FIFTH EDITION

FULLY REVISED AND EXPANDED

THE NEW OXFORD ANNOTATED BIBLE

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

WITH THE APOCRYPHA

AN ECUMENICAL STUDY BIBLE

THE NEW OXFORD ANNOTATED BIBLE

Fully Revised
Fifth Edition

New Revised Standard Version

Fully Revised Fifth Edition

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New Revised Standard Version

An Ecumenical Study Bible

Michael D. Coogan, *Editor*

Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom,
and Pheme Perkins, *Associate Editors*

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THE EDITORS' PREFACE

For over five decades *The Oxford Annotated Bible* and its successor *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* have served generations of readers and students as a study Bible. That extraordinary longevity is eloquent testimony to its success. This fifth edition retains the format and features that have proven so attractive. At the same time, the field of biblical studies has not been static, and this edition is a thoroughgoing revision of the previous ones. In particular, the editors have recruited contributors from a wide diversity of backgrounds and of scholarly approaches to the biblical traditions. In order to present this diversity more fully, the introductions to the biblical books, the maps and charts, the annotations, and the study materials at the end of the book have been significantly enhanced.

For this edition the editors have thoroughly revised the study materials and commissioned new materials where appropriate. There is a new essay on "The Languages of the Bible," and the table on "Calendars" has been augmented with an explanatory essay on the differing methods of accounting for time in the ancient world. "Parallel Texts" now includes parallels to the Synoptic Gospels in the Gospel of John. There is a table of "Chapter and Verse Differences" between standard English translations and the Hebrew Bible's numbering. As always, everything has gone through multiple readings by several editors and revisions by the editorial board and the contributors.

The editors recognize that no single interpretation or approach is sufficient for informed reading of these ancient texts, and have aimed at inclusivity of interpretive strategies. On a great number of issues there is a consensus among scholars, and the contributors have been encouraged to present such consensus when it exists. Where it has broken down, and has not yet re-formed, alternatives are mentioned. Moreover, in order to respect the canonical status of various parts of the Bible for different communities, and to avoid privileging any book or part of the Bible, the editors have kept both introductions and annotations roughly proportionate to the length of the books, while recognizing that some parts require more elaboration than others.

The editorial process was collaborative. Each contribution was read in its entirety by at least three of the editors, and revised with a view toward consistency of tone, coherence of approach, and completeness of coverage. The editors have also wanted to allow the contributors' own voices to be heard, and have avoided imposing a superficial uniformity of style and approach. Throughout, the editors have kept the needs of the general audience firmly in mind during the editorial stages, and the aim has been a congruity of experience as a reader turns from book to book and from section to section of the finished volume.

CONTENTS OF THE ANNOTATED BIBLE

The biblical text stands apart from any editorial contributions, in both placement and format. This will enable anyone who wishes to do so to read the text unprejudiced by editorial judgments.

The footnotes that are part of the New Revised Standard Version (indicated by an italic superscript letter after the word or phrase in question) are printed at the bottom of the right-hand column of the biblical text on each page where they occur. In these notes, divergent textual readings and alternate translations are printed in italics. Abbreviations in the textual notes are listed on pp. xxii–xxiii. The phrase "Other ancient authorities read" means that the reading (i.e., the wording) of the passage is different in various manuscripts and early versions, and the word "Or" signifies that the Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, or Latin text permits an alternate rendering besides the one given in the text. (See "Textual Criticism," p. 1843.)

Discussion of larger units in the Bible is provided by essays introducing each of them: "The Pentateuch," "The Historical Books," "The Poetical and Wisdom Books," "The Prophetic Books," "The Gospels," and "Letters/Epistles in the New Testament."

Each book is preceded by its own introduction, which sketches the book's structure, main themes, literary history, and historical context, as well as broad lines of interpretation; they therefore present a clear overview and guide to reading. These introductions are organized so that they cover the same topics in the same order.

At the bottom of each page of the biblical text, in a different font from it and in a single column, are the annotations. The annotations are just that, notes rather than paraphrase or commentary, although these genres admittedly overlap. They are intended to enhance the reader's understanding of the text, providing essential information, background, and interpretation, rather than only summarizing what it says. The boldface headings delineate the larger units of the book and provide a detailed consecutive outline of its contents. The word or phrase

being glossed is given in italics. Quotation marks are used for words quoted from elsewhere in the Bible as well as for transliterations of ancient languages. Since we desire each book to stand on its own, as much as possible the annotations are self-contained. We have thus tried to avoid both cross-references to fuller discussion elsewhere, and the misconception that a book or larger part of the Bible is merely a perfunctory reworking of other material, or that a particular passage can only be understood fully in the light of later biblical traditions. At the same time, we recognize that the Bible is often a progressive text, and that later parts of the Bible often contain the oldest interpretations of earlier traditions. The best starting point for interpreting a particular passage is often another passage, and we have encouraged contributors to point out interconnections in the biblical material by means of cross references. (The cross-references that end with "n." refer to the annotation as well as to the biblical text.)

A listing of abbreviations for the books of the Bible used in this edition is found on p. xxi. The chapter and verse divisions in a reference are separated by a period; thus, Gen 3.8 refers to the book of Genesis, chapter 3, verse 8. Inclusive references are used for both chapters and verses; thus, Ex 1–15 refers to the first fifteen chapters of the book of Exodus; Rom 11.33–36 to verses 33 through 36 of chapter 11 of the letter to the Romans; and so forth. Partial verses—either separable clauses, individual sentences where two or more are part of the same verse, or lines of poetry—are referred to with lower-case letters; thus, Gen 2.4a means the first part (here, a sentence) of verse 4 in chapter 2 of the book of Genesis. When a book of the Bible is referred to within an annotation on that book, the name of the book is not repeated unless there is ambiguity.

In keeping with the general desire to take account of the diversity of the users of this study Bible, the editors have adopted two widely-accepted conventions: referring to the first portion of the text as "the Hebrew Bible," since it is a collection preserved by the Jewish community and that is how Jews regard it; and citing all dates in the notes as BCE or CE ("Before the Common Era" and "Common Era") instead of BC or AD ("Before Christ" and "Anno Domini" ["in the year of the Lord"]), which imply a Christian view of the status of Jesus of Nazareth. Use of the title "Old Testament" for those books here designated as "the Hebrew Bible" is confined to instances expressing the historical view of various Christian interpreters. These conventions are followed in the study materials that the editors have produced; the translation has its own conventions, which may not be altered.

Several dozen maps and plans are interspersed in the biblical text. These will assist readers to locate important places mentioned in the text or to clarify the prose descriptions of such structures as the Tabernacle and the Temple.

The study materials at the end of the volume are a series of interconnected essays that provide background information for understanding the Bible, the processes by which it was formed, the contexts in which it was produced, and the ways in which it has been interpreted through the ages. These essays are followed by tables of rulers, of weights and measures, of the calendar (with an explanatory essay), of parallel passages in the biblical traditions, and "Chapter and Verse Differences" between English and Hebrew texts. There is also a brief bibliography to English translations of ancient writings that are referred to in the notes. A select chronology provides a quick reference for major events, rulers, and other persons contemporaneous with the biblical accounts. The study materials also include a glossary of important terms and concepts.

At the end of the book is a comprehensive subject index to all of the study materials, including the annotations. Finally, there is a set of fourteen color maps, with a separate index to them, that constitute a brief historical atlas of the Bible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It remains to express our gratitude, first and above all to the contributors, whose learning has made this a work of which we are immensely proud. We are grateful, as always, for the support and careful work of all those at Oxford University Press who make it possible to publish complex projects such as this. Lisa Grzan and Claudia Dukeshire oversaw the entire process of editorial development and typesetting, as well as the production of digital versions of this edition. Mary Sutherland copy-edited the entire text and prepared it for the compositor; Peachtree Editorial and Proofreading Service proofread the biblical text, and Debbie Ruel & Jan Maas proofread the study materials; 2K/DENMARK undertook the design and setting of the text. Erina Zadra oversaw the printing and binding process. Steve A. Wiggins and Donald Kraus handled all of the pre-production editing with unequalled skill and serenity. We are grateful to them all.

MICHAEL D. COOGAN, MARC Z. BRETTLER, CAROL A. NEWSOM, PHEME PERKINS — *August 2017*

TO THE READER

[The following prefatory essay, "To the Reader," is part of the New Revised Standard Version Bible translation (NRSV), and is reprinted here in accordance with the requirements of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., which holds copyright to the NRSV.]

This preface is addressed to you by the Committee of translators, who wish to explain, as briefly as possible, the origin and character of our work. The publication of our revision is yet another step in the long, continual process of making the Bible available in the form of the English language that is most widely current in our day. To summarize in a single sentence: the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is an authorized revision of the Revised Standard Version, published in 1952, which was a revision of the American Standard Version, published in 1901, which, in turn, embodied earlier revisions of the King James Version, published in 1611.

In the course of time, the King James Version came to be regarded as "the Authorized Version." With good reason it has been termed "the noblest monument of English prose," and it has entered, as no other book has, into the making of the personal character and the public institutions of the English-speaking peoples. We owe to it an incalculable debt.

Yet the King James Version has serious defects. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of biblical studies and the discovery of many biblical manuscripts more ancient than those on which the King James Version was based made it apparent that these defects were so many as to call for revision. The task was begun, by authority of the Church of England, in 1870. The (British) Revised Version of the Bible was published in 1881–1885; and the American Standard Version, its variant embodying the preferences of the American scholars associated with the work, was published, as was mentioned above, in 1901. In 1928 the copyright of the latter was acquired by the International Council of Religious Education and thus passed into the ownership of the Churches of the United States and Canada that were associated in this Council through their boards of education and publication.

The Council appointed a committee of scholars to have charge of the text of the American Standard Version and to undertake inquiry concerning the need for further revision. After studying the questions whether or not revision should be undertaken, and if so, what its nature and extent should be, in 1937 the Council authorized a revision. The scholars who served as members of the Committee worked in two sections, one dealing with the Old Testament and one with the New Testament. In 1946 the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published. The publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, took place on September 30, 1952. A translation of the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament followed in 1957. In 1977 this collection was issued in an expanded edition, containing three additional texts received by Eastern Orthodox communions (3 and 4 Maccabees and Psalm 151). Thereafter the Revised Standard Version gained the distinction of being officially authorized for use by all major Christian churches: Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox.

The Revised Standard Version Bible Committee is a continuing body, comprising about thirty members, both men and women. Ecumenical in representation, it includes scholars affiliated with various Protestant denominations, as well as several Roman Catholic members, an Eastern Orthodox member, and a Jewish member who serves in the Old Testament section. For a period of time the Committee included several members from Canada and from England.

Because no translation of the Bible is perfect or is acceptable to all groups of readers, and because discoveries of older manuscripts and further investigation of linguistic features of the text continue to become available, renderings of the Bible have proliferated. During the years following the publication of the Revised Standard Version, twenty-six other English translations and revisions of the Bible were produced by committees and by individual scholars—not to mention twenty-five other translations and revisions of the New Testament alone. One of the latter was the second edition of the RSV New Testament, issued in 1971, twenty-five years after its initial publication.

Following the publication of the RSV Old Testament in 1952, significant advances were made in the discovery and interpretation of documents in Semitic languages related to Hebrew. In addition to the information

that had become available in the late 1940s from the Dead Sea texts of Isaiah and Habakkuk, subsequent acquisitions from the same area brought to light many other early copies of all the books of the Hebrew Scriptures (except Esther), though most of these copies are fragmentary. During the same period early Greek manuscript copies of books of the New Testament also became available.

In order to take these discoveries into account, along with recent studies of documents in Semitic languages related to Hebrew, in 1974 the Policies Committee of the Revised Standard Version, which is a standing committee of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., authorized the preparation of a revision of the entire RSV Bible.

For the Old Testament the Committee has made use of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977; ed. sec. emendata, 1983). This is an edition of the Hebrew and Aramaic text as current early in the Christian era and fixed by Jewish scholars (the "Masoretes") of the sixth to the ninth centuries. The vowel signs, which were added by the Masoretes, are accepted in the main, but where a more probable and convincing reading can be obtained by assuming different vowels, this has been done. No notes are given in such cases, because the vowel points are less ancient and reliable than the consonants. When an alternative reading given by the Masoretes is translated in a footnote, this is identified by the words "Another reading is."

Departures from the consonantal text of the best manuscripts have been made only where it seems clear that errors in copying had been made before the text was standardized. Most of the corrections adopted are based on the ancient versions (translations into Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, and Latin), which were made prior to the time of the work of the Masoretes and which therefore may reflect earlier forms of the Hebrew text. In such instances a footnote specifies the version or versions from which the correction has been derived and also gives a translation of the Masoretic Text. Where it was deemed appropriate to do so, information is supplied in footnotes from subsidiary Jewish traditions concerning other textual readings (the *Tiqqune Sopherim*, "emendations of the scribes"). These are identified in the footnotes as "Ancient Heb tradition."

Occasionally it is evident that the text has suffered in transmission and that none of the versions provides a satisfactory restoration. Here we can only follow the best judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text. Such reconstructions are indicated in footnotes by the abbreviation Cn ("Correction"), and a translation of the Masoretic Text is added.

For the New Testament the Committee has based its work on the most recent edition of *The Greek New Testament*, prepared by an interconfessional and international committee and published by the United Bible Societies (1966; 3rd ed. corrected, 1983; information concerning changes to be introduced into the critical apparatus of the forthcoming 4th edition was available to the Committee). As in that edition, double brackets are used to enclose a few passages that are generally regarded to be later additions to the text, but which we have retained because of their evident antiquity and their importance in the textual tradition. Only in very rare instances have we replaced the text or the punctuation of the Bible Societies' edition by an alternative that seemed to us to be superior. Here and there in the footnotes the phrase, "Other ancient authorities read," identifies alternative readings preserved by Greek manuscripts and early versions. In both Testaments, alternative renderings of the text are indicated by the word "Or."

As for the style of English adopted for the present revision, among the mandates given to the Committee in 1980 by the Division of Education and Ministry of the National Council of Churches of Christ (which now holds the copyright of the RSV Bible) was the directive to continue in the tradition of the King James Bible, but to introduce such changes as are warranted on the basis of accuracy, clarity, euphony, and current English usage. Within the constraints set by the original texts and by the mandates of the Division, the Committee has followed the maxim, "As literal as possible, as free as necessary." As a consequence, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) remains essentially a literal translation. Paraphrastic renderings have been adopted only sparingly, and then chiefly to compensate for a deficiency in the English language—the lack of a common gender third person singular pronoun.

During the almost half a century since the publication of the RSV, many in the churches have become sensitive to the danger of linguistic sexism arising from the inherent bias of the English language towards the masculine gender, a bias that in the case of the Bible has often restricted or obscured the meaning of the original text. The mandates from the Division specified that, in references to men and women, masculine-oriented language should be eliminated as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture. As can be appreciated, more than once the Committee found that the

several mandates stood in tension and even in conflict. The various concerns had to be balanced case by case in order to provide a faithful and acceptable rendering without using contrived English. Only very occasionally has the pronoun "he" or "him" been retained in passages where the reference may have been to a woman as well as to a man; for example, in several legal texts in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In such instances of formal, legal language, the options of either putting the passage in the plural or of introducing additional nouns to avoid masculine pronouns in English seemed to the Committee to obscure the historic structure and literary character of the original. In the vast majority of cases, however, inclusiveness has been attained by simple rephrasing or by introducing plural forms when this does not distort the meaning of the passage. Of course, in narrative and in parable no attempt was made to generalize the sex of individual persons.

Another aspect of style will be detected by readers who compare the more stately English rendering of the Old Testament with the less formal rendering adopted for the New Testament. For example, the traditional distinction between *shall* and *will* in English has been retained in the Old Testament as appropriate in rendering a document that embodies what may be termed the classic form of Hebrew, while in the New Testament the abandonment of such distinctions in the usage of the future tense in English reflects the more colloquial nature of the koine Greek used by most New Testament authors except when they are quoting the Old Testament.

Careful readers will notice that here and there in the Old Testament the word LORD (or in certain cases GOD) is printed in capital letters. This represents the traditional manner in English versions of rendering the Divine Name, the "Tetragrammaton" (see the notes on Exodus 3.14, 15), following the precedent of the ancient Greek and Latin translators and the long established practice in the reading of the Hebrew Scriptures in the synagogue. While it is almost if not quite certain that the Name was originally pronounced "Yahweh," this pronunciation was not indicated when the Masoretes added vowel sounds to the consonantal Hebrew text. To the four consonants YHWH of the Name, which had come to be regarded as too sacred to be pronounced, they attached vowel signs indicating that in its place should be read the Hebrew word *Adonai* meaning "Lord" (or *Elohim* meaning "God"). Ancient Greek translators employed the word *Kyrios* ("Lord") for the Name. The Vulgate likewise used the Latin word *Dominus* ("Lord"). The form "Jehovah" is of late medieval origin; it is a combination of the consonants of the Divine Name and the vowels attached to it by the Masoretes but belonging to an entirely different word. Although the American Standard Version (1901) had used "Jehovah" to render the Tetragrammaton (the sound of Y being represented by J and the sound of W by V, as in Latin), for two reasons the Committees that produced the RSV and the NRSV returned to the more familiar usage of the King James Version. (1) The word "Jehovah" does not accurately represent any form of the Name ever used in Hebrew. (2) The use of any proper name for the one and only God, as though there were other gods from whom the true God had to be distinguished, began to be discontinued in Judaism before the Christian era and is inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church.

It will be seen that in the Psalms and in other prayers addressed to God the archaic second person singular pronouns *thee*, *thou*, *thine*) and verb forms (*art*, *hast*, *hadst*) are no longer used. Although some readers may regret this change, it should be pointed out that in the original languages neither the Old Testament nor the New makes any linguistic distinction between addressing a human being and addressing the Deity. Furthermore, in the tradition of the King James Version one will not expect to find the use of capital letters for pronouns that refer to the Deity—such capitalization is an unnecessary innovation that has only recently been introduced into a few English translations of the Bible. Finally, we have left to the discretion of the licensed publishers such matters as section headings, cross-references, and clues to the pronunciation of proper names.

This new version seeks to preserve all that is best in the English Bible as it has been known and used through the years. It is intended for use in public reading and congregational worship, as well as in private study, instruction, and meditation. We have resisted the temptation to introduce terms and phrases that merely reflect current moods, and have tried to put the message of the Scriptures in simple, enduring words and expressions that are worthy to stand in the great tradition of the King James Bible and its predecessors.

In traditional Judaism and Christianity, the Bible has been more than a historical document to be preserved or a classic of literature to be cherished and admired; it is recognized as the unique record of God's dealings with people over the ages. The Old Testament sets forth the call of a special people to enter into covenant relation with the God of justice and steadfast love and to bring God's law to the nations. The New Testament records the life and work of Jesus Christ, the one in whom "the Word became flesh," as well as describes the rise and spread of the early Christian Church. The Bible carries its full message, not to those who regard it simply as

a noble literary heritage of the past or who wish to use it to enhance political purposes and advance otherwise desirable goals, but to all persons and communities who read it so that they may discern and understand what God is saying to them. That message must not be disguised in phrases that are no longer clear, or hidden under words that have changed or lost their meaning; it must be presented in language that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today. It is the hope and prayer of the translators that this version of the Bible may continue to hold a large place in congregational life and to speak to all readers, young and old alike, helping them to understand and believe and respond to its message.

For the Committee,
BRUCE M. METZGER

ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

The Acts 1557
Amos 1299
1 Chronicles 583
2 Chronicles 625
Colossians 1707
1 Corinthians 1637
2 Corinthians 1663
Daniel 1249
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Esther 715
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1 Thessalonians 1715
2 Thessalonians 1721
1 Timothy 1727
2 Timothy 1735
Titus 1741
Zechariah 1357
Zephaniah 1347

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Books of the Bible: Abbreviation First

HEBREW BIBLE

Gen ..... Genesis	2 Chr ..... 2 Chronicles	Dan ..... Daniel
Ex ..... Exodus	Ezra ..... Ezra	Hos ..... Hosea
Lev ..... Leviticus	Neh ..... Nehemiah	Joel ..... Joel
Num ..... Numbers	Esth ..... Esther	Am ..... Amos
Deut ..... Deuteronomy	Job ..... Job	Ob ..... Obadiah
Josh ..... Joshua	Ps ..... Psalms	Jon ..... Jonah
Judg ..... Judges	Prov ..... Proverbs	Mic ..... Micah
Ruth ..... Ruth	Eccl ..... Ecclesiastes	Nah ..... Nahum
1 Sam ..... 1 Samuel	Song ..... Song of Solomon	Hah ..... Habakkuk
2 Sam ..... 2 Samuel	Isa ..... Isaiah	Zeph ..... Zephaniah
1 Kings ..... 1 Kings	Jer ..... Jeremiah	Hag ..... Haggai
2 Kings ..... 2 Kings	Lam ..... Lamentations	Zech ..... Zechariah
1 Chr ..... 1 Chronicles	Ezek ..... Ezekiel	Mal ..... Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT

Mt ..... Matthew	Eph ..... Ephesians	Heb ..... Hebrews
Mk ..... Mark	Phil ..... Philippians	Jas ..... James
Lk ..... Luke	Col ..... Colossians	1 Pet ..... 1 Peter
Jn ..... John	1 Thess ..... 1 Thessalonians	2 Pet ..... 2 Peter
Acts ..... Acts of the Apostles	2 Thess ..... 2 Thessalonians	1 Jn ..... 1 John
Rom ..... Romans	1 Tim ..... 1 Timothy	2 Jn ..... 2 John
1 Cor ..... 1 Corinthians	2 Tim ..... 2 Timothy	3 Jn ..... 3 John
2 Cor ..... 2 Corinthians	Titus ..... Titus	Jude ..... Jude
Gal ..... Galatians	Philem ..... Philemon	Rev ..... Revelation

In the textual notes to the books of the Bible, the following abbreviations are used:

Ant.	Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*
Aram	Aramaic
Ch, chs	Chapter, chapters
Cn	Correction; made where the text has suffered in transmission and the versions provide no satisfactory restoration but where the Standard Bible Committee agrees with the judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text.
Gk	Septuagint, Greek version of the Old Testament [also used in the NT, where it means simply Greek]
Heb	Hebrew of the consonantal Masoretic Text of the Old Testament
Josephus	Flavius Josephus (Jewish historian, about 37 to 95 CE)
Macc.	The book(s) of the Maccabees
Ms(s)	Manuscript(s)
MT	The Hebrew of the pointed Masoretic Text of the Old Testament
OL	Old Latin
Q Ms(s)	Manuscript(s) found at Qumran by the Dead Sea
Sam	Samaritan Hebrew text of the Old Testament
Syr	Syriac Version of the Old Testament
Syr H	Syriac Version of Origen's Hexapla
Tg	Targum
Vg	Vulgate, Latin Version of the Old Testament

For a detailed discussion of these terms, see "Textual Criticism," p. 1843.

The following abbreviations of additional ancient works are used in the introductions and annotations to the biblical books, and in the General Essays at the end of the volume:

Ag. Ap.	Josephus, *Against Apion*	*1 Clem*	*1 Clement (*First Epistle of Clement)
ANET	Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*	*CoS*	*The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions, and Archival Documents from the Ancient World,* 3 vols. (ed. W.W. Hallo; Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002)
Apoc. Bar.	*Apocalypse of Baruch*		
Apoc. Zeph.	*Apocalypse of Zephaniah*		
Aristophanes, *Ran.*	Aristophanes, *Ranae* (*Frogs*)		
Aristotle, *Pol.*	Aristotle, *Politics*		
Aristotle, *Rh.*	Aristotle, *Rhetoric*		
Aristotle, *Virt.*	Aristotle, *Virtues and Vices*	*De Vir. Ill.*	Jerome, De viris Illustribus, "Of Illustrious Men"
2 Bar.	*2 Baruch* (another name for the *Apocalypse of Baruch*)	*Did.*	*Didache*
b. B. Bat.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Baba Bathra*	Dio Chrys., *Or.*	Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes*
b. Ber.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Berakot*	Diod. Sic.	Diodorus of Sicily (*Library of History*)
b. Eruv.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Eruvim*	*1 En.*	*1 Enoch*
b. Git.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Gittin*	*Ep. Arist.*	*Letter of Aristeas*
b. Meg.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Megillah*	Euripides, *Tro.*	Euripides, *Trojan Women*
b. Ned.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Nedarim*	Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*	Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*
b. San.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Sanhedrin*	Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.*	Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*
b. Shabb.	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Shabbat*	*Gen. Rab.*	*Genesis Rabbah*
b. Yoma	Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Yoma*	Gk	Greek
CD	Cairo Genizah, Damascus Document	Hermas, *Mand.*	*Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate*
Cicero, *Fin.*	Cicero, *De finibus*	Hermas, *Sim.*	Shepherd of Hermas, *Similitude*
		Hist.	Herodotus, *Histories*
		Homer, *Od.*	Homer, *Odyssey*
		HS	Holiness School

Ignatius, *Philad.*	Ignatius, *Epistle to the Philadelphians*
Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*	Irenaeus, *Adversus omnes Haereses*
JB	Jerusalem Bible
Jer. Sot.	Jerusalem Talmud, *Sotah* (see *y. Sot.*)
Josephus, *Ant.*	Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*
Josephus, *Ap.*	Josephus, *Against Apion*
Josephus, *J.W.*	Josephus, *Jewish War*
Jub.	*Jubilees*
Juvenal, *Sat.*	Juvenal, *Satires*
KJV	King James Version (1611)
l	liter
Lam. Rab.	*Lamentations Rabbah*
lit.	literally
LXX	the Septuagint
m. Abot	*Mishnah Abot*
m. Avoda Zara	*Mishnah Avoda Zara*
m. Ber.	*Mishnah Berakot*
m. Ketub.	*Mishnah Ketubim*
m. Ned.	*Mishnah Nedarim*
m. Ohalot	*Mishnah Ohalot*
m. Sukkah	Mishnah Tractate *Sukkah,* "Tabernacles, Booths" [harvest festival]
Midr.	*Midrash*
Midr. Pss.	*Midrash Psalms*
Midr. Rab.	*Midrash Rabbah*
m. Shabb.	*Misnah Shabbat*
m. Sot.	*Mishnah Sotah*
Nic. Eth.	Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
NIV	New International Version
NT	New Testament
OG	Old Greek [Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible], the Septuagint (LXX)
P. Oxy.	*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*
Philo, *De Conf.Ling.*	Philo, *De Confusione Linguarum*
Philo, *De spec. leg.*	Philo, *De specialibus Legibus*
Philo, *Flaccus*	Philo, *Against Flaccus*
Philo, *Her.*	Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*
Philo, *Leg. all.*	Philo, *Legum allegoriae*
Philo, *Leg. Gai.*	Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium*
Philo, *Migr.*	Philo, *De migratione Abrahami*
Philo, *Opif.*	Philo, *De opificio mundi*
Philo, *Quest. in Gen.*	Philo, *Quaestiones in Genesis*
Plato, *Cri.*	Plato, *Crito*
Plato, *Gorg.*	Plato, *Gorgias*
Plato, *Phaedr.*	Plato, *Phaedrus*
Plato, *Symp.*	Plato, *Symposium*
Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*	Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*
Plutarch, *Mor.*	Plutarch, *Moralia*
Pro Rabirio	Cicero, *Pro Rabirio Postuma*
Pss. Sol.	*Psalms of Solomon*
11QTemple	The Temple Scroll from Qumran Cave 11 (11Q19)
1QH	Hodayot (Thanksgiving Hymns) from Qumran Cave 1
1QM	Milhamah (War Scroll) from Qumran Cave 1
11QMelch	Melchizedek Scroll from Qumran Cave 11 (11Q13)
1QpHab	Pesher to Habakkuk from Qumran Cave 1
11QPs[a]	The Psalms[a] Scroll from Qumran Cave 11 (11Q5)
1QS	Rule of the Community (Serek Hayahad) from Qumran Cave 1
Quintilian, *Inst.*	*Institutio Oratoria*
Quod Det.	Philo, *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat,* "That the Worse is Wont to Attack the Better"
REB	REVISED ENGLISH BIBLE
RSV	REVISED STANDARD VERSION
Seder Eliyahu R.	*Seder Eliyahu Rabbah,* midrash [on the coming-to-be of the world]
Seder Olam R.	*Seder Olam Rabbah*
Shab.	*Shabbat*
Sifre Num.	*Sifre Numbers*
Sib. Or.	*Sibylline Oracles*
Sophocles, *Ant.*	Sophocles, *Antigone*
Strom.	Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*
Tacitus, *Hist.*	Tacitus, *Historiae*
T. Abr.	*Testament of Abraham*
T. Jos.	*Testament of Joseph*
T. Jud. (Test. Jud.)	*Testament of Judah*
T. Levi	*Testament of Levi*
T. Moses	*Testament of Moses*
T. Naph.	*Testament of Naphtali*
T. Reuben	*Testament of Reuben*
T. Sol.	*Testament of Solomon*
Tg. Ps-J.	*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*
Tr. Eruv.	Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Eruvim* (see *b. Eruv.*)
y.	Jerusalem Talmud
y. Sot.	Jerusalem Talmud, *Sotah*
v., vv.	verse, verses

Note: The abbreviation "Q," unless specified as "Quelle" ("Source") for the posited New Testament document of non-Markan common material in Matthew and Luke, refers to Qumran, and manuscripts from Qumran are identified by the cave number, which precedes the Q, and the official manuscript number, which follows it; thus, 1Q34 = Manuscript 34 from Cave 1 at Qumran; 4Q174 = Manuscript 174 from Cave 4; etc.

THE NEW OXFORD ANNOTATED BIBLE

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THE HEBREW BIBLE

The Hebrew Scriptures
Commonly Called
The Old Testament

New Revised Standard Version

INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

TERMINOLOGY, CONTENTS, AND TRADITIONAL VIEWS OF AUTHORSHIP

The word "Pentateuch," from the Greek for "five (*penta*) books (*teuchos*)," has entered English by way of Latin as the designation for the first group of books in the Bible, comprising Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Unlike other canonical divisions, where there is significant debate within and between different religious traditions, all Jewish and Christian traditions view these five books in this order as a single unit opening the Bible. The unanimity of tradition and the initial placement of these five books reflect their significance within both Judaism and Christianity.

These five books present a narrative beginning with the creation of the world and concluding immediately before the entrance of Israel into the land of Canaan. They do not, however, form a single book in the modern sense, with a single author; modern scholarship has persuasively argued that each of these books is composite, consisting of several sources and supplements from different periods in Israel's history (see below). Nor do the five form a single book in terms of plot. Although Moses is the central human character of much of the Pentateuch, he is not introduced until ch 2 of Exodus, the second book. Nor is the early development of Israel as a people the Pentateuch's unifying theme, as the first eleven chapters of the Bible are concerned with the world from creation to the birth of Abraham (Gen 11.27). Other suggested unifying themes for the Pentateuch, such as covenant, are also inadequate, since they do not explicitly appear at the beginning of the Pentateuch and also continue well beyond it. The suggestion that the promise of the land unifies the Pentateuch is especially problematic, since this theme, though introduced in Gen 12, is fulfilled only with the conquest of the land in the book of Joshua, in which case the Hexateuch ("six books": the Pentateuch plus Joshua) rather than the Pentateuch should be seen as the decisive unit. In fact, the story begun in the Hexateuch continues in Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings, leading some scholars to posit an Enneateuch, or nine-book unit starting with Genesis.

The Hebrew terms *torah*, *torat moshe* ("the Torah of Moses"), *torat YHWH* ("the Torah of the LORD"), and *torat ha'elohim* ("the Torah of God"), already in use in late biblical literature to describe what is later called the Pentateuch (e.g., 2 Chr 23.18; Ezra 7.6,10; Neh 8.1,18; Dan 9.11), offer a better clue to the nature and unity of these books. *Torah* is often understood as "law," and this is one of its frequent meanings in the Bible, as in Ex 12.49: "There shall be one law [Heb "*torah*"] for the native and for the alien who resides among you." This understanding is already found in the Septuagint, the pre–Common Era translation of the Bible into Greek, where *torah* is typically translated as *nomos*, "law." Law is a predominant genre of the Pentateuch, which contains extensive legal collections in Ex 21–23, Lev 17–26, and Deut 12–26, as well as selected laws within various narratives, such as the law of circumcision in the narrative about Abraham in Gen 17 and the law concerning inheritance of the land by women in Num 36, embedded within a section about the possession of the land. Many narrative sections also contain material that is of legal significance. For example, the first creation account in Genesis culminates with the "creation" of the sabbath (Gen 2.2–3), anticipating the legislation of Ex 16, and of the Decalogue, in Ex 20.8–11. Similarly, the account of the construction of the tabernacle (Ex 25–40), a temporary temple for God in the wilderness, is not narrated for its own sake, but as an introduction to the various laws of sacrifice, narrated at the beginning of Leviticus, the book that immediately follows.

Yet "law" is not the only possible translation of *torah*, and the Pentateuch is not a book of law. T*orah* also means "instruction" or "teaching," as in Prov 1.8: "Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not reject your mother's teaching (*torah*)." Teaching is not confined to law; narratives or stories are as effective a medium of instruction. Thus, given the predominance of narrative in significant portions of the Pentateuch, especially in Genesis, the beginning of Exodus, and Numbers, it is best to understand the biblical term *torat moshe* as "the instruction of Moses," an instruction realized through narratives and laws, which together elucidate the proper norms of living and the relationship between God and the world.

The term *torat moshe* and its variants, in several late biblical books such as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, refers to the Pentateuch more or less as it now exists, but it is not found in the Pentateuch. In fact, the Torah

never explicitly suggests that it was compiled by Moses himself. (The phrase "the Torah" in passages such as Deut 4.44, "This is the law [*torah*] that Moses set before the Israelites," never refers to the complete Pentateuch.) The tradition that Moses wrote the entire Torah is likely based on the passages that suggest that Moses stayed on Mount Sinai (or Horeb) for forty days and forty nights (Ex 24.18; 34.28; Deut 9.9; 10.10). Clearly, this was too long a time for short legal collections such as Ex 21–23 to have been conveyed to him, and thus traditions developed that Moses received the entire written Torah from God at that point. According to the classical rabbis, Moses simultaneously received the oral law, which interpreted and filled in the written law. The written Torah would include, according to all rabbinic sources (which are followed by the early church), even the book of Genesis, which represents God's narration to Moses of the early history of the world and of Abraham and his extended family. Some rabbinic sources even suggest that the final chapter of the Torah, Deut 34, which beginning in v. 5 narrates the death of Moses, was dictated by God to Moses, who wrote it with his tears. The view that the Torah should be understood as the divine word mediated by Moses was the standard view of synagogue and church through the Renaissance.

This view is explicitly contradicted by the Torah's narrative, as was sometimes (though rarely) recognized in the Middle Ages. Thus, Abraham ibn Ezra, a scholar active in the twelfth century CE, noted that Gen 12.6 states in reference to Abraham that "at that time the Canaanites were in the land." The words "at that time" suggest that for the author, the Canaanites were no longer in the land; in other words, it appears that this snippet was written after the time of Moses, because during his time the Canaanites were still in the land. Several other places that indicate authorship later than Moses were pointed out by a small number of medieval scholars, but this view was never systematized into a thesis that could challenge the dominant view concerning Moses's authorship of the Torah.

MODERN SOURCE THEORIES

Slowly, with the rise of rationalism, particularly as associated with figures such as Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza (1632–1677), the view that the Torah was a unified whole, written by Moses, began to be questioned. (For additional information on this development, see the essays on "The Interpretation of the Bible," pp. 1856–1882.) This culminated in the development of the Documentary Hypothesis in the nineteenth century, according to which the Pentateuch (or Hexateuch) is composed of four main sources or documents that were edited or redacted together: J, E, P, and D. Each of these sources or documents is embedded in a (relatively) complete form in the current Pentateuch, and each has a distinct vocabulary and theological perspective.

J and E are so called after the names for God that each of them uses in Genesis: J uses the name "Yahweh" (German Jahwe, hence "J"), translated in the NRSV as "LORD," though it is really a personal name, whose exact meaning is unknown, from the root "to be"; E prefers to call the deity "Elohim" (translated "God"), an epithet that also serves as the generic term for God or gods in the Bible; P, which also uses "Elohim" (among other names, such as el shaddai [NRSV "God Almighty"], but not "LORD") is an abbreviation for the Priestly material; and D refers to Deuteronomy.

The difference in divine names, however, is not the main criterion used by scholars for suggesting that the Torah is not a unified composition. Much more significant are doublets and contradictions, in both narrative and legal material. For example, it has long been noted that chs 1–3 of Genesis twice narrate creation. People are created first in 1.27—"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them"—and then again in 2.7—"Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." Furthermore, the second creation account does not simply mirror or repeat the first, but differs from the first both in outline and in detail. Gen 1.1–2.3, the first account, narrates the creation of a highly symmetrical world by a very powerful deity who creates by speaking. In this account, for example, man and woman are created together (1.27) after the creation of the land animals (1.25). In contrast, the second account, in Gen 2.4–3.24, suggests that man was created (2.7), then the animals (2.19), and then woman (2.21–22). Its focus is on the creation of humanity, not of the entire physical world, and God experiments and anthropomorphically "forms" various beings, rather than creating them by speaking. Thus, these are two distinct accounts, written by two authors, expressing different worldviews about the nature of creation, humanity, and God.

The two creation accounts appear as two totally separate blocks of material in Gen 1.1–2.4a and 2.4b–3.24. In several cases, however, an editor or redactor could not combine sources into consecutive, complete blocks.

For example, the flood story culminates in a tradition that God will never again bring a flood on the land (Gen 9.11); for this reason, the J and P flood narratives cannot appear as separate and complete narratives, so they are intertwined. Similarly, the story of the plague of blood (Ex 7.14–24) contains two intertwined accounts; in one (J), Moses is the protagonist, and the blood affects only the Nile, and the main plague is death of fish (e.g., vv. 17–18), while in the other (P), Aaron appears as well, and blood affects all Egyptian water sources (e.g., vv. 19, 24). In such cases, careful attention to plot and vocabulary helps to discern the original building blocks or sources of the story. This is sometimes easier in the original Hebrew since many translations, in their desire to create a text that reads well, obscure differences between sources.

In addition to narrative, the legal material in the Torah is not unified. For example, slave laws concerning Hebrew or Israelite slaves are found in Ex 21.1–6, Lev 25.39–46, and Deut 15.12–18. These laws cannot be reconciled in a straightforward fashion since three different notions of slavery underlie them. Most significant is the way in which Exodus differentiates between the treatment of male and female slaves, whereas Deuteronomy claims that they should both be treated similarly. While Exodus and Deuteronomy agree that a slave who loves his master may opt to remain a slave "for life" (Ex 21.6) or "forever" (Deut 15.17), Lev 25 insists that slavery does not really exist, since slaves must be treated "as hired or bound laborers," and they may serve only "until the year of the jubilee" (v. 40). Such legal differences are not surprising given that the Bible is composite and that the different legal collections reflect norms or ideals of different groups living in different times or locations.

In fact, it is possible to trace distinctive styles and theological notions that typify individual Pentateuchal sources. For example, the J source is well known for its highly anthropomorphic God, who has a close relationship with humans, as seen in Gen 2.4–3.24, which includes, for example, a description of the LORD God "walking in the garden" (3.8) and says that the LORD God "made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them" (3.21). On the other hand, in E, the Elohist source, God is more distant from people, typically communicating with them by dreams or through intermediaries, such as heavenly messengers (NRSV "angels") and prophets. The P or Priestly source is characterized by a strong interest in order and boundaries (see Gen 1), as well as an overriding concern with the priestly family of Aaron that supervises the Temple-based religious system, which is prefigured by worship at the tabernacle in the wilderness. D, or Deuteronomy, is characterized by a unique hortatory or preaching style and insists strongly that God cannot be seen, as in this source's description of revelation: "Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice" (Deut 4.12). This explains why this source, uniquely, insists that God does not physically dwell in the Temple or tabernacle; rather, the Temple is "the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name" (Deut 12.11). D further emphasizes that this one God must be worshiped in one place only (see especially Deut 12); this place is later understood to be Jerusalem. Deuteronomy also shows exceptional concern for the underclasses, such as the widow and orphan, and it focuses on Moses.

The narrative sources J, E, P, and D also have legal collections associated with them. The Covenant Collection or Covenant Code (see Ex 24.7) in Ex 20.22–23.33 is probably associated with E. The Holiness Collection or Holiness Code of Lev 17–26 is so named because of its central injunction, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev 19.2). Though not composed by the Priestly author (P), it represents a form of Priestly theology. The Deuteronomic law collection appears in Deut 12–26. These blocks of material are often called "codes," but since the blocks are neither complete nor organized for the law court, as a "code" might be, the term "collection" is more suitable.

Critical biblical scholarship, through the latter part of the twentieth century, was confident in dating each of these Pentateuchal sources along with the legal collections they incorporated. Thus, J was seen as the earliest collection, often dated to the period of David and Solomon in the tenth century BCE, followed by E, which was often associated with the Northern Kingdom of Israel, established after the death of Solomon. D was connected to the reform of King Josiah of Judah in the late seventh century, and P was seen as deriving from the Babylonian exile in the sixth century. Scholars now agree that the reasons usually given for assigning these dates are problematic, and some doubt many of the historical events associated with them, such as the Davidic monarchy or the Josianic reform. A lively debate has developed concerning the relative order and absolute date of these sources. The existence of E as a complete source has been questioned as well, especially since E first appears well after the beginning of the Torah and is very difficult to disentangle from J after the beginning of Exodus. Thus, many scholars now talk of JE together as an early narrative source, incorporating diverse traditions; this should be distinguished from P, Priestly material, and D, Deuteronomic material, which according to

some is also found outside of Deuteronomy, in the Torah's first four books. Other scholars have abandoned a documentary model, which sees the Torah as comprised of four distinct, largely complete blocks (J, E, D and P), and have returned to a model that was more popular in the nineteenth century—a supplementary model—where the Torah grew over a long period of time as a result of a large number of supplements to a base text. Others combine documentary and supplementary approaches. Given that ancient texts remained flexible over a long period of time, such complex models are very likely.

Most scholars who continue to work with a documentary model no longer see each source as the work of a single author writing at one particular time but recognize that each is the product of a single group or "school" over a long time. Thus, it is best to speak of streams or strands of tradition and to contrast their basic underpinnings, rather than to speak of a source coming from a single author, period, and locale. Yet, despite the unraveling of a consensus on the exact date and nature of the sources, it is still important to acknowledge the many contradictory perspectives found in the Torah, and to contrast the ideologies and worldviews of different passages, contrasting, for example, the Deuteronomic view of Israel's fundamental, intrinsic holiness—as seen, in Deut 7.6, "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God"—with the Priestly view, articulated most clearly in the Holiness Collection, which suggests that Israel must aspire to holiness—as in Lev 19.2, "You shall be holy."

COMPILATION AND REDACTION OF THE PENTATEUCH

It is unknown how these various sources and legal collections, which now comprise the Torah, came together to form a single book. Some scholars posited that the Torah was compiled by Ezra on the basis of a request by the Persian authorities—this is called "the royal authorization hypothesis"—but this goes beyond the evidence available. Most scholars posit an editor or series of editors or redactors, conventionally called R, who combined the various sources, perhaps in several stages, over a long time. Not all ancient Israelite legal and narrative traditions were collected and redacted as part of the Torah. The Torah itself occasionally indicates when it refers to other sources (e.g., Num 21.14,27), and traditions about creation and the early history of Israel that are not found in the Torah are found in biblical books outside of the Torah (e.g., Isa 51.9). Much material was certainly lost. Without direct access to these lost texts and traditions, it is impossible to suggest in detail how and why the redactor(s), R, functioned in a particular way. It is sufficient to notice that in contrast to modern editing, which is typically interested in developing a single viewpoint, the redaction of the Torah, like the editing of other ancient works, was not interested in creating a purely consistent, singular perspective but incorporated a variety of voices and perspectives and wished to preserve them despite their repetitions and contradictions. This is part of the process of the formation of authoritative scripture.

The ultimate result of this redaction, which most likely took place during the Babylonian exile (586–538 BCE) or soon thereafter in the early Persian period, was the creation of a very long book, narrating what was thought to be the formative period of Israel, from the period of the creation of the world through the death of Moses. Perhaps the events narrated in Gen 1–11 were included as a type of introduction to the choosing of Abraham, describing in detail the failures of humanity, as seen especially in the flood narrative (Gen 6–9) and the tower of Babel episode (Gen 11.1–9), which necessitated the choosing of a particular nation—Israel—by God.

No other work of comparable length or inclusiveness, in terms of the time span covered and the sources systematically incorporated, was produced in the ancient Near East. This extensive, inclusive nature of the Torah has created a fundamental and interesting problem with which biblical interpreters have either consciously or subconsciously grappled: Do we concentrate on interpreting the individual sources, on hearing the voices of the constituent parts of the text before redaction took place? Or do we focus on the final product, an approach that has been called holistic reading? The annotations of the following books will draw attention to this issue, showing how meaning may be uncovered by looking both at the early building blocks of the text and at the text in its final, redacted form.

Marc Z. Brettler

GENESIS

NAME

Jewish tradition calls the first book of the Bible after its first word, *Bereshit*, which can be translated as "in the beginning" or "when first." It was common in the ancient world to name a book after its first word(s); for example, the Mesopotamian epic that narrates the world's creation, *Enuma Elish*, gets its name from its first words, which mean "When on high." *Bereshit* also highlights the character of the book as the beginning of the Bible.

Christian tradition takes its name for the first book of the Bible, "Genesis," from the ancient Greek translation of the Torah, the Septuagint. *Genesis* in Greek means "origin" or "birth," and it appears throughout the Greek translation of book, starting with two labels that refer to a "book of origin/birth" (2.4; 5.1). This name highlights an important dimension of the book of Genesis: its focus on genealogical origins. Though Genesis contains some of the most powerful narratives in the Bible, these stories occur within a genealogical structure, starting with 2.4 and ending with 37.2. Within this framework, the book may be understood as an expanded genealogy of the "children of Israel" who will be the focus of attention in the book of Exodus and subsequent books.

CANONICAL STATUS AND LOCATION

Every ordering of the Bible places Genesis first, and as such it sets the stage for what follows. Jews have long revered Genesis as the first book in the Torah, the most authoritative part of the Hebrew Bible. Christians have paid particular attention to Genesis because of its focus on God's work with humanity prior to the giving of the law. When Islam arose, it too featured a prominent focus on traditions from Genesis, such as the stories of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, and Joseph. As a result, three major religious traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all lay claim to the characters and stories of Genesis, each with their distinct understanding of the meaning of this important book of beginnings.

AUTHORSHIP

In the ancient Near East, most literary compositions, including Genesis, were anonymous. Only during the Greco-Roman period do we start to see statements in early Jewish texts that Moses wrote Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch. By this time Judaism had been influenced by Greek culture, where author attributions were important and the writings attributed to Homer enjoyed the highest prestige. In response, the Jewish authors of texts such as Jubilees (second century BCE) claimed that their Pentateuch had an ancient author as well—Moses. This identification of authorship made some sense since the four books of the Pentateuch that follow Genesis all are set during the lifetime of Moses, and Moses is by far the most prominent human character in the Pentateuch. In addition, verses such as Deut 4.44, "This is the law [Heb *torah*] that Moses set before the Israelites," were understood by later tradition as attributing the authorship of the entire Torah/Pentateuch to Moses.

Nevertheless, careful readers of the Bible in subsequent centuries recognized problems with this claim of authorship by Moses. Some verses in Genesis refer to events after the time of Moses, such as when the Canaanites were no longer in the land (12.6). In addition, a few rabbis wondered how Moses would have written a narrative about his own death and burial (Deut 34). To be sure, interpreters who have made it an article of faith to affirm Moses's authorship of the entire Pentateuch have found ways to explain these and other problems. These discussions, however, highlight ways that Genesis and other books of the Pentateuch do not seem to have been written originally in the voice of Moses. Like other ancient texts, it was originally anonymous and only attributed to Moses in the context of later, author-oriented cultures.

DATES OF COMPOSITION, HISTORICAL CONTEXTS, AND LITERARY HISTORY

Two hundred and fifty years of historical scholarship on Genesis have established that Genesis was written over many centuries, using oral and written traditions. "In the beginning," so to speak, were oral traditions, since Genesis was composed in a largely oral culture. We can see marks of that oral culture in the way similar stories about wife endangerment, wells, and oaths were attached to different patriarchs; compare, for example, stories about Abraham in Philistia in 20.1–18 and 21.22–34 with stories about Isaac in the same location in 26.6–33.

Indeed, these sorts of oral traditions about beginnings were important at every stage in the composition of Genesis.

Most scholars agree that the texts now found in Genesis began to be written down sometime after the establishment of the monarchy in Israel in the tenth century BCE or later. Building on German scholarship from the nineteenth century, many scholars think they can find (fragments of) two early sources in Genesis, a tenth-century BCE Yahwistic source ("J" for German "Jahwist") written in Judah during the reign of David or Solomon, and an Elohistic source ("E") written in the Northern Kingdom of Israel sometime during the eighth century BCE. Much recent scholarship, however, has doubted the existence of such sources and preferred to see the earliest written origins of Genesis in separate compositions, such as a Yahwistic primeval history covering the creation and flood, an originally Northern Israelite narrative about Jacob and Joseph, and a separate Moses story. In either case, the earliest works now embedded in Genesis were products of scribes working in the context of the monarchies of early Judah and Israel.

Many important parts of Genesis, however, were not written until after the monarchy had fallen in 586 BCE and Judean leaders were living in exile in Babylon. According to many scholars, this is the time when the Abraham narrative was written, and the theme of the promise of the land and much progeny was added to earlier stories about Jacob and Joseph. Through such new compositions and additions, former royal scribes adapted earlier writings about creation and ancestors to reassure the exiles of God's intent to bless them as God earlier had blessed their ancestors. Moreover, they used this theme of promise to link earlier separate stories to each other and to the Moses story that followed. Alongside these scribal adaptations, a group of priestly authors wrote a parallel version of many stories in Genesis, starting with the seven-day creation account in 1.1–2.3 and the genealogy in ch 5, continuing with a priestly version of the flood story, and moving on from God's covenant of circumcision with Abraham (ch 17) to short stories about the inheritance of this covenant promise by his descendants. This layer of texts in Genesis is called "P" for "Priestly source," because of its strong links to other Pentateuchal texts in Exodus–Numbers that focus on the priesthood of Aaron and sacrificial worship at the tabernacle. For example, in structure and vocabulary, the seven-day creation account in 1.1–2.3 anticipates the story of the creation of the Priestly tabernacle at the end of the book of Exodus (Ex 35–40).

The last major stage in the composition of Genesis was the combination of the older non-Priestly writings about creation–flood and ancestors with their priestly counterparts. This probably happened during the postexilic period, when exiles had returned and were rebuilding Jerusalem and its Temple. The consolidation of parallel traditions now in Genesis (and the rest of the Pentateuch) resulted in a common Torah around which the community could unite. This consolidation, however, also produced contradictions in Genesis that can be seen by the attentive reader, such as between the seven-day creation in 1.1–2.3 (P) and the earlier non-Priestly story of creation and aftermath in 2.4–3.24, or between a non-Priestly version of the flood culminating in Noah's sacrifice (e.g., 7.1–5 and 8.20–22) and a Priestly version of the flood that lacks such a sacrifice and does not describe the provision of extra animals for it (e.g., 6.11–22 and 9.1–17). The contrasts are so clear that historical scholars already started to distinguish between the Priestly layer and the other parts of Genesis more than three hundred years ago, and the specifics of this distinction of P and non-P throughout the Pentateuch have remained an assured result of historical scholarship.

In sum, we do not know many of the details of the earliest composition of Genesis, and the oral stories that stand behind the book are lost. Nevertheless, we do know that the book was written over centuries by multiple authors, and we have a more specific and assured picture of the final stages of its composition. The book's history of composition explains why Genesis is not limited to just one situation or set of perspectives. Instead, it is a chorus of different voices, a distillate of ancient Israel's experiences with God over the centuries, written in the form of continually adapted stories about beginnings.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

Genesis is comprised of two main sections: the primeval history in chs 1:1–11:26 and the ancestral history in chs 11:27–50:26. The latter section contains the story of Abraham and Sarah (chs 11.27–25.11), the story of Jacob and Esau (chs 25.19–35.29), and the story of Joseph and his brothers (chs 37.2–50.26). (Isaac, son of Abraham and father of Isaac, is a linking figure and is not the subject of an extensive story of his own.) Notably, despite the male focus of headings like this and in the book itself, it is matriarchs of ancient Israel, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, who often play a determinative role in the Genesis narratives of birth and the fulfillment of God's promise.

The primeval history has two major sections that parallel each other: (1) the creation of the cosmos and stories of the first humans (1.1–6.4); and (2) the flood and dispersal of post-flood humanity (6.5–11.9). It features universal traditions similar to myths in other cultures, particularly in the ancient Near East and Greece. For example, the Mesopotamian Atrahasis epic was written hundreds of years before chs 1–11, yet it parallels numerous particulars of the biblical narrative as it describes the creation of the world, a flood, and the vow of the gods (here plural) not to destroy life with a flood again. These two sections are followed by a genealogy in 11.10–26 that traces the generations connecting Noah's son, Shem, to Abraham.

The ancestral history picks up where the primeval history left off and tells the story of God's choice of Abraham and the transmission of the promise (12.1–3) through Isaac and Jacob (whose name is changed to Israel in 32.28; 35.10), down to Jacob's twelve sons, the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel. These stories are closest to oral folklore, so it is often difficult to find ancient written parallels to chs 12–50. Nevertheless, recent scholarship has found similarities between Israelite tales about the matriarchs and patriarchs and modern legends told in oral cultures. For example, the depiction of the clever deceptions of Jacob and others (e.g., 25.27–34; 27.1–45) often parallel the celebration of wily "tricksters" in Native American and other traditions.

These different parts of Genesis are brought together through the framework of *toledot* ("generations" or "descendants") headings (originally from the Priestly source), each of which guides the reader to the major focus of the section that follows it (2.4; 5.1; 6.9; 10.1; 11.10; 11.27; 25.12; 25.19; 36.1,9; 37.2). After an initial focus on all the peoples of the world descending from Adam (5.1) and Noah (6.9; 10.1), they highlight a narrowing focus in Genesis on those who receive the divine promise. The headings then lead us to Abraham, the first to receive God's promise (11.10,27). Then they distinguish between descendants of Abraham who receive the promise (Isaac and Jacob/Israel) and those who do not (Ishmael and Esau).

Using these kinds of guides, we can outline Genesis as follows:

I.	The primeval history	1.1–11.26
	A. Creation and violence before the flood	1.1–6.4
	B. Re-creation through flood and multiplication of humanity	6.5–11.9
II.	Transitional genealogy bridging from Shem (the Primeval History) to Abraham (Ancestral History)	11.10-26
III.	The ancestral history	11.27–50.26
	A. Gift of the divine promise to Abraham and his descendants	11.27–25.11
	B. The divergent destinies of the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac (Jacob/Esau)	25.12–35.29
	C. The divergent destinies of the descendants of Esau and Jacob/Israel	36.1–50.26

By the end of the book, the lens of the narrative camera has moved from a wide-angle overview of all the peoples of the world to a narrow focus on one small group, the sons of Jacob (also named "Israel"). As the book concludes, this family has settled in Egypt because of famine in their homeland, but the final set of sons of Jacob have remained together (in contrast to Isaac-Ishmael and Jacob-Esau) and are common heirs of the promise of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This family of promise will become the people of promise featured at the outset of the book of Exodus.

INTERPRETATION

The history of interpretation of Genesis begins with its gradual composition over centuries. Early monarchic scribes reinterpreted oral traditions in writing the first preexilic compositions behind Genesis. Later exilic scribes expanded and joined together earlier compositions in the process of addressing an audience of Judeans exiled in Babylon. Priests (exilic or postexilic) wrote their own versions of the beginnings of Israel, "P." Later postexilic writers consolidated the non-Priestly and Priestly writings into a common Torah that became the foundation for later Judaism. Each of these stages involved interpretation of how earlier writings pertained to the present. Genesis as we have it now is a crystallization of these multiple interpretations.

As discussed, the book has continued to be centrally important to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It was a major focus of early Jewish writings from the fifth century BCE to the first century CE, including the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Ben Sira, and the Wisdom of Solomon. Later Jewish rabbinic scholars built on these traditions, writing midrashic interpretations of Genesis and expansive Aramaic translations of the book. Some of these Jewish traditions adapted the stories of Genesis so that they linked better with Torah law. For example, the book

of Jubilees (written in the second century BCE) uses regulations for impurity after birth (Lev 12.1–5) to calculate a period of forty days of impurity for Adam's creation and an additional eighty days for Eve's creation (Jubilees 3:8–12). Moreover, the story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac (22.1–19), termed the "Akedah" (the "binding") in Jewish tradition, was adapted by some readers into an account of how Isaac actually was sacrificed by Abraham and resurrected by God—reflecting hopes for redemption in times of suffering.

Christian communities likewise focused on the stories of Genesis. For example, Paul, the central figure behind the outreach of Christians to Gentiles, argued that Abraham was an important example of how grace, through faith, came before the giving of the law. In his letter to the Romans (4.1–15) he notes that Abraham had his faith "reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gen 15.6) before he had undergone circumcision (Gen 17). Based on this and other arguments, Paul argued that Gentile converts did not have to fulfill Torah requirements such as circumcision in order to partake of God's promise, as long as they joined themselves to Jesus Christ, whom Paul affirmed as the true spiritual offspring and heir of Abraham. Thus, whereas earlier and later Jewish interpreters tended to stress Abraham's and other patriarchs' Torah obedience, Paul, himself also a Jew, reinterpreted Abraham apart from Torah obedience in order to create a place for non-Jews to have a full relationship with the God of Israel.

Stories originating from Genesis also play a prominent role in Islam. Building on older Jewish traditions about Abraham destroying his father's idols, the Qur'an and other Muslim traditions revere Abraham as one of the first monotheists. Yet within Islam, Ishmael and not Isaac is the most important of his sons. It is Ishmael and not Isaac whom Abraham almost sacrifices (cf. Gen 22) according to Islamic tradition. Moreover, after that, Islamic tradition holds that Abraham and Ishmael went on to find and rebuild the Kaaba shrine at Mecca, Islam's most holy site. In this way, stories from Genesis are linked to two of the five central pillars of Islam: monotheism and pilgrimage.

In the modern era, Genesis has been an important battleground as communities have worked to live out ancient faiths in a modern world. For example, much discussion of Genesis, at least among Christians in the West, has focused on whether the stories of Genesis are historically true. Astronomers, biologists, and other scientists have offered accounts of the origins of the cosmos and humanity different from those in Gen 1–2. Some believers, however, insist on the importance of affirming the historical accuracy of every part of Genesis as literal truth, and have come to see such belief as a defining characteristic of what it means to be truly faithful. This definition is relatively new: the historicity of Genesis was not a significant concern prior to the rise of modern science and the historical method; in fact, in premodern times, the stories of Genesis were often read metaphorically or allegorically. Moreover, many would argue that an ancient document such as Genesis should not be treated as scientific treatise or a modern-style historical source. Instead, its rich store of narratives offer nonscientific, narrative, and poetic perspectives on values and the meaning of the cosmos that pertain to other dimensions of human life.

Finally, recent years have seen a proliferation of other approaches to Genesis, particularly literary studies of Genesis in its final form, without recourse to its compositional history, and feminist rereadings of many narratives in Genesis. For example, some feminist scholars have questioned whether the typical reading of the *Garden of Eden* story, which is highly critical of women, is correct. Others have highlighted the crucial role of the matriarchs as actors in the Genesis drama, especially as determiners of which son of a given patriarch will inherit the promise (e.g., Sarah and Rebekah) or as influencers of the levels of privilege among brothers (e.g., Rachel). Reading from another perspective, African American and other interpreters have traced the misuse of the story of Ham to reinforce racism and slavery, and a wide variety of interpreters have called into question the traditional interpretation of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah as a judgment on homosexuality. In these ways and many others, an ever more diverse range of interpreters of the Bible have offered new perspectives on a text centrally important to readers for many centuries.

Many who have resolved to read the whole Bible have made it through Genesis, but what they find often surprises them. Those who know the stories of Genesis through the lens of later interpretation often assume that the characters in the book are saints. A closer reading reveals otherwise. The supposedly "faithful" Abraham often seems doubtful of God's intent to protect and provide for him, and Jacob and his family are distinguished by their ability to survive in the world through bargaining and trickery. Such stories pose a challenge to those who would use the biblical ancestors as role models for ethical behavior. Standing at the Bible's outset, they challenge readers to develop other models for understanding and appreciating this ancient text.

Genesis has been a major focus for literary approaches to the Bible, which adopt techniques from the study of contemporary literature to illuminate the artistry and poetics of the Bible. The story of Joseph and his brothers is a particularly constructive place to explore this kind of approach. Its narrator subtly leads the reader through an arc extending from Joseph's initial dreams of rule of his brothers in ch 37 to their submission to him and his provision of food for them in chs 42–50. Along the way, the speeches of Joseph and his brothers often do not correspond precisely to the reality described by the narrator, and the divergences reveal much about their characters. For example, the brothers' failure to report that their money was back in their sacks (42.25–34) is found out by Jacob, who guesses that they were planning to take Benjamin from him (42.35–38) as they actually took Joseph (37.18–28). Later, Joseph puts his brothers in a position where they can save themselves from slavery by betraying Benjamin, Joseph's full brother, as they once betrayed Joseph himself (44.1–17). Only when Judah, who formerly initiated the sale of Joseph into slavery (37.26–28), offers himself in place of Benjamin (44.18–34) does Joseph break down and reveal his true identity to his brothers (45.1–15). In this way the Joseph story artfully describes the first movement in Genesis from the urge toward fratricide (cf. 4.1–16; 27.41–45; see 33.12–17n.) to full reunion. Reading the Joseph story for such turns and characterizations can be an excellent introduction to the elegance of biblical narrative more generally.

Finally, one strategy in reading Genesis is to observe the differences between some of the writings embedded in it. The reader can compare parallel stories in Genesis, such as the different stories of creation in 1.1–2.3 and 2.4–3.24 or the parallel and yet different accounts about Hagar (chs 16 and 21), the covenant with Abraham (chs 15 and 17), or Sarah's endangerment at the hands of her husband and foreign rulers (12.10–20 and 20.1–18), or Abraham, Abimelech, and Isaac (20.1–18; 21.22–34 and 26.6–33). Comparing these different accounts helps uncover the distinct perspectives of each and their contribution to the book of Genesis as a whole.

David M. Carr

1 In the beginning when God created[a] the heavens and the earth, [2] the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God[b] swept over the face of the waters. [3] Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. [4] And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. [5] God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there

[a] Or *when God began to create* or *In the beginning God created*

[b] Or *while the spirit of God* or *while a mighty wind*

1.1–11.26: The primeval history: from creation to the birth of Abraham. This unit is composed of two principal layers, a Priestly source that also provides an editorial framework (1.1–2.3; 5.1–28,30–32; 6.9–22; 7.6,11,13–16a,18–21,24; 8.1–2a,3–5,14–19; 9.1–17; 10.10–27), and an earlier non-Priestly primeval history that uses the divine name Yahweh (represented as LORD in the translation) found in the rest of 2.4–11.9. As seen in the chart on correspondences spanning the primeval history (see p. 13), the present combined text is an intricate narrative, with echoes of creation and un-creation, struggles surrounding human god-likeness, and other themes.

1.1–2.3: Creation culminating in sabbath. This Priestly account of creation presents God as a king, creating the universe by decree in six days and resting on the seventh. **1.1:** Scholars differ on whether this verse is to be translated as an independent sentence, even a title summarizing what follows (e.g., "In the beginning God created"), or as a temporal phrase describing what things were like when God started (e.g., "When God began to create . . . the earth was a formless void"; cf. 2.4–6). In either case, the text does not describe creation out of nothing (contrast 2 Macc 7.28). **2:** Like Gen 2.4–6 and other ancient cosmogonies, Gen 1.2 begins with description of how things were before creation. The initial focus on earth as an uninhabitable mass (submerged in water, see 1.9) sets the stage for God's transformation of it into a livable habitat on days two and three. Christian interpreters have often seen the "Spirit" of the Trinity later in this verse. *Wind of God* fits the ancient context better (see 8.1), describing a divine breath that prepares for God's creation speech that follows next. **3:** The first of eight acts of creation through decree. Like a king God pronounces his will and it is accomplished. **4–5:** These verses introduce two other themes crucial to this account: the goodness of creation and the idea that creation is accomplished through God's separating, ordering, and naming elements of the universe. The seven-day

was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." 21 So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind[a] in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of

[a] Heb *adam*

scheme of 1.1–2.3 requires the creation of light, day, and night at the outset. **6–8:** The *dome*/*Sky* made on the second day separates an upper ocean (Ps 148.4; see Gen 7.11) from a lower one, creating a space in which subsequent creation can take place. **11–13:** *Earth* is a feminine noun in Heb. The text thus echoes other ancient mythologies and the life cycle in having a feminine earth bring forth the first life in the universe (cf. Job 1.21). God is involved only indirectly here, commanding the earth to *put forth.* **14–19:** The correspondence between days one to three and days four to six (1 || 4, 2 || 5, 3 || 6) heightens the symmetry and order of God's creation. Here, God's creation of heavenly *lights* on the fourth day corresponds to creation of light, day, and night on the first. In a critical response to non-Israelite cultures who worshiped these heavenly bodies, the bodies are not named and are identified as mere timekeepers. Their "rule" of day and night (1.16) anticipate human rule of earth in 1.26, 28. **20–23:** The second day featured the dome separating upper and lower oceans; the corresponding fifth day features the creation of birds to fly *across the dome* and ocean creatures, including sea monsters (Ps 104.25–26). God's blessing of the swarming creatures (1.22) anticipates a similar blessing that God will give humanity (1.28). **24–30:** The third day described creation of land and plants in turn, the corresponding sixth day involves the creation of two types of plant-eating land-dwellers: animals and then humans. **24–25:** Again, earth is involved in bringing forth life (see 1.11–13n.). The text does not mention God giving a fertility blessing to land animals (cf. 1.22), perhaps because their multiplication might jeopardize human rule over the earth they share with humans (1.26, 28). **26:** The plural *us, our* (3.22; 11.7) probably refers to the divine beings who compose God's heavenly

the earth,[a] and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

27 So God created humankind[b] in his image,
in the image of God he created them;[c]
male and female he created them.
28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." 29 God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the LORD[d] God made the earth and the heavens, 5 when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and

[a] Syr: Heb *and over all the earth*
[b] Heb *adam*
[c] Heb *him*
[d] Heb YHWH, as in other places where "LORD" is spelled with capital letters (see also Ex 3.14-15 with notes).

court (1 Kings 22.19; Job 1.6). 26–27: *Image, likeness* is often interpreted to be a spiritual likeness between God and humanity. This idea of God's making of humans as a "God image" (1.27) may instead be related to ancient ideas of the making of physical cult images of deities and/or ancient beliefs that the king was an "image" of the deity, and thus authorized to rule. This latter idea is democratized here. God makes all of humanity as images of God in order for them to exercise godlike rule over earth's creatures. **27–28:** The text stresses the creation of humanity as simultaneously male and female. This prepares for God's fertility blessing in v. 28, enabling humans to multiply greatly on the earth and thus "subdue" it and its creatures. Developed in a context quite different from the present day, this picture accurately anticipated the power of contemporary humanity over much of the rest of its habitat. **29–30:** The text envisions an ancient mythological time before violence disturbs God's perfect order (cf. 6.11). **31:** Where individual elements of creation were "good" (vv. 4,10, etc.), the whole is *very good,* perfectly corresponding to God's intention. **2.1–3:** God's seventh-day rest (Heb "shabat") here weaves a seven-day rhythm into creation, anticipating later commands for Israel to rest on the seventh day (e.g, Ex 16.22–30; 20:8–11//Deut 5.12–15).

2.4a: Although many scholars view this as the conclusion to the Priestly creation account, it is probably a separate introduction to the following material, as elsewhere in Genesis (e.g., 5.1; 6.9; 10.1).

CORRESPONDENCES SPANNING THE PRIMEVAL HISTORY

Creation (1.1–2.3)

Eating of fruit transgression/maturing (2.4–3.21)	*Brother conflict* divine defiance, murder (4.1–16)
Prevention of godlike immortality (3.22–24)	Origins of cultures, accelerated violence (4.17–24

Flood: un-creation and re-creation (6.5–9.17)

Origins/spreading of **peoples** (10.1–11.9) and divine prevention of people gaining godlike power (11.1–9)	*Brother separation*: subjugation of a **people** (9.20–27) as a result of the first drinking of wine

2.4b–25: Creation in a garden. This non-Priestly Yahwistic tradition is different from 1.1–2.3, as evidenced by the different style and order of events. Though distinct from the Priestly account of 1.1–2.3, it nevertheless reflects ancient temple imagery. **4b–6:** A description of how things were prior to creation (cf. 1.1–2) is common

there was no one to till the ground; [6] but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— [7] then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground,[a] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. [8] And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. [9] Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[10] A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. [11] The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; [12] and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. [13] The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. [14] The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

[15] The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. [16] And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; [17] but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

[18] Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." [19] So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man[b] there was not found a helper as his partner. [21] So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his

[a] Or *formed a man* (Heb *adam) of dust from the ground* (Heb *adamah)*

[b] Or *for Adam*

in ancient Near Eastern creation stories. **7:** The wordplay on Heb "'adam" (human being; here translated "man" [cf. 1.26]) and "'adamah" (arable land/soil; here *ground*) introduces a motif characteristic of this tradition: the relation of humankind to the soil from which it was *formed.* Human nature is not a duality of body and soul; rather God's *breath* animates the *dust* and it becomes a single *living being* (Ps 104.29; Job 34.14–15). **8–9:** *Eden* probably means "well-watered place." Elsewhere in the Bible, this place is called "garden of God/the LORD" (13.10; Ezek 28.13–16; 31.8–9; Isa 51.3; Joel 2.3); such sacred gardens are known in other ancient Near Eastern temples. In addition, ancient Near Eastern art and texts feature a prominent focus on trees, often associated with feminine powers of fertility. The *tree of life* appears in Proverbs (3.22; Prov 3.18;11:30; 13:12; 15:4). But this story focuses more on the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil,* symbolizing the mature knowledge of adults (Isa 7.15) and the godlike wisdom possessed by kings (2 Sam 14.17; 1 Kings 3.9). Despite the translation here (the tree of life also in the midst of the garden), the text may mean that both trees are located in the midst of the garden. **10–14:** This section, along with the preceding one describing a "stream" rising up to water the ground (2.6), may draw on the ancient tradition that a temple is built on a primal mountain of creation from which the waters of the earth flow. The rivers mentioned here combine significant rivers like the *Tigris* and *Euphrates* (both in Mesopotamia) with the more obscure *Pishon* and *Gihon.* The latter may refer to the *Gihon* spring in Jerusalem (1 Kings 1.33, 38, 45) and the idea of a world river flowing from the temple mountain in Jerusalem (Ps 46.4; Zech 14.8). **15:** God's placement of the human in the garden to till it echoes other ancient creation narratives where humans are created to labor on the gods' behalf. **16–17:** God's speech focuses on a prohibition for the human to eat from "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" lest he "certainly die" (NRSV you shall die). **18:** God's decision to create a helper for the human that "corresponds to him" (NRSV as his partner) recognizes a primal human need for companionship and the human destiny, even in the garden, to work (see 2.15; Eccl 4.7–10); the Hebrew word rendered as helper need not imply a subordinate status. **19–20:** Animals are created after the first human rather than before (cf. 1.24–25). The human's naming of the animals implies a dominion over them analogous to that seen in 1.26–28. Yet the LORD God here contrasts with the all-powerful deity depicted in ch 1; The LORD God creates the animals in a comical, failed attempt to make a truly corresponding *helper* for the human. **21–23:** Just as the connection of humanity to the ground is af-

ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,[a]
for out of Man[b] this one was taken."

24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; 5 for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,[c] knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

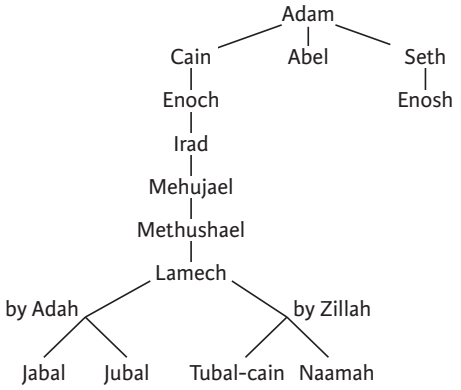
8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and

[a] Heb *ishshah*
[b] Heb *ish*
[c] Or *gods*

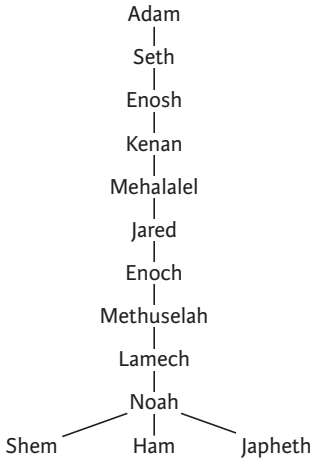
firmed in the making of the first human from earthy "humus" (see v. 7n), so also the connection of men and women is affirmed here through the crowning event of creation: the making of the woman from a part of the man (2.21–22). The man affirms this connection in a jubilant poem (2.23) featuring a wordplay on "man" (Heb "'ish") and "woman" ("'ishshah"). This concluding song praising the woman corresponds to God's concluding affirmation of all of creation as "very good" in 1.31. **24–25:** Sex between a *man* and *his wife* is regarded here as reflecting the essence of the connection God created between men and women. The unashamed nakedness of the man and woman indicates their still uncivilized and innocent status.

3.1–24: Garden disobedience and punishment. Though this story is often taken by Christians as an account of "original sin," the word "sin" never occurs in it. Instead, it is a sophisticated narrative describing how God's acts and their aftermath lead to the formation of fully adult, mortal humans to till the earth outside the garden (2.5), separated from animals by both bodily shame (requiring clothing) and an awareness of good and evil otherwise possessed only by God. **1:** This characterization of the snake emphasizes his wise craftiness (Heb "'arum"), a characteristic that contrasts with the innocent nakedness ("'arum") of the man and woman. Snakes were a symbol in the ancient world of wisdom, fertility, and immortality. Only later was the snake in this story seen by interpreters as the devil (see Wis 2.24). 3: The woman's quote of God's prohibition diverges in several respects from the report of it in 2.17: Even though it was addressed to the first man, she assumes that she was included in the prohibition; her description of the forbidden tree as the one "in the midst of the garden" leaves confusion about which tree is forbidden (see 2.9n.); she adds a prohibition against touching the tree; and she revises the consequence of eating it from "you will certainly die" to "you shall die" (see 3.22–23n). **4–5:** The snake introduces doubt by insisting that the humans "will not certainly die" (NRSV you will not die), and attributing God's prohibition to God's fear that humans would have their eyes *opened* (see v. 7) so they gain godlike wisdom, *knowing good and evil.* **6–7:** The woman sees that the fruit of the tree is desirable *to make one wise;* she eats it and shares it with her husband. The result is enlightenment: *the eyes of both were opened.* Such wisdom takes them from the earlier unashamed nakedness (2.25) to clothing, a mark of their first move from childlike/animal-like unashamed nakedness to civilized adulthood. **8–13:** The disintegration of the earlier simple bond between God, the man, and the woman is shown by the hiding of the humans from the LORD God and the tendency of the man to blame the woman (and implicitly the LORD God) for his action. Later interpreters of the story have shown a similar tendency to follow the man in blaming the

The descendants of Adam according to the Yahwistic source (Gen 4)



The descendants of Adam according to the Priestly source (Gen 5)



I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." [11] He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" [12] The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." [13] Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." [14] The LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all animals
and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.
[15] I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel."

[16] To the woman he said,

"I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you."

[17] And to the man[a] he said,

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree
about which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
[18] thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
[19] By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,

[a] Or *to Adam*

woman (e.g., Sir 25.24; 1 Tim 2.14). **14–15:** Here the crawl of the snake is linked to the LORD God's punishing curse. As a result, later audiences can look to the crawling snake as a reminder of the story and testimony to its truth. **16–19:** Whereas God's curse of the snake and man both start with judgments for what each did, God's speech to the woman merely describes her future fate and lacks the word "curse." It is not introducing a new state, where previously procreative women will now bear children only in pain. In fact, the word translated as "pain" in childbirth may refer instead to her "toil" of endless pregnancies, much as the man is condemned in vv. 17–19 to endless "toil" in food production. The man's *rule* over the woman here is a tragic reflection of

for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return."
20 The man named his wife Eve,[a] because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man[b] and for his wife, and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— 23 therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

4 Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced[c] a man with the help of the LORD." 2 Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

8 Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field."[d] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" 10 And the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you till the ground, it will no longer

[a] In Heb *Eve* resembles the word for *living*
[b] Or *for Adam*
[c] The verb in Heb resembles the word for *Cain*
[d] Sam Gk Syr Compare Vg: MT lacks *Let us go out to the field*

the disintegration of original connectedness between them. **21:** The LORD God's replacement of the humans' stiched-together fig loincloths (3.7) with full-body skin tunics (NRSV garments) is a divine recognition of their complete transition, through gaining wisdom, from childlike innocence to adulthood. **22–23:** As elsewhere in the ancient Near East, humans here are depicted as having a brief opportunity for immortality. The LORD God's fear of humans becoming godlike (cf. 1.26–27) recalls the snake's assertions in 3.4–5. The term "us" probably refers to the heavenly court (see 1.26n.). God's speech to this court clarifies that the human gaining of godlike wisdom meant that God would send them from the garden, permanently preventing their immortality, so that they now will "certainly die" as God predicted In 2.17. At the same time, God's sending them from the garden means that the absence of humans to "till the ground" noted at the outset of creation (2.5) is finally addressed (3.23). **24:** Cf. Ezek 28.13–16. The last echoes of temple imagery (see 2.8–9n.; 2.20–11n.) occur here. *The cherubim* are composite, winged creatures like the half-human, half-lion Sphinx of Egypt. Representations of them guarded sanctuaries like the one in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6.23–28,32,35). The gate to the garden of Eden is in the east, like the processional gate to the Temple (Ezek 10.19).

4.1–16: Cain and Abel. While 2.4–3.24 featured relations between men and women, 4.1–16 turns to relations between brothers, paralleling 3.1–24 in many respects. **1:** This first verse emphasizes the wonder of creative power in the first birth of a child. The child's name, "Cain," derives from a Hebrew word for create, "qanah." Ancient Israelites may have associated this Cain with the Kenite tribe (Num 24.21–22). **2:** The name "Abel" is the same word translated as "vanity" (or "emptiness") in the book of Ecclesiastes. His name anticipates his destiny. The distinction in professions between Cain and Abel implies a further step toward culture. **3–5:** The story does not explain why the LORD *had regard for Abel and his offering* but not *for Cain and his offering.* It is possible the ancient Israelite audience would have assumed a divine preference for animal sacrifice over the kind of vegetable sacrifice that Cain could offer. The text, however, focuses on Cain's reaction to this unexplained divine preference for his brother's sacrifice. **7:** This is the first mention of *sin* in the Bible. In this difficult verse, sin is somehow linked with the risk to Cain if he does "not do well" in dealing with his anger. **10–11:** Blood is sacred, for it is the

yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." [13] Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! [14] Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me." [15] Then the LORD said to him, "Not so![a] Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him. [16] Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod,[b] east of Eden.

[17] Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city, and named it Enoch after his son Enoch. [18] To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael the father of Methushael, and Methushael the father of Lamech. [19] Lamech took two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. [20] Adah bore Jabal; he was the ancestor of those who live in tents and have livestock. [21] His brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe. [22] Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

[23] Lamech said to his wives:

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.
[24] If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

[25] Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has appointed[c] for me another child instead of Abel, because Cain killed him." [26] To Seth also a son was born, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to invoke the name of the LORD.

5 This is the list of the descendants of Adam. When God created humankind,[d] he made them[e] in the likeness of God. [2] Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them "Humankind"[d] when they were created.

[3] When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. [4] The days of Adam after he

[a] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *Therefore*
[b] That is *Wandering*
[c] The verb in Heb resembles the word for *Seth*
[d] Heb *adam*
[e] Heb *him*

seat of life (9.4; Deut 12.23), and blood of unpunished murders pollutes the ground (Num 35.30–34). **13–14:** The importance of arable ground in these chapters can be seen in Cain's conclusion that expulsion from the *soil* means being *hidden* from the LORD's *face*. **16:** See 11.1–9n.

4.17–26: First overview of generations from creation to flood. Deriving from a different source than 5.1–32, most of the names here are variants of those found there, but not in the same order. **17:** Cain's marriage, along with his fear of others (4.14), presumes the presence of a broader population, indicating that the narratives about him were not originally connected with creation. **19–22:** The emphasis on civilization seen in 3.1–24 emerges again here in the depiction of the occupations of Lamech's sons. This tradition does not anticipate a flood narrative. **23–24:** The first half of this song may once have been used to brag about the ability of Lamech and his family to avenge their honor. Placed where it is and including v. 24, it now functions to demonstrate a major consequence of the expansion of civilization: an expansion of the violence with which the family tree began (see 4.1–16). **25:** A parallel to 4.1, introducing the new line of Seth. **26:** This Yahwistic tradition locates the beginning of use of the divine name "Yahweh" (LORD) in the primeval period, in contrast to the Priestly tradition, in which the divine name is not used until the time of Moses (Ex 6.2–6).

5.1–32: Second overview of generations from creation to flood. This Priestly genealogy parallels 4.1–26, building from the P creation story (1.1–2.3) to the Priestly strand of the flood narrative. **1a:** *The list of the descendants of Adam* was evidently a separate source which the Priestly writer drew upon for this chapter and used as a model for later notices (6.9; 10.1; etc.). **1b–2:** The Priestly writer uses this reprise of 1.26–28 to bind his genealogical source (where "'adam" designates a particular person) to 1.1–2.3 (where "'adam" designates humanity as a whole). **3:** The divine *likeness* (v. 1; see 1.26n.) was continued in Adam's son Seth and thus transmitted to succeeding generations (9.6). **4–32:** Ancient Babylonian lists similarly survey a series of heroes before the flood,

became the father of Seth were eight hundred years; and he had other sons and daughters. [5] Thus all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred thirty years; and he died.

[6] When Seth had lived one hundred five years, he became the father of Enosh. [7] Seth lived after the birth of Enosh eight hundred seven years, and had other sons and daughters. [8] Thus all the days of Seth were nine hundred twelve years; and he died.

[9] When Enosh had lived ninety years, he became the father of Kenan. [10] Enosh lived after the birth of Kenan eight hundred fifteen years, and had other sons and daughters. [11] Thus all the days of Enosh were nine hundred five years; and he died.

[12] When Kenan had lived seventy years, he became the father of Mahalalel. [13] Kenan lived after the birth of Mahalalel eight hundred and forty years, and had other sons and daughters. [14] Thus all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years; and he died.

[15] When Mahalalel had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Jared. [16] Mahalalel lived after the birth of Jared eight hundred thirty years, and had other sons and daughters. [17] Thus all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred ninety-five years; and he died.

[18] When Jared had lived one hundred sixty-two years he became the father of Enoch. [19] Jared lived after the birth of Enoch eight hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. [20] Thus all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty-two years; and he died.

[21] When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. [22] Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. [23] Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty-five years. [24] Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.

[25] When Methuselah had lived one hundred eighty-seven years, he became the father of Lamech. [26] Methuselah lived after the birth of Lamech seven hundred eighty-two years, and had other sons and daughters. [27] Thus all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty-nine years; and he died.

[28] When Lamech had lived one hundred eighty-two years, he became the father of a son; [29] he named him Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands." [30] Lamech lived after the birth of Noah five hundred ninety-five years, and had other sons and daughters. [31] Thus all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy-seven years; and he died.

[32] After Noah was five hundred years old, Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6 When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, [2] the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. [3] Then the LORD said, "My spirit shall not abide[a] in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years." [4] The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

each of whom lived fantastically long times. As in those lists, here too ages decline over time, to the 100–200 years of Israel's ancestors. The names in this list resemble those of 4.17–26 (see 4.17–26n.). **24:** Babylonian traditions also report that some individuals—e.g., Emmeduranki (a pre-flood figure), Etana, and Adapa—were taken up into heaven by God. Later Jewish tradition speculated at length on Enoch's travels. **29:** Noah's name, which comes from the Hebrew verb "rest," anticipates his founding of viticulture (9.20), providing wine that relieves the curse of the ground (3.17–19).

6.1–4: Divine-human reproduction illustrates the breaching of the divine-human boundary that the LORD God feared in 3.22. There the LORD God drove humans away from the tree of life. Here, in an abbreviated narrative often attributed to the Yahwistic primeval history, the LORD limits their life span to *one hundred twenty* years, the life span of Moses (Deut 34.7). Nothing appears to happen to the *sons of God* (see the "heavenly court" in 1.26n.) who instigated it all, though this becomes a matter of great speculation in postbiblical literature. **4:** The products of divine-human intercourse are legendary *warriors of renown.* They are distinguished here from the *Nephilim,* a race of giants said to exist both prior to and after those times (cf. Num 13.33; Deut 2.10–11).

them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.

5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7 So the LORD said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." 8 But Noah found favor in the sight of the LORD.

9 These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. 13 And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. 14 Make yourself an ark of cypress[a] wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. 16 Make a roof[b] for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. 17 For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 19 And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. 20 Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. 21 Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them." 22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. 2 Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; 3 and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. 4 For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." 5 And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *window*

6.5–8.19: The great flood. This story describes God's un-creation and re-creation of the world. The version preserved here is an interweaving of parallel accounts, one of which links with the Priestly traditions of 1.1–2.3 and 5.1–32, and the other of which links with the Yahwistic primeval history in 2.4b–4.26. This type of intertwining of traditions is less usual than placing one tradition as a block after the other, but is necessary here to avoid describing two consecutive floods. **6.5–8:** This introduction links with the non-Priestly material, particularly 2.7 (compare 6.7). **5:** Though the biblical account is quite close in many respects to Mesopotamian flood stories found in Atrahasis and Gilgamesh tablet 11, one significant difference is that this text attributes the flood to God's judgment on *the wickedness of humankind* rather than divine frustration with human overpopulation and noise. **9–22:** This section begins the Priestly account of the flood. **11–13:** Here the Priestly writers attribute the flood to corruption of the earth and *violence* filling it (see 4.8,10,23–24). **14–16:** In the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, the hero, named Utnapishtim, is told to build a similar houseboat, sealing it with pitch. The description of a three-leveled ark may be based on an ancient idea that the ark reflects the three-part structure of both universe and temple. It is about 437 x 73 x 44 ft (133 x 22 x 13 m). **18:** *Covenant,* see 9.8–17n. **19–20:** See 7.2–3n. **7.1–5:** This non-Priestly text parallels P in 6.11–22 and continues the tradition seen in 6.5–8. **2–3:** The provision of extra *clean* animals allows for the sacrifice that will occur in 8.20. If only one pair of each animal were taken, every sacrifice would eliminate a species. In contrast, the Priestly tradition presumes that both

6 Noah was six hundred years old when
the flood of waters came on the earth. 7 And
Noah with his sons and his wife and his
sons' wives went into the ark to escape the
waters of the flood. 8 Of clean animals, and of
animals that are not clean, and of birds, and
of everything that creeps on the ground, 9 two
and two, male and female, went into the ark
with Noah, as God had commanded Noah.
10 And after seven days the waters of the flood
came on the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life,
in the second month, on the seventeenth day
of the month, on that day all the fountains of
the great deep burst forth, and the windows
of the heavens were opened. 12 The rain fell
on the earth forty days and forty nights. 13 On
the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem
and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and
the three wives of his sons entered the ark,
14 they and every wild animal of every kind,
and all domestic animals of every kind, and
every creeping thing that creeps on the earth,
and every bird of every kind—every bird,
every winged creature. 15 They went into
the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh
in which there was the breath of life. 16 And
those that entered, male and female of all
flesh, went in as God had commanded him;
and the LORD shut him in.

17 The flood continued forty days on the
earth; and the waters increased, and bore
up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.
18 The waters swelled and increased greatly on
the earth; and the ark floated on the face of
the waters. 19 The waters swelled so might-
ily on the earth that all the high mountains
under the whole heaven were covered; 20 the
waters swelled above the mountains, cover-
ing them fifteen cubits deep. 21 And all flesh
died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic
animals, wild animals, all swarming crea-
tures that swarm on the earth, and all human
beings; 22 everything on dry land in whose
nostrils was the breath of life died. 23 He blot-
ted out every living thing that was on the face
of the ground, human beings and animals
and creeping things and birds of the air; they
were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah
was left, and those that were with him in the
ark. 24 And the waters swelled on the earth for
one hundred fifty days.

8 But God remembered Noah and all the
wild animals and all the domestic ani-
mals that were with him in the ark. And God
made a wind blow over the earth, and the
waters subsided; 2 the fountains of the deep
and the windows of the heavens were closed,
the rain from the heavens was restrained,
3 and the waters gradually receded from the
earth. At the end of one hundred fifty days
the waters had abated; 4 and in the seventh
month, on the seventeenth day of the month,
the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ara-
rat. 5 The waters continued to abate until the
tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first
day of the month, the tops of the mountains
appeared.

6 At the end of forty days Noah opened the
window of the ark that he had made 7 and
sent out the raven; and it went to and fro
until the waters were dried up from the earth.
8 Then he sent out the dove from him, to see
if the waters had subsided from the face of

sacrifice and the distinction between clean and unclean animals (see Lev 11) were not introduced until the revelation at Sinai. Therefore only one pair of each species suffices (6.19–20; 7.14–15; cf. 7.9). **6–16:** Noah, his family, and the animals enter the ark twice (7.7–9 || 7.13–16), reflecting the interweaving of the two originally distinct flood accounts. Whereas the non-Priestly account has the flood caused by forty days of rain (7.4,12), the Priestly account attributes the flood to God's opening of the protective dome created on the second day (1.6–8), thus allowing the upper and lower oceans to meet (7.11), reversing P's creation story. **17–24:** The P and non-P strands are thoroughly interwoven in this description of the flood itself, including multiple descriptions of the extinction of life outside the ark (7.21–23). Such flood imagery powerfully represents a return to chaos. Though many world traditions speak of floods, there is no geological evidence of a global flood like that described here. **8.1–5:** With the exception of 8.2b–3a, this unit comes from the Priestly writer. **1–2a:** God's wind echoes the first creation (1.2) in the process of starting the re-creation process. The closing of the *fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens* reestablishes the space for life that was first created on the second day (1.6–8). **4:** In the Gilgamesh epic the boat also rested on a mountain. *Ararat,* a region in Armenia. **6–12:** Part of the non-Priestly account. In the Gilgamesh epic the hero sent out two birds, a dove and a swallow, each of which came back; the

the ground; [9] but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. [10] He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; [11] and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. [12] Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

[13] In the six hundred first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was drying. [14] In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. [15] Then God said to Noah, [16] "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. [17] Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." [18] So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. [19] And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.

[20] Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. [21] And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

[22] As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,
summer and winter, day and night,
shall not cease."

9 God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. [2] The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. [3] Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. [4] Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. [5] For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life.

[6] Whoever sheds the blood of a human,
by a human shall that person's blood be
shed;

third, a raven, did not return. **13–19:** The Priestly account resumes here with a description of the exit from the ark of Noah, his family, and the animals.

8.20–9.17: Divine commitments after the flood. This section features two accounts of God's commitments after the flood (8.20–22 [non-P]; 9.1–17 [P]), both of which include God's promise not to destroy life through such a flood ever again. **8.20–22:** The non-Priestly tradition describes Noah's *burnt offerings* of clean animals (see 7.2–3n.). In the Gilgamesh epic (see 6.14–16n.; 8.4n.; 8.6–12n.) the hero offered sacrifices and "the gods smelled the pleasant fragrance" and repented of their decision to destroy humanity. Here the LORD smells the *pleasing odor* of Noah's offering and resolves never again to curse the ground or destroy all creatures (v. 21). The LORD does this despite full recognition that human nature has not changed (cf. 6.5–7). The final result of Noah's sacrifice is the LORD's promise to preserve the cycle of agricultural seasons (v. 22). A central aim of temple sacrifice in Israel and elsewhere was to preserve that cycle, assuring agricultural fertility. The echo of that idea here is yet another way in which the "non-Priestly" primeval history reflects temple concerns (see also the focus on responses to sacrifice in 4.1–8 and notes on 2.8–9,10–14; 3.24). **9.1–17:** The Priestly tradition lacks an account of sacrifice (see 7.2–3n.). Instead it focuses on affirmations of some aspects of the creation in 1.1–31 and revisions of others. **1–7:** This section begins and ends with a reaffirmation of the fertility blessing (vv. 1,7; cf. 1.28). **2–6:** Here God revises the earlier command of vegetarianism (1.29–30). This is a partial concession to the "violence" observed prior to the flood (6.11,13) and an extension of the human dominion over creation described in 1.26–28. At the same time, God limits human rule and regulates pre-flood violence through stipulating that humans may not eat the blood in which life resides (see 4.10–11n.) and that humans, as bearers of God's image

Ch 10: The table of nations. Only places that can be identified with probability are shown.

for in his own image
God made humankind.
7 And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound
on the earth and multiply in it."

8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons
with him, 9 "As for me, I am establishing my
covenant with you and your descendants af-
ter you, 10 and with every living creature that
is with you, the birds, the domestic animals,
and every animal of the earth with you, as
many as came out of the ark.[a] 11 I establish my
covenant with you, that never again shall all
flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and
never again shall there be a flood to destroy
the earth." 12 God said, "This is the sign of the
covenant that I make between me and you
and every living creature that is with you, for
all future generations: 13 I have set my bow
in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the
covenant between me and the earth. 14 When
I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is
seen in the clouds, 15 I will remember my cov-
enant that is between me and you and every
living creature of all flesh; and the waters
shall never again become a flood to destroy
all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the clouds, I
will see it and remember the everlasting cov-
enant between God and every living creature
of all flesh that is on the earth." 17 God said to
Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that
I have established between me and all flesh
that is on the earth."

18 The sons of Noah who went out of the
ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was
the father of Canaan. 19 These three were the
sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth
was peopled.

20 Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to
plant a vineyard. 21 He drank some of the wine
and became drunk, and he lay uncovered in
his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan,
saw the nakedness of his father, and told
his two brothers outside. 23 Then Shem and
Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their
shoulders, and walked backward and covered
the nakedness of their father; their faces were
turned away, and they did not see their fa-
ther's nakedness. 24 When Noah awoke from
his wine and knew what his youngest son had
done to him, 25 he said,

"Cursed be Canaan;
lowest of slaves shall he be to his
brothers."
26 He also said,
"Blessed by the LORD my God be Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave.

[a] Gk: Heb adds *every animal of the earth*

(1.26–27), may not be murdered. Since these laws are given to Noah and his sons, the ancestors of all post-flood humanity, they were used in later Jewish tradition as the basis for a set of seven Noachide laws that were seen as binding upon Gentiles as well as Jews (see Acts 15.20; 21.25; *b. San.* 58b). **8–17:** This is the first covenant explicitly mentioned in the Bible, and it encompasses all of humanity, as well as the animal world (vv. 10,12,15) and even the earth (v. 13). A "covenant" is a formal agreement, often between a superior and inferior party, the former "making" or "establishing" (vv. 9,11) the bond with the latter, and the superior protecting the weaker party. This agreement is often sealed through ceremonies. In this case, God sets his weapon, the bow (Ps 7.12–13; Hab 3.9–11), in the sky facing away from humanity as a sign of God's commitment not to flood the earth again.

9.18–29: Noah and his sons. Aside from P in vv. 18–19 and 28–29, this text is part of the Yahwistic primeval history. It links to the explanation of Noah's name in 5.29 (see note) and repeats major themes from the pre-flood period: farming, (nakedness, alienation in the family, curse, and domination). Though this text was once widely misread as describing a "curse of Ham" justifying slavery of African peoples, Noah's curse here is actually directed at Canaan, a figure not seen as an ancestor of African peoples. **22–23:** Some have speculated that Ham had sex with his father, since seeing nakedness refers to incestuous behavior in Lev 20.17. Nevertheless, a more common expression for sexual intercourse in Leviticus is "uncover nakedness" (e.g., 18.6; 20.18) or "lie with" (e.g., 20.11–12). Moreover, the description of Ham's brothers' contrasting behavior in v. 23 (*their faces were turned away*) makes clear that the problem with Ham's behavior was that he did not look away. In the ancient Near East, sons were expected to protect the honor of their father, including caring for him when he was drunk. Ham here does the opposite. Such behavior is an example of the breakdown of family relationships seen in ch 3 (see 3.8–13,16–19n.) and ch 4 (see 4.1–16n.). **24–27:** Many have puzzled over why Canaan is cursed for his father, Ham's, misdeed (9.25–26). An editor may have redirected an earlier curse on Ham toward Canaan, so that the curse could help justify the conquest of the land of Canaan (see 10.16–18a; 14.1–12,13–16n.).

[27] May God make space for[a] Japheth,
and let him live in the tents of Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave."
[28] After the flood Noah lived three hundred fifty years. [29] All the days of Noah were nine hundred fifty years; and he died.

10 These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; children were born to them after the flood.

[2] The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. [3] The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. [4] The descendants of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.[b] [5] From these the coastland peoples spread. These are the descendants of Japheth[c] in their lands, with their own language, by their families, in their nations.

[6] The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. [7] The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. [8] Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior. [9] He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." [10] The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar. [11] From that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and [12] Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. [13] Egypt became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, [14] Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from which the Philistines come.[d]

[15] Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, [16] and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, [17] the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, [18] the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. [19] And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon, in the direction of Gerar, as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. [20] These are the descendants of Ham, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

[21] To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. [22] The descendants of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. [23] The descendants of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. [24] Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. [25] To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg,[e] for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name was Joktan. [26] Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,

[a] Heb *yapht,* a play on *Japheth*
[b] Heb Mss Sam Gk See 1 Chr 1.7: MT *Dodanim*
[c] Compare verses 20, 31. Heb lacks *These are the descendants of Japheth*
[d] Cn: Heb *Casluhim, from which the Philistines come, and Caphtorim*
[e] That is *Division*

10.1–32: The table of nations. See map on p. 23 and compare with 1 Chr 1.4–23. This is a (largely Priestly) survey of the world of the Israelites. Like many ancient peoples, they depicted the relations between national groups in kinship terms. This list identifies three large spheres of nations—Japhethites, Hamites, and Shemites—that overlap precisely in Canaan. **2–5:** *The descendants of Japheth* had their center in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). **6–20:** *The descendants of Ham* lived in the Egyptian orbit. **8–15:** A fragment of the non-Priestly primeval history. It features a legend regarding Nimrod's building a kingdom in *Shinar* (southern Mesopotamia) and Assyria (vv. 8–12). **14:** See Jer 47.4; Am 9.7. Modern scholarship suggests that the Philistines originated from the Aegean. 15: Canaan is the father of two sons, *Heth* (representing the Hittites originally of Asia Minor [Turkey]) and *Sidon* (who represents the Phoenician coastal cities). **16–18a:** This survey of Canaanite peoples lists ethnic groups rather than ancestors, including the *Jebusites* (centered in Jerusalem), *Amorites* (natives of the hill country), and the *Hivites* (a group in central Palestine). The list resembles later lists of peoples displaced by Israel (e.g., 15.19–21; Deut 7.1) and may be an addition from the same hand that directed Noah's curse toward Canaan (see 9.18–27n.). **21–31:** *Shem* is the father of the Semitic peoples, including Israel. Another pair of fragments of the non-Priestly primeval history (vv. 21,24–30) focuses on the *children of Eber, whose name* may be related to the word "Hebrew." If so, this text postulates a wider group of *children of Eber* of which the Israelites are a part.

27 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael,
Sheba, 29 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these
were the descendants of Joktan. 30 The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar, the hill country of the east. 31 These are the descendants of Shem, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.

32 These are the families of Noah's sons, according to their genealogies, in their nations; and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as they migrated from the east,[a] they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." 5 The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. 6 And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused[b] the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

10 These are the descendants of Shem. When Shem was one hundred years old, he became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood; 11 and Shem lived after the birth of Arpachshad five hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

12 When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the father of Shelah; 13 and Arpachshad lived after the birth of Shelah four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

14 When Shelah had lived thirty years, he became the father of Eber; 15 and Shelah lived after the birth of Eber four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

16 When Eber had lived thirty-four years, he became the father of Peleg; 17 and Eber lived after the birth of Peleg four hundred thirty years, and had other sons and daughters.

18 When Peleg had lived thirty years, he became the father of Reu; 19 and Peleg lived after the birth of Reu two hundred nine years, and had other sons and daughters.

20 When Reu had lived thirty-two years, he became the father of Serug; 21 and Reu lived after the birth of Serug two hundred

[a] Or *migrated eastward*
[b] Heb *balal*, meaning *to confuse*

11.1–9: The tower of Babel. This narrative (from the non-Priestly Yahwistic primeval history) revisits the theme of preservation of the divine-human boundary. The threat to that boundary, self-reflective speech by the LORD, and act of divine prevention all parallel 3.22–24 and 6.1–4. With 11.2 the human family completes the eastward movement begun in 3.22–24 (cf. 4.16). This story then focuses on a scattering of the human family into different ethnic, linguistic, and territorial groups, and gives background for the table of nations in ch 10, although it was not originally written with that in view. **2:** *Shinar,* see 10.8–15n. **4:** The humans are depicted as fearful of being scattered and thus aim to make a name for themselves through a *tower* reaching into heaven. The humans' intention here to stay together contradicts the divine imperative to "fill the earth" now found in Priestly traditions (1.28; 9.1,7). **6:** The LORD is described here as fearing the human power that might result from ethnic and linguistic unity (see 3.22). **7:** *Let us,* see 1.26n. **8–9:** The LORD's scattering of humanity and confusing of language is the final step in creation of civilized humanity, with its multiple territorial and linguistic groups completing the movement toward cultural maturity begun in ch 3. Each step toward this end has been fraught with conflict and loss. The name "Babel," interpreted here as "confusion" but originally meaning "gate of god" (cf. 28.16–17n.), serves as a final testimony to the results of this process.

11.20–26: The descendants of Shem. This genealogy from the Priestly tradition closely parallels 5.1–32, though it lacks death notices. It builds a genealogical bridge from Shem to Terah, the father of Abraham. Parts

seven years, and had other sons and daughters.
22 When Serug had lived thirty years, he
became the father of Nahor; 23 and Serug
lived after the birth of Nahor two hundred
years, and had other sons and daughters.
24 When Nahor had lived twenty-nine
years, he became the father of Terah; 25 and
Nahor lived after the birth of Terah one
hundred nineteen years, and had other sons
and daughters.
26 When Terah had lived seventy years,
he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and
Haran.
27 Now these are the descendants of Terah.
Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and
Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot.
28 Haran died before his father Terah in the
land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.
29 Abram and Nahor took wives; the name
of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of
Nahor's wife was Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah.
30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.
31 Terah took his son Abram and his
grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they
went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans
to go into the land of Canaan; but when they
came to Haran, they settled there. 32 The days
of Terah were two hundred five years; and
Terah died in Haran.

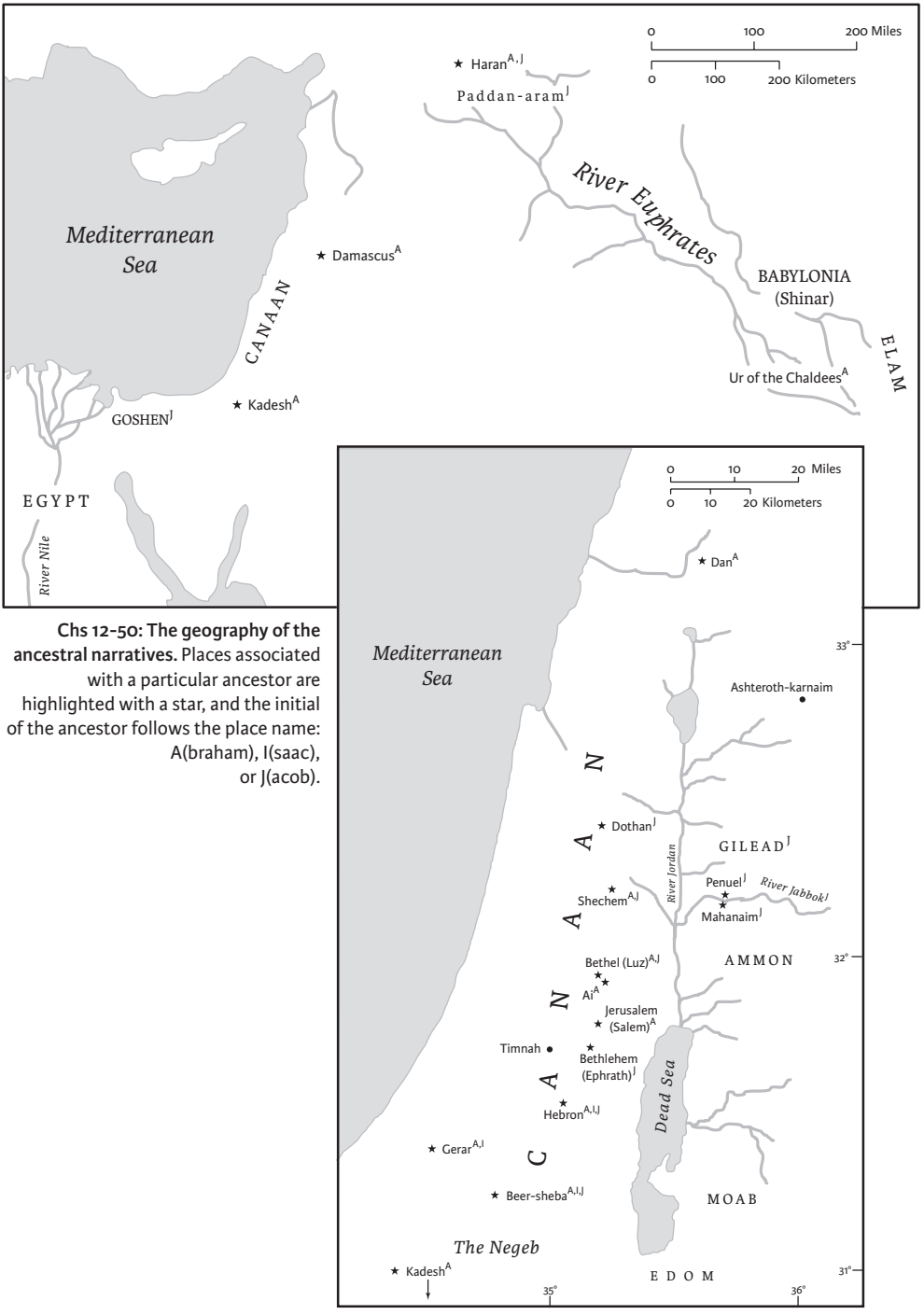
12 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from
your country and your kindred and
your father's house to the land that I will
show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation,

of the genealogy of Shem (10.21–31) are repeated, but now the text focuses on those firstborn male descendants who lead to Abraham, thus setting up Abraham as the firstborn heir of Shem, the eldest of Noah's sons.

11.27–25.11: The story of Abraham and his family. The bulk of this section is a non-Priestly narrative about Abraham. It builds on a blend of oral traditions about him, including the stories standing behind the present narratives about his descent into Egypt (12.10–20), the Abraham and Lot cycle (13.2–13; 18.1–16; 19.1–28,30–37), a pair of Hagar and Ishmael narratives (16.1–14 and 21.8–20), and the tradition about Abraham's stay in Philistine Gerar (20.1–18; 21.22–34; cf. 26.6–33). Some scholars think that the Abraham stories incorporate two separate written J and E sources, with remnants of J (the Yahwistic source) found primarily in chs 12–19 (along with ch 24) and E (Elohistic source) fragments in chs 20–22. Others suggest that they were composed as a single whole, though building on a range of separate traditions (see the Introduction and 20.1–18n.). Scholars generally agree, however, that the story of conquest and covenant in 14.1–15.21 and Priestly materials found in 17.1–27 and elsewhere (see 11.27–32n.; 12.4b–5n. 16.3n. 17.1–27n. 21.3–5n. 25.7–11n) were added later. For patterns uniting this complex whole, see "Chiasm in the Abraham Story" on p. 39.

11.27–32: Introduction to the Abraham story. The genealogical heading (v. 27) and the concluding notices regarding Terah's travels and death (vv. 31–32) are Priestly, but most scholars consider vv. 28–30 to be earlier, non-Priestly material. **27:** *Abram,* see 17.5n. The designation "Abraham" is used here in the annotations as the better-known name of Abra(ha)m. Aside from his birth, nothing is told about the early life of Abraham; this lack is filled in by postbiblical tradition. **29–30:** *Sarai,* see 17.15n. This is the first appearance of the theme of barrenness of the three most central matriarchs: Sarai/Sarah, Rebekah (25.21), and Rachel (29.31). Their initial barrenness helps highlight God's power to provide heirs of the promise. **31:** *Haran,* in northwest Mesopotamia, was Abraham's ancestral home, according to 24.10 (cf. 29.4). Nonbiblical sources show that several of the names of Abraham's ancestors in the preceding genealogy were places near Haran; e.g., Peleg (vv. 16–19; also 10.25), Serug (vv. 20–23), Nahor (vv. 24–25; cf. 26), and Terah (vv. 24–26).

12.1–3: The Lord's call and promise to Abraham initiates a major new movement in the story of Genesis. This is the first of three divine speeches in which a patriarch is given travel directions and promises of blessing (12.1–3; 26.2–5; 46.1–4; see also 31.3,13). The combination of command (v. 1) and promise (vv. 2–3) implies that the Lord's fulfillment of the promise will follow upon Abraham's fulfillment of the command. **1:** This command to Abraham is similar to, and may have been modeled on, the later divine command for Jacob to return to the "land of your ancestors and to your kindred" (31.3) and to "the land of your birth" (31.13). Due to the complex history of the book of Genesis, it is not surprising that material found in earlier chapters is based on material found in later parts of the book. **2:** The promise that *a great nation* will come from Abraham stands in tension with Sarah's barrenness in 11.30, motivating much of the following narrative. *Nation* implies not just a numerous people (cf. 13.16; 15.5; etc.), but a politically independent social group. *I will bless you,* involves giving



Chs 12-50: The geography of the ancestral narratives. Places associated with a particular ancestor are highlighted with a star, and the initial of the ancestor follows the place name: A(braham), I(saac), or J(acob).

and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."[a]

4 So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the l and of Canaan, 6 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak[b] of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring[c] I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD. 9 And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

10 Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land. 11 When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance; 12 and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account." 14 When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15 When the officials of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16 And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys, and camels.

[a] Or *by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves*
[b] Or *terebinth*
[c] Heb *seed*

Abraham the power to flourish in flocks, other riches, and offspring (12.16; 13.2,5,16; etc.; cf. Job 42.12–13). *And make your name great,* to become famous. The LORD promises Abraham a fame similar to that promised to later Israelite kings (2 Sam 7.9; 1 Kings 1.47). Thus Abraham, as heir of Shem (see 11.20–26n.)—which means "name" in Hebrew—gains the great "name" that the peoples at Babel had futilely sought for themselves (cf. 11.4). *So that you will be a blessing* implies that those associated with Abraham and his heirs will flourish as well. Later, Laban (30.27–30) and Potiphar (39.5) will both gain blessing through their association with Abraham's heirs. **3:** Though obscured in the translation, the promise to curse *the one who curses* means that the LORD will curse anyone who even "treats [Abraham] lightly." *In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* has been a particularly important passage in Christian tradition. Building on the ancient Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, the Septuagint, Paul interpreted this as a blessing of the Gentiles through Abraham (Gal 3.8). Yet the closest analogies to this promise suggest that the alternate translation, *by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves,* i.e., they will say "may we be like Abraham," is probably closer to the meaning of the Hebrew. Like 48.20, it envisions other nations of the world looking to Abraham's great blessing and wishing a similar one on themselves (see Ps 72.17). Later in the narrative we see this kind of recognition of Abraham and his heirs' special blessing by foreigners like Abimelech (26.28), Laban (30.27), Potiphar (39.3–5), Joseph's jailer (39.21–23), Pharaoh (Ex 1.9), Jethro (Ex 18.10–12), and Balaam (24.1).

12.4–9: Abraham's first journey to the land. 4b–5: Part of the Priestly Abraham narrative. **6–8:** This brief report of Abraham's journey anticipates the much longer story of Jacob's travels through similar places: Shechem with its oak (cf. 33.18–35.4) and Bethel (cf. 35.1,9–16; see map on p. 28). Sacred trees like the *oak of Moreh* ("oracle giver"; cf. 13.18; 18.1; 35.4; Deut 11.30; Josh 24.26) occur elsewhere in Genesis (e.g., 21.33; 35.8) and seem to have played an important role in the religion of the ancient Israelites and surrounding peoples (see 2.8–9n.).

12.10–13.1: First story of endangerment of the matriarch (cf. ch 20; 26.6–11). Putting Sarah in jeopardy to protect himself, Abraham appears not to trust the promise of protection just offered him. On Abraham's later claim to be Sarah's half brother, see 20.12n. Overall, this story of descent into Egypt because of famine and rescue through plagues anticipates many aspects of the later narrative about Israel's descent into Egypt and exodus from it (Gen 45–Ex 14).

17 But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his
house with great plagues because of Sarai,
Abram's wife. 18 So Pharaoh called Abram, and
said, "What is this you have done to me? Why
did you not tell me that she was your wife?
19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I
took her for my wife? Now then, here is your
wife, take her, and be gone." 20 And Pharaoh
gave his men orders concerning him; and
they set him on the way, with his wife and all
that he had.

13 So Abram went up from Egypt, he and
his wife, and all that he had, and Lot
with him, into the Negeb.

2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock,
in silver, and in gold. 3 He journeyed on by
stages from the Negeb as far as Bethel, to
the place where his tent had been at the
beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 to the
place where he had made an altar at the first;
and there Abram called on the name of the
LORD. 5 Now Lot, who went with Abram, also
had flocks and herds and tents, 6 so that the
land could not support both of them living
together; for their possessions were so great
that they could not live together, 7 and there
was strife between the herders of Abram's
livestock and the herders of Lot's livestock. At
that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites
lived in the land.

8 Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no
strife between you and me, and between your
herders and my herders; for we are kindred.
9 Is not the whole land before you? Separate
yourself from me. If you take the left hand,
then I will go to the right; or if you take the
right hand, then I will go to the left." 10 Lot
looked about him, and saw that the plain of
the Jordan was well watered everywhere like
the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt,
in the direction of Zoar; this was before the
LORD had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.
11 So Lot chose for himself all the plain of the
Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward; thus
they separated from each other. 12 Abram set-
tled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled
among the cities of the Plain and moved his
tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the people of
Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the
LORD.

14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had
separated from him, "Raise your eyes now,
and look from the place where you are,
northward and southward and eastward and
westward; 15 for all the land that you see I will
give to you and to your offspring[a] forever. 16 I
will make your offspring like the dust of the
earth; so that if one can count the dust of the
earth, your offspring also can be counted.
17 Rise up, walk through the length and the
breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."
18 So Abram moved his tent, and came and
settled by the oaks[b] of Mamre, which are at
Hebron; and there he built an altar to the
LORD.

14 In the days of King Amraphel of
Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar, King
Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of
Goiim, 2 these kings made war with King Bera
of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King
Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Ze-

[a] Heb *seed*
[b] Or *terebinths*

13.2–18: Split of Abraham and Lot. 2–7: This narrative describing huge flocks and riches in Abraham's household testifies to the preliminary fulfillment of the promises of blessing in 12.2–3. *Lot,* see 11.27,31. **8–13:** The narrative anticipates the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative (ch 19) through mention of those cities, the wickedness of their inhabitants (13.13), and references to *Zoar* (19.19–23). It also notes that Lot, the heir apparent, does not choose to stay in the land of Canaan (vv. 10–12). **14–17:** Only after Abraham has split from Lot and settled in *Canaan* does God show him the land (cf. 12.7). This certifies that Abraham has fulfilled God's command to go to the land that God "will show" him (12.1). Similarly, Jacob is promised the land after he has split from Esau (28.13–14). **18:** *Mamre* was an ancient southern sacred place, slightly north of Hebron, with which Abraham was associated (see ch 23).

14.1–24: Abraham's rescue of Lot from the eastern kings. This and ch 15 relate to each other (see 15.1n., 15.12–16n.) and link in multiple ways with late layers of the primeval history (see 9.18–27n.; 10.16–18a n.). **1–12:** Here an alliance of four eastern kings conquers five Canaanite kings associated with the Dead Sea region where Lot had settled. In a fulfillment of the curse of Noah predicting the enslavement of Canaan by Shem (9.25–26), these Canaanite kings had been subject for twelve years to an eastern alliance of kings headed by the Shemite

boiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). 3 All these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Dead Sea).[a] 4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and subdued the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in the hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the edge of the wilderness; 7 then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and subdued all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar. 8 Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim 9 with King Chedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Shinar, and King Arioch of Ellasar, four kings against five. 10 Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits; and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. 11 So the enemy took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way; 12 they also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who lived in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks[b] of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner; these were allies of Abram. 14 When Abram heard that his nephew had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred eighteen of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and routed them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. 16 Then he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his nephew Lot with his goods, and the women and the people.

17 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High.[c] 19 He blessed him and said,

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,[c]
maker of heaven and earth;
20 and blessed be God Most High,[c]
who has delivered your enemies into
your hand!"

And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything. 21 Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD, God Most High,[c] maker of heaven and earth, 23 that I would not take a thread or a sandal-thong or anything that is yours, so that you might not say, 'I have made Abram rich.' 24 I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. Let them take their share."

[a] Heb *Salt Sea*
[b] Or *terebinths*
[c] Heb *El Elyon*

king, *Chedorlaomer* (cf. 10.22). When the Canaanite kings rebel, the eastern kings crush the revolt and seize Lot and his household and take them back toward their home. Neither the battle nor any of the kings can be identified in nonbiblical sources. **13–16:** Abraham's ability to pursue and overcome the Shemite conquerors testifies to his status as heir of Shem and recipient of Shem's blessing (9.25–27). Moreover, this demonstrates the fulfillment of the divine promise to protect Abraham and his household (12.3). **13:** *Hebrew,* probably meaning an outsider, as often in the Bible (see, e.g., 39.14; Ex 1.15; 1 Sam 29.3; Jon 1.9). **17–20:** This is the only section of Genesis associating a patriarch with Jerusalem; indeed, it is the only place in the entire Torah where Jerusalem is referred to by name, albeit in the shortened form, Salem. As heir of Shem, Abraham now receives the blessing of the priest in what will become Israel's royal and religious center. *Salem* is a name for Jerusalem (Ps 76.2), where the ancient high god of the Canaanite pantheon, El Elyon (*God Most High*), was likely worshiped in pre- and early Israelite times. The *King's Valley* is near Jerusalem (2 Sam 18.18), and the priest *Melchizedek* appears as the founder of a royal priesthood in an ancient Jerusalemite psalm (110.4). This mysterious Melchizedek was later interpreted eschatologically at Qumran and typologically by early Christians (Heb 7.1–17). **20:** *One-tenth,* i.e., a tithe; cf. 28.22; Num 18.21–28.

15 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." [2] But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"[a] [3] And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." [4] But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." [5] He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." [6] And he believed the LORD; and the LORD[b] reckoned it to him as righteousness.

[7] Then he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." [8] But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" [9] He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." [10] He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. [11] And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

[12] As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. [13] Then the LORD[b] said to Abram, "Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; [14] but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. [15] As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. [16] And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

[17] When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. [18] On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *he*

15.1–21: The first covenant with Abraham. The LORD promises Abraham protection, reward, and an heir in the wake of his recent military encounter with the eastern kings. **1:** The promise to be a *shield* (Heb "magen") for Abraham echoes Melchizedek's praise of the god who "delivered" ("miggen") Abraham (14.20), and the *reward* replaces the goods he had refused from the king of Sodom (14.21–24). **2–5:** The parallel objections from Abraham (vv. 2 and 3) and parallel divine responses (vv. 4 and 5) may be indicators of growth in this text, whether parallel sources (J and E; see the Introduction) or the supplementation of an earlier story by later material. **6:** This verse indicates that Abraham considered his objections answered. Though later tradition has generally understood God to be the one who reckoned righteousness to Abraham (e.g., Rom 4.9; Gal 3.6), the subject and object are not specified, and are ambiguous, in Hebrew. *Righteousness* is being true to one's social obligations and commitments. It is possible that it is Abraham here who reckons righteousness to the LORD, certifying that he now believes that the LORD will be true to his commitments in 15.1 (cf. 15.2–3). **7–21:** This section parallels the promise-objection-reassurance pattern of 15.1–6, but with the added component of a covenant ceremony sealing God's promise to give Abraham the land. **9–17:** The ceremony (9–11,17) reflects an ancient practice in which the participants in a covenant oath passed through the dismembered parts of an animal and proclaimed a similar fate on themselves if they disobeyed the terms of the agreement (see Jer 34.18). Likely because of this, the Hebrew word for "making" a covenant is literally to "cut" a covenant (found in 15.18 and frequent elsewhere). In this case, God passes between the pieces in the form of fire (see Ex 3.2; 13.21). **12–16:** A speech has been inserted into this ceremony that echoes Abraham's earlier triumph over the eastern kings at "Dan" and return from there with "goods" (Heb "rekush"; 14.14–16). Here in v. 14 God promises a future *judgment* (Heb "dan") on Egypt and escape of Abraham's descendants from there with yet more goods (again "rekush" in 15.14; see Ex 3.21–22; 12.33–36). Though this is promised in four generations at the end of the speech (15.16), a Priestly editor likely modified this in v. 13 to four hundred years in order to better match Priestly material in Exodus 12.40. **16:** *The iniquity of the Amorites,* see Lev 20.23; Deut 9.4. **18–21:** The ceremony is concluded with God's promise to give the land of the Canaanite peoples (cf. 10.16–18) to Abraham. **18:** The boundaries given here are the broadest definition of the promised land in the Bible. They correspond to similarly broad, ideal descriptions of the land in the Deuteronomistic History (e.g.,

saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, [19] the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, [20] the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, [21] the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

16 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, [2] and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. [3] So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. [4] He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. [5] Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!" [6] But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

[7] The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. [8] And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." [9] The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her." [10] The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." [11] And the angel of the LORD said to her,

"Now you have conceived and shall bear
a son;

2 Sam 8.3; 1 Kings 4.21; cf. Deut 1.7; 11.24; Josh 1.4). The phrase *river of Egypt* occurs only here and may refer to the Nile. But elsewhere in the Bible (e.g., Num 34.5; 2 Kings 24.7; Isa 27.12) and in other sources, the "Wadi of Egypt" is apparently either the Wadi Besor or the Wadi el-Arish, both south of Gaza. **19–21:** The form of this list of ten nations to be displaced resembles the list of Canaanite groups in Gen 10.16–18, but its contents more resemble lists of Canaanite peoples in the Tetrateuch (e.g., Ex 3.8,17; 13.5) and Deuteronomistic History (e.g., Deut 7.1; 20.17; Josh 3.10). This list, however, is longer than others. Though it is missing the "Hivites" (see 10.16–18a n.), who occur on most other lists, this list is unique in including the *Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,* and *Rephaim.*

16.1–16: Hagar's encounter with God and the birth of Ishmael stand at the heart of the Abraham story (see "Chiasm in the Abraham Story" on p. 39), enveloped by parallel traditions dealing with covenant (chs 15 and 17), Lot and Abraham (chs 13–14 and 18–19), the endangerment of Sarah (12.10–20 and ch 20), and the promise (12.1–6 and 22.1–19). This story echoes the story of Abraham's endangerment of Sarah in 12.10–20 in describing the complications resulting from human attempts to fulfill the promise, in this case the promise of offspring. In addition, like that story, this one links with the Exodus, though offering a quite different picture. In the book of Exodus Israelites are "oppressed" (Heb "'anah") by the Egyptians (Ex 1.12), flee east toward Israel through the wilderness, and meet God there (Ex 19.24.1–2,10–11). In this chapter, however, it is an *Egyptian*, Hagar, who is "oppressed" (Heb "'anah"; "dealt harshly with" in the NRSV of v. 6) by the Israelite matriarch Sarah; Hagar flees west from Israel toward Egypt and meets God in the wilderness. Later, in Gen 21.8–21, we will see a doublet of this story, where Hagar again must leave Abraham's clan, go into the desert, and hear an oracle that will revolve around an interpretation of the name of Hagar's son, Ishmael (Heb for "God hears"). Both stories have their origins in ancient traditions surrounding the origins of the Ishmaelites, seen in Genesis as ancestors of the Arab peoples (see Gen 25.12–18), but the version here in Gen 16 is distinguished by its echoes of the Exodus story and ultimately sympathetic focus on Hagar. **2:** According to ancient surrogate motherhood customs, a wife could give her maid to her husband and claim the child as her own (30.3,9). **3:** This duplicate notice of Sarah's transfer of Hagar to Abraham as a surrogate mother probably comes from the Priestly source. **4–5:** The translation *looked with contempt* implies that Hagar disdained her mistress, whereas the Hebrew verb ("qll," "to treat lightly") implies only that Hagar did not look up to her mistress the way she once did. Having had a child, Hagar is now derisively seen by her mistress as a slave who is not sufficiently submissive. **7:** Here *the angel of the LORD* is not a heavenly being subordinate to God but the LORD (Yahweh) in earthly manifestation, as is clear from v. 13 (cf. 21.17,19; Ex 14.19). **11:** *The LORD has given heed,* lit., "The LORD has heard," an explanation of the name Ishmael

you shall call him Ishmael,[a]
for the LORD has given heed to your affliction.
12 He shall be a wild ass of a man,
with his hand against everyone,
and everyone's hand against him;
and he shall live at odds with all his kin."
13 So she named the LORD who spoke to her, "You are El-roi";[b] for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?"[c] 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi;[d] it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

15 Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him[e] Ishmael.

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty;[f] walk before me, and be blameless. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." 3 Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be Abram,[g] but your name shall be Abraham;[h] for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring[i] after you. 8 And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God."

9 God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your

[a] That is *God hears*
[b] Perhaps *God of seeing* or *God who sees*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] That is *the Well of the Living One who sees me*
[e] Heb *Abram*
[f] Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*
[g] That is *exalted ancestor*
[h] Here taken to mean *ancestor of a multitude*
[i] Heb *seed*

(see note *a* and 21.17). **13:** *God of seeing* (see note *b*) was the name of the deity at the Beer-lahai-roi well, now identified with Israel's God. On Hagar's question, cf. 32.30; Ex 33.20; Judg 6.22–23; 13.22. **15–16:** Priestly material focusing more on Ishmael than on Hagar.

17.1–27: The everlasting covenant and sign of circumcision. This account from the Priestly tradition is parallel to that in 15.1–21 and links to the Priestly covenant with Noah in 9.8–17; see further 9.8–17n. **1:** The phrase translated as *God Almighty* (Heb "El Shadday") is variously understood as "God [or "El"], the one of the mountains," "God of the Shadday [deities]," or even "fertile God" (literally, "God with breasts," see 49.25). Whatever its original meaning, the Priestly tradition understands this epithet to be what the early ancestors of Israel called God before they learned the name Yahweh (Ex 6.2–8). **2–6:** In a parallel to 15.1–6 this text includes the promise of offspring in the covenant. **5:** A new name signifies a new relationship or status (see 32.28). *Abram* means "the [divine] ancestor is exalted," as does its dialectical variant here, Abraham. This verse, however, explains the extra syllable ham in Abraham as from the Hebrew word, "hamon" (multitude), thus meaning that Abraham will now be *ancestor of a multitude.* This anticipates nations whose ancestry will be traced to Abraham (v. 16; 28.3; 35.11; 48.4), such as Edomites and Ishmaelites. The promise to make Abraham "exceedingly numerous" (v. 2) and *exceedingly fruitful* (v. 6) echoes the broader fertility blessing given animals (1.22; 8.17) and humanity (1.28; 9.1,7) in the primeval history, suggesting that Abraham's line is now the recipient of the blessing originally intended for all humanity. **7:** Within the Priestly tradition, the promise to be God to Abraham and his offspring leads to the divine provision of religious laws and a tabernacle sanctuary into which God comes to dwell in Israel's midst (Ex 25–31; 35–40). Like the covenant with Noah (9.8–17), this covenant to be bound to Israel is *an everlasting covenant* (vv. 13,19) because it is grounded in the will of God, not human behavior. **9–14:** Circumcision was an ancient rite practiced among some Semitic groups, perhaps originally connected to marriage and fertility (see 34.14–17), elsewhere connected with warding off demons (see Ex 4.24–26). Here, however, it is moved to early childhood and reinterpreted as a sign of God's everlasting covenant with Israel, a mark of membership in the covenant community. Unlike the covenant with Noah (9.1–17), this one pertains only to the household and heirs of Abraham. **15:** *Sarah,* meaning "princess," is a variant of *Sarai;* see v. 5n. **17:** In the text's final form, Abraham's laughter here in the Priestly tradition anticipates Sarah's laughter in the non-Priestly account (18.9–15n.).

offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. 13 Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

15 God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!" 19 God said, "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac.[a] I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. 20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year." 22 And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

23 Then Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the slaves born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised; 27 and all the men of his house, slaves born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

18 The LORD appeared to Abraham[b] by the oaks[c] of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. 3 He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. 4 Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures[d] of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." 7 Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. 8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

9 They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." 10 Then one said, "I will surely return to

[a] That is *he laughs*
[b] Heb *him*
[c] Or *terebinths*
[d] Heb *seahs*

18.1–15: The LORD's visit to Abraham and Sarah. 1: The *oaks of Mamre,* see 12.6–8n.; 13.18n. **2–8:** A description of Abraham's ideal hospitality parallel to that of Lot in 19.1–11. This motif of secretly divine visitors is widespread in folklore. The relation between the three visitors and the LORD (v. 1) is unclear. The narrative fluidly shifts from speaking of them as a group (e.g., v. 9) to having "the LORD" speak alone (e.g., v. 13; cf. v. 10). Later materials in v. 22 and 19.1 conceive of "the LORD" as one of the three angels (see 16.7n.), though this is not specified in the preceding narrative ("one" in the NRSV of v. 10 is a translator's addition). **9–15:** The narrator uses the theme of Sarah's laughter (cf. 17.17) to stress the incredibility of God's promise of a son

you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" 13 The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' 14 Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." 15 But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

16 Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way. 17 The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18 seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?[a] 19 No, for I have chosen[b] him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." 20 Then the LORD said, "How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! 21 I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know."

22 So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD.[c] 23 Then Abraham came near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" 26 And the LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." 27 Abraham answered, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. 28 Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." 29 Again he spoke to him, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." 30 Then he said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." 31 He said, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." 32 Then he said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." 33 And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

[a] Or *and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him*
[b] Heb *known*
[c] Another ancient tradition reads *while the LORD remained standing before Abraham*

(eventually Isaac, 21.1–3). **11:** *Ceased . . . after the manner of women,* a circumlocution for menopause. **12:** Isaac's name means "he [God] laughs"; other traditions develop the link with laughter as well (17.17–19; 21.6,8; 26.8).

18.16–33: Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah. 17–19: This first speech by the LORD stresses that he speaks to Abraham because he chose him to teach his household the ways of righteousness. In vv. 22–32 the LORD will model such righteousness in his responsiveness to Abraham. **18:** See 12.3n. **20–21:** This second speech by the LORD echoes his decision at Babel to *go down* and *see* what was going on there (11.5; cf. divine self-reflection in 3.22; 6.3,5–7; 11.6–7). Unlike vv. 17–19, this speech suggests that the LORD has not yet decided what to do. **22–33:** Like Moses (e.g., Ex 32.9–14), Abraham negotiates with an angry God, appealing to God's righteousness. In this case, however, the terms he ends up winning—aversion of disaster if ten righteous people can be found—do not avert destruction. Thus, this text appears to be a theoretical reflection on God's righteousness and how many righteous people are required to save a broader group; cf. Ezek 14.12–23.

19 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. [2] He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square." [3] But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. [4] But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; [5] and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them." [6] Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, [7] and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. [8] Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." [9] But they replied, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. [10] But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. [11] And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

[12] Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city—bring them out of the place. [13] For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it." [14] So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up, get out of this place; for the LORD is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

[15] When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the city." [16] But he lingered; so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and left him outside the city. [17] When they had brought them outside, they[a] said, "Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed." [18] And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords; [19] your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will overtake me and I die. [20] Look, that city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let

[a] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *he*

19.1–38: The rescue of Lot and his family from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was a prominent example in the Israelite tradition of God's total judgment (Deut 29.23; Isa 1.9; Jer 49.18; Am 4.11). **1:** *Two angels,* see 18.2–8n. **1–11:** As in the case of 18.1–8, the main issue here is hospitality to secretly divine visitors. Here, however, the sanctity of hospitality is threatened by *the men of the city* who wish to rape (*know*) the guests (cf. Judg 19.22–30). The primary point of this text is how this threat by the townspeople violates the value of hospitality (contrast 18.1–16). Hospitality is valued so strongly in this context that Lot offers his virgin daughters in place of his guests (vv. 7–8). Nevertheless, this foolish and cruel, unfatherly act has the opposite of its intended effect, leading the townspeople to threaten worse things to Lot than the rape they were going to inflict on his guests (v. 9), and requiring the guests to protect their host (vv. 10–11). Where Abraham was the model of hospitality (Gen 18.1–16), Lot's actions show him to be a bungling, almost heartless imitator who does not deserve to be the heir of the promise to Abraham. **12–14:** In place of Sarah's laughter (Heb "tsḥq") in the preceding hospitality scene (18.11–14), we have here the Sodomite *sons-in-law* assuming that Lot is *jesting* (Heb "tsḥq"). **15–23:** Once again, Lot is unfavorably contrasted with Abraham. Where Abraham hurried to serve his angelic guests (18.2,6,7), Lot hesitates at their urging to leave Sodom, requiring them to take him away by force (vv. 15–16). Then, doubting their rescue plan, he asks them to let him stop in a nearby city (Zoar, which means "little"; see vv. 20 and 22 and note *a*) lest he be caught up in the coming

me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!" 21 He said to him, "Very well, I grant you this favor too, and will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. 22 Hurry, escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." Therefore the city was called Zoar.[a] 23 The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

24 Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven; 25 and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

27 Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD; 28 and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the Plain and saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of a furnace.

29 So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had settled.

30 Now Lot went up out of Zoar and settled in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; so he lived in a cave with his two daughters. 31 And the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the world. 32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, so that we may preserve offspring through our father." 33 So they made their father drink wine that night; and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. 34 On the next day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Look, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, so that we may preserve offspring through our father." 35 So they made their father drink wine that night also; and the younger rose, and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. 36 Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. 37 The firstborn bore a son, and named him Moab; he is the ancestor of the Moabites to this day. 38 The younger also bore a son and named him Ben-ammi; he is the ancestor of the Ammonites to this day.

20 From there Abraham journeyed toward the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While

[a] That is *Little*

destruction (vv. 17–22). In the end, though Lot claims that he has found a Noah-like favor with his angelic rescuers (19.19; cf. Gen 6.8), this is not affirmed by the angels or the narrator. **24–25:** The *rain* of destruction continues the echoes of the Noah story. **26:** This text turns salt formations in the Dead Sea area into a testimony to the truth of the story, asserting that one of those formations was Lot's wife, who disobediently looked back at the cities God was destroying. Such etiological notes (accounts of origin) are common in the Bible, especially in Genesis. **29:** This is a Priestly summary of the story, echoing 8.1 and attributing Lot's rescue to his relation with Abraham. **37–38:** This episode suggests that two of Israel's closest neighbors, the Moabites and Ammonites in Transjordan, originated in incest. Mistakenly assuming that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was so total that there is no one else on earth by whom to have children (19.31), Lot's daughters get their father drunk so that he will conceive with them. The themes of drunkenness and (implicit) nakedness are reminiscent of the story of Noah and his sons (9.20–27).

20.1–18: The second story of endangerment of the matriarch (cf. 12.10–20; 26.6–11). Many scholars have argued that chs 20–22 contain the first major block of an Elohistic (E) source parallel to the Yahwistic (J) source found in chs 12–19 and extending through the rest of the Pentateuch (see further 15.2–5n. and the Introduction). Note parallels between stories of endangerment of Sarah in 20.1–18 (E) and 12.10–20 (J); the Hagar stories 21.8–19 (E) and 16.1–14 (J), and even stories about Abimelech in 21.22–34 (E) and 26.17–33 (J). These similarities indicate that the author of the non-Priestly Abraham narrative probably drew upon cycles of Yahwistic and Elohistic traditions that were parallel at some points. Nevertheless, there are some important indicators that the Elohistic traditions seen in Gen 20–22 were written down as part of a larger whole that included the preceding narratives in Gen 12–19 and thus do not reflect (in their present form) a separate written source. Not only are the Elohistic accounts organized as part of a broader chiasm that includes the narratives of Gen 12–19, but details of Gen 20–22 are understandable only when these chapters are read following Gen 12–19.

residing in Gerar as an alien, 2 Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." And King Abimelech of Gerar sent and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "You are about to die because of the woman whom you have taken; for she is a married woman." 4 Now Abimelech had not approached her; so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent people? 5 Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' I did this in the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands." 6 Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart; furthermore it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 Now then, return the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all that are yours."

8 So Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants and told them all these things; and the men were very much afraid. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you, that you have brought such great guilt on me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that ought not to be done." 10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What were you thinking of, that you did this thing?" 11 Abraham said, "I did it because I thought, There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. 12 Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13 And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, He is my brother.' " 14 Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him. 15 Abimelech said, "My land is before you; settle where it pleases you." 16 To Sarah he said, "Look, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; it is your exoneration before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated." 17 Then Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his

CHIASM IN THE ABRAHAM STORY

There are a series of correspondences between different parts of the Abraham story, where themes introduced at the outset of a narrative are resumed in reverse order in its second half. This chiastic pattern binds many parts of the Abraham story together and puts a heightened emphasis on the sections that occur at the center (in **boldface**).

A. Prologue (11.27–30)
  B. First challenge: call for Abraham to leave family of origin (12:1–3)
    C. Wife-sister story 12:10–13:1
      D. Separation from Lot (13:2–18)
        E. Covenant of pieces with Abraham (14–15)
          F. Hagar-Ishmael story (Gen 16:1–14)
        E'. Covenant of circumcision with Abraham (17)
      D'. Hospitality/progeny episodes; Abraham contrasted with Lot (18–19)
    C'. Wife-sister story (20)
  B'. Final challenge: calls for Abraham to let go of family of future (21.8–21 and 22.1–19)
A'. Epilogue 22.20–24

For example, Abraham's brief claim in 20.2 that Sarah is his sister would not make sense without the explanation of his request to her to make the same claim in 12.11–13. **3–7:** The depiction of Abimelech is far more detailed and sympathetic than that of the foreign king in either of the parallel accounts (cf. 12.15–19; 26.9–10). **7:** To Abraham is attributed the intercessory role of *prophet;* this is the Bible's first use of the term, and the only designation of Abraham as a prophet in the Torah (but see Ps 105.15). **12:** The narrator never asserts that Sarah is Terah's daughter (cf. 11.27–30). Nevertheless, faced with Abimelech's passionate questioning, Abraham claims to be her half brother by way of his father. Though many have taken his assertion at face value, it may be an attempt to provide as many excuses for his behavior as possible (cf. 20.11).

wife and female slaves so that they bore children. 18 For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

21 The LORD dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised. 2 Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." 7 And she said, "Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

8 The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.[a] 10 So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." 11 The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. 13 As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." 14 So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. 18 Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

20 God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. 21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

22 At that time Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, said to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do; 23 now therefore swear to me here by God that you

[a] Gk Vg: Heb lacks *with her son Isaac*

21.1–21: Isaac and Ishmael. 3–5: A notice of Isaac's birth and circumcision taken from the Priestly source (see 17.1–24). On *the name Isaac,* see 18.12n. **6:** See 18.9–15n. **8–21:** This story of endangerment of Ishmael parallels the following one of endangerment of Isaac. After God gives Abraham the command to let his child go (v. 12; 22.2), he rises *early in the morning* to fulfill it (v. 14 || 22.3), the child is delivered when an *angel of God/the LORD* cries out from heaven (v. 17; 22.11–12), and Hagar and Abraham both see a way to save the child (v. 19 || 22.13). These features distinguish this story of Hagar and Ishmael from its parallel in ch 16, where Hagar likewise left Abraham's clan, went into the desert, and heard a message from an angel of God (there an "angel of the LORD") about her child's destiny. Though the divinity is referred to in ch. 16 as "the LORD" and here in ch. 21 as "God," the angel in both cases promises that Hagar's offspring will be numerous (16.10; 21.18) and assures her that God has "heard" her (ch. 16.11) or her child's (ch. 21.17) suffering, wordplays on Ishmael's name, which means "God hears" (see also 17.20, part of the Priestly tradition). These are probably oral variants of a story about the origin of the Ishmaelites (see 25.12–18). **9:** *Playing with,* literally "making [him] laugh," another reference to Isaac's name; see 18.12n. **14–17:** In these verses Ishmael is a little boy, a stark contrast to the presentation of him as a teenager in the preceding Priestly traditions (16.16; 17.25; 21.5). This is just one sign that stories like this one about Hagar and Ishmael were not originally written with the Priestly tradition in view. **17:** See 16.7n.

21.22–34: Abraham's dispute with Abimelech. This text continues the story about Abraham and Abimelech that was begun in ch 20. Together, the narratives of Abraham's sojourn in Gerar in ch 20 and 21.22–34 resemble

will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but as I have dealt loyally with you, you will deal with me and with the land where you have resided as an alien." [24] And Abraham said, "I swear it."

[25] When Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized, [26] Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today." [27] So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. [28] Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs of the flock. [29] And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?" [30] He said, "These seven ewe lambs you shall accept from my hand, in order that you may be a witness for me that I dug this well." [31] Therefore that place was called Beer-sheba;[a] because there both of them swore an oath. [32] When they had made a covenant at Beer-sheba, Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, left and returned to the land of the Philistines. [33] Abraham[b] planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.[c] [34] And Abraham resided as an alien many days in the land of the Philistines.

22 After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." [2] He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you." [3] So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. [4] On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. [5] Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." [6] Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. [7] Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" [8] Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

[9] When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on

[a] That is *Well of seven* or *Well of the oath*
[b] Heb *He*
[c] Or *the* LORD, *El Olam*

that of Isaac's sojourn in Gerar in 26.6–33, and they may have a common oral background. This story combines a tradition that explains the name *Beer-sheba* as meaning "well of seven [Heb sheva'] " (see 22.28–30) with an explanation (parallel to 26.31–33) that it means "well of oath [shevu'ah]." **33:** On the tamarisk tree, see 12.6–8n. *Everlasting God* ("El Olam") may be an ancient divine name once associated with the sanctuary at Beer-sheba.

22.1–19: The testing of Abraham. Although in later tradition this is one of the most significant chapters in the ancestral narratives, nothing in the text marks it as such. **1a:** The narrative begins by informing the reader of something that Abraham does not know, that *God tested Abraham.* Abraham's "fear" of God is not proven (v. 12) until he has reached out his hand to slaughter his son (v. 10). In general, the Bible suggests that God may control future events, but not that God knows all future events. **1b–2:** After giving up Ishmael earlier (see 21.8–21n.), Abraham must now prepare to give up Isaac, his promised heir, as well. The story echoes the opening of the Abraham story. Just as he was once asked to *go* (Heb "lek leka") from his family of origin and travel to a land God would show him (12.1), so now he must *go* ("lek leka") and sacrifice his future family on a mountain that God will show him (v. 2). The way the command is stated (*your only son . . . whom you love*), which parallels the syntax of 12.1, presupposes that what is being asked of Abraham is extraordinary and extremely difficult. The narrative is not a polemic against child sacrifice: while it does not presuppose a general practice of sacrifice of the firstborn, it does suggest that such a practice could be performed under extraordinary circumstances (see 2 Kings 3.27). **3:** As in 12.4–6 Abraham obeys the command immediately. **5:** Abraham's promise that he and Isaac will return may suggest a faith that God will work out an alternative sacrifice (see v. 8). **9–13:** The narration slows down here, showing how close Abraham came to fulfilling the command. Some later Jewish traditions

top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill[a] his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." 13 And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place "The LORD will provide";[b] as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."[c]

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, 18 and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice." 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba.

20 Now after these things it was told Abraham, "Milcah also has borne children, to your brother Nahor: 21 Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, 22 Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." 23 Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. 24 Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

23 Sarah lived one hundred twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah's life. 2 And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. 3 Abraham rose up from beside his dead, and said to the Hittites, 4 "I am a stranger and an alien residing among you; give me property among you for a burying place, so that I may bury my dead out of my sight." 5 The Hittites answered Abraham, 6 "Hear us, my lord; you are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places; none of us will withhold from you any burial ground for burying your dead." 7 Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites, the people of the land. 8 He said to them, "If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me Ephron son of Zohar, 9 so that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as a possession for a burying place." 10 Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city, 11 "No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it; in the presence of my people I give it to you; bury your dead." 12 Then Abraham bowed down before the

[a] Or *to slaughter*
[b] Or *will see*; Heb traditionally transliterated *Jehovah Jireh*
[c] Or *he shall be seen*

understood Abraham to have actually sacrificed (an obedient) Isaac, making both men models for later generations of Jewish martyrs. A similar image stands behind the Christian understanding of Isaac as a prefiguration of Jesus. **12:** See 22.1a n. **14:** Like other characters in Genesis (e.g., Jacob in 28.19 and 32.2,30), Abraham names the place in response to his encounter with God (see 22.8; cf. 28.19; 32.30). The name *The LORD will provide* is not attested elsewhere as a place name. The mention of *Moriah* in v. 2 and of *the mount of the LORD* in v. 14 may be allusions to Jerusalem (see 1 Chr 3.1). **15–18:** This second divine call stands out as an additional divine response to his obedience (cf. vv. 11–12), this time providing a reward for Abraham's passing of the test. **18:** See 12.3n.

22.20–24: The descendants of Abraham's brother Nahor. See 11.27–29; 24.15.

23.1–20: Abraham's purchase of a family burial place. A late Priestly tradition. **2:** *Kiriath-arba,* the older name of Hebron (Josh 14.15; 15.13; Judg 1.10). **3:** The *Hittites* are considered at this point to be among the Canaanite peoples (see v. 7 and 10.15; 15.9) and should not be confused with the ancient Hittites, who resided in Asia Minor (Turkey). **4–16:** The narrative stresses the legitimacy of the Israelites' claim to this burial plot. **10:** Legal

people of the land. 13 He said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, "If you only will listen to me! I will give the price of the field; accept it from me, so that I may bury my dead there." 14 Ephron answered Abraham, 15 "My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver—what is that between you and me? Bury your dead." 16 Abraham agreed with Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.

17 So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, passed 18 to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, in the presence of all who went in at the gate of his city. 19 After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. 20 The field and the cave that is in it passed from the Hittites into Abraham's possession as a burying place.

24 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh 3 and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, 4 but will go to my country and to my kindred and get a wife for my son Isaac." 5 The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land; must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" 6 Abraham said to him, "See to it that you do not take my son back there. 7 The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. 8 But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must not take my son back there." 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter.

10 Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all kinds of choice gifts from his master; and he set out and went to Aram-naharaim, to the city of Nahor. 11 He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water; it was toward evening, the time when women go out to draw water. 12 And he said, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. 13 I am standing here by the spring of water, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. 14 Let the girl to whom I shall say, 'Please offer your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master."

transactions often took place at the city gate; see 34.20; Deut 20.19; 25.7; Ruth 4.1–11; 2 Sam 15.2). **15:** *Four hundred shekels,* about 10 lb (4.5 kg); see 24.22n. **17–20:** As in many ancient cultures, the Israelites believed that burial of ancestors in a plot of land gave their heirs a sacred claim to it. The Priestly notices of the Genesis story indicate that descendants of Abraham who did not inherit the promise ended up outside Canaan (e.g., Ishmael in 25.12–18 and Esau in 36.1–43; cf. 25.1–6), while Israel's early patriarchs and matriarchs were buried in the land (25.9–10; 35.27–29; 49.29–32; 50.12–13; etc.; cf. non-Priestly traditions in 35.19–20; 50.5,25).

24.1–67: Finding a wife for Isaac among kinfolk in Haran. **2:** Putting the hand under the thigh, an old form of oath taking (47.29), reflected the view that reproductive organs were sacred. **3:** The text describes a concern by Abraham about intermarriage with Canaanites that is otherwise seen primarily in late materials from Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 7.3–4) and texts influenced by Deuteronomy. 10–27: Wells often serve as meeting places for men and women in the cultures of the Near East. The Bible describes several such well scenes (e.g., 29.2–12; Ex 2.15–22). **10:** *Aram-naharaim,* the upper Euphrates region of northern Syria, in which Haran, Abraham's original home, was located (see 12.4). **12:** *Steadfast love,* NRSV's translation of Heb *ḥesed* that signifies the loyalty arising from a relationship (e.g., friendship; see 1 Sam 20.8). Applied to God, it means benevolent action, loyalty

15 Before he had finished speaking, there
was Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel son of
Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother,
coming out with her water jar on her shoul-
der. 16 The girl was very fair to look upon, a
virgin, whom no man had known. She went
down to the spring, filled her jar, and came
up. 17 Then the servant ran to meet her and
said, "Please let me sip a little water from
your jar." 18 "Drink, my lord," she said, and
quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and
gave him a drink. 19 When she had finished
giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw for
your camels also, until they have finished
drinking." 20 So she quickly emptied her jar
into the trough and ran again to the well to
draw, and she drew for all his camels. 21 The
man gazed at her in silence to learn whether
or not the LORD had made his journey suc-
cessful.

22 When the camels had finished drink-
ing, the man took a gold nose-ring weighing
a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms
weighing ten gold shekels, 23 and said, "Tell
me whose daughter you are. Is there room
in your father's house for us to spend the
night?" 24 She said to him, "I am the daughter
of Bethuel son of Milcah, whom she bore
to Nahor." 25 She added, "We have plenty of
straw and fodder and a place to spend the
night." 26 The man bowed his head and wor-
shiped the LORD 27 and said, "Blessed be the
LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who
has not forsaken his steadfast love and his
faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the
LORD has led me on the way to the house of
my master's kin."

28 Then the girl ran and told her mother's
household about these things. 29 Rebekah had
a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban
ran out to the man, to the spring. 30 As soon
as he had seen the nose-ring, and the brace-
lets on his sister's arms, and when he heard
the words of his sister Rebekah, "Thus the
man spoke to me," he went to the man; and
there he was, standing by the camels at the
spring. 31 He said, "Come in, O blessed of the
LORD. Why do you stand outside when I have
prepared the house and a place for the cam-
els?" 32 So the man came into the house; and
Laban unloaded the camels, and gave him
straw and fodder for the camels, and water
to wash his feet and the feet of the men who
were with him. 33 Then food was set before
him to eat; but he said, "I will not eat until I
have told my errand." He said, "Speak on."

34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant.
35 The LORD has greatly blessed my master,
and he has become wealthy; he has given him
flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and
female slaves, camels and donkeys. 36 And
Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my
master when she was old; and he has given
him all that he has. 37 My master made me
swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for
my son from the daughters of the Canaanites,
in whose land I live; 38 but you shall go to my
father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife
for my son.' 39 I said to my master, 'Perhaps
the woman will not follow me.' 40 But he said
to me, 'The LORD, before whom I walk, will
send his angel with you and make your way
successful. You shall get a wife for my son
from my kindred, from my father's house.
41 Then you will be free from my oath, when
you come to my kindred; even if they will
not give her to you, you will be free from my
oath.'

42 "I came today to the spring, and said,
'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if
now you will only make successful the way I
am going! 43 I am standing here by the spring
of water; let the young woman who comes
out to draw, to whom I shall say, "Please give
me a little water from your jar to drink,"
44 and who will say to me, "Drink, and I will
draw for your camels also"—let her be the
woman whom the LORD has appointed for my
master's son.'

45 "Before I had finished speaking in my
heart, there was Rebekah coming out with
her water jar on her shoulder; and she went
down to the spring, and drew. I said to her,
'Please let me drink.' 46 She quickly let down
her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink,
and I will also water your camels.' So I drank,
and she also watered the camels. 47 Then I
asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She
said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son,
whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring
on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms.
48 Then I bowed my head and worshiped the
LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my
master Abraham, who had led me by the right

way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. 49 Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left."

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you anything bad or good. 51 Look, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken."

52 When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD. 53 And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments. 54 Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they rose in the morning, he said, "Send me back to my master." 55 Her brother and her mother said, "Let the girl remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go." 56 But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has made my journey successful; let me go that I may go to my master." 57 They said, "We will call the girl, and ask her." 58 And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will." 59 So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

"May you, our sister, become
thousands of myriads;
may your offspring gain possession
of the gates of their foes."

61 Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 Now Isaac had come from[a] Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. 63 Isaac went out in the evening to walk[b] in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. 64 And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, 65 and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. 66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

25 Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. 4 The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5 Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. 6 But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, while he was still living, and he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country.

7 This is the length of Abraham's life, one hundred seventy-five years. 8 Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. 9 His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, 10 the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with his wife Sarah. 11 After the death of Abraham God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi.

12 These are the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's slave-girl, bore to Abraham. 13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel,

[a] Syr Tg: Heb *from coming to*

[b] Meaning of Heb word is uncertain

manifest in deeds. **15:** See 22.20–23. **22:** A *shekel* weighed about .4 oz (11.5 gr). **62:** *Beer-lahai-roi,* see 16.14; 25.11.

25.1–11: The death of Abraham. 1–6: The ancestry of Arabian tribes, including Midian (Ex 2.15b–22; 18.1–27), is traced to Abraham through another wife, Keturah. **7–11:** A conclusion to the Abraham story taken from the Priestly source. On the cave of Machpelah, see ch 23. **11:** *Beer-lahai-roi,* see 16.14; 24.62.

25.12–18: Overview of the descendants of Ishmael (cf. 36.1–43). Before the narrative discusses the descendants of Isaac (25.19–35.29), it gives an overview of the descendants of Ishmael, the firstborn son of Abraham.

Mibsam, [14] Mishma, Dumah, Massa, [15] Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. [16] These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. [17] (This is the length of the life of Ishmael, one hundred thirty-seven years; he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) [18] They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria; he settled down[a] alongside of[b] all his people.

[19] These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, [20] and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. [21] Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. [22] The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?"[c] So she went to inquire of the LORD. [23] And the LORD said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples born of you shall be divided;
the one shall be stronger than the other,
the elder shall serve the younger."

[24] When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. [25] The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. [26] Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named

[a] Heb *he fell*
[b] Or *down in opposition to*
[c] Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

For the genealogy of Abraham, see chart on p. 63. **16:** Like Israel, the Ishmaelites are said to have twelve tribes. **18:** The Ishmaelites are placed in the desert on either side of the Red Sea. See map on p. 23.

25.19–35.29: The story of Jacob and his family. The bulk of this section of Genesis goes back to early traditions about Jacob/Israel, the father of the Israelite tribes. Though many originated as ancient Israelite oral traditions, this written version of the Jacob story shows multiple connections to places that were important in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (see 28.10–11n., 20–22n., 31.13n., 32.1–2n., 32.30–31n., and 33.18n.), and thus likely originated there. This story has been enriched through additions that balance the early northern focus on Jacob with an emphasis on Judah, King David's putative ancestor (see 30.21n.; 34.1–31n. and 49.8–12n.). Later, still other texts were added, such as the gift of the Abrahamic promise to Jacob at Bethel (28.13–16), and fragments of Priestly material (25.19–20; 26.34–35; 27.46–28.9; 31.17–18; 35.9–15,22b–29). The story of Jacob's father, Isaac (26.1–33), links this large block to the previous Abraham material.

CHIASM IN THE JACOB STORY

As in the Abraham story (see p. 39), there may be a chiastic pattern in the Jacob story, where themes introduced in its first half are resumed in reverse order in the second. This kind of pattern places emphasis on its center (in **boldface**), in this case the fertility of Jacob himself and of his flocks:

A. Encounter between Jacob/Esau (25.21–34; 27)
  B. Encounter with God and departure from home (28)
    C. Acquisition of wives, Leah and Rachel (29.1–30)
      D. Fertility: the birth of Jacob's children (29.31–30.24)
      D'. Fertility: the growth of Jacob's flocks (30.25–43)
    C'. Jacob's removal of his wives from their father's household (31.1–32.1)
  B'. Encounter with God on return home (32.22–32)
A'. Reunion encounter between Jacob and Esau (33.1–33.17)

25.19–28: Introduction of the descendants of Isaac. 19–20: Introductory Priestly material. For the genealogy of Isaac, see chart on p. 63. **22–23:** The narrative presupposes an ancient practice of seeking a divine oracle at a local sanctuary. **25:** The Hebrew word for *red* ("'admoni") is a play on the word "Edom" ("'edom"; v. 30); *hairy* ("se'ar") is a play on Seir, the region of the Edomites (32.3). **26:** *Jacob,* which probably means "may (God) protect," is interpreted here by a play on the Hebrew word for "heel," i.e., "he takes by the heel" or "he supplants";

Jacob.[a] Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

27 When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. 28 Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. 30 Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.[b]) 31 Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." 32 Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" 33 Jacob said, "Swear to me first."[c] So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

26 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar, to King Abimelech of the Philistines. 2 The LORD appeared to Isaac[d] and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; settle in the land that I shall show you. 3 Reside in this land as an alien, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. 4 I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and will give to your offspring all these lands; and all the nations of the earth shall gain blessing for themselves through your offspring, 5 because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

6 So Isaac settled in Gerar. 7 When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "My wife," thinking, "or else the men of the place might kill me for the sake of Rebekah, because she is attractive in appearance." 8 When Isaac had been there a long time, King Abimelech of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw him fondling his wife Rebekah. 9 So Abimelech called for Isaac, and said, "So she is your wife! Why then did you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought I might die because of her." 10 Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." 11 So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall be put to death."

12 Isaac sowed seed in that land, and in the same year reaped a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, 13 and the man became rich; he prospered more and more until he became very wealthy. 14 He had possessions of flocks and herds, and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him. 15 (Now the Philistines had stopped up and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the

[a] That is *He takes by the heel* or *He supplants*
[b] That is *Red*
[c] Heb *today*
[d] Heb *him*

see Hos 12.3. **27–28:** As in the Cain and Abel story (4.1–16), this narrative plays on the tension between the older and the younger brother and their different lifestyles.

25.29–34: Jacob buys Esau's birthright. 30: See 25.25n. **31–34:** The *birthright* refers to the extra rights that normally go to the eldest son: leadership of the family and a double share of the inheritance (Deut 21.15–17). This caricature of Esau as a dull person, outwitted on an empty stomach, is intended to explain Israel's domination of Edom (2 Sam 8.9–14; 1 Kings 11.14–22; 1 Kings 3.9–12; 8.20–22).

26.1–33: Interlude on Isaac. Whereas the surrounding sections focus primarily on Isaac's descendants, this chapter focuses on Isaac apart from his children. Although relatively little is told about Isaac, each element makes him parallel to his father Abraham: the initial note linking his trip to Gerar with Abraham's initial journey to Egypt (v. 1; cf. 12.10), the travel command and promise (vv. 2–5; see 12.1–3n.; 22.18n.), the story of endangerment of the matriarch (vv. 6–11; cf. 12.10–13.1 and 20.1–18), the manifestation of blessing on Isaac (vv. 12–14; cf. 12.16; 20.14), the recognition of that blessing by Abimelech (v. 28; cf. 21.22), and the well stories (vv. 17–33; see 21.22–34n.). The narratives of Abraham and Isaac have clearly influenced one another. By the end of the chapter it is clear that Isaac has successfully inherited Abraham's blessing and is thus prepared to pass it on to one of his sons (see ch 27). **8:** *Fondling,* Heb "metsaḥeq," another reference to Isaac's name; see 18.12n.

days of his father Abraham.) 16 And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us; you have become too powerful for us."

17 So Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar and settled there. 18 Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham; for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the names that his father had given them. 19 But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, 20 the herders of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herders, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the well Esek,[a] because they contended with him. 21 Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also; so he called it Sitnah.[b] 22 He moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he called it Rehoboth,[c] saying, "Now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

23 From there he went up to Beer-sheba. 24 And that very night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham's sake." 25 So he built an altar there, called on the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army. 27 Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?" 28 They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you; so we say, let there be an oath between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you 29 so that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD." 30 So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. 31 In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths; and Isaac set them on their way, and they departed from him in peace. 32 That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well that they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water!" 33 He called it Shibah;[d] therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba[e] to this day.

34 When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite; 35 and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called his elder son Esau and said to him, "My son"; and he answered, "Here I am." 2 He said, "See, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. 3 Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and hunt game for me. 4 Then prepare for me savory food, such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may bless you before I die."

5 Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, 6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I heard your father say to your brother Esau, 7 'Bring me game, and prepare for me savory food to eat, that I may bless you before the LORD before I die.' 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my word as I command you. 9 Go to the flock, and get

[a] That is *Contention*
[b] That is *Enmity*
[c] That is *Broad places* or *Room*
[d] A word resembling the word for *oath*
[e] That is *Well of the oath* or *Well of seven*

33: Another explanation of the name "Beer-sheba"; see 21.22–34n.

26.34–28.4: The transfer of blessing to Jacob and not Esau. 26.34–35 (cf. 28.8–9 and 36.2–3): This Priestly note on Esau's difficult marriages was originally connected with 27.46–28.9 (P). Its current placement helps legitimate the following story about how he was tricked out of his father's blessing. **27.1–45:** This non-Priestly story of Rebekah and Jacob's cunning resembles "trickster" traditions in other cultures, where a culture hero flourishes through underhanded tactics (cf. 29.23–25; 31.19–35; 34.1–31; 38.1–30). Women had little power and often had to use unconventional means to accomplish their goals. **4:** Deathbed blessings (and curses) were important in the life and literature of ancient peoples (e.g., 48.8–20; 49.1–28). It was believed that such blessings irrevocably released a tangible power that determined the character and destiny of the recipient. Ch 27 itself focuses exclusively on Isaac's blessing, but the preceding chapter makes clear that this is Isaac's transfer of a

me two choice kids, so that I may prepare from them savory food for your father, such as he likes; 10 and you shall take it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies." 11 But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, "Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a man of smooth skin. 12 Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him, and bring a curse on myself and not a blessing." 13 His mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my word, and go, get them for me." 14 So he went and got them and brought them to his mother; and his mother prepared savory food, such as his father loved. 15 Then Rebekah took the best garments of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob; 16 and she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 Then she handed the savory food, and the bread that she had prepared, to her son Jacob.

18 So he went in to his father, and said, "My father"; and he said, "Here I am; who are you, my son?" 19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, so that you may bless me." 20 But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success." 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." 22 So Jacob went up to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." 23 He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. 24 He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am." 25 Then he said, "Bring it to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son." 27 So he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him, and said,

"Ah, the smell of my son
is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.
28 May God give you of the dew of heaven,
and of the fatness of the earth,
and plenty of grain and wine.
29 Let peoples serve you,
and nations bow down to you.
Be lord over your brothers,
and may your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be everyone who curses you,
and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"

30 As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau came in from his hunting. 31 He also prepared savory food, and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father sit up and eat of his son's game, so that you may bless me." 32 His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your firstborn son, Esau." 33 Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all[a] before you came, and I have blessed him?—yes, and blessed he shall be!" 34 When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, me also, father!" 35 But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." 36 Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob?[b] For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright; and look, now he has taken away my blessing." Then he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" 37 Isaac answered Esau, "I have already made him your lord, and I have given him all his brothers as servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?" 38 Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me, me also, father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

[a] Cn: Heb *of all*

[b] That is *He supplants* or *He takes by the heel*

divine blessing first given to Abraham (12.1–3; etc.). **11:** See 25.25n. **34–35:** The blessing was believed to release a power that could not be retracted (see v. 4n.). **36:** See 25.26n.; 25.29–34. The Heb offers a wordplay between *my*

39 Then his father Isaac answered him:
"See, away from[a] the fatness of the earth
shall your home be,
and away from[b] the dew of heaven on
high.
40 By your sword you shall live,
and you shall serve your brother;
but when you break loose,[c]
you shall break his yoke from your neck."
41 Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." 42 But the words of her elder son Esau were told to Rebekah; so she sent and called her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, 44 and stay with him a while, until your brother's fury turns away— 45 until your brother's anger against you turns away, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send, and bring you back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

46 Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women such as these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

28 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, "You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women. 2 Go at once to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father; and take as wife from there one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. 3 May God Almighty[d] bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, that you may become a company of peoples. 4 May he give to you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your offspring with you, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien—land that God gave to Abraham." 5 Thus Isaac sent Jacob away; and he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he charged him, "You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women," 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and gone to Paddan-aram. 8 So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please his father Isaac, 9 Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael, and sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

10 Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. 11 He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. 12 And he dreamed that there was a ladder[e] set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And the LORD

[a] Or *See, of*
[b] Or *and of*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*
[e] Or *stairway* or *ramp*

birthright ("bekorati") and *my blessing* ("birkati"). **39:** An inversion of the same words in v. 28. **40:** See 25.31–34n. Edom repeatedly revolted from subjection by Judah (1 Kings 11.14–22; 2 Kings 8.20–22). **43:** See 24.4,29. *Haran* was the home of Abraham's brother Nahor, whose son was Laban. Like Isaac, Jacob will marry within the extended family; see 24.4,10n.,29. **46:** See 26.34–35n. **27.46–28.2:** On intermarriage, see 24.3n. **28.1–4:** A Priestly parallel to the preceding story (27.27–29) where Isaac was not tricked into blessing Jacob, but intended from the outset to bless him in the process of sending him away to find a proper wife (see 26.34–35n.). Compare with P in 17.1–8; 35.11–12; 48.3–4. **3:** *God Almighty,* see 17.1n.

28.5–22: The split between Jacob and Esau occurs twice here, the Priestly version in 28.5–9 and the non-Priestly account in 28.10–22. **8–9:** See 26.34–35 and compare 36.2–3. **10–11:** Bethel (see 12.6–8n.; map on p. 28) was one of the two major royal sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12.26–13.10; Am 7.10–13). Here it is depicted as an unsettled place. **12:** The earliest version of this oracle described divine messengers (NRSV *angels*) ascending and descending a stairway (a better translation than NRSV's *ladder*) to heaven. This is reflected in v. 17. **13–15:** God's appearance here is awkwardly linked to the preceding stairway vision. Therefore, many scholars see another authorial hand here, adding the Abrahamic promise to an early Bethel narrative that lacked it. **13–14:** The

stood beside him[a] and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; [14] and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed[b] in you and in your offspring. [15] Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." [16] Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!" [17] And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

[18] So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. [19] He called that place Bethel;[c] but the name of the city was Luz at the first. [20] Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, [21] so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, [22] and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one-tenth to you."

29 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the people of the east. [2] As he looked, he saw a well in the field and three flocks of sheep lying there beside it; for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, [3] and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well, and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.

[4] Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where do you come from?" They said, "We are from Haran." [5] He said to them, "Do you know Laban son of Nahor?" They said, "We do." [6] He said to them, "Is it well with him?" "Yes," they replied, "and here is his daughter Rachel, coming with the sheep." [7] He said, "Look, it is still broad daylight; it is not time for the animals to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them." [8] But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

[9] While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. [10] Now when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his mother's brother Laban, and the sheep of his mother's brother Laban, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of his mother's brother Laban. [11] Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and wept aloud. [12] And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father.

[13] When Laban heard the news about his sister's son Jacob, he ran to meet him; he embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Jacob[d] told Laban all these things, [14] and Laban said to him, "Surely you

[a] Or *stood above it*
[b] Or *shall bless themselves*
[c] That is *House of God*
[d] Heb *He*

promise to Jacob here after his split from Esau is similar to the promise to Abraham in 13.14–17 just after his split from Lot. On the formulation of these promises, see 12.1–3n. **15:** This portion of the divine promise relates specifically to Jacob's journey and anticipates both his vow (vv. 20–22) and later references to this event (35.3; cf. 31.13). It may be the earliest layer of the promise speech. **16–17:** Some scholars have seen a doubled response here by Jacob, a response to God's appearance and speech in v. 16 and a (possibly earlier) response to the vision of the stairway in v. 17 (see v. 12n.). Verse 17 explains the name "Bethel" ("house of [the Canaanite deity] El") as *house of God (Heb'el). Gate of heaven* suggests the ancient view that a sanctuary was a place where the god came to earth, like "Babel" ("gate of god," 11.1–9). **18:** Ancient Israelite local sanctuaries featured sacred pillars, perhaps signifying male powers of fertility (see v. 22; 31.13,45–54; 35.14,20). For feminine tree imagery, see 2.8–9n. **19:** *Bethel,* see vv. 16–17n. **20–22:** This text looks toward both Jacob's immediate trip to Haran and the longer-range future of the sanctuary at Bethel (see 28.10–11n.). **22:** *One-tenth,* see 14.20n.

29.1–30: Jacob's marriages to Laban's daughters. 2–12: See 24.10–27n. **4–5:** See 24.10n.; 26.43. **10:** Jacob, the

are my bone and my flesh!" And he stayed with him a month.

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" 16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 Leah's eyes were lovely,[a] and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. 18 Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." 19 Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." 22 So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. 23 But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. 24 (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) 25 When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" 26 Laban said, "This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. 27 Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." 28 Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. 29 (Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her maid.) 30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He served Laban[b] for another seven years.

31 When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. 32 Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben;[c] for she said, "Because the LORD has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." 33 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard[d] that I am hated, he has given me this son also"; and she named him Simeon. 34 Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be joined[e] to me, because I have borne him three sons"; therefore he was named Levi. 35 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise[f] the LORD"; therefore she named him Judah; then she ceased bearing.

30 When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" 2 Jacob became very angry with Rachel and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" 3 Then she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, that she may bear upon my knees and that I too may have children through her." 4 So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife; and Jacob went in to her. 5 And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. 6 Then Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son"; therefore she

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *him*
[c] That is *See, a son*
[d] Heb *shama*
[e] Heb *lawah*
[f] Heb *hodah*

folk hero, has superhuman strength (see v. 3). **18:** Jacob asks for Rachel as a reward for service (cf. Josh 15.16–17; 1 Sam 17.25; 18.17) instead of paying the usual marriage price (34.12; Ex 22.16–17; Deut 22.29). **23–25:** Here Jacob the trickster (see 27.1–45n.) is tricked; this motif will continue throughout the Jacob story. The exchange could be made because the bride was brought veiled to the bridegroom (24.65). **27:** *The week* refers to the week of marriage festivity (Judg 14.12).

29.31–30.24: The birth of eleven of Jacob's sons and Dinah (for Benjamin's birth, see 35.16–18). This birth of children and the later birth of flocks (30.25–43) stand at the heart of the Jacob story. The pathos of the conflict between women is expressed through folk-explanations of the names (see NRSV text notes). **30.3,9:** Like Sarah, Rachel and Leah give their servants to Jacob as surrogate wives; see 16.2n. **14:** *Mandrakes,* roots of a potato-like plant, were thought to have aphrodisiac properties. **21:** The note about the birth of Dinah is inserted (without a story or explanation of the name) to anticipate the story about her in ch 34.

named him Dan.[a] 7 Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. 8 Then Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled[b] with my sister, and have prevailed"; so she named him Naphtali.

9 When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. 10 Then Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. 11 And Leah said, "Good fortune!" so she named him Gad.[c] 12 Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. 13 And Leah said, "Happy am I! For the women will call me happy"; so she named him Asher.[d]

14 In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." 15 But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" Rachel said, "Then he may lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes." 16 When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him, and said, "You must come in to me; for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. 17 And God heeded Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. 18 Leah said, "God has given me my hire[e] because I gave my maid to my husband"; so she named him Issachar. 19 And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. 20 Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband will honor[f] me, because I have borne him six sons"; so she named him Zebulun. 21 Afterwards she bore a daughter, and named her Dinah.

22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God heeded her and opened her womb. 23 She conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach"; 24 and she named him Joseph,[g] saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!"

25 When Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. 26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know very well the service I have given you." 27 But Laban said to him, "If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you; 28 name your wages, and I will give it." 29 Jacob said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you, and how your cattle have fared with me. 30 For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly; and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?" 31 He said, "What shall I give you?" Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything; if you will do this for me, I will again feed your flock and keep it: 32 let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and such shall be my wages. 33 So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, shall be counted stolen." 34 Laban said, "Good! Let it be as you have said." 35 But that day Laban removed the male goats that were striped and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white on it, and every lamb that was black, and put them in charge of his sons; 36 and he set a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob was pasturing the rest of Laban's flock.

37 Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the rods. 38 He

[a] That is *He judged*
[b] Heb *niphtal*
[c] That is *Fortune*
[d] That is *Happy*
[e] Heb *sakar*
[f] Heb *zabal*
[g] That is *He adds*

30.25–43: The birth of Jacob's flocks. Since striped or speckled coloration was unusual, Laban seemingly had nothing to lose. **37–40:** Ancient breeders believed that the female, at the time of conception, was influenced by visual impressions that affect the color of the offspring. Jacob produced striped animals by putting striped sticks before the females' eyes while they were breeding, thereby outwitting Laban.

set the rods that he had peeled in front of the flocks in the troughs, that is, the watering places, where the flocks came to drink. And since they bred when they came to drink, 39 the flocks bred in front of the rods, and so the flocks produced young that were striped, speckled, and spotted. 40 Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the striped and the completely black animals in the flock of Laban; and he put his own droves apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock. 41 Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob laid the rods in the troughs before the eyes of the flock, that they might breed among the rods, 42 but for the feebler of the flock he did not lay them there; so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. 43 Thus the man grew exceedingly rich, and had large flocks, and male and female slaves, and camels and donkeys.

31 Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's; he has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father." 2 And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him as favorably as he did before. 3 Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you." 4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was, 5 and said to them, "I see that your father does not regard me as favorably as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. 6 You know that I have served your father with all my strength; 7 yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not permit him to harm me. 8 If he said, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore speckled; and if he said, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore striped. 9 Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father, and given them to me.

10 "During the mating of the flock I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats that leaped upon the flock were striped, speckled, and mottled. 11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!' 12 And he said, 'Look up and see that all the goats that leap on the flock are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. 13 I am the God of Bethel,[a] where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and return to the land of your birth.'" 14 Then Rachel and Leah answered him, "Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? 15 Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has been using up the money given for us. 16 All the property that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you."

17 So Jacob arose, and set his children and his wives on camels; 18 and he drove away all his livestock, all the property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

19 Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father's household gods. 20 And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. 21 So he fled with all that he had; starting out he crossed the Euphrates,[b] and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.

22 On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. 23 So he took his kinsfolk with him and pursued him for seven days until he caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. 24 But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night, and said to him, "Take heed that you say not a word to Jacob, either good or bad."

[a] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *the river*

31.1–55: Jacob's departure from Laban's family. 4–16: This speech by Jacob and reply by his wives is often assigned by scholars to a different author than the surrounding verses, generally identified as J. In it Jacob presents to his wives a particular perspective on the previously narrated events (cf. 30.25–43). **13:** Where Jerusalem Zion traditions claimed that the LORD dwells in Zion (Pss 9.12; 135.21), God claims in this text to be "the god of Bethel" (see 28.10–11n.). This probably reflects the perspective of this originally northern Jacob story in comparison with Jerusalem-oriented traditions that predominate in the Bible. **19–35:** The *household gods* (see 1 Sam 19.13–17) may have been figures representing ancestral deities. Possession of them ensured leadership of the family and legitimated property claims. Here Jacob's favored wife, Rachel, is the trickster (see 27.1–45n.).

25 Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsfolk camped in the hill country of Gilead. 26 Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You have deceived me, and carried away my daughters like captives of the sword. 27 Why did you flee secretly and deceive me and not tell me? I would have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre. 28 And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? What you have done is foolish. 29 It is in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Take heed that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.' 30 Even though you had to go because you longed greatly for your father's house, why did you steal my gods?" 31 Jacob answered Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. 32 But anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsfolk, point out what I have that is yours, and take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.[a]

33 So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah's tent, and entered Rachel's. 34 Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. Laban felt all about in the tent, but did not find them. 35 And she said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me." So he searched, but did not find the household gods.

36 Then Jacob became angry, and upbraided Laban. Jacob said to Laban, "What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? 37 Although you have felt about through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsfolk and your kinsfolk, so that they may decide between us two. 38 These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. 39 That which was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself; of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. 40 It was like this with me: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. 41 These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. 42 If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear[b] of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night."

43 Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about their children whom they have borne? 44 Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I; and let it be a witness between you and me." 45 So Jacob took a stone, and set it up as a pillar. 46 And Jacob said to his kinsfolk, "Gather stones," and they took stones, and made a heap; and they ate there by the heap. 47 Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha:[c] but Jacob called it Galeed.[d] 48 Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." Therefore he called it Galeed, 49 and the pillar[e] Mizpah,[f] for he said, "The LORD watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other. 50 If you ill-treat my daughters, or if you take

[a] Heb *them*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] In Aramaic *The heap of witness*
[d] In Hebrew *The heap of witness*
[e] Compare Sam: MT lacks *the pillar*
[f] That is *Watchpost*

35: *The way of women,* menstruation. **42:** The Hebrew word rendered as *fear* in *Fear of Isaac,* is different from the Hebrew word usually used for "fear" of the LORD. The same word clearly means "terror" or "dread" elsewhere, as in the "terror of the LORD" refrain in Isa 2.10,19,21. Some scholars, however, have proposed alternative understandings of the word in this context, such as "kin" of Isaac. **43–54:** The story is built around an older tradition regarding a boundary covenant between Arameans and Israelites (vv. 44,52), both of whom laid claim to the region of Gilead in northern Transjordan (see map on p. 239). On the *pillar,* see 28.18n. **47:** The stone heap is given two names (see notes *c* and *d*), one in Laban's language (Aramaic) and one in Jacob's (Hebrew).

wives in addition to my daughters, though no one else is with us, remember that God is witness between you and me."

51 Then Laban said to Jacob, "See this heap and see the pillar, which I have set between you and me. 52 This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. 53 May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor"—the God of their father—"judge between us." So Jacob swore by the Fear[a] of his father Isaac, 54 and Jacob offered a sacrifice on the height and called his kinsfolk to eat bread; and they ate bread and tarried all night in the hill country.

55 [b]Early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them; then he departed and returned home.

32 Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him; 2 and when Jacob saw them he said, "This is God's camp!" So he called that place Mahanaim.[c]

3 Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, 4 instructing them, "Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, 'I have lived with Laban as an alien, and stayed until now; 5 and I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male and female slaves; and I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.' "

6 The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." 7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies, 8 thinking, "If Esau comes to the one company and destroys it, then the company that is left will escape."

9 And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good,' 10 I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. 11 Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children. 12 Yet you have said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.' "

13 So he spent that night there, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau, 14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15 thirty milch camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. 16 These he delivered into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass on ahead of me, and put a space between drove and drove." 17 He instructed the foremost, "When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, 'To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?' 18 then you shall say, 'They belong to your servant Jacob; they are a present sent to my lord Esau; and moreover he is behind us.' " 19 He likewise instructed the second and the third and all who followed the droves, "You shall say the same thing to Esau when you meet him, 20 and you shall say, 'Moreover your servant Jacob is behind us.' " For he thought, "I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterwards I shall see his face; perhaps he

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Ch 32.1 in Heb
[c] Here taken to mean *Two camps*

53: *Nahor,* Laban's father, and *Abraham,* Jacob's father, were brothers (11.27).

32.1–32: Journey toward Esau. 1–2: The Transjordanian town of Mahanaim (see map on p. 28) is said to have been a capital of the Northern Kingdom during the brief reign of Ishbaal, Saul's heir (2 Sam 2.8–9); and is later associated with David's flight from Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion (17.24–29) and was an administrative center in the time of Solomon (1 Kings 4.14). *Angels,* see 28.12n. **3–21:** The ever-clever Jacob develops multiple strategies to appease his brother: dividing his camp (vv. 6–8), praying for divine help (vv. 9–12), and

will accept me." [21] So the present passed on ahead of him; and he himself spent that night in the camp.

[22] The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. [23] He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. [24] Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. [25] When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. [26] Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." [27] So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." [28] Then the man[a] said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel,[b] for you have striven with God and with humans,[c] and have prevailed." [29] Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. [30] So Jacob called the place Peniel,[d] saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." [31] The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. [32] Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

33 Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. [2] He put the maids with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. [3] He himself went on ahead of them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother.

[4] But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. [5] When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." [6] Then the maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed down; [7] Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down; and finally Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. [8] Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor with my lord." [9] But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." [10] Jacob said, "No, please; if I find favor with you, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God—since you have received me with such favor. [11] Please accept my gift that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have everything I want." So he urged him, and he took it.

[12] Then Esau said, "Let us journey on our way, and I will go alongside you." [13] But Jacob

[a] Heb *he*
[b] That is *The one who strives with God* or *God strives*
[c] Or *with divine and human beings*
[d] That is *The face of God*

then sending several waves of livestock as a gift to Esau (vv. 13–21). **22–32:** Abraham unknowingly hosted divine visitors (18.1–15); now Jacob unknowingly fights with God (cf. Ex 4.24–26). The narrative includes a complicated wordplay on the names of Jacob (Heb "yaabeq"; v. 24); see also 25.26n. **25:** Jacob is so strong (29.10) that he is winning the contest until his divine opponent pulls Jacob's hip out of joint. **26:** The divine being had to vanish before sunrise—an ancient folkloristic theme marking the antiquity of the tradition on which this story is based. **28:** Jacob's new name reflects a new self: no longer was he the "supplanter" (25.26; 27.36), but *Israel,* (Heb Yisra'el) (35.10), which probably originally meant "El rules" (the god El was the head of the Canaanite pantheon). Here, however, it is interpreted to mean "the one who strives [Heb "sarah"] with God" (cf. Hos 12.3–4). *And with humans* refers to Jacob's strife with Esau and Laban. In this way, the community of Israel, as descendants of this god-wrestler, is depicted as a group that successfully strives with God and humans. **29:** The divine being refuses lest Jacob, by possessing the name, gain power over him; cf. 2.19–20n. **30:** Jacob had feared to see Esau's face (v. 20), but instead saw God *face to face* and lived (see 16.13n.). **30–31:** The story is located at Penuel/Peniel ("face of El"), one of the first capitals of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12.25); it serves as an etiology, an explanation for that site's choice. **32:** An Israelite prohibition against eating the thigh muscle of an animal is cited as testimony to the truth of the story. This prohibition is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

33.1–17: Partial reunion with Esau. 10: *Like seeing the face of God,* who at Penuel (or Peniel) also proved to be gracious (32.30–31). **12–17:** Esau proposes to stay with Jacob, but Jacob sends him ahead, promising to join him

said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds, which are nursing, are a care to me; and if they are overdriven for one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."

15 So Esau said, "Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "Why should my lord be so kind to me?" 16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17 But Jacob journeyed to Succoth,[a] and built himself a house, and made booths for his cattle; therefore the place is called Succoth.

18 Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram; and he camped before the city. 19 And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for one hundred pieces of money[b] the plot of land on which he had pitched his tent. 20 There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.[c]

34 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the region. 2 When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force. 3 And his soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke tenderly to her. 4 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this girl to be my wife."

5 Now Jacob heard that Shechem[d] had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came. 6 And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him, 7 just as the sons of Jacob came in from the field. When they heard of it, the men were indignant and very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.

8 But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The heart of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. 9 Make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. 10 You shall live with us; and the land shall be open to you; live and trade in it, and get property in it." 11 Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "Let me find favor with you, and whatever you say to me I will give. 12 Put the marriage present and gift as high as you like, and I will give whatever you ask me; only give me the girl to be my wife."

13 The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. 14 They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. 15 Only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male among you be circumcised. 16 Then we will

[a] That is *Booths*
[b] Heb *one hundred qesitah*
[c] That is *God, the God of Israel*
[d] Heb *he*

later (v. 14); Jacob does not do so, however (v. 17), perhaps noting that Esau had always planned to wait to kill him until their father died (27.41; cf. 35.29). **17:** *Succoth* means "booths." Its precise location is uncertain.

33.18–35.5: The stay in Shechem and the rape of Dinah. 33.18: *Shechem,* see 12.6–8n., was an important town in early Israel and one of the first capitals of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12.25). **19:** Here and in ch 34 *Shechem* is a personal name. As elsewhere in Genesis, the story portrays, in the guise of individuals, relations between Israel and non-Israelite groups. **20:** The name of the altar ("El is the God of Israel") may be another reflection of the worship of the Canaanite deity El in early Israel (see 28.16–17n.; 32.28,31–32n.). **34.1–31:** In its broader context, this story explains why Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's elder sons, did not receive his highest blessing; see 49.5–7n. **2:** See 33.19n. *Lay with her by force,* raped her, though some scholars interpret the Hebrew verbs as suggesting illicit sexual intercourse rather than rape. **7:** *Committed an outrage in Israel* is a proverbial expression for ultimate offenses, such as violations of the sexual honor of the tribal group (here), the ban on booty in holy war (Josh 7.15), and the sanctity of hospitality (Judg 19.23–24; 20.6,10). **8–12:** Israelite law stipulates that a man who has sex with an unbetrothed woman must retroactively marry her by paying her father a marriage price (Ex 22.16–17; Deut 22.28–29). This narrative either does not recognize this law or assumes that it does not apply outside the people of Israel. **13–17:** Jacob's sons now are the tricksters (see 27.1–45n.). On circumcision

give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live among you and become one people. 17 But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."

18 Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. 19 And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his family. 20 So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, 21 "These people are friendly with us; let them live in the land and trade in it, for the land is large enough for them; let us take their daughters in marriage, and let us give them our daughters. 22 Only on this condition will they agree to live among us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. 23 Will not their livestock, their property, and all their animals be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will live among us." 24 And all who went out of the city gate heeded Hamor and his son Shechem; and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

25 On the third day, when they were still in pain, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city unawares, and killed all the males. 26 They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. 27 And the other sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. 28 They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. 29 All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and made their prey. 30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household." 31 But they said, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?"

35 God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and settle there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your clothes; 3 then come, let us go up to Bethel, that I may make an altar there to the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak that was near Shechem.

5 As they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities all around them, so that no one pursued them. 6 Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, 7 and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel,[a] because it was there that God had

[a] That is *God of Bethel*

see 17.9–14n., though the practice of adult circumcision is proposed here as part of a vengeful ruse. **21–23:** In contrast to Hamor's proposal to the Israelites of intermarriage and acquisition of land (vv. 8–10), his speech to his countrymen here betrays an interest in impoverishing the Israelites through assimilating them. On concern about intermarriage, see 24.3n. **25–26:** Simeon and Levi lead the killing and recapture of Dinah because, as older full brothers of Dinah (29.33–34; 30.21), they were responsible for avenging the violation of the family's honor through her. **27–29:** In a reversal of what the Shechemites had planned for them (vv. 21–23), the Israelites take all the Shechemites' possessions. **30–31:** Jacob is depicted here as less concerned about family honor than about good relations with the Canaanites (see 35.5). His sons' question is left unanswered at the end of the story (cf. Jon 4.11). **35.1–4:** The present narrative reflects a later judgment on non-Yahwistic ritual objects. Like its parallels (Josh 24.23; Judg 10.16; 1 Sam 7.3), it may presuppose, however, a more ancient practice of burial of divine images in sacred places, i.e., by a sacred tree (see 12.6–8n.). **5:** Jacob's fears (see 34.30) prove to be unfounded.

35.6–15: Jacob's return to Bethel (see 28.10–22). **6–7:** Deities often had local manifestations (e.g., on ancient inscriptions we find "Yahweh of Samaria" and "Yahweh of Teman"). Jacob honors the local manifestation of El at Bethel

revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. 8 And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So it was called Allon-bacuth.[a]

9 God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. 10 God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he was called Israel. 11 God said to him, "I am God Almighty:[b] be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. 12 The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." 13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had spoken with him. 14 Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured out a drink offering on it, and poured oil on it. 15 So Jacob called the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel was in childbirth, and she had hard labor. 17 When she was in her hard labor, the midwife said to her, "Do not be afraid; for now you will have another son." 18 As her soul was departing (for she died), she named him Ben-oni;[c] but his father called him Benjamin.[d] 19 So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), 20 and Jacob set up a pillar at her grave; it is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day. 21 Israel journeyed on, and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

22 While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard of it.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. 23 The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. 24 The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. 25 The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali. 26 The sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.

27 Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had resided as aliens. 28 Now the days of Isaac were one hundred eighty years. 29 And Isaac breathed his last; he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

36 These are the descendants of Esau (that is, Edom). 2 Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah

[a] That is *Oak of weeping*
[b] Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*
[c] That is *Son of my sorrow*
[d] That is *Son of the right hand* or *Son of the South*

by building an altar there and calling the sanctuary "El of Bethel." **8:** Once again a tree is associated with a revered sanctuary (see 12.6–8n.). **9–15:** A Priestly parallel to the non-Priestly renaming tradition in 32.28 and the Bethel tradition in 28.10–22. **10:** Cf. 32.28. **11–12:** Cf. non-P, 28.13–15. The divine fulfillment of Isaac's wish (28.3–4) that God bestow Abraham's blessing (17.1–8) on Jacob. **11:** *God Almighty,* see 17.1n. **13:** P stresses that God is not bound permanently to Bethel in the way asserted in the non-Priestly Bethel narratives (28.10–22; 32.6–7); God merely spoke there and left. **14:** In a P doublet of 28.18–19, Jacob sets up a pillar at Bethel (see 28.18n.) and (re)names the place.

35.16–21: The birth of Benjamin and death of Rachel. 18: Dying in childbirth, Rachel gives an ominous name ("son of my sorrow") to the baby. In this instance (cf. 29.31–30.24) the father overrules his wife's naming and gives him a more propitious one. *Benjamin* (see note *d*) refers either to the right hand as a symbol of power or to the tribe's position south ("right") of Ephraim. **19:** Here and in 48.7 the tomb of Rachel is located near Bethlehem (south of Jerusalem). Compare 1 Sam 10.2 and Jer 31.15. **20:** On pillars, see 28.18n. **21:** From this point on the name *Israel* is often, but not exclusively, used to refer to Jacob (32.28).

35.22–29: Concluding materials on Jacob's sons and Isaac's death and burial. 22a: This aside describes how Reuben violated his father's honor by sleeping with Jacob's concubine, the servant of recently deceased Rachel, Bilhah (29.29; 30.3–8). Later he will be cursed for this act (see 49.3–4n.). This is a part of a series of texts added to the early Jacob and Joseph narratives that explain Jacob's preference for Judah (see 49.8–12n.), and thus Judean kingship under David and his successors. **22b–29:** A Priestly listing of Jacob's sons and the death and burial notice of Isaac.

36.1–43: Overview of the descendants of Esau and prior inhabitants of Edom/Seir. Cf. 25.12–18. Before the narrative goes into detail on the descendants of Jacob (37.2–50.26), it gives an overview (largely Priestly) of the descendants of Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac. **2–3:** Though this note agrees with other Priestly material

son[a] of Zibeon the Hivite, [3] and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth. [4] Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau; Basemath bore Reuel; [5] and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

[6] Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his cattle, all his livestock, and all the property he had acquired in the land of Canaan; and he moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob. [7] For their possessions were too great for them to live together; the land where they were staying could not support them because of their livestock. [8] So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.

[9] These are the descendants of Esau, ancestor of the Edomites, in the hill country of Seir. [10] These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz son of Adah the wife of Esau; Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath. [11] The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. [12] (Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These were the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. [13] These were the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These were the sons of Esau's wife, Basemath. [14] These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, daughter of Anah son[b] of Zibeon: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

[15] These are the clans[c] of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: the clans[c] Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, [16] Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the clans[c] of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; they are the sons of Adah. [17] These are the sons of Esau's son Reuel: the clans[c] Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah; these are the clans[c] of Reuel in the land of Edom; they are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath. [18] These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: the clans[c] Jeush, Jalam, and Korah; these are the clans[c] born of Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah. [19] These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their clans.[c]

[20] These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, [21] Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the clans[c] of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. [22] The sons of Lotan were Hori and Heman; and Lotan's sister was Timna. [23] These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. [24] These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah; he is the Anah who found the springs[d] in the wilderness, as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon. [25] These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of Anah. [26] These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. [27] These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. [28] These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. [29] These are the clans[c] of the Horites: the clans[c] Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, [30] Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the clans[c] of the Horites, clan by clan[e] in the land of Seir.

[31] These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. [32] Bela son of Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his city being Dinhabah. [33] Bela died, and Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah succeeded him as king. [34] Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites succeeded him as king. [35] Husham died, and Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, succeeded him as king, the name of his city being Avith. [36] Hadad

[a] Sam Gk Syr: Heb *daughter*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *daughter*
[c] Or *chiefs*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Or *chief by chief*

in stressing his intermarriage with foreigners, the names or parentage of Esau's wives are different here (cf. 26.34–35; 28.8–9). **6–8:** Echoes the (non-Priestly) story of Abraham's split from Lot (13.2–13). **9–14:** A list of Esau's descendants organized by the mother (cf. 35.23–26). **9:** The repeated introduction (cf. 36.1) may indicate that an earlier Priestly overview of Esau's descendants began here. **15–19:** A list of clans of the sons of Esau that diverges slightly from vv. 9–14 in its list of offspring of Eliphaz (cf. 36.11 and 15–16). **20–30:** A list of clans of Horite inhabitants of Seir (see 14.6), which may have been originally understood as a region in Transjordan different from Edom. Deuteronomy 2.12,22 describes Esau (Edom) as having expelled the Horites from Seir. **31–39:** A list of early kings of Edom (see Num 20.14). **40–43:** A list of a slightly different kind of clan group (Heb "'alup") in Edom that partially overlaps with names occurring in 36.9–19.

died, and Samlah of Masrekah succeeded him as king. 37 Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates succeeded him as king. 38 Shaul died, and Baal-hanan son of Achbor succeeded him as king. 39 Baal-hanan son of Achbor died, and Hadar succeeded him as king, the name of his city being Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Me-zahab.

40 These are the names of the clans[a] of Esau, according to their families and their localities by their names: the clans[a] Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, 41 Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, 42 Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, 43 Magdiel, and Iram; these are the clans[a] of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their settlements in the land that they held.

37 Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. 2 This is the story of the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves.[b] 4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

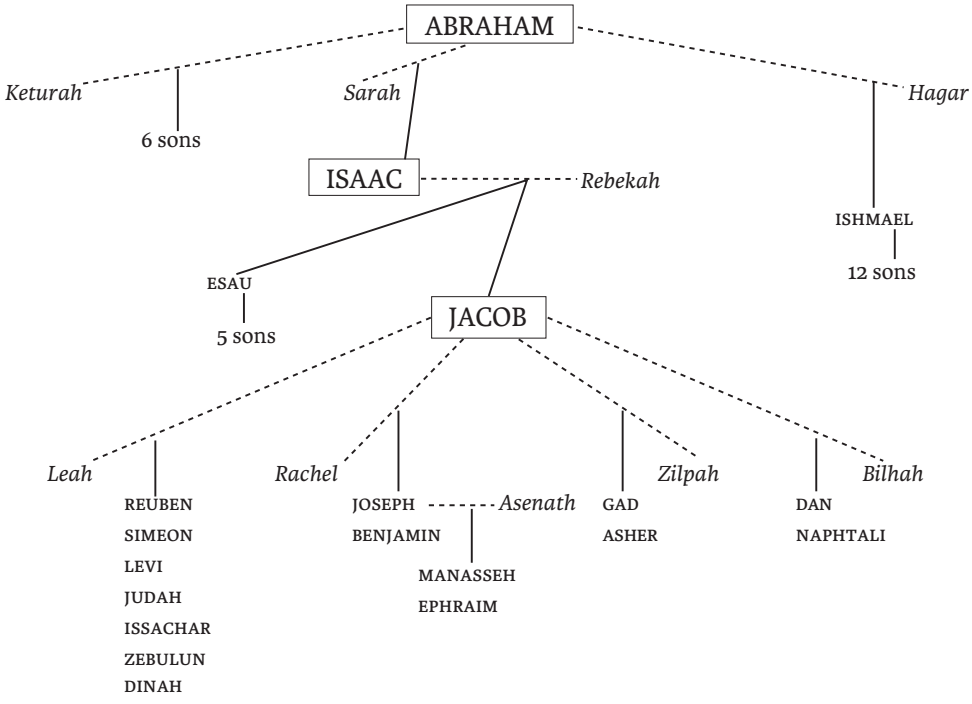
5 Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. 7 There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words.

[a] Or *chiefs*

[b] Traditional rendering (compare Gk): *a coat of many colors*; meaning of Heb uncertain

37.1–50.26: The story of Joseph and his family. As indicated in the Introduction, this portion of Genesis features an intricate depiction of Joseph's relations with his brothers and father. Starting with a pair of dreams (37.5–11), the narrative follows a trajectory from his brothers' murderous hatred of Joseph to Joseph's eventual testing of and reunion with them (chs 42–45; 50). Joseph was a prominent northern tribe, and like the Jacob story, this narrative has Northern connections, especially with the addition of the story in 48.8–14 of Joseph's special blessing on his son, Ephraim. The first king of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam, was a member of the tribe of Ephraim (1 Kings 11.26), and stories like these about early Israelite ancestors would have reinforced his claim to rule. Yet over time the story evolved in significance, through additions assuming *Judah*'s destiny to rule (see 49.8–12n.), inserted echoes of the promise theme first introduced in the Abraham story (such as 46.1–4; 48.15–16 and 12.1–3n.), connections leading to the book of Joshua (50.24–25), and a few fragments that may come from the Priestly source (e.g., 37.1–2; 46.8–27; 47.27–28; 48.3–6; 49.29–33).

37.1–11: Joseph's dreams of power. These narratives open the remarkably cohesive story of Joseph and his brothers in chs 37–50. Source critics have attempted to trace strands of the hypothesized Yahwistic and Elohistic source documents (see Introduction) through the Joseph story; thus sections focusing on Reuben and Midianites (e.g., 37.22–24,28–36) were assigned to E, while sections focusing on Judah and the Ishmaelites (e.g., 37.25–28) were assigned to J. Others suggested that an early Joseph story focused on Reuben was revised by an author who focused on Judah and referred to Jacob as "Israel." Despite the presence of some additions and modifications (e.g., 37.2a, 28; 41.46), however, the essential unity of the Joseph story is clear. **2a:** *This is the story*, despite the different translation here in the NRSV, this heading, which brings unity to Genesis, is identical with those in 5.1; 6.9; 10.1; 11.27; 25.12,18; 36.1,9 that refer to the "descendants" of a given figure. Here it identifies what follows as concerning the "descendants of Jacob," that is, Joseph and his brothers. **2b–4:** According to the Priestly narrative (vv. 1–2), Joseph tattled on his brothers. The non-Priestly narrative (vv. 3–4) explains his brothers' antagonism toward him as resulting from jealousy about Jacob's love. Joseph is favored as the eldest of the children of Jacob by his favorite wife, Rachel (30.22–24). The *long robe with sleeves* (v. 3; but see note *b*) is a royal garment (2 Sam 13.18–19) anticipating Joseph's future status. At this point in the story neither the reader nor the brothers know how this will come about. **5–8:** This first dream report predicts Joseph's domination of his brothers (43.26; 50.18; cf. 42.6). The story may intend to predict the future rule of Jeroboam, a member of



Chs 12–50: The genealogy of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Dashed lines show the wives; solid lines show descendants.

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[9] He had another dream, and told it to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." [10] But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, "What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?" [11] So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

[12] Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. [13] And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." [14] So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem, [15] and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" [16] "I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." [17] The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. [18] They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. [19] They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. [20] Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and

the Joseph tribe of Ephraim, over the other tribes of northern Israel (1 Kings 11.26; 12.1–14.20). **9–11:** Jacob sees this dream as predicting that he and Joseph's mother, Rachel, will join the brothers in submitting to Joseph. This episode was probably part of an independent Joseph story that originally did not follow an account of Rachel's death (see 35.16–20).

37.12–36: Joseph is sold into slavery. 17: Dothan is about 15 mi (24 km) north of Shechem and lay along a trade route from Syria to Egypt. **20:** *The pits* were cisterns for storing rainwater and sometimes used to imprison

we shall see what will become of his dreams." 21 But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." 22 Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves[a] that he wore; 24 and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

25 Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. 26 Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. 28 When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes. 30 He returned to his brothers, and said, "The boy is gone; and I, where can I turn?" 31 Then they took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 They had the long robe with sleeves[a] taken to their father, and they said, "This we have found; see now whether it is your son's robe or not." 33 He recognized it, and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." 34 Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 All his sons and all his daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father bewailed him. 36 Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

38 It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and settled near a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah. 2 There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; he married her and went in to her. 3 She conceived and bore a son; and he named him Er. 4 Again she conceived and bore a son whom she named Onan. 5 Yet again she bore a son, and she named him Shelah. She[b] was in Chezib

[a] See note on 37.3
[b] Gk: Heb *He*

people (Jer 38.6). **22–27:** The advice of Reuben and Judah reflects the ancient idea that blood cannot be "concealed" (v. 26), but cries out for requital (see 4.10–11n.). **25–36:** Most scholars agree that some combination or modification of traditions has occurred here. Though the brothers decide here to sell Joseph (v. 27) and Joseph later says that they did so (45.4–5), this narrative describes the *Midianite*s as drawing him out and selling him to the *Ishmaelite*s (v. 28). Later, both the *Midianite*s (37.36) and the *Ishmaelite*s (39.1; cf. 37.25) are identified as the ones who sold Joseph to Potiphar. **25:** *Gilead,* in northern Transjordan, was famous for its *balm,* an aromatic resin used in healing (see Jer 8.22). **26–27:** On the role of Judah, see 44.18–34n. 28: The first half of this verse (possibly an insertion) displaces blame for the actual sale to passing Midianites (cf. Gen 37.27; 45.4–5). **31–34:** Now Jacob is tricked by an article of clothing (contrast 27.15; see 29.23–25n.). **35:** *Sheol,* the underworld to which everyone went at death—the Hebrew Bible does not recognize a differentiated heaven and hell. Since this afterlife was at best a shadowy existence (see Ps 6.5; Eccl 9.10), Jacob's going to his son further reflects his misery. **36:** Multiple traditions testify to some kind of connection between Joseph and an Egyptian *Potiphar/*" Potiphera." *Potiphar* is a form of "Potiphera," the name of the Egyptian priest who is Joseph's father-in-law in 41.45 and 46.20.

38.1–30: Judah and Tamar. Though an apparent interlude in the Joseph story, this chapter echoes elements of ch 37 and anticipates themes from the upcoming Joseph story. Yet this story contrasts with most of this part of Genesis in its focus on Judah, not Joseph. Moreover, it has striking parallels with later narratives about David (see 38.1–2n., 6n.). Both elements—the focus on Judah and anticipation of David—link 38.1–30 with a sequence of episodes, starting in 30.21; 34.1–31; 35.22, that prepare for Jacob's blessing of Judah and prediction of the Davidic dynasty in 49.8–12. See 49.1–28n. and 8–12n. **1–2:** *Adullam,* a town associated with David's mercenary army (1 Sam 22.1; 2 Sam 23.13). The locales in this narrative are appropriately in the territory of the tribe of Judah. Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua (Heb "Bat Shu'a," v. 12), anticipates the later "Bathsheba" of the David and

when she bore him. 6 Judah took a wife for Er
his firstborn; her name was Tamar. 7 But Er,
Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the
LORD, and the LORD put him to death. 8 Then
Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's
wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law
to her; raise up offspring for your brother."
9 But since Onan knew that the offspring would
not be his, he spilled his semen on the ground
whenever he went in to his brother's wife, so
that he would not give offspring to his brother.
10 What he did was displeasing in the sight of
the LORD, and he put him to death also. 11 Then
Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Re-
main a widow in your father's house until my
son Shelah grows up"—for he feared that he
too would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went
to live in her father's house.

12 In course of time the wife of Judah, Shua's
daughter, died; when Judah's time of mourn-
ing was over,[a] he went up to Timnah to his
sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the
Adullamite. 13 When Tamar was told, "Your
father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear
his sheep," 14 she put off her widow's gar-
ments, put on a veil, wrapped herself up, and
sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is
on the road to Timnah. She saw that Shelah
was grown up, yet she had not been given to
him in marriage. 15 When Judah saw her, he
thought her to be a prostitute, for she had
covered her face. 16 He went over to her at the
roadside, and said, "Come, let me come in to
you," for he did not know that she was his
daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give
me, that you may come in to me?" 17 He an-
swered, "I will send you a kid from the flock."
And she said, "Only if you give me a pledge,
until you send it." 18 He said, "What pledge
shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and
your cord, and the staff that is in your hand."
So he gave them to her, and went in to her,
and she conceived by him. 19 Then she got up
and went away, and taking off her veil she put
on the garments of her widowhood.

20 When Judah sent the kid by his friend
the Adullamite, to recover the pledge from the
woman, he could not find her. 21 He asked the
townspeople, "Where is the temple prostitute
who was at Enaim by the wayside?" But they
said, "No prostitute has been here." 22 So he
returned to Judah, and said, "I have not found
her; moreover the townspeople said, 'No pros-
titute has been here.' " 23 Judah replied, "Let
her keep the things as her own, otherwise we
will be laughed at; you see, I sent this kid, and
you could not find her."

24 About three months later Judah was told,
"Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the
whore; moreover she is pregnant as a result of
whoredom." And Judah said, "Bring her out,
and let her be burned." 25 As she was being
brought out, she sent word to her father-in-
law, "It was the owner of these who made me
pregnant." And she said, "Take note, please,
whose these are, the signet and the cord
and the staff." 26 Then Judah acknowledged
them and said, "She is more in the right than
I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah."
And he did not lie with her again.

27 When the time of her delivery came,
there were twins in her womb. 28 While she

[a] Heb *when Judah was comforted*

Solomon narratives (2 Sam 11; cf. 1 Chr 3.5). **6:** Links to the David and Solomon story continue with mention of "Tamar" (see 2 Sam 13). **8–10:** According to the ancient custom of levirate marriage (Deut 25.5–10), *the duty of a brother-in-law* of his brother's childless widow was to impregnate her and thus perpetuate his brother's name and inheritance through his widow's offspring. Onan's death is attributed to his refusal to perform this duty of impregnating Er's widow, Tamar, probably by coitus interruptus (rather than "onanism," masturbation). **11:** Judah apparently fears that the death of his sons resulted from Tamar's sinister power. **12–19:** Tamar tricks Judah into impregnating her by dressing as a prostitute and allowing him to hire her to have sex (see 27.1–45n.). **18:** The *signet* was a seal, often suspended from the neck with a *cord,* used to "sign" documents. **20–22:** Though some interpret the Hebrew here for "holy woman" ("qedeshah") as referring to a *temple prostitute* (so NRSV), it is unlikely that the institution of sacred prostitution existed in ancient Israel. Perhaps Judah's Adullamite friend is just delicately referring to the missing "prostitute" as a similarly unattached "holy woman." **24:** Stoning was the usual punishment for adultery (Deut 22.23–24; cf. Jn 8.5), although burning was prescribed for exceptional cases (Lev 21.9). **25–26:** The presentation of evidence to Judah here echoes the presentation of the bloody robe to Jacob in 37.32–33. **27–30:** The birth of Judah's twins is depicted in terms similar to that of Jacob and Esau

was in labor, one put out a hand; and the midwife took and bound on his hand a crimson thread, saying, "This one came out first." 29 But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore he was named Perez.[a] 30 Afterward his brother came out with the crimson thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.[b]

39 Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking. 7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" 10 And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her. 11 One day, however, when he went into the house to do his work, and while no one else was in the house, 12 she caught hold of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. 13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, 14 she called out to the members of her household and said to them, "See, my husband[c] has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice; 15 and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside." 16 Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home, 17 and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; 18 but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside."

19 When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is the way your servant treated me," he became enraged. 20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison. 21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

[a] That is *A breach*
[b] That is *Brightness*; perhaps alluding to the crimson thread
[c] Heb *he*

(25.24–26). The final link of this chapter to the David narrative (see 38.1–2,6n.) occurs with Perez, the firstborn and ancestor of David (Ruth 4.18–22; see 49.1–28n. and 8–12n.).

39.1–23: Joseph's success, temptation, and imprisonment. 1–6: Joseph's enjoyment of blessing and Potiphar's recognition of it are an outgrowth of the promise to Abraham in 12.1–3 (see 12.2n.). **7–20:** A parallel Egyptian "Tale of Two Brothers" also tells a tale of how a man rejected the advances of another's wife, who then laid false accusations against him and almost brought about his death. **12–15:** Again (see 37.31–33), Joseph's *garment* is used as misleading evidence. **14:** *Hebrew,* see 14.13n. **21–23:** Abraham's blessing is again evident here.

40 Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord the king of Egypt. [2] Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, [3] and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. [4] The captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he waited on them; and they continued for some time in custody. [5] One night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own meaning. [6] When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. [7] So he asked Pharaoh's officers, who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?" [8] They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me."

[9] So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream there was a vine before me, [10] and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms came out and the clusters ripened into grapes. [11] Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." [12] Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days; [13] within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. [14] But remember me when it is well with you; please do me the kindness to make mention of me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this place. [15] For in fact I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon."

[16] When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, [17] and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head." [18] And Joseph answered, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days; [19] within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a pole; and the birds will eat the flesh from you."

[20] On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants, and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. [21] He restored the chief cupbearer to his cupbearing, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand; [22] but the chief baker he hanged, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. [23] Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

41 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, [2] and there came up out of the Nile seven sleek and fat cows, and they grazed in the reed grass. [3] Then seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. [4] The ugly and thin cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. And Pharaoh awoke. [5] Then he fell asleep and dreamed a second time; seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. [6] Then seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them. [7] The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Pharaoh awoke, and it was a dream. [8] In the morning his spirit was troubled; so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

[9] Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my faults today. [10] Once Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard. [11] We dreamed on the same night, he and I, each

40.1–23: Joseph establishes his expertise as dream interpreter. Doubled dreams are a recurring motif in the Joseph narrative (see 37.5–10; 41.1–7,32; 42.9). **13:** *Lift up your head,* i.e., graciously free you from prison (2 Kings 25.27). The same expression is applied ironically to the baker's fate in v. 19. **15:** *Stolen,* 37.28.

41.1–57: Joseph's elevation as the result of successful dream interpretation. **8:** The narrator intends to demonstrate the superiority of Israel's God over Egyptian magic and wisdom, anticipating the plague narrative in

having a dream with its own meaning. 12 A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each according to his dream. 13 As he interpreted to us, so it turned out; I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."

14 Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was hurriedly brought out of the dungeon. When he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not I; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." 17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile; 18 and seven cows, fat and sleek, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. 19 Then seven other cows came up after them, poor, very ugly, and thin. Never had I seen such ugly ones in all the land of Egypt. 20 The thin and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows, 21 but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had done so, for they were still as ugly as before. Then I awoke. 22 I fell asleep a second time[a] and I saw in my dream seven ears of grain, full and good, growing on one stalk, 23 and seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouting after them; 24 and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. But when I told it to the magicians, there was no one who could explain it to me."

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, as are the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind. They are seven years of famine. 28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 29 There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. 30 After them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; the famine will consume the land. 31 The plenty will no longer be known in the land because of the famine that will follow, for it will be very grievous. 32 And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. 33 Now therefore let Pharaoh select a man who is discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land, and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plenteous years. 35 Let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and lay up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. 36 That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to befall the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine."

37 The proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. 38 Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find anyone else like this—one in whom is the spirit of God?" 39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you." 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph's hand; he arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command; and they cried out in front of him, "Bow the knee!"[b] Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Moreover Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." 45 Pharaoh gave Joseph

[a] Gk Syr Vg: Heb lacks *I fell asleep a second time*

[b] *Abrek*, apparently an Egyptian word similar in sound to the Hebrew word meaning *to kneel*

Exodus (Ex 8.18–19; 9.11; cf. Dan 2.2–19; 5.8,15–28). **16:** Joseph denies having any occult art and ascribes his skill solely to God. **42:** *His signet ring* (see 38.18n.) empowered Joseph to act as Pharaoh's representative. **45:** The

the name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, as his wife. Thus Joseph gained authority over the land of Egypt.

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went through all the land of Egypt. 47 During the seven plenteous years the earth produced abundantly. 48 He gathered up all the food of the seven years when there was plenty[a] in the land of Egypt, and stored up food in the cities; he stored up in every city the food from the fields around it. 49 So Joseph stored up grain in such abundance—like the sand of the sea—that he stopped measuring it; it was beyond measure.

50 Before the years of famine came, Joseph had two sons, whom Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh,[b] "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." 52 The second he named Ephraim,[c] "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes."

53 The seven years of plenty that prevailed in the land of Egypt came to an end; 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in every country, but throughout the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do." 56 And since the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses,[d] and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. 57 Moreover, all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe throughout the world.

42 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you keep looking at one another? 2 I have heard," he said, "that there is grain in Egypt; go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die." 3 So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. 4 But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he feared that harm might come to him. 5 Thus the sons of Israel were among the other people who came to buy grain, for the famine had reached the land of Canaan.

6 Now Joseph was governor over the land; it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. 7 When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he said. They said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." 8 Although Joseph had recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. 9 Joseph also remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them. He said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land!" 10 They said to him, "No, my lord; your servants have come to buy food. 11 We are all sons of one man; we are honest men; your servants have never been spies." 12 But he said to them, "No, you have come to see the nakedness of the land!" 13 They said, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of a certain man in the land of Canaan; the youngest, however, is now with our father, and one is no more." 14 But Joseph said to them, "It is just as I have said to you; you are spies! 15 Here is how you shall be tested: as

[a] Sam Gk: MT *the seven years that were*
[b] That is *Making to forget*
[c] From a Hebrew word meaning *to be fruitful*
[d] Gk Vg Compare Syr: Heb *opened all that was in* (or, *among) them*

installation rites culminate in the bestowal of an Egyptian name on Joseph. Joseph's adoption into the Egyptian court is further indicated by his marriage into the priesthood of *On* or Heliopolis. No judgment is attached to this intermarriage with an Egyptian foreigner (see Deut 23.8–9). *Potiphera,* see 37.36n. **46:** This is the first Priestly notice since the outset of the Joseph story (37.2). **50–52:** The birth of Joseph's two sons; see 46.20; ch 48.

42.1–38: Joseph's brothers' first journey to Egypt. 5: See 12.10; 26.1. **6:** *Bowed themselves before him,* since all but Benjamin are present, Joseph's first dream (37.5–8) is almost fulfilled (cf. 43.26). **9–14:** The charge of spying is natural, since Egypt's frontier, facing Canaan, was vulnerable to attack (Ex 1.10). Nevertheless, the narrator (v. 9) explains Joseph's accusation as related to his memory of his dreams (37.5–11). **15–17:** Though Joseph claims

Pharaoh lives, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here! 16 Let one of you go and bring your brother, while the rest of you remain in prison, in order that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you; or else, as Pharaoh lives, surely you are spies." 17 And he put them all together in prison for three days.

18 On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: 19 if you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here where you are imprisoned. The rest of you shall go and carry grain for the famine of your households, 20 and bring your youngest brother to me. Thus your words will be verified, and you shall not die." And they agreed to do so. 21 They said to one another, "Alas, we are paying the penalty for what we did to our brother; we saw his anguish when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this anguish has come upon us." 22 Then Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to wrong the boy? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood." 23 They did not know that Joseph understood them, since he spoke with them through an interpreter. 24 He turned away from them and wept; then he returned and spoke to them. And he picked out Simeon and had him bound before their eyes. 25 Joseph then gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to return every man's money to his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. This was done for them.

26 They loaded their donkeys with their grain, and departed. 27 When one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money at the top of the sack. 28 He said to his brothers, "My money has been put back; here it is in my sack!" At this they lost heart and turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, 30 "The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly to us, and charged us with spying on the land. 31 But we said to him, 'We are honest men, we are not spies. 32 We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in the land of Canaan.' 33 Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, take grain for the famine of your households, and go your way. 34 Bring your youngest brother to me, and I shall know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will release your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.' "

35 As they were emptying their sacks, there in each one's sack was his bag of money. When they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed. 36 And their father Jacob said to them, "I am the one you have bereaved of children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has happened to me!" 37 Then Reuben said to his father, "You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." 38 But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should come to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol."

43 Now the famine was severe in the land. 2 And when they had eaten up the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go again, buy us a little more food." 3 But Judah said to him, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' 4 If you will send our brother with

to be "testing" whether his brothers are spies, he actually seems to be "testing" whether they will betray his full brother and father's favorite (v. 4), Benjamin, the way they once betrayed him (see chs 43–44). The reader, however, does not yet know this and is left to wonder about Joseph's motives for putting his brothers through the following ordeal. **21–23:** The brothers' expression of guilt at their earlier betrayal of Joseph hints at the change of heart for which Joseph is looking. **25:** *Money,* lit., "silver"; money in the sense of minted currency was introduced only in the Persian period. **38:** *Sheol,* see 37.35n.

43.1–34: Joseph's brothers' second journey to Egypt. 1–2: Simeon, left as a hostage in Egypt (vv. 14,23), is apparently forgotten, for the brothers return only when more grain is needed. **3–7:** Cf. 42.29–34. **8–10:** Again

us, we will go down and buy you food; 5 but if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.' " 6 Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?" 7 They replied, "The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'?" 8 Then Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the boy with me, and let us be on our way, so that we may live and not die—you and we and also our little ones. 9 I myself will be surety for him; you can hold me accountable for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. 10 If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice."

11 Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry them down as a present to the man—a little balm and a little honey, gum, resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds. 12 Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the top of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. 13 Take your brother also, and be on your way again to the man; 14 may God Almighty[a] grant you mercy before the man, so that he may send back your other brother and Benjamin. As for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." 15 So the men took the present, and they took double the money with them, as well as Benjamin. Then they went on their way down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon." 17 The man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph's house. 18 Now the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph's house, and they said, "It is because of the money, replaced in our sacks the first time, that we have been brought in, so that he may have an opportunity to fall upon us, to make slaves of us and take our donkeys." 19 So they went up to the steward of Joseph's house and spoke with him at the entrance to the house. 20 They said, "Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food; 21 and when we came to the lodging place we opened our sacks, and there was each one's money in the top of his sack, our money in full weight. So we have brought it back with us. 22 Moreover we have brought down with us additional money to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks." 23 He replied, "Rest assured, do not be afraid; your God and the God of your father must have put treasure in your sacks for you; I received your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them. 24 When the steward[b] had brought the men into Joseph's house, and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder, 25 they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they had heard that they would dine there.

26 When Joseph came home, they brought him the present that they had carried into the house, and bowed to the ground before him. 27 He inquired about their welfare, and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" 28 They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads and did obeisance. 29 Then he looked up and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!" 30 With that, Joseph hurried out, because he was overcome with affection for his brother, and he was about to weep. So he went into a private room and wept there. 31 Then he washed his face and came out; and controlling himself he said, "Serve the meal."

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

[b] Heb *the man*

(see 37.26–27) *Judah* is depicted as the hero; see 44.18–34n. **11:** *Balm . . . gum,* and *resin,* echoing 37.25. **14:** *God Almighty,* see 17.1n. **23:** The Egyptian steward anticipates the emphasis of the story on divine providence (44.16; 45.5–8; 50.20). **26:** With all eleven brothers now bowing down (cf. v. 15), they unknowingly fulfill the first dream in 37.5–8 (see 50.18n.). **29–30:** Joseph *was overcome with affection* for Benjamin, his only full brother (through

32 They served him by himself, and them by
themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with
him by themselves, because the Egyptians
could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is
an abomination to the Egyptians. 33 When
they were seated before him, the firstborn
according to his birthright and the young-
est according to his youth, the men looked
at one another in amazement. 34 Portions
were taken to them from Joseph's table, but
Benjamin's portion was five times as much as
any of theirs. So they drank and were merry
with him.

44 Then he commanded the steward
of his house, "Fill the men's sacks
with food, as much as they can carry, and
put each man's money in the top of his sack.
2 Put my cup, the silver cup, in the top of the
sack of the youngest, with his money for the
grain." And he did as Joseph told him. 3 As
soon as the morning was light, the men were
sent away with their donkeys. 4 When they
had gone only a short distance from the city,
Joseph said to his steward, "Go, follow after
the men; and when you overtake them, say to
them, 'Why have you returned evil for good?
Why have you stolen my silver cup?[a] 5 Is it not
from this that my lord drinks? Does he not
indeed use it for divination? You have done
wrong in doing this.' "

6 When he overtook them, he repeated
these words to them. 7 They said to him,
"Why does my lord speak such words as
these? Far be it from your servants that they
should do such a thing! 8 Look, the money
that we found at the top of our sacks, we
brought back to you from the land of Canaan;
why then would we steal silver or gold from
your lord's house? 9 Should it be found
with any one of your servants, let him die;
moreover the rest of us will become my lord's
slaves." 10 He said, "Even so; in accordance
with your words, let it be: he with whom it is
found shall become my slave, but the rest of
you shall go free." 11 Then each one quickly
lowered his sack to the ground, and each
opened his sack. 12 He searched, beginning
with the eldest and ending with the youngest;
and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.
13 At this they tore their clothes. Then each
one loaded his donkey, and they returned to
the city.

14 Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's
house while he was still there; and they fell to
the ground before him. 15 Joseph said to them,
"What deed is this that you have done? Do
you not know that one such as I can practice
divination?" 16 And Judah said, "What can
we say to my lord? What can we speak? How
can we clear ourselves? God has found out
the guilt of your servants; here we are then,
my lord's slaves, both we and also the one in
whose possession the cup has been found."
17 But he said, "Far be it from me that I should
do so! Only the one in whose possession the
cup was found shall be my slave; but as for
you, go up in peace to your father."

18 Then Judah stepped up to him and said,
"O my lord, let your servant please speak a
word in my lord's ears, and do not be angry
with your servant; for you are like Pharaoh

[a] Gk Compare Vg: Heb lacks *Why have you stolen my silver cup?*

Rachel). **34:** Just as Benjamin (42.4,38; 43.6–14) and before him Joseph (37.3–4) was favored by Jacob, so here—through Joseph's actions—the brothers watch a son of Rachel enjoy special privilege in the Egyptian court. The stage is set for a reprise of their murderous envy once shown toward Joseph in Gen 37 and now potentially directed at Benjamin.

44.1–34: Joseph's final test of his brothers. 1–5: Here the focus is on Joseph's cup, a sacred vessel for divination, prediction of the future (cf. 42.25–28). The brothers' (unknowing) taking of the cup and pronouncement of a death penalty on the thief (v. 9) echo the earlier story of Rachel's stealing of Laban's household gods (31.19) and Jacob's pronouncement of the death penalty on the thief (31.32). In a narrative that parallels those stories, Joseph lays a trap for his brothers. **17:** Joseph tests his brothers (see 42.15–17) to see whether they will let Benjamin go into slavery as they once did with him (37.25–35). In this case, the stakes are higher, since the brothers now think that they themselves will go into slavery if they do not betray Benjamin. **18–34:** Judah had secured Jacob's release of Benjamin through offering himself as collateral (43.8–10; see v. 32). Now he steps forth to express a respect for their father's bond to Rachel's son(s) that had not been evident among the brothers before (cf. 37.19–35). This is a prime example of a passage in the Joseph narrative where Judah, rather than the eldest

himself. [19] My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?' [20] And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead; he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.' [21] Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, so that I may set my eyes on him.' [22] We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' [23] Then you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.' [24] When we went back to your servant my father we told him the words of my lord. [25] And when our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food,' [26] we said, 'We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother goes with us, will we go down; for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' [27] Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; [28] one left me, and I said, Surely he has been torn to pieces; and I have never seen him since. [29] If you take this one also from me, and harm comes to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to Sheol.' [30] Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, [31] when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die; and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. [32] For your servant became surety for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I will bear the blame in the sight of my father all my life.' [33] Now therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord in place of the boy; and let the boy go back with his brothers. [34] For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the suffering that would come upon my father."

45 Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. [2] And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. [3] Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

[4] Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. [5] And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. [6] For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. [7] God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. [8] So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. [9] Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. [10] You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. [11] I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.' [12] And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. [13] You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." [14] Then he fell upon

Reuben, plays the role of the most powerful and prominent son (see also 37.26–27; ch 38; 43.3–5,8–10; 46.28). Such texts have typically been assigned to a Judah-Israel (or J) layer of the story (see Introduction and 37.1–11n.), but may rather reflect an attempt in the Joseph story as a whole (perhaps a Northern text) to show even Judah, King David's ancestor, eventually recognizing Joseph's right to rule over his brothers.

45.1–28: Joseph makes himself known to his brothers and father. 1–3: The brothers initially react with shock to the knowledge that they face the brother whom they sold into slavery. **4–13:** Joseph reassures his brothers by telling them that God—not they—sent him into slavery. God sent him there so that he might feed his family in the famine. **10:** *The land of Goshen,* probably located in the eastern Nile Delta. **16–20:** Asiatics are frequently attested as living in Egypt, though no Egyptian records refer specifically to the Israelites living there.

his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

16 When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have come," Pharaoh and his servants were pleased. 17 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your animals and go back to the land of Canaan. 18 Take your father and your households and come to me, so that I may give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you may enjoy the fat of the land.' 19 You are further charged to say, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20 Give no thought to your possessions, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

21 The sons of Israel did so. Joseph gave them wagons according to the instruction of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. 22 To each one of them he gave a set of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five sets of garments. 23 To his father he sent the following: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey. 24 Then he sent his brothers on their way, and as they were leaving he said to them, "Do not quarrel[a] along the way."

25 So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. 26 And they told him, "Joseph is still alive! He is even ruler over all the land of Egypt." He was stunned; he could not believe them. 27 But when they told him all the words of Joseph that he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 Israel said, "Enough! My son Joseph is still alive. I must go and see him before I die."

46 When Israel set out on his journey with all that he had and came to Beer-sheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2 God spoke to Israel in visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." 3 Then he said, "I am God,[b] the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. 4 I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again; and Joseph's own hand shall close your eyes."

5 Then Jacob set out from Beer-sheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 They also took their livestock and the goods that they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, 7 his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters; all his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.

8 Now these are the names of the Israelites, Jacob and his offspring, who came to Egypt. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, 9 and the children of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. 10 The children of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul,[c] the son of a Canaanite woman. 11 The children of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 12 The children of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan); and the children of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. 13 The children of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Jashub,[d] and Shimron. 14 The children of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel 15 (these are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, together with his daughter Dinah; in all his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three). 16 The children of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. 17 The children of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah.

[a] Or *be agitated*
[b] Heb *the God*
[c] Or *Saul*
[d] Compare Sam Gk Num 26.24; 1 Chr 7.1: MT *Iob*

46.1–27: Jacob's migration to Egypt. 1–4: Jacob's first stop on the way out of the land is *Beer-sheba,* where the same God who told Isaac to stay in the land and not to go to Egypt (26.2–3) now tells his son, Jacob, to leave the land for Egypt (see 12.1–3n.; 28.13–15n.). God also expands the earlier promise that Abraham would be a *great nation* (see 12.2n.) by saying that God will make Jacob a great nation in *Egypt* (v. 3; see 47.27; Ex 1.7,9). **8–27:** A Priestly section listing Jacob's descendants by their mothers, using the traditional number seventy (v. 27; Ex 1.5; Deut 10.22). Most names of the clan leaders are in the Priestly list in Num 26. **12:** See ch 38.

The children of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel
18 (these are the children of Zilpah, whom
Laban gave to his daughter Leah; and these
she bore to Jacob—sixteen persons). 19 The
children of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and
Benjamin. 20 To Joseph in the land of Egypt
were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom
Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On,
bore to him. 21 The children of Benjamin: Bela,
Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh,
Muppim, Huppim, and Ard 22 (these are the
children of Rachel, who were born to Jacob—
fourteen persons in all). 23 The children of
Dan: Hashum.[a] 24 The children of Naphtali:
Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem 25 (these are
the children of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to
his daughter Rachel, and these she bore to Ja-
cob—seven persons in all). 26 All the persons
belonging to Jacob who came into Egypt, who
were his own offspring, not including the
wives of his sons, were sixty-six persons in
all. 27 The children of Joseph, who were born
to him in Egypt, were two; all the persons of
the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were
seventy.

28 Israel[b] sent Judah ahead to Joseph to lead
the way before him into Goshen. When they
came to the land of Goshen, 29 Joseph made
ready his chariot and went up to meet his
father Israel in Goshen. He presented himself
to him, fell on his neck, and wept on his neck
a good while. 30 Israel said to Joseph, "I can
die now, having seen for myself that you are
still alive." 31 Joseph said to his brothers and
to his father's household, "I will go up and tell
Pharaoh, and will say to him, 'My brothers
and my father's household, who were in the
land of Canaan, have come to me. 32 The men
are shepherds, for they have been keepers of
livestock; and they have brought their flocks,
and their herds, and all that they have.'
33 When Pharaoh calls you, and says, 'What
is your occupation?' 34 you shall say, 'Your
servants have been keepers of livestock from
our youth even until now, both we and our
ancestors'—in order that you may settle in
the land of Goshen, because all shepherds are
abhorrent to the Egyptians."

47 So Joseph went and told Pharaoh, "My
father and my brothers, with their
flocks and herds and all that they possess,
have come from the land of Canaan; they are
now in the land of Goshen." 2 From among
his brothers he took five men and presented
them to Pharaoh. 3 Pharaoh said to his broth-
ers, "What is your occupation?" And they
said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shep-
herds, as our ancestors were." 4 They said to
Pharaoh, "We have come to reside as aliens
in the land; for there is no pasture for your
servants' flocks because the famine is severe
in the land of Canaan. Now, we ask you, let
your servants settle in the land of Goshen."
5 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father
and your brothers have come to you. 6 The
land of Egypt is before you; settle your father
and your brothers in the best part of the land;
let them live in the land of Goshen; and if
you know that there are capable men among
them, put them in charge of my livestock."

7 Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob,
and presented him before Pharaoh, and Jacob
blessed Pharaoh. 8 Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How
many are the years of your life?" 9 Jacob said to
Pharaoh, "The years of my earthly sojourn are
one hundred thirty; few and hard have been
the years of my life. They do not compare with
the years of the life of my ancestors during
their long sojourn." 10 Then Jacob blessed Phar-
aoh, and went out from the presence of Phar-
aoh. 11 Joseph settled his father and his broth-
ers, and granted them a holding in the land of
Egypt, in the best part of the land, in the land
of Rameses, as Pharaoh had instructed. 12 And
Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and
all his father's household with food, according
to the number of their dependents.

[a] Gk: Heb *Hushim*
[b] Heb *He*

46.28–47.28: Jacob's family settles in Egypt. 46.34: *All shepherds are abhorrent,* no nonbiblical evidence supports this assertion. **47.7,12:** According to this Priestly tradition, *Jacob blessed Pharaoh.* **11:** A Priestly notice. *The land of Rameses* cannot be identified with certainty. The first Egyptian pharaoh with that name ruled at the beginning of the thirteenth century BCE. **13–26:** Joseph's clever impoverishment of the Egyptians here contrasts with his beneficent provision for his own family (see 45.5–11; 50.20–21). **27–28:** Another fragment from P. Here the Priestly fertility promise to Abraham (17.2,6; cf. 1.28; 9.1,7) is fulfilled in Egypt. **27:** *Goshen,* see 45.10n.

13 Now there was no food in all the land, for
the famine was very severe. The land of Egypt
and the land of Canaan languished because of
the famine. 14 Joseph collected all the money to
be found in the land of Egypt and in the land
of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they
bought; and Joseph brought the money into
Pharaoh's house. 15 When the money from the
land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan was
spent, all the Egyptians came to Joseph, and
said, "Give us food! Why should we die before
your eyes? For our money is gone." 16 And
Joseph answered, "Give me your livestock, and
I will give you food in exchange for your live-
stock, if your money is gone." 17 So they brought
their livestock to Joseph; and Joseph gave them
food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the
herds, and the donkeys. That year he sup-
plied them with food in exchange for all their
livestock. 18 When that year was ended, they
came to him the following year, and said to him,
"We can not hide from my lord that our money
is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord's.
There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but
our bodies and our lands. 19 Shall we die before
your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and
our land in exchange for food. We with our land
will become slaves to Pharaoh; just give us seed,
so that we may live and not die, and that the
land may not become desolate."

20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for
Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold their fields,
because the famine was severe upon them;
and the land became Pharaoh's. 21 As for the
people, he made slaves of them[a] from one end
of Egypt to the other. 22 Only the land of the
priests he did not buy; for the priests had a
fixed allowance from Pharaoh, and lived on
the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; there-
fore they did not sell their land. 23 Then Joseph
said to the people, "Now that I have this day
bought you and your land for Pharaoh, here
is seed for you; sow the land. 24 And at the
harvests you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh,
and four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for
the field and as food for yourselves and your
households, and as food for your little ones."
25 They said, "You have saved our lives; may it
please my lord, we will be slaves to Pharaoh."
26 So Joseph made it a statute concerning the
land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that
Pharaoh should have the fifth. The land of the
priests alone did not become Pharaoh's.

27 Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt,
in the region of Goshen; and they gained pos-
sessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied
exceedingly. 28 Jacob lived in the land of Egypt
seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years
of his life, were one hundred forty-seven years.

29 When the time of Israel's death drew
near, he called his son Joseph and said to him,
"If I have found favor with you, put your hand
under my thigh and promise to deal loyally
and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt.
30 When I lie down with my ancestors, carry
me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial
place." He answered, "I will do as you have
said." 31 And he said, "Swear to me"; and he
swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself on
the head of his bed.

48 After this Joseph was told, "Your father
is ill." So he took with him his two
sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2 When Jacob
was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you,"
he[b] summoned his strength and sat up in bed.
3 And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty[c] ap-
peared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and
he blessed me, 4 and said to me, 'I am going to
make you fruitful and increase your numbers;
I will make of you a company of peoples, and
will give this land to your offspring after you

[a] Sam Gk Compare Vg: MT *He removed them to the cities*
[b] Heb *Israel*
[c] Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

47.29–49.33: Jacob's preparations for death, including the adoption and blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh. This section is viewed by many scholars as a series of later insertions into the Joseph story, linking it back to the Jacob story and forward to the story of the Israelites in Exodus. **47.29:** *Put your hand under my thigh,* see 24.2n. **30–31:** Joseph binds himself by oath to bury Jacob in an ancestral burial place, perhaps in Transjordan (see 50.10n.). This non-Priestly notice parallels the Priestly notice where Jacob orders his sons to bury him in the cave at Machpelah (49.29–33; see ch 23). **48.3–6:** This Priestly narrative refers to the Priestly Bethel (Luz) account (35.9–13) in describing Jacob's adoption of his two grandsons by Joseph. The narrative accounts for the division of the "house of Joseph" (Josh 17.17; 18.5; Judg 1.23,35) into two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim.

for a perpetual holding.' [5] Therefore your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are now mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are. [6] As for the offspring born to you after them, they shall be yours. They shall be recorded under the names of their brothers with regard to their inheritance. [7] For when I came from Paddan, Rachel, alas, died in the land of Canaan on the way, while there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem).

[8] When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" [9] Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." And he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them." [10] Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, and he could not see well. So Joseph brought them near him; and he kissed them and embraced them. [11] Israel said to Joseph, "I did not expect to see your face; and here God has let me see your children also." [12] Then Joseph removed them from his father's knees,[a] and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. [13] Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them near him. [14] But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands, for Manasseh was the firstborn.

[15] He blessed Joseph, and said,

"The God before whom my ancestors
Abraham and Isaac walked,
the God who has been my shepherd all my
life to this day,
[16] the angel who has redeemed me from all
harm, bless the boys;
and in them let my name be perpetuated,
and the name of my ancestors
Abraham and Isaac;
and let them grow into a multitude on the
earth."

[17] When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. [18] Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father! Since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head." [19] But his father refused, and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations." [20] So he blessed them that day, saying,

"By you[b] Israel will invoke blessings,
saying,
'God make you[b] like Ephraim and like
Manasseh.' "

So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

[21] Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your ancestors. [22] I now give to you one portion[c] more than to your brothers, the portion[c] that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow."

49 Then Jacob called his sons, and said: "Gather around, that I may tell you what will happen to you in days to come.

[a] Heb *from his knees*
[b] *you* here is singular in Heb
[c] Or *mountain slope* (Heb *shekem*, a play on the name of the town and district of Shechem)

7: 35.16–20. **8–14:** In having Jacob favor the younger son, Ephraim, over the older, Manasseh, this non-Priestly narrative echoes the previous accounts of Jacob's achievement of ascendancy over Esau (25.22–34; 27.1–45). Like the older Joseph story into which this scene is inserted (see 47.28–49.33n.), this section may intend to predict the Ephraimite Jeroboam's ascendancy over the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 11.26; 12.1–14.20; see 37.5–8n.). **10:** Cf. 27.1. **15–16:** Jacob passes onto the Joseph tribes the special blessing of Abraham and Isaac (12.1–3; 26.2–5; etc.). **17–19:** See 8–14n. **20:** This older version of the blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. vv. 15–16) is an example of people "blessing themselves by" another (see 12.3n.). **22:** In Hebrew *one portion* (or "shoulder," Heb "shekem") is a play on the name "Shechem" (see 12.6n.). *With my sword and with my bow,* cf. 33.19–34.31. *Amorites,* see 10.16–18a n.

49.1–28: Jacob's blessing on his twelve sons. Though the poem is depicted as a deathbed *blessing* by the text following it (49.28; cf. 27.4 and n.), this poem seems to have been originally designed as a prediction of the

[2] Assemble and hear, O sons of Jacob;
listen to Israel your father.

[3] Reuben, you are my firstborn,
my might and the first fruits of my vigor,
excelling in rank and excelling in power.
[4] Unstable as water, you shall no longer excel
because you went up onto your father's bed;
then you defiled it—you[a] went up onto my couch!

[5] Simeon and Levi are brothers;
weapons of violence are their swords.
[6] May I never come into their council;
may I not be joined to their company—
for in their anger they killed men,
and at their whim they hamstrung oxen.
[7] Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,
and their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob,
and scatter them in Israel.

[8] Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.
[9] Judah is a lion's whelp;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion,
like a lioness—who dares rouse him up?
[10] The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;[b]
and the obedience of the peoples is his.
[11] Binding his foal to the vine
and his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
he washes his garments in wine
and his robe in the blood of grapes;
[12] his eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth whiter than milk.

[13] Zebulun shall settle at the shore of the sea;
he shall be a haven for ships,
and his border shall be at Sidon.

[14] Issachar is a strong donkey,
lying down between the sheepfolds;
[15] he saw that a resting place was good,
and that the land was pleasant;
so he bowed his shoulder to the burden,
and became a slave at forced labor.

[16] Dan shall judge his people
as one of the tribes of Israel.
[17] Dan shall be a snake by the roadside,
a viper along the path,
that bites the horse's heels
so that its rider falls backward.

[a] Gk Syr Tg: Heb *he*
[b] Or *until Shiloh comes* or *until he comes to Shiloh* or (with Syr) *until he comes to whom it belongs*

destinies, good and bad, of the tribes of Israel. Many scholars have argued that the poem is ancient on the basis of its language and resemblance to other supposedly ancient tribal poems in Deut 33 and Judg 5. Nevertheless, the present form of the poem appears to have been modified to fit the narrative context in which it has been put. Its first part follows the birth order of 29.31–35 and legitimates rule for Judah and—by extension—the Davidic dynasty. The author of these changes may be responsible for inserting the whole poem into its present context, as well as for the addition to the Jacob-Joseph story of the narratives referred to in 49.3–7 (30.21; 34.1–31; 35.21–22a; cf. 37.36–38.30). **3–4:** This section justifies Reuben's ejection from favor as firstborn by recalling the story of his sleeping with his father's concubine (see 35.22n.). **5–7:** Judah's older brothers, Simeon and Levi, fail to take Reuben's place because of their role in the despoiling of Shechem (34.25–31). **8–12:** With his three older brothers out of favor (vv. 3–7), Judah receives the greatest part of his father's blessing. The narrative of the succession to David features a similar displacement of three older sons: Amnon (2 Sam 13), Absalom (2 Sam 15–18), and Adonijah (1 Kings 1–2). See 38.27–30n. **10:** The *scepter* and *staff* are symbols of sovereignty. The latter part of the verse, however, is obscure (see note *b*). It appears to predict rule for Judean royalty (Num 24.17; Pss 2, 110).**13–27:** This latter part of the blessing (vv. 13–27) diverges from the birth order of 30.1–24. This section appears to predate placement into its present context in the story of Jacob and Joseph. **16:** The tribal name *Dan*

18 I wait for your salvation, O LORD.

19 Gad shall be raided by raiders,
but he shall raid at their heels.

20 Asher's[a] food shall be rich,
and he shall provide royal delicacies.

21 Naphtali is a doe let loose
that bears lovely fawns.[b]

22 Joseph is a fruitful bough,
a fruitful bough by a spring;
his branches run over the wall.[c]
23 The archers fiercely attacked him;
they shot at him and pressed him hard.
24 Yet his bow remained taut,
and his arms[d] were made agile
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,
by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,
25 by the God of your father, who will help you,
by the Almighty[e] who will bless you
with blessings of heaven above,
blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
26 The blessings of your father
are stronger than the blessings of the eternal mountains,
the bounties[f] of the everlasting hills;
may they be on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.

27 Benjamin is a ravenous wolf,
in the morning devouring the prey,
and at evening dividing the spoil."

28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, blessing each one of them with a suitable blessing.

29 Then he charged them, saying to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my ancestors—in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave in the field at Machpelah, near Mamre, in the land of Canaan, in the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. 31 There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried; there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried; and there I buried Leah— 32 the field and the cave that is in it were purchased from the Hittites." 33 When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

50 Then Joseph threw himself on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. 2 Joseph commanded the physicians in his service to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel; 3 they spent forty days in doing this, for that is the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.

4 When the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph addressed the household of Pharaoh, "If now I have found favor with you, please speak to Pharaoh as follows: 5 My father made me swear an oath; he said, 'I am about to die. In the tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.' Now therefore let me go up, so that I may bury my father; then I will return."

[a] Gk Vg Syr: Heb *From Asher*
[b] Or *that gives beautiful words*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Heb *the arms of his hands*
[e] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[f] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *of my progenitors to the boundaries*

is derived from the Hebrew verb for "judge" ("dan"). **22–26:** The lengthy blessing on Joseph and its triumphant conclusion (v. 26) suggest that he may have been the original focus of the early blessing (see 49.1–28n.). **25:** *The Almighty,* see 17.1n. *Blessings of heaven,* i.e., rain, dew, sun. *The deep that lies beneath,* an allusion to the subterranean ocean (see 1.6; 2.6). Compare Deut 33.13.

49.29–33: This Priestly section includes an order to bury Jacob at Machpelah (see ch 23) that parallels the earlier non-Priestly burial order (47.29–31).

50.1–26: Burial of Jacob and final days of Joseph. 1–11: This non-Priestly narrative presupposes that the burial and mourning occurred in Transjordan, not at the cave at Machpelah (23.1,19). **2–3:** Jacob is provided with Egyptian honors: embalming and lengthy mourning. **5:** This speech by Joseph links to the non-Priestly order

6 Pharaoh answered, "Go up, and bury your
father, as he made you swear to do."
7 So Joseph went up to bury his father.
With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the
elders of the land of Egypt, 8 as well as all the
household of Joseph, his brothers, and his
father's household. Only their children, their
flocks, and their herds were left in the land of
Goshen. 9 Both chariots and charioteers went
up with him. It was a very great company.
10 When they came to the threshing floor of
Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they held
there a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed a time of mourning for
his father seven days. 11 When the Canaanite
inhabitants of the land saw the mourning on
the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is
a grievous mourning on the part of the Egyptians." Therefore the place was named Abelmizraim;[a] it is beyond the Jordan. 12 Thus his
sons did for him as he had instructed them.
13 They carried him to the land of Canaan and
buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham
bought as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. 14 After he had buried his father, Joseph
returned to Egypt with his brothers and all
who had gone up with him to bury his father.
15 Realizing that their father was dead,
Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still
bears a grudge against us and pays us back
in full for all the wrong that we did to him?"
16 So they approached[b] Joseph, saying, "Your
father gave this instruction before he died,
17 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime
of your brothers and the wrong they did in
harming you.' Now therefore please forgive
the crime of the servants of the God of your
father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him.
18 Then his brothers also wept,[c] fell down
before him, and said, "We are here as your
slaves." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not
be afraid! Am I in the place of God? 20 Even
though you intended to do harm to me, God
intended it for good, in order to preserve a
numerous people, as he is doing today. 21 So
have no fear; I myself will provide for you
and your little ones." In this way he reassured
them, speaking kindly to them.
22 So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's household; and Joseph lived one hundred
ten years. 23 Joseph saw Ephraim's children of
the third generation; the children of Machir son
of Manasseh were also born on Joseph's knees.
24 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am
about to die; but God will surely come to you,
and bring you up out of this land to the land
that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to
Jacob." 25 So Joseph made the Israelites swear,
saying, "When God comes to you, you shall
carry up my bones from here." 26 And Joseph
died, being one hundred ten years old; he was
embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

[a] That is *mourning* (or *meadow) of Egypt*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *they commanded*
[c] Cn: Heb *also came*

to bury him at an ancestral burial place, here a tomb that Jacob had hewn out for himself (see 47.30–31n.). **10:** Hebron/Mamre (see v. 13) is much closer to Egypt than this unidentified location in Transjordan. **12–13:** The Priestly narrative. **15–16:** In fear now that their father is dead (cf. 27.41 and 33.12–17n.), Joseph's brothers attempt to protect themselves by making up a report that Jacob had ordered Joseph to forgive them (vv. 16–17). **18–21:** For the first time, the brothers knowingly subject themselves to Joseph (cf. 43.26), fulfilling Joseph's first dream (37.5–7) and thus refuting their challenge of his destiny to rule them (37.8). Since they had just spoken of themselves as God's slaves (v. 17; translated in the NRSV as *servants*), their description of themselves here as Joseph's slaves implicitly equates him with God. Echoing his father's words to Rachel (30.2), Joseph rejects this equation, attributing his dominion over his brothers as resulting from God's plan. Later readers could have taken this as an implicit endorsement of the divine destiny of Joseph's descendants—such as the Ephraimite king Jeroboam (1 Kings 11.26)—to rule over the other tribes. **23:** *Machir* was an early tribal group (Judg 5.14), later viewed as a clan within Manasseh that laid claim to Gilead (Num 32.39–40; Deut 3.15). *Born on Joseph's knees,* see 30.3. **24:** A reference to God's covenant oath to give the land to Abraham (15.9–17n.; 22.15–18). It closely resembles similar texts in Deut 1.8; 6.10; and related materials. **25:** This request will be fulfilled in Ex 13.19; Josh 24.2, one of the links between Genesis and the narrative extending to the end of Joshua. 26: The conclusion of Joseph's life closely parallels the conclusion of Joshua's life (Josh 24.29), and the burial of Joseph's bones in the land just after Joshua's death (24.32).

EXODUS

NAME

The English name "Exodus," which derives from a Latinized abbreviation of the Greek title *exodos aigyptou* ("exit from Egypt"), highlights the storyline of the first third of the book. In keeping with the ancient practice of naming books after their opening words, the main Hebrew title is *Shemot* ("names"), taken from the book's beginning ("These are the names").

CANONICAL STATUS AND LOCATION

The second book of the Bible in all canonical traditions, Exodus is not an independent work but rather is an integral part of the Torah, or Pentateuch. Its opening verses connect it to Gen 46.8–27; and it closes with the completion of the tabernacle, the wilderness shrine that prefigures the Temple as a dwelling for the divine presence. Details of worship at that shrine dominate the next book, Leviticus; and Numbers and Deuteronomy continue the journey narrative.

AUTHORSHIP

Authorship is traditionally ascribed to Moses, in part based on passages such as 24.4 and 34.27. Modern biblical scholarship, however, has noted many problems with the view that Moses wrote the entire Torah, including Exodus. Like the rest of the Pentateuch, Exodus contains contradictions and redundancies. For example, Moses's father-in-law is sometimes called Reuel and sometimes Jethro; and the mountain of revelation is Sinai in some passages and Horeb in others. The narratives of Moses on the mountain in chs 19 and 24 have many overlapping and conflicting details, as does the account of the calamities—called "ten plagues" in postbiblical tradition but not in the Bible—against the Egyptians in 7.8–10.29. Differences in vocabulary, style, and ideas are also evident. Thus Exodus is best understood as a composite of streams of traditions shaped over many centuries by an unknown number of anonymous storytellers and writers. Eventually those traditions—often labeled J, E, D, and P according to critical biblical scholarship—were skillfully combined into the present canonical book by one or more redactors or editors who accepted these multiple traditions as valid. The redactor(s) or editor(s) can be credited with the overall interweaving of disparate materials—narratives, legal texts, priestly records, lists, and one long poem. Redaction also introduced or maintained patterns, such as the repetition of a thematic word or phrase a symbolic number of times (usually seven or ten) in a literary unit (see, e.g., 4.21n.; 5.1n.; 18.26n.; 40.16n.), and also the triadic arrangement of the account of the nine marvels (see 7.8–10.29n.).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The diverse materials in Exodus are situated within a story line describing the departure of a group of oppressed people from Egypt to a sacred mountain in Sinai where they enter into a covenant with the God they believed rescued them; then, at that God's direction, they construct a portable shrine for their deity before continuing their journey. The historicity of that story has been questioned, partly because the literary strands comprising Exodus date from many centuries after the events they purport to describe. The events themselves, which involve the escape of a component of Pharaoh's workforce, the disruption of Egyptian agriculture, and the loss of many Egyptian lives, are not mentioned in Egyptian sources (although the Egyptians would not necessarily record such events). Similarly, the larger-than-life leader Moses is not mentioned in contemporaneous nonbiblical sources; and no trace of a large group of people moving across the Sinai Peninsula has been found by archaeological surveys or excavations. In addition, features of the story—such as the signs and wonders performed in Egypt, the exceedingly large number of people said to have left Egypt (see 12.37n.), and the huge quantities of precious metals (e.g., ca. 2,482 pounds of gold; see 38.24) used to construct the tabernacle and other ritual objects—defy credibility. Virtually none of the places mentioned in Exodus, including the holy mountain, can be identified with sites discovered in Sinai or with names known from other sources (see 12.37n.; 19.1n.). Finally, the Exodus story culminates in the book of Joshua, with the conquest of the land of Israel; here too the archaeological record does not corroborate the main biblical narrative.

Despite these problems, the basic story line about the departure from Egypt fits broad evidence from Egyptian and other sources. Foreigners from western Asia, called "Asiatics" in Egyptian documents, periodically did migrate to Egypt, especially during times of famine (see Gen 12.10; 41.57; 43.1–2); others were taken to Egypt as military captives or were forcibly sent there as human tribute by Canaanite rulers. Moreover, many such groups, including those who voluntarily entered Egypt, were conscripted for state projects (see Ex 1.11–14). This pattern was especially strong toward the end of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1400–1200 BCE). And, although virtually all of the foreigners in Egypt were assimilated into local culture, there is at least one documented instance of several workers escaping into the Sinai wilderness. Thus the overall pattern of descent into Egypt followed by servitude and escape accords with general information in ancient documents. In addition, the end of the Late Bronze Age, by which time the Israelites would have left Egypt, coincides with the date of inscriptional evidence—a stele erected by Pharaoh Merneptah in ca. 1209 BCE—for a people called "Israel" in the land of Canaan, the first mention of Israel outside the Bible.

A plausible reconstruction is that a relatively small group of people, descendants of western Asiatics who had entered Egypt generations before, managed to escape from servitude. So improbable was such an event that the people, or their leader, attributed it to miraculous divine intervention. This experience bonded them in their loyalty to that deity and gave them a collective identity. This story was originally oral and developed like other oral tales. Upon entering Canaan, they told their story and spread word about their unusual saving God, Yahweh, a name perhaps learned from Midianites with whom they interacted (see 3.15n.). Their stories about securing freedom are collective memories meant to re-create for others the intense emotional experience of liberation rather than to record accurate details of their escape. As time passed, major features of Israelite culture—such as the main agricultural festivals (especially passover), the custom of redeeming firstborn males, the idea of a people in a covenant relationship with God, prophets as transmitters of God's word, the sabbath, the construction of a central shrine as God's earthly abode, a sacrificial system administered by priests—were assimilated into the core Exodus narrative, which gave them emotional power and authority (see 11.1–13.16n.). This commemoration of the past makes the experience of a few the collective story, the very identity, of the community taking shape and expanding in the highlands of Canaan and later struggling to survive the traumas of division and exile.

LITERARY HISTORY

The components of the book of Exodus have been so skillfully woven together that it often is not possible to reconstruct the process by which they emerged and were ultimately combined. The overall story comprises several traditions, perhaps related to the southern (Judean) J and northern (Israelite) E posited by biblical scholarship, that arose during the monarchic period, with the long poem of ch 15 likely an independent composition predating the narrative strands. Deuteronomic elements (D, usually linked to late monarchic developments) can also be identified; it is even possible that all three streams of tradition drew from a core commemorative account but developed it in their own particular ways. A strong P (Priestly) component is also present at the end of the book, in the passages dealing with the sanctuary, priests, and rituals, and in several points of the earlier story line, notably in the accounts of the marvels in Egypt and the deliverance at the sea. The final redaction reflects Priestly emphases of the sixth century BCE or later but also preserves ritual and ceremonial practices many centuries older.

STRUCTURE

The book can be subdivided into thematic and literary units in various ways; this one positions the revelation at Sinai and the covenant in the center:

Part I: Israel in and out of Egypt (1.1–15.21): God sees Israelite suffering in Egypt (chs 1–2), Moses becomes God's spokesperson (3.1–7.7), and a series of calamities (7.7–13.16), known in tradition as the "ten plagues," culminate in the escape of the people (13.17–15.21).

Part II: Sinai and covenant (15.22–24.18): After traveling through the wilderness (15.22–18.27), the Israelites reach Mount Sinai, where they experience a theophany (a divine appearance, chs 19, 24), and receive the covenant (chs 20–23).

Part III: Sanctuary and new covenant (25:1–40:34): An episode of apostasy followed by covenant renewal (chs 32–34) separates instructions for building the sanctuary (chs 25–31) from the account of its construction (chs 35–40).

INTERPRETATION

Exodus is arguably the most important book in the Hebrew Bible. It contains an explanation of God's name YHWH and also fundamental biblical ideas about God, especially that God responds to and saves people who are suffering or oppressed. Major institutions of ancient Israel—such as prophecy, covenant, community regulations, a central shrine, festivals, sacrifice, and the sabbath—are grounded in the narrative of liberation. The Exodus story likely struck a resonant chord for Judeans experiencing defeat and exile in the sixth century BCE and later; for them, maintaining or restoring the institutions set forth in Exodus contributed to their emerging identity and to their very survival as a dispersed people. A similar dynamic is true for subsequent Jewish history. Although the institutions of Exodus played a lesser role in Christian tradition, the concept of divine self-revelation as manifest in Jesus Christ is rooted in the prominence of God's self-revelation in Exodus; and the story of suffering leading to redemption shapes key Christian beliefs. For both Jews and Christians, identification with the suffering in Egypt contributes to the moral imperative to alleviate the suffering of others. As a story of liberation, Exodus has infused hope into many peoples. Despite its many positive features, however, some aspects of Exodus—such as the loss of innocent Egyptian lives and the investment of community resources in an elaborate shrine—continue to trouble readers.

Carol Meyers

1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: [2] Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, [3] Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, [4] Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. [5] The total number of people born to Jacob was seventy. Joseph was already in Egypt. [6] Then Joseph died, and all his brothers, and that whole generation. [7] But the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

[8] Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. [9] He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. [10] Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." [11] Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. [12] But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and

1.1–15.21: Israel in and out of Egypt. The Israelites are oppressed in Egypt; but they escape through the intervention of their God, whose identity is revealed to their heroic leader Moses, who then carries out God's directives to secure their release.

1.1–22: The oppression of the Israelites. The introductory chapter, preceding the birth of Moses, connects Exodus with Genesis and serves as a prologue to the story of deliverance by describing how the Israelites became oppressed (in fulfillment of Gen 15.13). **1–7**: A shortened recapitulation of the account in Gen 46.8–27 of Jacob's family relocating in Egypt. **1**: *Israel* here refers to the patriarch Jacob (see Gen 32.28). **2–4**: Jacob's sons, the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel, are listed by groups according to their mothers (see Gen 29.31–30.24; 35.16–20,23–26): Leah's six sons; Rachel's second son; two sons each of the handmaids Bilhah and Zilpah; and Rachel's firstborn *Joseph*, the one with a position of power in the Egyptian court (Gen 41.37–45). **5:** Because the number seven and its multiples symbolize totality, the notion of *seventy* descendants of Jacob signifies that all Israel is present in Egypt (cf. Gen 46.27; Deut 10.22). **7**: The language of Israelite increase echoes God's commands at creation (Gen 1.28) and after the flood (Gen 9.1,7) and also God's promises to the ancestors (Gen 12.2; 15.5; 17.2; 18.18; 22.17; 26.4; 28.14; 46.3; 48.4), suggesting that originally broader divine promises are now fulfilled through Israel. **8–14**: The Egyptian ruler considers Israelite population growth a threat and attempts to restrict it, first by subjecting the Israelites to *forced labor*. **8**: The *new king* is often identified as Rameses II (1279–1213 BCE), but he is not named here or anywhere in the Bible. This anonymity, which perhaps demeans him, gives the narrative a general character. **10**: The possibility of *escape* is mentioned, foreshadowing what will eventually happen. **11**: *Forced labor* refers to corvée or compulsory unpaid labor, a typical way to mobilize labor for state projects in the ancient Near East (e.g., 1 Kings 5.13). *Supply cities* in border areas served military purposes. *Pithom* and *Rameses*

spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. 13 The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, 14 and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 16 "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." 17 But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. 18 So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" 19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." 20 So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. 22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews[a] you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. 3 When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. 4 His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

5 The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. 6 When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women

[a] Sam Gk Tg: Heb lacks *to the Hebrews*

were probably located in the eastern Nile Delta, protecting the northeastern frontier of Egypt; attempts to identify them with sites dating to the reign of Rameses II are inconclusive. **13–14**: Words using the Heb root meaning "to serve" appear five times in these two verses (translated *imposing tasks*, *service*, *labor*, *tasks*, and *imposed*), emphasizing the difficult lives of the Israelites; they are forced to work in state agriculture as well as construction. **15–22**: Forced labor fails to deplete the Israelite population, so another strategy, selective infanticide, is implemented. **15:** *Hebrew* seems to denote Israelites as a people, often in the speech of non-Israelites (e.g., Gen 14.13; Ex 21.2; 1 Sam 29.3), where it may be a derogatory term. *Shiphrah* and *Puah* are the first two of twelve women featured in the life of Moses, the deliverer of the twelve tribes. Some interpreters and ancient traditions consider them Egyptians who are "midwives to the Hebrews" rather than *Hebrew midwives*, but their Semitic names make it more likely that they are Hebrews. **16**: *Birthstool*, probably the two bricks or stones on which parturient women squatted; that position facilitated delivery. The instruction to *kill* infant boys, not girls, in order to limit population growth suggests the king's ineptitude and introduces the violence that will recur in the ensuing story of oppression and liberation. **17:** *Feared God* indicates an awareness that killing would cause divine retribution. Heb *Elohim* is used for the deity here and often in the non-Priestly parts of Exodus, suggesting that much of the narrative derives from the E (Elohist) source. **22**: *Every boy . . . you shall throw into the Nile*, the final strategy for depleting the Israelite population, anticipates the appearance of the baby Moses.

2.1–25: The emergence of Moses. 1–10: As in the birth legends of other heroic figures in ancient literature, the miraculous rescue of the doomed infant Moses signifies that he is destined for greatness. **1:** Moses's parents, both from the priestly tribe of *Levi*, are named in 6.20. *Woman*, Moses's mother, the third in a series of twelve women featured in chs 1–2; see 1.15n. **2**: *Saw that he was a fine baby*, lit., "saw that he was good," echoes the language of creation in Gen 1. **3**: The Heb word for *basket* appears elsewhere in the Bible only as a designation for Noah's ark (Gen 6.14), on which Noah and his family and the animals are saved. Here it is the means for rescuing the person who will save the Israelites. *Reeds*, see 13.18n. **4**: Moses's *sister*, named Miriam in 15.20 (perhaps in a different source), is the fourth woman of the story (see 1.15n.). She appears in more books of the Hebrew Bible (Numbers, Deuteronomy, 1 Chronicles, and Micah) than any other woman. **5**: The *royal daughter* is the fifth woman of chs 1–2; see 1.15n. **6**: *Hebrew*, see 1.15n. **7**: Hiring a wet *nurse* was usually a practice of elites in the ancient Near East.

to nurse the child for you?" [8] Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. [9] Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. [10] When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses,[a] "because," she said, "I drew him out[b] of the water."

[11] One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and saw their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk. [12] He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. [13] When he went out the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting; and he said to the one who was in the wrong, "Why do you strike your fellow Hebrew?" [14] He answered, "Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "Surely the thing is known." [15] When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses.

But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well. [16] The priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. [17] But some shepherds came and drove them away. Moses got up and came to their defense and watered their flock. [18] When they returned to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come back so soon today?" [19] They said, "An Egyptian helped us against the shepherds; he even drew water for us and watered the flock." [20] He said to his daughters, "Where is he? Why did you leave the man? Invite him to break bread." [21] Moses agreed to stay with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage. [22] She bore a son, and he named him Gershom; for he said, "I have been an alien[c] residing in a foreign land."

[23] After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. [24] God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. [25] God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

3 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and

[a] Heb *Mosheh*
[b] Heb *mashah*
[c] Heb *ger*

10: *Moses*, an Egyptian name meaning "is born" and often joined with a god's name in Egyptian personal names (e.g., Thutmoses, Ahmoses, Rameses), is given a Heb etymology ("he who draws out") in anticipation of Moses's role in drawing his people through the sea (14.21–29; cf. Isa 63.11). **11–15**: In the first two episodes of his adult life, Moses saves one Hebrew and tries to adjudicate between two others; both roles will recur and involve all his people. **11**: *His kinsfolk*, he identifies with his people even though he was raised in the Egyptian court. **14–15a**: Moses is rejected by his own people, and Pharaoh seeks his life. **14**: *Ruler*, Heb "sar"; cf. 18.21,25. *Judge*, anticipates one of Moses's many roles; see 18.13–27n. **15b–22:** Moses flees to Midian and marries. **15b**: *Midian*, in northwest Arabia. The Midianites, said to be descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Gen 25.2), were caravaneers whose routes stretched across Sinai toward Egypt. A *well*, where Moses meets his future wife, a pattern appearing in the stories of Rebekah (Gen 24) and Rachel (Gen 29). **16**: Moses's future father-in-law is a *priest*, who plays an important role in ch 18. *Seven daughters*, making a total of twelve female figures (see 1.15n.). **17**: Saved by the daughter of a king, Moses now saves the daughters of a priest, one of whom will save him (4.24–26); the motif of saving recurs, anticipating the ultimate salvation or deliverance at the sea (13.17–15.21). **18**: *Reuel*, elsewhere called Jethro (as 3.1) or Hobab (Judg 4.11), likely reflecting different ancient sources. **19**: Probably because of his clothing, Moses is mistaken for an *Egyptian*. **21**: *Gave . . . in marriage*, lit., "gave . . . as a wife," a Heb idiom for marriage. **23–25**: A postscript to the marriage episode provides a transition to the account of Moses becoming deliverer of his people in response to God's call. *God* is mentioned in the midwives episode but only now is said to be aware of the Israelites' plight. **23**: They *cried*, the Egyptians eventually will cry louder (11.6), and the Israelites will cry again at the sea (14.10). Their *slavery*, that is, "their work." **24**: Referring to the ancestral *covenant* (Heb "berit," as in 6.4–5; cf. 25.16n.) links Exodus with Genesis and anticipates the Sinai covenant (Ex 19–24).

3.1–4.17: Moses's call and mission. The god of the ancestors appears to Moses in Midian, reveals the divine name, and commissions him to free his people. The term "prophet" is not used for Moses in Exodus, but this

came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 3 Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." 4 When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10 So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12 He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

13 But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."[a] He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the

[a] Or *I AM WHAT I AM* or *I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE*

call narrative, similar to Isa 6, Jer 1.4–10, and Ezek 1–3, presents him as one. **3.1–10**: Theophany: a divine revelation at the bush, where several sources have been combined. **1**: *Keeping the flock*, a shepherd is a metaphor for both human (e.g., 1 Sam 17.15; 2 Sam 5.2; 7.8) and divine (e.g., Pss 23.1; 80.1; 100.3) kings. *Horeb*, used only three times in Exodus, only in the E source, but ordinarily in Deuteronomy), is called *mountain of God*, perhaps indicating its sanctity for Midianites. More often the holy mountain is called "Sinai" in Exodus; see 19.1. **2**: An *angel* (lit., "messenger") is a manifestation of God, who sometimes takes human form. God's physical presence also appears shielded in clouds and *fire* (e.g., Ex 19.9; 24.15–18; 33.9; 40.34–38), both sometimes depicted as *pillars* (Ex 13.21; 14.19,24); seeing God directly can be dangerous (see 3.6n). *Bush*, Heb *seneh*, an unidentifiable shrub perhaps alluding alliteratively to Sinai (cf. Deut 33.16), another site of divine presence and revelation. God's appearance in a bush may also reflect the symbolism of plants or trees as markers of fertility and divine presence (see 25.31–40n.). **5**: *Place* (Heb "maqom") often signifies holy space (Gen 28.11; Josh 5.15), as does *holy ground;* both indicate a site of theophany. **6**: Divine presence represents such intense, mysterious, and powerful holiness that it was considered dangerous to humans, hence Moses's reluctance to *look* at God's (physical) manifestation (see 19.10–15n.; cf. 24.10; 33.20,23; 34.29–35; contrast 33.11). **8**: *Come down* implies that God resides in a heavenly abode (see 25.9n.). *Flowing with milk and honey* (also 33.3), a recurrent vision of a fertile land, is a reality only when people obey God (Deut 28). *Honey* is not bees' honey but rather syrup made from cooking dates or grapes. *Canaanites . . . Jebusites* is one of several lists in the Pentateuch of the indigenous inhabitants of the land; the longest appears in Gen 15.19–21; cf. 13.5; 23.23,28; 33.2; 34.11. **10**: Prophets are called and then sent to deliver God's message (Isa 6.8; Jer 1.7). **3.11–4.17**. Prophets are often reluctant, and Moses confronts God with four problematic issues. **3.11–12**: Moses's first problem is a sense of unworthiness for the mission; and the *sign* of divine help will be worship at the mountain. **13–15**: The next problem is not knowing God's name. Deities were identified by their proper names (not by generic "God"), and the Israelites will want to know which god has sent Moses to them. **14**: *I am who I am* (Heb "'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh") renders the first name that God provides; a shortened form, *I am* ("'ehyeh"), renders the second. These translations are uncertain, however, for the Hebrew is ambiguous. **15**: The third name is *LORD*, which has four Heb letters, "yhwh" (probably pronounced Yahweh) in Hebrew and is thus known as the Tetragrammaton. Like the first two versions of God's name, its root means "to be" but its specific meaning is unclear. Because of the great sanctity of God's name, early Jewish tra-

Israelites, 'The LORD,[a] the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you':

This is my name forever,
and this my title for all generations.

16 Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying: I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. 17 I declare that I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.' 18 They will listen to your voice; and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; let us now go a three days' journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.' 19 I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand.[b] 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go. 21 I will bring this people into such favor with the Egyptians that, when you go, you will not go empty-handed; 22 each woman shall ask her neighbor and any woman living in the neighbor's house for jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters; and so you shall plunder the Egyptians."

4 Then Moses answered, "But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.' " 2 The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." 3 And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses drew back from it. 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out your hand, and seize it by the tail"—so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand— 5 "so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

6 Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." He put his hand into his cloak; and when he took it out, his hand was leprous,[c] as white as snow. 7 Then God said, "Put your hand back into your cloak"—so he put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored like the rest of his body— 8 "If they will not believe you or heed the first sign, they may believe the second sign. 9 If they will not believe even these two signs or heed you, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

[a] The word "LORD" when spelled with capital letters stands for the divine name, *YHWH,* which is here connected with the verb *hayah,* "to be"

[b] Gk Vg: Heb *no, not by a mighty hand*

[c] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

dition avoided pronouncing it and used the Heb word *ʾadonay* ("my lord") as a substitute. Most translations respect that tradition and use LORD for the deity's proper name. According to Gen 4.26 (see also Gen 13.4), people knew God's name early in human history; but this passage along with 6.3 preserves a different tradition, that Moses is the first to hear it. In ancient nonbiblical sources this divine name is known from a Late Bronze Age inscription that mentions the "Shasu of *ya-h-wa* [or *yhw*]"; the Shasu were desert-dwellers and included Midianites. **16–22**: A directive to Moses about speaking to his people and Pharaoh precedes other two problems. **16**: *Elders*, usually used with "of Israel," are representatives of the people in community governance (see also 4.29; 12.21; 17.5,6; 18.12; 19.7; 24.1,9,14). **18**: *God of the Hebrews*, which connects the LORD to a specific people, is used when Moses addresses non-Israelites (5.3; 7.16; 9.1; 9.13; 10.3); see 1.15n. Egyptians did give their state workers time off for religious events, so the request to make *a three days' journey* is reasonable. **19**: *Mighty hand* is an image of divine power in the ancient Near East (13.9; 15.6). **22**: That an Israelite woman requests jewelry (see also 11.2–3; 12.35–36; 32.2–3) and clothing from her Egyptian *neighbor* suggests that they live peacefully together in workers' villages; yet this transfer of goods is called *plunder*, perhaps in reference to Gen 15.14. **4.1–9**: God responds to Moses's third problem, that the people will not heed him, by providing three supernatural signs: changing a *staff* (see 4.20n.) to a *snake* (4.2–5), making Moses's *hand* diseased and then restoring it (4.6–8), and

10 But Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord,
I have never been eloquent, neither in the
past nor even now that you have spoken to
your servant; but I am slow of speech and
slow of tongue." 11 Then the LORD said to him,
"Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes
them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not
I, the LORD? 12 Now go, and I will be with your
mouth and teach you what you are to speak."
13 But he said, "O my Lord, please send some-
one else." 14 Then the anger of the LORD was
kindled against Moses and he said, "What of
your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that
he can speak fluently; even now he is coming
out to meet you, and when he sees you his
heart will be glad. 15 You shall speak to him
and put the words in his mouth; and I will be
with your mouth and with his mouth, and
will teach you what you shall do. 16 He indeed
shall speak for you to the people; he shall
serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve
as God for him. 17 Take in your hand this staff,
with which you shall perform the signs."

18 Moses went back to his father-in-law
Jethro and said to him, "Please let me go back
to my kindred in Egypt and see whether they
are still living." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go
in peace." 19 The LORD said to Moses in Mid-
ian, "Go back to Egypt; for all those who were
seeking your life are dead." 20 So Moses took
his wife and his sons, put them on a donkey,
and went back to the land of Egypt; and Mo-
ses carried the staff of God in his hand.

21 And the LORD said to Moses, "When you
go back to Egypt, see that you perform before
Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put in your
power; but I will harden his heart, so that he
will not let the people go. 22 Then you shall say
to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: Israel is my
firstborn son. 23 I said to you, "Let my son go
that he may worship me." But you refused to
let him go; now I will kill your firstborn son.'"

24 On the way, at a place where they spent
the night, the LORD met him and tried to kill
him. 25 But Zipporah took a flint and cut off
her son's foreskin, and touched Moses'[a] feet
with it, and said, "Truly you are a bridegroom
of blood to me!" 26 So he let him alone. It was
then she said, "A bridegroom of blood by
circumcision."

27 The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wil-
derness to meet Moses." So he went; and he

[a] Heb *his*

turning *water* bloody (4.9). The last sign anticipates the first of the marvels (7.14–25). **10–17**: God answers Moses's fourth problem—that he cannot speak—by assuring him of divine help and assigning his brother to speak for him. **10**: *Slow of speech* may denote a speech impediment (cf. 6.12,30) or perhaps a prophet's reluctance to accept a commission from God (cf. Jer 1.6–7). **14**: The first mention of *Aaron*, who would later found the priestly class. **15–16**: Aaron becomes spokesperson to Moses, who will be God to him. This makes Moses equal to the divine Pharaoh in the ensuing negotiations; see 7.1. **17**: *Staff*, see 4.20n.

4.18–31: Moses returns to Egypt. **20**: *Two sons*, as in 18.3, although only one is mentioned in 2.22 and 4.25. **20:** Moses's shepherd staff (3.1; 4.2) is now called *the staff of God*, the instrument through which he and Aaron exert divine power; see further 17.9n. **21:** The motif of Pharaoh's hardened *heart* (stubbornness), appearing frequently in the narrative of Moses's negotiations with the Egyptian ruler, serves to increase dramatic tension. The number ten, though never mentioned explicitly, plays a role: Pharaoh hardens his own heart (e.g., 8.15) ten times, although even then it is part of God's plan (7.3; 11.9); and ten times God hardens it directly (e.g., 9.12). These differing reports of who caused the hardening of Pharaoh's heart likely reflect different sources. **22:** Based on the formulaic words of heralds bearing messages in the ancient Near East, the biblical expression *thus says the LORD* introduces words conveyed by a prophetic messenger of God. The prominent *firstborn son* motif is used here for Israel as the child of God (who will live), contrasting with chs 11 and 12, where it designates Egyptian offspring (who will die). See also Hos 11.1. **24–26:** In this enigmatic episode, God attacks Moses for reasons that are unclear. **24**: Moses again is saved by a woman, his wife Zipporah; see 2.17n. In performing her son's circumcision, she may be carrying out a female role in Midianite and Israelite culture (1 Macc 1.60; 2 Macc 6.10; 4 Macc 4.25; cf. Gen 17.23–27 and Josh 5.2–7, where men are the circumcisers). **25:** *Feet*, a euphemism for genitals (see Isa 7.20). *Bridegroom of blood* may connote an ancient apotropaic (evil-averting) function of circumcision as a rite of passage, for the Heb word for bridegroom ("ḥatan") in other Semitic languages can mean "protect" as well as "circumcise." Marriage and circumcision are also associated in Gen 34.14–24. **27–31:** Aaron joins Moses and convinces the people with words and signs that God sees their plight. **27**: *Mountain of God,* see 3.1.

met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. 28 Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which he had sent him, and all the signs with which he had charged him. 29 Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites. 30 Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and performed the signs in the sight of the people. 31 The people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had given heed to the Israelites and that he had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

5 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.' " 2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go." 3 Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has revealed himself to us; let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the LORD our God, or he will fall upon us with pestilence or sword." 4 But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their work? Get to your labors!" 5 Pharaoh continued, "Now they are more numerous than the people of the land[a] and yet you want them to stop working!" 6 That same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, as well as their supervisors, 7 "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as before; let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 But you shall require of them the same quantity of bricks as they have made previously; do not diminish it, for they are lazy; that is why they cry, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.' 9 Let heavier work be laid on them; then they will labor at it and pay no attention to deceptive words."

10 So the taskmasters and the supervisors of the people went out and said to the people, "Thus says Pharaoh, 'I will not give you straw. 11 Go and get straw yourselves, wherever you can find it; but your work will not be lessened in the least.' " 12 So the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt, to gather stubble for straw. 13 The taskmasters were urgent, saying, "Complete your work, the same daily assignment as when you were given straw." 14 And the supervisors of the Israelites, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and were asked, "Why did you not finish the required quantity of bricks yesterday and today, as you did before?"

15 Then the Israelite supervisors came to Pharaoh and cried, "Why do you treat your servants like this? 16 No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' Look how your servants are beaten! You are unjust to your own people."[b] 17 He said, "You are lazy, lazy; that is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.' 18 Go now, and work; for no straw shall be given you, but you shall still deliver the same number of bricks." 19 The Israelite supervisors saw that they were in trouble when they were told, "You shall not lessen your daily number of bricks." 20 As they left Pharaoh, they came upon Moses

[a] Sam: Heb *The people of the land are now many*
[b] Gk Compare Syr Vg: Heb *beaten, and the sin of your people*

5.1–6.1: Moses and Aaron have their first encounter with Pharaoh. 5.1–3: They request only a three-day leave, not permanent freedom, but Pharaoh refuses as anticipated in 3.19. **1:** *God of Israel*, cf. 3.18n. The imperative *Let my people go* appears for the first time and adumbrates its sevenfold use in the account of nine divine marvels; see 7.16n. **2:** *Know the LORD*, which entails acknowledging the LORD's authority, is a recurrent theme in Exodus; God's mighty deeds will convince the Egyptians of God's reality and power (14.4,18) and cause the Israelites to affirm their belief (16.12; 29.46). Knowing God is a response to witnessing God's powerful deeds (1 Kings 20.13). **3:** *God of the Hebrews*, see 3.18n. *Fall . . . sword* indicates that failure to carry out religious obligations would have dire consequences. **4–19:** Pharaoh again employs strategies, now also punitive, to deal with the burgeoning Israelite population. **6**: *Supervisors*, Israelite officers (perhaps a subgroup of the elders; see 3.16n.) working under the Egyptian *taskmaster*s in charge of corvée labor (see 1.11n.). **7:** *Straw*, an essential component in brick-making, binds the particles of Nile mud. **9:** *Deceptive words* refers to Moses's promise of liberation. **10:** Introducing Pharaoh's words with *Thus says Pharaoh* sets him in opposition to the LORD, whose words are similarly announced (see 4.22n). **5.20–6.1:** The Israelite supervisors are disheartened, and Moses complains to God who promises to take action.

and Aaron who were waiting to meet them. 21 They said to them, "The LORD look upon you and judge! You have brought us into bad odor with Pharaoh and his officials, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

22 Then Moses turned again to the LORD and said, "O LORD, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me? 23 Since I first came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has mistreated this people, and you have done nothing at all to deliver your people."

6 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh: Indeed, by a mighty hand he will let them go; by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land."

2 God also spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty,[a] but by my name 'The LORD'[b] I did not make myself known to them. 4 I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. 5 I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. 6 Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'" 9 Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery.

10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, 11 "Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his land." 12 But Moses spoke to the LORD, "The Israelites have not listened to me; how then shall Pharaoh listen to me, poor speaker that I am?"[c] 13 Thus the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them orders regarding the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt, charging them to free the Israelites from the land of Egypt.

14 The following are the heads of their ancestral houses: the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben. 15 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul,[d] the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon. 16 The following are the names of the sons of Levi according to their genealogies: Gershon,[e] Kohath, and Merari, and the length of Levi's life was one hundred thirty-seven years. 17 The sons of Gershon:[e] Libni and Shimei, by their families. 18 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, and the length of Kohath's life was one hundred thirty-three years. 19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their genealogies. 20 Amram married

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*
[b] Heb *YHWH*; see note at 3.15
[c] Heb *me? I am uncircumcised of lips*
[d] Or *Saul*
[e] Also spelled *Gershom*; see 2.22

6.2–7.7: God reaffirms the mission of Moses and Aaron in the light of the worsened circumstances of the people. This section from the Priestly source parallels 3.1–4.17. **6.2:** God's self-identification (also vv. 5 and 6) emphasizes the connection of God's identity to the promise. **3:** The meaning of Heb *shadday* (see text note *a*; Gen 17.1n.; 35.11), translated *Almighty*, is unclear; it may be an epithet meaning "the one of the mountains." **4:** The ancestral *covenant* promised the land (Gen 15.7–21; 17.1–8; see 2.24n.). **5:** Similar to 2.23–25. **6–8:** Seven dynamic verbs (*will free, deliver, redeem, take, will be, will bring, will give*), with God as the first-person subject, connote the totality of God's commitment. Two other verbs in dependent clauses (*swore, freed*) bring the total up to nine divine actions, anticipating the nine signs and wonders of the next section. **7:** *I will take you as my people, and I will be your God* is formulaic language linking the two partners of a covenant (Jer 31.33). *Know*, see 5.2n. **9:** *Cruel slavery*, or "hard work," referring to their predicament rather than their status. **12:** *Poor speaker* (also v. 30) is another expression of a prophet's reluctance; see 4.10n. **14–25:** A genealogy, similar to other genealogies in the Pentateuch (Gen 46.8–27; Num 3.1–37; 26). **16–25:** Authority is conferred on Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons and grandsons by situating their lineage in the priestly tribe of Levi. The unusual naming of several women (vv. 20,23,25) emphasizes the importance of the Levites. **20:** Moses's mother *Jochebed*, whose name

Jochebed his father's sister and she bore him Aaron and Moses, and the length of Amram's life was one hundred thirty-seven years. 21 The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. 22 The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. 23 Aaron married Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 24 The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites. 25 Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the ancestral houses of the Levites by their families.

26 It was this same Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, company by company." 27 It was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, the same Moses and Aaron.

28 On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, 29 he said to him, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I am speaking to you." 30 But Moses said in the LORD's presence, "Since I am a poor speaker,[a] why would Pharaoh listen to me?"

7 The LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. 2 You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his land. 3 But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and I will multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 When Pharaoh does not listen to you, I will lay my hand upon Egypt and bring my people the Israelites, company by company, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. 5 The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out from among them." 6 Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them. 7 Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

8 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 9 "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a

[a] Heb *am uncircumcised of lips*; see 6.12

means "Yo [Yahweh] is glory," is the first person in the Bible to have a name formed with the name of Israel's God. *Aaron and Moses,* but not Miriam. **23:** *Nadab* and *Abihu*, priestly leaders with Aaron in the Sinai narrative (24.1); cf. Lev 10.1–7. **25:** *Eleazar . . . Phinehas*, the successors of Aaron (see Num 20.25–28; 25.1–13) conclude the genealogy, revealing its priestly interest; see 28.1. **26–30:** The narrative resumes with a brief recapitulation of 6.2–12. **26:** *Company by company*, military language depicts the fleeing Israelites (also 7.4; 12.17; 12.37n.; 13.18). **7.1–7:** Another account of the affirmation of Moses's mission. **1:** See 4.15–16n. **3:** *Harden*, see 4.21n. *Signs and wonders* anticipates the nine marvels of the next section (see 7.7–10.29n.); these mighty acts of God, together with the climactic slaying of Egyptian firstborn, are the source of knowing God. **5:** *Know*, see 5.2n. **7:** *Eighty . . . eighty-three* makes Moses younger than Aaron, different from the firstborn tradition of 2.2.

7.8–10.29: The nine marvels. The designation "ten plagues" does not appear in the Bible, and fewer than ten catastrophes appear in the two psalms that mention them (Pss 78.44–51 and 105.28–36). The noun "plague" appears only for the slaying of the firstborn (11.1), except for once at 9.14 (see n.; cf. 8.2n). The Bible has several designations for the nine marvels: "signs and wonders" (7.3; Pss 78.43; 105.27), "signs" (10.1,2), and "wonders" (11.9,10). These terms do not fit the meaning of the Heb term for "plague" (root "ngp"), an epidemic of deadly disease as a punitive measure (cf. 32.35; Num 25.8,9,18,19). The marvels narrative likely draws from several sources to form a three-triad pattern, totaling nine marvels: Pharaoh receives a warning, in the morning, for the first, fourth, and seventh marvels; Pharaoh receives a warning, time unspecified, for the second, fifth, and eighth ones; the third, sixth, and ninth happen unannounced. Each triad has the same sequence, an arrangement suggesting that nine is the appropriate number; the slaying of the firstborn constitutes a separate climactic event. The marvels unfold in a dramatic series of encounters between God's emissaries, Moses and Aaron, and the deified Pharaoh and his officials and magicians; they result in Pharaoh's acknowledging ("knowing") God. Although each of the nine marvels depicts a horrific natural phenomenon, the intensity and rapid-fire timing provide a vivid expression of God's extraordinary power, as does the tenth event, the slaying of the firstborn. These disastrous events originate in literary/mythic traditions deployed to gripping dramatic effect.

7.8–13: Preface to the marvels. The introduction to the marvels, like 4.1–5, features a staff turning into a snake in competition with Egyptian magicians. **9:** *Aaron*, not Moses, has the leading role in this episode and in the first three marvels, which incorporate material from the Priestly source, which emphasizes Aaron.

wonder,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, and it will become a snake.' " [10] So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did as the LORD had commanded; Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. [11] Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same by their secret arts. [12] Each one threw down his staff, and they became snakes; but Aaron's staff swallowed up theirs. [13] Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

[14] Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. [15] Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water; stand by at the river bank to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that was turned into a snake. [16] Say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you to say, "Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness." But until now you have not listened. [17] Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD." See, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall be turned to blood. [18] The fish in the river shall die, the river itself shall stink, and the Egyptians shall be unable to drink water from the Nile.' " [19] The LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over its rivers, its canals, and its ponds, and all its pools of water—so that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout the whole land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.' "

[20] Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and of his officials he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the river, and all the water in the river was turned into blood, [21] and the fish in the river died. The river stank so that the Egyptians could not drink its water, and there was blood throughout the whole land of Egypt. [22] But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts; so Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. [23] Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. [24] And all the Egyptians had to dig along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the river.

[25] Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

8 [a] Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. [2] If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. [3] The river shall swarm with frogs; they shall come

[a] Ch 7.26 in Heb

11: *Magicians* appear for the first time; the Heb term is derived from an Egyptian word denoting a priestly official. *Secret arts* refers to spells or incantations that the Egyptians use, whereas Aaron simply casts his staff down. **13:** *Hardened*, appearing in the preface, anticipates Pharaoh's response to every marvel and to the climactic plague; see 4.21n. *As . . . said*, noting the veracity of God's predictions here and for most of the marvels.

7.14–8.19: First three marvels. Aaron's staff is the instrument of divine power. **7.14–25: First marvel, bloody waters.** This marvel, like some others, combines two traditions: in one, Moses's action pollutes the Nile only; in the other, Aaron turns all Egyptian water into blood. **15:** *Water* and *river bank* evoke the image of the infant Moses in the river (2.3) and anticipate the role of water in the final water event, when the Red (Reed) Sea splits and Egyptian troops drown (14.21–29). **16–17:** The Israelites have heard what God will do (6.6–8), as has Moses (7.1–5); now Pharaoh is told. **16:** *God of the Hebrews*, see 3.18n. *Let my people go* appears six more times in the marvels sequence (8.20,21; 9.1,13; 10.3,4; cf. 5.1); this sevenfold usage emphasizes the theme of freeing the Israelites. **17:** The entire *Nile* turns bloody, making this far more extensive than the bloody-water sign to the Israelites (4.9). *Blood* in the Nile may reflect the reddish color of extreme flooding, but bloody water also symbolizes dire misfortune in ancient Near Eastern literature. **18:** *Egyptians* (but apparently not Israelites) will be affected (as in vv. 21,24, and in the next marvel, 8.3–4,9–11). **19:** The abundance of water terms, *rivers . . . water*, stresses the role of water; see 7.15n. **22:** Magicians can duplicate this calamity; but again (as in 7.11) they must use spells, and humorously they make the calamity even worse! **22:** *Hardened*, see 4.21n. **8.1–15: Second marvel, frogs. 2:** *Plague*, better "smite." **3:** The three elements of Egypt's hierarchical society—Pharaoh, his *officials*, and the *peo-*

up into your palace, into your bedchamber and your bed, and into the houses of your officials and of your people,[a] and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. 4 The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your officials.'" 5 [b]And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, the canals, and the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.'" 6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. 7 But the magicians did the same by their secret arts, and brought frogs up on the land of Egypt.

8 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron, and said, "Pray to the LORD to take away the frogs from me and my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." 9 Moses said to Pharaoh, "Kindly tell me when I am to pray for you and for your officials and for your people, that the frogs may be removed from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile." 10 And he said, "Tomorrow." Moses said, "As you say! So that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God, 11 the frogs shall leave you and your houses and your officials and your people; they shall be left only in the Nile." 12 Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh; and Moses cried out to the LORD concerning the frogs that he had brought upon Pharaoh.[c] 13 And the LORD did as Moses requested: the frogs died in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. 14 And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart, and would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, so that it may become gnats throughout the whole land of Egypt.'" 17 And they did so; Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and gnats came on humans and animals alike; all the dust of the earth turned into gnats throughout the whole land of Egypt. 18 The magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, but they could not. There were gnats on both humans and animals. 19 And the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God!" But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

20 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. 21 For if you will not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you, your officials, and your people, and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies; so also the land where they live. 22 But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people live, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I the LORD am in this land. 23 Thus I will make

[a] Gk: Heb *upon your people*
[b] Ch 8.1 in Heb
[c] Or *frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh*

ple, that is, all Egyptians—are affected. They are mentioned nine times in the marvels sequence and once more in the account of the slaying of the firstborn (12.30). **8:** Despite the magicians' replication of this event (v. 7), Pharaoh momentarily relents and seems to recognize Israel's god by requesting that Moses and Aaron pray (lit., "plead") on behalf of the Egyptians (cf. 8.28–30; 9.28; 10.17–18). **10:** *Tomorrow*, a one-day delay; see 8.23n. Pharaoh is depicted as a buffoon for not opting to cease the plague immediately. **15:** *Hardened*, see 4.21n. **8.16–19: Third marvel, gnats.** Unlike the two previous wonders, which combine Priestly and non-Priestly material, this wonder is entirely Priestly, and thus less internally repetitive and more consistent. **16:** *Dust* represents what is countless (Gen 13.16). **18–19:** Failing this time to replicate the calamity, the magicians—but not Pharaoh—recognize the infestation as an act of Israel's god. **19:** *Hardened*, see 4.21n.

8.20–9.12: Second group of three marvels. Instrumentality shifts: God is the direct agent (8.24; 9.6), then Moses and Aaron together are agents (9.8). **8.20–32: Fourth marvel, flies. 20:** Although Aaron is sometimes mentioned, *Moses* dominates the accounts of the remaining six marvels. **21:** The meaning of the Heb word for *flies* is uncertain, but it likely denotes biting insects (cf. Pss 78.45; 105.31). **22:** *Goshen*, unknown in Egyptian sources, appears here and in 9.26 as the location of the Israelite work camps, probably in the eastern Nile Delta; see 1.11n. and Gen 45.10. **23:** *Distinction*, now God explicitly excludes the Israelites from the calamities; see 7.18n.

a distinction[a] between my people and your people. This sign shall appear tomorrow.'" 24 The LORD did so, and great swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh and into his officials' houses; in all of Egypt the land was ruined because of the flies.

25 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron, and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land." 26 But Moses said, "It would not be right to do so; for the sacrifices that we offer to the LORD our God are offensive to the Egyptians. If we offer in the sight of the Egyptians sacrifices that are offensive to them, will they not stone us? 27 We must go a three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he commands us." 28 So Pharaoh said, "I will let you go to sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness, provided you do not go very far away. Pray for me." 29 Then Moses said, "As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his officials, and from his people; only do not let Pharaoh again deal falsely by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."

30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. 31 And the LORD did as Moses asked: he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his officials, and from his people; not one remained. 32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and would not let the people go.

9 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. 2 For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, 3 the hand of the LORD will strike with a deadly pestilence your livestock in the field: the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks. 4 But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing shall die of all that belongs to the Israelites.'" 5 The LORD set a time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land." 6 And on the next day the LORD did so; all the livestock of the Egyptians died, but of the livestock of the Israelites not one died. 7 Pharaoh inquired and found that not one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he would not let the people go.

8 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw it in the air in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 It shall become fine dust all over the land of Egypt, and shall cause festering boils on humans and animals throughout the whole land of Egypt." 10 So they took soot from the kiln, and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses threw it in the air, and it caused festering boils on humans and animals. 11 The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils afflicted the magicians as well as all the Egyptians. 12 But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

13 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. 14 For this time I will send all my plagues upon you yourself, and upon your officials, and upon your people, so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence,

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *will set redemption*

Tomorrow introduces a time element; a delay in the onset of the marvel (as also in 9.5,18; 10.4) is a twist on the delay of Moses's wonder-ending prayer (8.10n.). **25:** Pharaoh seems to relent (as in 8.8) but reneges in v. 32. **26:** *Offensive*, practices of one people are odious to another; cf. Gen 46.34. **28–29:** *Pray*, as in 8.9. **32:** *Hardened*, see 4.21n. **9.1–7: Fifth marvel, pestilence. 1:** *God of the Hebrews*, see 3.18n. **3:** *Hand*, see 3.19n. *Pestilence* in Deuteronomic and prophetic texts kills both humans and animals, but here only animals. **4:** *Distinction*, see 8.23n. **5:** *Tomorrow*, see 8.23n. **7:** *Hardened*, see 4.21n. **9.8–12: Sixth marvel, boils. 11:** *Magicians* cannot compete and are themselves afflicted (cf. 7.11,22; 8.7,18–19). **12:** Now God hardens Pharaoh's heart; see 4.21n.

9.13–10.29: Third group of three marvels. Moses's outstretched hand is now the instrument, and the severity of the calamities escalates. **9.13–35: Seventh marvel, hail. 13:** *God of the Hebrews*, see 3.18n. **14:** Only here is *plagues* used for one of the nine marvels, perhaps because of the extensive loss of human and animal life, as for

and you would have been cut off from the earth. [16] But this is why I have let you live: to show you my power, and to make my name resound through all the earth. [17] You are still exalting yourself against my people, and will not let them go. [18] Tomorrow at this time I will cause the heaviest hail to fall that has ever fallen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. [19] Send, therefore, and have your livestock and everything that you have in the open field brought to a secure place; every human or animal that is in the open field and is not brought under shelter will die when the hail comes down upon them.' " [20] Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD hurried their slaves and livestock off to a secure place. [21] Those who did not regard the word of the LORD left their slaves and livestock in the open field.

[22] The LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven so that hail may fall on the whole land of Egypt, on humans and animals and all the plants of the field in the land of Egypt." [23] Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire came down on the earth. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; [24] there was hail with fire flashing continually in the midst of it, such heavy hail as had never fallen in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. [25] The hail struck down everything that was in the open field throughout all the land of Egypt, both human and animal; the hail also struck down all the plants of the field, and shattered every tree in the field. [26] Only in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were, there was no hail.

[27] Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. [28] Pray to the LORD! Enough of God's thunder and hail! I will let you go; you need stay no longer." [29] Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD's. [30] But as for you and your officials, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God." [31] (Now the flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. [32] But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they are late in coming up.) [33] So Moses left Pharaoh, went out of the city, and stretched out his hands to the LORD; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured down on the earth. [34] But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned once more and hardened his heart, he and his officials. [35] So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

10 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his officials, in order that I may show these signs of mine among them, [2] and that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I have made fools of the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them—so that you may know that I am the LORD."

[3] So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me. [4] For if you refuse to let my people go, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country. [5] They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They shall

the climactic slaying of the firstborn; see 7.8–10.29n. and 11.1n. **18:** *Tomorrow*, see 8.23n. So severe is the hail that it figures in the next calamity (10.5,15). **19**: The severity prompts God, uniquely, to suggest a protective measure. **22:** *Hail*, frequently Yahweh's weapon (e.g., Josh 10.11, Isa 30.20; Ezek 13.13). **24**: *Fire flashing*, lightning, along with thunder accompanies the hail (vv. 23–24) to deadly effect; compare the thunder and lightning of the Sinai theophany (see 19.16–19n.). **26**: See 8.22n. and 8.23n. **27**: *Sinned*, an apparently unqualified admission; but Pharaoh continues to sin by reneging again (v. 34; 8.15,32). **28**: *Pray*, see 8.8n. **35:** *Hardened*, apparently by God; see 4.21n. **10.1–20: Eighth marvel, locusts. 1:** God *hardened* the hearts of both Pharaoh and his officers; see 4.21n. **2:** *Tell . . . grandchildren* heralds the importance of remembering; see 11.1–13.16n. **3**: *God of the Hebrews*, see 3.18n. **4**: *Tomorrow*, see 8.23n. *Locusts* are extremely damaging; a common literary theme in the ancient Near East, they reflect disaster (Joel 1.2–2.27) and divine judgment (Amos 4.9). **5:** *No one . . . see*, a result replicated

devour the last remnant left you after the hail, and they shall devour every tree of yours that grows in the field. 6 They shall fill your houses, and the houses of all your officials and of all the Egyptians—something that neither your parents nor your grandparents have seen, from the day they came on earth to this day.' " Then he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

7 Pharaoh's officials said to him, "How long shall this fellow be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the LORD their God; do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?" 8 So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, worship the LORD your God! But which ones are to go?" 9 Moses said, "We will go with our young and our old; we will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, because we have the LORD's festival to celebrate." 10 He said to them, "The LORD indeed will be with you, if ever I let your little ones go with you! Plainly, you have some evil purpose in mind. 11 No, never! Your men may go and worship the LORD, for that is what you are asking." And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

12 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt, so that the locusts may come upon it and eat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left." 13 So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night; when morning came, the east wind had brought the locusts. 14 The locusts came upon all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever shall be again. 15 They covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was black; and they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left; nothing green was left, no tree, no plant in the field, in all the land of Egypt. 16 Pharaoh hurriedly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. 17 Do forgive my sin just this once, and pray to the LORD your God that at the least he remove this deadly thing from me." 18 So he went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. 19 The LORD changed the wind into a very strong west wind, which lifted the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea;[a] not a single locust was left in all the country of Egypt. 20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.

21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt." 22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was dense darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. 23 People could not see one another, and for three days they could not move from where they were; but all the Israelites had light where they lived. 24 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses, and said, "Go, worship the LORD. Only your flocks and your herds shall remain behind. Even your children may go with you." 25 But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings to sacrifice to the LORD our God. 26 Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must choose some of them for the worship of the LORD our God, and we will not know what to use to worship the LORD until we arrive there." 27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was unwilling to let them go. 28 Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Take care that you do not see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die." 29 Moses said, "Just as you say! I will never see your face again."

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

by the ninth marvel (10.23). **13**: An *east wind*, which will also part the Red (Reed) Sea (14.21), brings the locusts; and a "west wind" will later remove them by casting them into that sea (v. 19). **16**: *Sinned*, see 9.27n. **17–18:** *Pray*, see 8.8n. **19**: *Red Sea*, see 13.18n. **20:** *Hardened by God*; see 4.21n. **10:21–29: Ninth marvel, darkness,** another common literary theme. **21**: *Darkness* anticipates the midnight setting of the death of firstborns (12.29) and the nighttime sea crossing (14.20). **22:** *Three days* mirrors the requested three-day journey for sacrifice (3.18; 5.3; 8.27) and anticipates the three-day duration of the first post-Sinai journey (15.22). **27:** *Hardened* by God; see 4.21n.

11 The Lord said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go from here; indeed, when he lets you go, he will drive you away. [2] Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbor and every woman is to ask her neighbor for objects of silver and gold." [3] The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, Moses himself was a man of great importance in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's officials and in the sight of the people.

[4] Moses said, "Thus says the Lord: About midnight I will go out through Egypt. [5] Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the livestock. [6] Then there will be a loud cry throughout the whole land of Egypt, such as has never been or will ever be again. [7] But not a dog shall growl at any of the Israelites—not at people, not at animals—so that you may know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. [8] Then all these officials of yours shall come down to me, and bow low to me, saying, 'Leave us, you and all the people who follow you.' After that I will leave." And in hot anger he left Pharaoh.

[9] The Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, in order that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt." [10] Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; but the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: [2] This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. [3] Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. [4] If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. [5] Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. [6] You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight.

11.1–13.16: Plague, commemorative rituals, and departure. After the firstborn plague is announced, detailed commands for commemorative rituals are interspersed with accounts of Egyptian deaths and the Israelite Exodus. Although addressed to Israelites as they leave Egypt, the directives for various rituals also mandate future acts commemorating the radical change from servitude to freedom through divine intervention. The miraculous departure from Egypt becomes part of the collective memory of future generations, kept alive through religious practices that enable later generations to recall and relive the formative Exodus experiences. The rituals will contribute to Israelite communal identity. Present and future merge in this composite and somewhat redundant account drawing on Priestly and other sources.

11.1–10: Announcement of the plague. 1: *Plague*, better "affliction"; see 7.8–10.29n. and 9.14n. *Drive* echoes the prediction of 6.1. **2:** In 3.22 women acquire jewelry and clothing; here men and women will obtain jewelry but not clothing (see also 12.35–36; 35.22,29. **5:** *Firstborn*, see 4.22n. *Pharaoh . . . female slave*, opposite ends of the socioeconomic spectrum form a merism indicating that all Egyptians will be affected. **6:** The Egyptians' unique *loud cry* surpasses the Israelites' cry (see 2.2n.). Uniqueness also features in the seventh and eighth marvels (9.18,25; 10.14). **7:** *Distinction between Egypt and Israel*, again indicating the selective nature of what will happen (see 8.23n. and 9.4). **10:** *Hardened by God*, see 4.21n.

12.1–28: Preparations for departure: passover and unleavened bread festivals. Here and in vv. 43–49 and 13.3–10, God ordains what will become a major Israelite festival (Deut 16.1–8; Num 9.1–14; 2 Kings 23.21–23; Ezek 45.21–24). Pastoral and agricultural components of the originally Canaanite ritual calendar—springtime birth of sheep and goats, growth of green herbs, and ripening of grains—are now historicized. These festivals, which were originally separate, are linked to each other and to the Exodus, helping to re-create for later generations the exultant experience of liberation. **1–13: Passover. 2:** *This month* (March-April), called Abib in 13.4 and 23.15, is later called Nisan (Neh 2.1; Esth 3.7). This spring New Year (*first month of the year*) reflects a Priestly reckoning (Lev 23.5; Num 9.1–5) in contrast to an older tradition of an autumn New Year (23.16; 34.22). **3:** *Whole congregation of Israel*, repeated in v. 47, refers to the adult males of the community. **4:** *Household* likely indicates an extended (not a nuclear) family—enough people to consume a roasted animal in one sitting. **5:** *Without*

7 They shall take some of the blood and put
it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the
houses in which they eat it. 8 They shall eat the
lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted
over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter
herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in
water, but roasted over the fire, with its head,
legs, and inner organs. 10 You shall let none of
it remain until the morning; anything that re-
mains until the morning you shall burn. 11 This
is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your
sandals on your feet, and your staff in your
hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the
passover of the LORD. 12 For I will pass through
the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike
down every firstborn in the land of Egypt,
both human beings and animals; on all the
gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am
the LORD. 13 The blood shall be a sign for you
on the houses where you live: when I see the
blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall
destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 This day shall be a day of remembrance
for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the
LORD; throughout your generations you shall
observe it as a perpetual ordinance. 15 Seven
days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first
day you shall remove leaven from your houses,
for whoever eats leavened bread from the first
day until the seventh day shall be cut off from
Israel. 16 On the first day you shall hold a solemn
assembly, and on the seventh day a solemn
assembly; no work shall be done on those days;
only what everyone must eat, that alone may
be prepared by you. 17 You shall observe the
festival of unleavened bread, for on this very
day I brought your companies out of the land
of Egypt: you shall observe this day throughout
your generations as a perpetual ordinance. 18 In
the first month, from the evening of the four-
teenth day until the evening of the twenty-first
day, you shall eat unleavened bread. 19 For seven
days no leaven shall be found in your houses;
for whoever eats what is leavened shall be cut
off from the congregation of Israel, whether
an alien or a native of the land. 20 You shall eat
nothing leavened; in all your settlements you
shall eat unleavened bread.

21 Then Moses called all the elders of Israel
and said to them, "Go, select lambs for your
families, and slaughter the passover lamb.
22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood
that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and
the two doorposts with the blood in the ba-
sin. None of you shall go outside the door of
your house until morning. 23 For the LORD will
pass through to strike down the Egyptians;
when he sees the blood on the lintel and on

blemish, offerings to God must be perfect (Lev 22.19–25; Deut 15.21; 17.1). **7:** *Blood* can have an apotropaic quality; see 4.25n. and 12.11n. **8:** The animal slaughtered for the festal meal is to be *roasted* over *fire*, a preparation making it seem like an offering (cf. Lev 1.7–9), but without using a sacrificial term. *Unleavened bread* appears here without comment, as if it were already known and incorporated into the passover festival; see 12.15n. *Bitter herbs*, a green plant serving as a condiment. **11:** The people must be ready to travel while they consume the young sheep or goat (v. 5). *Passover* ("pesaḥ"), often understood as "passing over," is more likely from a word meaning "protect" ("spare," Isa 31.5), which is in accord with the apotropaic role of the blood smeared on doorways (12.5n.). Here (and in vv. 27,43) "passover" refers to the slaughter and eating of the animal; eventually, it designates a longer commemorative festival (Deut 16.1–8; Ezek 45.21) that includes the following seven-day festival of unleavened bread (12.14–20; 13.2–10). **12:** *I will strike* has God slaying the firstborn (but see 12.23n.) of both humans and animals. Israel's god thus wins the contest with the *gods of Egypt* (cf. 15.11). **13:** *Pass over*, see 12.11n. **14–20: Unleavened bread. 14**: This day is the fifteenth day, after the passover of the fourteenth of Nisan; see 12.2n. and 12.6. Thus, the nighttime passover is followed by a seven-day festival of unleavened bread (see Lev 23.5–8). *Remembrance* proclaims the festival's commemorative aspect (see 13.9n), and *throughout . . . perpetual* applies it to all future Israelites (see 10.2n. and 11.1–13.16n.). **15:** *Unleavened bread* (Heb "matsah," spelled "matzah" or "matzo" in English; also vv. 34,39; 23.15; 34.18), part of an ancient spring barley harvest festival, is connected to the hasty departure from Egypt; see 12.11n. and 11.1–13.16n. *Cut off*, the penalty for many serious violations of Priestly law (e.g., 30.33,38; 31.14), signifies dying without heirs, thus ending one's lineage; it would be implemented by God, not humans. **16:** *No work* signifies a holy day, as on the sabbath (20.8–11). **17:** *Companies*, a military term; see 6.26n. **19:** Although not obliged to celebrate the passover (v. 48), an *alien* (non-Israelite) must refrain from eating leavened bread. **21–28: Passover again. 22:** *Hyssop*, an aromatic plant used in dipping and sprinkling rituals (e.g., Lev 14.6–7; Num 19.18). **23**: *Pass over*, that is, "protect"; see 12.11n. Representing a

the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you down. 24 You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children. 25 When you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. 26 And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this observance?' 27 you shall say, 'It is the passover sacrifice to the LORD, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses.' " And the people bowed down and worshiped.

28 The Israelites went and did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.

29 At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. 30 Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his officials and all the Egyptians; and there was a loud cry in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. 31 Then he summoned Moses and Aaron in the night, and said, "Rise up, go away from my people, both you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD, as you said. 32 Take your flocks and your herds, as you said, and be gone. And bring a blessing on me too!"

33 The Egyptians urged the people to hasten their departure from the land, for they said, "We shall all be dead." 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls wrapped up in their cloaks on their shoulders. 35 The Israelites had done as Moses told them; they had asked the Egyptians for jewelry of silver and gold, and for clothing, 36 and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. And so they plundered the Egyptians.

37 The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. 38 A mixed crowd also went up with them, and livestock in great numbers, both flocks and herds. 39 They baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt; it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

40 The time that the Israelites had lived in Egypt was four hundred thirty years. 41 At the end of four hundred thirty years, on that very day, all the companies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. 42 That was for the LORD a night of vigil, to bring them out of the land of Egypt. That same night is a vigil to be kept for the LORD by all the Israelites throughout their generations.

43 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: This is the ordinance for the passover: no

variant tradition, a divine agent, *the destroyer*, rather than God, carries out the mission. **24–27:** Commands for future observance emphasize the pedagogic function of the passover (also 10.2; 13.8–9,14–16; cf. Deut 6.6–7); see 11.1–13.16n.

12.29–52: Plague, departure, and passover. As soon as the Egyptian firstborns die, the Israelites leave Egypt and are reminded to celebrate the passover. **29–36: Plague**. What God announced in 11.1–8 is carried out. **29:** *Firstborn*, see 4.22n. **30:** *Cry*, see 11.6n. **33:** *Urged*, perhaps fulfilling the notion of driving out the Israelites (6.1; 11.1). **35:** *Jewelry . . . clothing*, rather than "plunder" (in v. 36; see 3.22n.). **12.37–42:** Departing Egypt and beginning the wilderness journey (which continues in the book of Numbers). **37:** Each stage of the journey is marked by formulaic language: traveling from Place A to Place B. *Rameses* (see 1.11n.) and *Succoth* are probably in the eastern Nile Delta; however, like virtually every stop on the journey, they cannot be clearly identified and do not reflect accurate or actual memories. *Six hundred thousand men* (as Num 11.21; cf. 38.26) is hyperbole indicating the proliferation of Israelites (1.7–9,20; 5.5) and the idea that all Israel experienced the Exodus; cf. 14.7n. *Men on foot*, or infantry, continues the military imagery; see 6.26n. Children are mentioned, but not the elderly or women; the latter may be subsumed into their husbands, the "men" (see 20.8–11n). **38:** *Mixed crowd* suggests that non-Israelites also escape. **39:** See 12.15n. **40–41:** *Four hundred and thirty years* is close to the period of "four hundred years" foreordained in Gen 15.13 (but cf. Gen 15.16); suggested reasons for the additional thirty years are speculative. **41:** *Companies*, see 12.17n. **42:** *Vigil*, from a root meaning "to guard" and also "to observe, perform (an obligation)" appears twice, forming a wordplay connoting present divine protection and future Israelite commemoration. **43–51: Further passover instructions**, explicitly for future observances. **43:** *Ordinance for*

foreigner shall eat of it, [44] but any slave who has been purchased may eat of it after he has been circumcised; [45] no bound or hired servant may eat of it. [46] It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the animal outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. [47] The whole congregation of Israel shall celebrate it. [48] If an alien who resides with you wants to celebrate the passover to the LORD, all his males shall be circumcised; then he may draw near to celebrate it; he shall be regarded as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it; [49] there shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you.

[50] All the Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. [51] That very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, company by company.

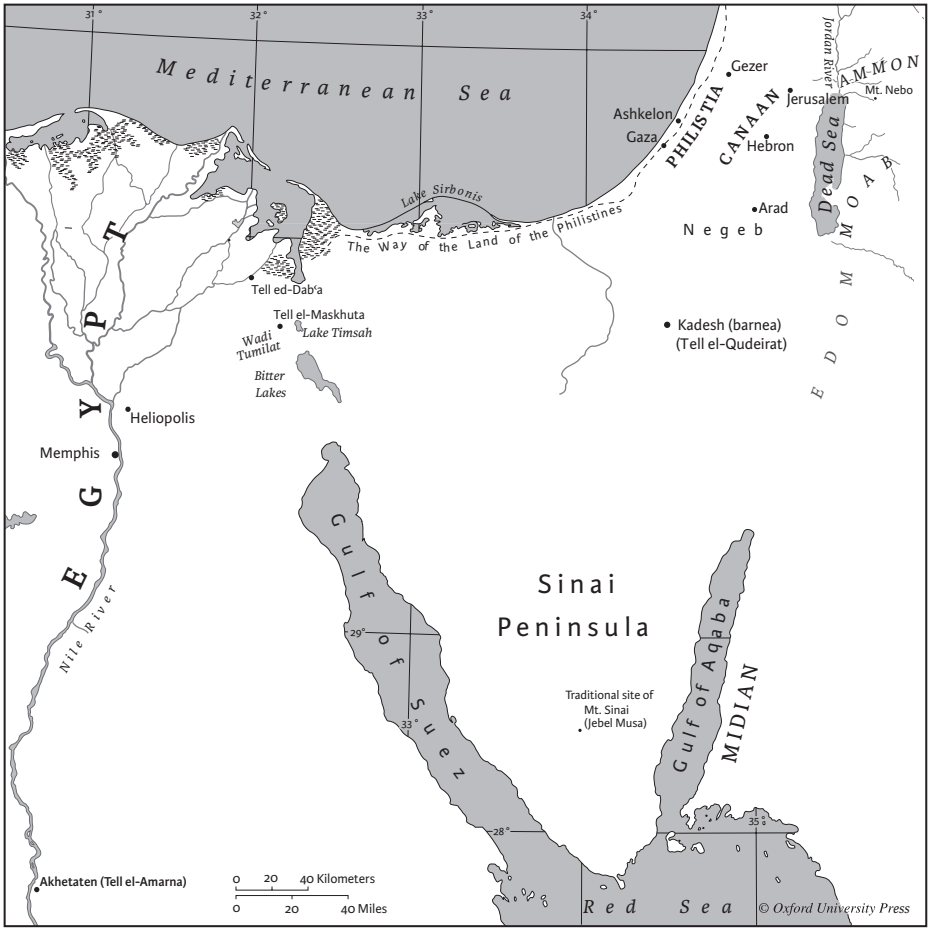
13 The LORD said to Moses: [2] Consecrate to me all the firstborn; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine.

[3] Moses said to the people, "Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, because the LORD brought you out from there by strength of hand; no leavened bread shall be eaten. [4] Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. [5] When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your ancestors to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this observance in this month. [6] Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival to the LORD. [7] Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen in your possession, and no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory. [8] You shall tell your child on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' [9] It shall serve for you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead, so that the teaching of the LORD may be on your lips; for with a strong hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. [10] You shall keep this ordinance at its proper time from year to year.

[11] "When the LORD has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your ancestors, and has given it to you, [12] you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your livestock that are males shall be the LORD's. [13] But every firstborn donkey you shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. Every firstborn male among your children you shall redeem. [14] When in the future your child asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall answer, 'By strength of hand the LORD

the passover (also in Num 9.12 and probably Ex 13.10) is likely the title of a Priestly document containing rules for passover observance. *Foreigner*, non-Israelite living temporarily in the land. **44:** A *slave* who is *purchased* is *circumcised* and considered part of the household (Gen 17.12–13). **45:** *Bound or hired servant* denotes a temporary member of a household. **46:** *In one house*, see 12.4n. **47:** *Whole congregation*, see 12.3n. **48:** Unlike the "foreigner" of v. 43, an *alien* is usually a permanent, non-Israelite resident and must be *circumcised* in order to celebrate passover. Circumcision in this instance is not a conversion rite. **49:** *Law* (Heb "torah") is better translated "instruction" or "teaching" (as 13.9; 18.20). *Native*, or citizen, that is Israelite. **51:** This verse resumes the narrative of vv. 37–41. *Company*, see 12.17n.

13.1–16: More commemorative rituals: consecration of the firstborn, and unleavened bread festival. **2:** *Consecration of the firstborn* reflects the special status of the first offspring of a woman or animal (see 4.22n.; 13.12n. 22.29–30; 34.19–20; Num 8.16–18). Its commemorative function is given in vv. 14–16. **3:** The charge to *remember* prescribes commemoration; see 10.2n. and 11.1–13.16n.. **4:** *Abib*, meaning "new grain," is an older name for this springtime month; see 12.2n. **5:** See 3.8n. **8:** See 11.1–13.16n. and 12.24–27n. **9:** *Sign . . . forehead* (also v. 16; Deut 6.6–8) denotes metaphoric modes of commemoration (as Prov 6.20–21; 7.1–3), but is interpreted literally in postexilic times, giving rise to the Jewish custom of phylacteries. *Reminder* (Heb "zikkaron"; sometimes translated "remembrance") frequently invokes the commemorative function of ritual acts or objects (17.14; 28.12,29; 30.16; see also 11.1–13.16n. The phrase *teaching* (Heb "torah") *of the LORD* appears for the first time in the Bible; see 12.49n. *Hand*, see 3.19n. **11:** Instructions for consecrating the firstborn resume. **12:** *Set apart to the LORD*, for the firstborn belong to God; see 4.22n. *Males*, specifying for the first time the gender of the firstborn to be consecrated. **13:** Because the *donkey* is a ritually impure animal (see Lev 11; Deut 14.3–21), it is redeemed by a pure one, a *sheep*; see also 34.20. The procedure for redeeming the human *firstborn male* is not specified. **14–15:** Linking the



The Nile Delta and the Sinai Peninsula. Tell el- Maskhutah and Tell ed-Dab'a have been identified as the cities of Pithom and Ramses. Jebel Musa in the southern Sinai Peninsula is the traditional identification of Mount Sinai, but that is questioned by most scholars.

brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human firstborn to the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD every male that first opens the womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.' 16 It shall serve as a sign on your hand and as an emblem[a] on your forehead that by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the

[a] Or *as a frontlet*; meaning of Heb uncertain

consecration of the firstborn to the firstborn slain in the plague gives the custom a pedagogical function; see 10.2n. and 11.1–13.16n. **16:** See v. 9n.

13.17–15.21: Journey to and through the sea, described in prose and poetry.

13.17–14.31: The narrative account, with its repetitions, contradictions, non sequiturs, and inconsistencies, is a composite. **13.17**: *Way of the land of the Philistines*, the shortest land route from Egypt to Canaan, runs parallel to the Mediterranean coast toward southwest Canaan where the Philistines, an Aegean people, settled in the

Philistines, although that was nearer; for God thought, "If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt." 18 So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.[a] The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt prepared for battle. 19 And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph who had required a solemn oath of the Israelites, saying, "God will surely take notice of you, and then you must carry my bones with you from here." 20 They set out from Succoth, and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. 21 The LORD went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

14 Then the LORD said to Moses: 2 Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall camp opposite it, by the sea. 3 Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, "They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has closed in on them." 4 I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, so that I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD. And they did so.

5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed toward the people, and they said, "What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?" 6 So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; 7 he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. 8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the Israelites, who were going out boldly. 9 The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, his chariot drivers and his army; they overtook them camped by the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

10 As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD. 11 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." 13 But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."

15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. 16 But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. 17 Then I will harden the hearts

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries BCE. **18:** *Roundabout way of the wilderness*, that is, not a specific route. This vague description fits the ahistorical character of the places along the way; see 12.37n. *Red Sea* (Heb "yam sup"), properly Reed Sea, likely designates the reedy marshes of northeastern Egypt. The following miraculous sea-splitting account (14.21–29) does not fit the marshland referent and reflects a different, perhaps imaginary or mythological, sea tradition. *Battle*, in keeping with the military language for the journeying Israelites; see 6.26n. **19:** Gen 50.24–26. **20:** Next stage of the journey; see 12.37n. **21:** *Pillar of cloud* and *pillar of fire*, probably one column manifesting the divine presence, shielded by a cloud by day and fire at night; see 3.2n. **14.1:** *Moses* acts alone, without Aaron, in the sea-crossing episode. **2:** Next stage of the journey; see 12.37n. *Sea*, see 13.18n. **4:** *Harden*, by God; see 4.21n. *Glory*, better "power" and thus "authority" (also v. 17). *Know*, see 5.2n. **7:** *Six hundred*, perhaps a stock military unit (cf. Judg 18.11), provides a 1:1000 ratio with the Israelite infantry (12.37n.). **8:** *Hardened* by God; see 4.21n. **9:** *Pursued . . . overtook* is formulaic language (15.9; Deut 19.6; etc.). **10:** *Cried*, see 2.23n. **11–12:** For the first but not the last time the Israelites complain in a crisis situation, challenging Moses's authority (15.24; 16.2–3; 17.3; and frequently in Numbers). **14:** *The LORD will fight* introduces the mythic concept of the Divine Warrior, based on the Canaanite deity Baal who battles watery chaos often depicted as a sea monster. The image is used in the Bible to represent divine might wielded to save Israel (v. 25; 15.3; Deut 20.4; 1 Sam 17.47; Zech 9.13–14.) **16:** Moses's *staff* (see 4.17n.) is not mentioned in vv. 21,26,27. **17:** *Harden* appears

of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers."

19 The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. 20 It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. 22 The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. 23 The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. 24 At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. 25 He clogged[a] their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

26 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. 28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. 29 But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

15 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has
triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the
sea.
2 The LORD is my strength and my might,[b]
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
3 The LORD is a warrior;
the LORD is his name.

4 "Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast
into the sea;

a Sam Gk Syr: MT *removed*
b Or *song*

for the last time; see 4.21n. *Glory*, see v.4n. **18:** *Know*, see 5.2n. **19–20:** *Angel* and *pillar*, both manifestations of God's presence (see 3.2n. and 13.21n.), likely from different sources. **21:** *Wind*, *dry land*, and *divided waters*, which evoke creation (Gen 1.2,6,9; cf. Gen 8.2), are from a Priestly hand. **22:** This verse is repeated almost verbatim in v. 29, framing vv. 23–28 and indicating that as the Israelites were fleeing, the Egyptians were pursuing them. **24:** *Pillar*, see 3.2n. **29:** This verse repeats v. 22 (see v. 22n.). *Dry ground . . . sea* reverses the *sea . . . dry ground* of v. 22, forming a chiasm and further framing the intervening narrative. **31:** The Heb for *believed* means to "trust" in God rather than to affirm God's existence.

15.1–21: The Song of the Sea is a lyric victory hymn generally considered an originally independent composition, one of the oldest literary units in the Bible, perhaps from the twelfth century BCE. Influenced by mythic accounts of the Divine Warrior's battle with watery chaos (see 14.14n.), it is rich in metaphors and terms that preclude single explanations and at times even defy comprehension; in many details it diverges from the prose account in ch 14. **1:** Although attributed here to *Moses*, this poem was originally attributed to Miriam, given the association of women with the victory song genre (see v. 20n.); *I* need not be Moses. **2:** *The LORD . . . salvation*, a hymnic bicolon appearing (perhaps as a quotation) in Isa 12.2 and Ps 118.14. *My father's God*, Israel's ancestral deity (3.6,13,15; 4.5; 6.2–4). **3:** *Warrior*, see 14.14n. *Name*, see 3.13–15n. **4:** *Red Sea*, see 13.18n.

his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea.[a]
5 The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.
6 Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power—
your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.
7 In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries;
you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble.
8 At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up,
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'
10 You blew with your wind, the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

11 "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendor, doing wonders?
12 You stretched out your right hand,
the earth swallowed them.

13 "In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed;
you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.
14 The peoples heard, they trembled;
pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
15 Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed;
trembling seized the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.
16 Terror and dread fell upon them;
by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone
until your people, O LORD, passed by,
until the people whom you acquired passed by.
17 You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession,
the place, O LORD, that you made your abode,

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

5: *Floods,* in Heb the plural of the term that denotes watery chaos ("deep") in Gen 1.2. **6:** The *right hand* of God (also v. 12), not Moses's hand (as 14.16,21,26), directly vanquishes the enemy; see 3.19n. **7:** *Consumed . . . stubble* evokes imagery of fire, which is sometimes paired with water as elements of devastation (Isa 43.2,16–17). **8:** *Blast of your nostrils*, poetic language for a strong wind (v. 10), usually destructive (see Job 4.9). **9:** *Pursue . . . overtake*, see 14.9n. **11:** *Among the gods* may be language of Israelite monolatry, in which the existence of other gods is acknowledged (18.11; 20.3; 23.32–33). Another possibility is that *gods* denotes lesser divine manifestations or angels in God's heavenly court (Pss 82.1; 89.5–8). Either way, the rhetorical questions of this verse highlight the incomparability of Israel's god. **12:** *Right hand*, see 15.6n. *Earth*, seemingly incompatible with water imagery, refers to the underworld (Sheol, the abode of the dead), which swallows the living (Num 16.32; Isa 29.4; Prov 1.12). **13:** *Love,* Heb *ḥesed*, which also connotes "kindness" and especially "faithfulness." *Holy abode* may refer to God's heavenly dwelling (as do the terms of v. 17b) or mythical home in the north (Ps 48.1–2); but it perhaps also alludes to the Promised Land as God's mountainous possession (v. 17a; Ps 78.54–55) and to the Israelites as God's sanctuary (Ps 114.1–2). If this is not a premonarchic poem, it may also refer to the Jerusalem Temple (v. 17b). **14:** *Philistia*, see 13.17n. **15:** The Transjordanian kingdoms of *Edom* and *Moab*, along with many *inhabitants of Canaan*, are enemies of the Israelites. **16:** *Arm*, instead of "hand" (see 15.6n.), as in 6.6. *Passed by*, better "crossed," has many possible meanings, all valid: crossing the sea, the wilderness, the Jordan, or mythically crossing to God's mountain. **17:** This verse contains overlapping and multileveled imagery similar to that of ancient Canaanite poetry (see 15.13n.). *Mountain of your possession* can refer to Israel's homeland in Canaan, conceptualized as God's inheritance (see v. 13n.; 34.9; cf. Isa 2.3). *Abode*, not the same Heb word as for "abode" in v. 13, designates God's heavenly throne. *Sanctuary*, lit., "holy place," is never used in 1 Kings for the Jerusalem Temple; and elsewhere it designates places or objects possessing sanctity, including celestial dwell-

the sanctuary, O LORD, that your hands
have established.
18 The LORD will reign forever and ever."
19 When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.
20 Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. 21 And Miriam sang to them:
"Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."
22 Then Moses ordered Israel to set out from the Red Sea,[a] and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. 23 When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter. That is why it was called Marah.[b] 24 And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" 25 He cried out to the LORD; and the LORD showed him a piece of wood;[c] he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the LORD[d] made for them a statute and an ordinance and there he put them to the test. 26 He said, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you."

27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they camped there by the water.

16 The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. 2 The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The Israelites

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*
[b] That is *Bitterness*
[c] Or *a tree*
[d] Heb *he*

ings of deities (see 25.9n.). *Your hands have established* indicates that God made the sanctuary, implying that it is the heavenly one, not the copy constructed in Jerusalem by humans; or it could give God credit for building the earthly shrine (cf. Ps 78.69). **18:** *Reign* introduces for the first time the prominent biblical metaphor of God as king. **19–21:** A brief narrative with a final poetic section. **19:** A summary of 14.23–29. **20:** The title *prophet* is used for Miriam (whose name appears here for the first time), perhaps because her utterances are in the form of an inspired musical performance (cf. Deborah, Judg 4.4; 5, but not for Moses in Exodus. *Tambourine* is an anachronistic translation of Heb top, a small handheld frame drum (without jingles) played mainly by women in the ancient Near East. *All the women . . . dancing* indicate a woman's performance genre—usually involving drums, dance, and song—for victory celebrations (1 Sam 18.6–7; Jer 31.4,13). **21:** This poem, similar to 15.1, may be an abbreviation or title of 15.1–18, originally a composition of Miriam later attributed to Moses (see 15.1n.).

15.22–24.18. Sinai and covenant. Facing recurrent difficulties, the Israelites cross the wilderness to Sinai (15.22–18.27) where they experience a theophany (ch 19) and enter into the covenant (chs 20–24).

15.22–18.27: Crises and reorganization in the wilderness. The journey resumes; four crises—two water shortages, lack of food, and military threat—foreshadowing the difficulties of life in Canaan, and a meeting with Jethro.

15.22–27: First crisis, lack of water. 22–23: Next stage of the journey; see 12.37n. **22:** *Red Sea*, see 13.18n. **24:** *Complained*, see 14.11–12n. **25a**: Moses carries out a magical act, **25b:** *Statute . . . ordinance*, necessary because a community cannot exist without regulations; see 21.1–22.17n. The wilderness crises test Israelites (also 16.4) and God (17.2,7); see Deut 8.1–3,16. **26:** *Diseases*, although not used in the marvels episodes (7.8–10.29), may allude to them or to general Egyptian maladies or to both; cf. Deut 28.27. *Heals you*, better "your healer," an epithet that may derive from Canaanite myth. **27:** Next stage of the journey; see 12.37n.

16.1–36: Second crisis, lack of food (cf. Num 11). **1:** Next stage of the journey, see 12.37n. *Fifteenth day . . . second month* is a month after departing Egypt (12.17–18). The name *Sinai* appears for the first time (see 3.1n., 3.2n., and 19.1n.). **2:** *Complained*, see 14.11–12n. **3:** *Hand of the LORD*, see 9.3n. *Fleshpots* (referring to meat) and

said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, 7 and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?" 8 And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD."

9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.'" 10 And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 12 "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

13 In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?"[a] For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. 16 This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.'" 17 The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. 18 But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. 19 And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over until morning." 20 But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. 21 Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

22 On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.'" 24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses commanded them; and it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it. 25 Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you

[a] Or *"It is manna"* (Heb *man hu,* see verse 31)

bread, their food in Egypt, will be matched by quails (v. 13) and bread (v. 4; or manna, vv. 15,31) in the wilderness. **4:** This *test* (see 15.25n.) may be about obeying God's instructions (Heb "torah"; see 12.49n.) and about believing God will provide for them. **6:** To *know* God here (and v. 12) is to recognize that God can miraculously provide sustenance; cf. 5.2n. **7:** The phrase *glory of the LORD*, a technical Priestly phrase signifying God's physical presence (within a cloud, v. 10), appears for the first time in the Bible (also 24.16,17; 40.34,35; cf. 33.18n.); see 3.2n. **9:** *Aaron* again speaks for Moses; see 4.15–16n. **12:** *Know*, see 16.6n. **13:** *Dew*, like rain, signifies divine favor (e.g., Gen 27.28), both essential for agriculture in ancient Israel. **16:** *Omer*, see 16.36n. **19:** This will indicate trust in God. **23–30:** Instructions for the *sabbath* as a *day of rest* on the *seventh day* (cf. Gen 2.2–3) precede the Decalogue's sabbath commandment (see 20.8–11n.); sabbath observance is part of Israel's learning to obey God (see 16.4n.; see also 20.8–11; 23.12; 31.12–17; 34.21; 35.1–3). Thus the sabbath as part of the world order is introduced

shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a sabbath, there will be none."

27 On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none. 28 The LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions? 29 See! The LORD has given you the sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day." 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 The house of Israel called it manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. 32 Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, in order that they may see the food with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'" 33 And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD, to be kept throughout your generations." 34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the covenant,[a] for safekeeping. 35 The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a habitable land; they ate manna, until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. 36 An omer is a tenth of an ephah.

17 From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5 The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He called the place Massah[b] and Meribah,[c] because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

8 Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. 9 Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men for us and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." 10 So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[b] That is *Test*
[c] That is *Quarrel*

through the manna episode. **31:** *House of Israel*, see 40.34n. "What is it?" (Heb "man hu'") in v. 15 provides an etymology for *manna*, which cannot be identified and may be a mythic substance (cf. Num 11.7–9; Ps 78.25; Wis 16.20). **32:** *Kept throughout your generations* alludes to an otherwise unknown commemorative ritual; see 11.1–13.16n. **33–34:** *Covenant*, elliptical for the not-yet-announced "ark of the covenant" (25.10–22), is parallel to *LORD* (v. 33), indicating that the ark signifies God's presence (see 25.17–22n.). Cf. Heb 9.4. **35:** *Forty years*, the first mention of the length of the wilderness sojourn. **36:** *Ephah* (ca. 21 qts [23 L]) and *omer* (2 qts [2.3 liters]) are dry measures, usually for grain.

17.1–7: Third crisis, lack of water (cf. Num 20.2–13). **1:** Further stages of the journey; see 12.27n. **2–3:** The people *complain* again (see 14.11–12n.). The synonym *quarrel* (Heb "rib") provides an etymology for Meribah (v. 7). Similarly, *test* (Heb "nissah") provides an etymology for Massah (v. 7). **6:** *Water* coming from a *rock* at the mountain *Horeb* (see 3.1n.) invokes mythic imagery of the cosmic mountain, the divine home and source of all water. **7:** *Among us*, or "with you/us," an expression denoting God's potent presence, which provides food or water and protection for Israelites.

17.8–16. Fourth crisis, military threat. 8: *Amalek* refers to a seminomadic group and habitual enemy of Israel (v. 16; Deut 25.17–19; Judg 6.1–3; 1 Sam 15; etc.). Amalekites are not attested in nonbiblical sources. **9:** Moses's successor *Joshua*, whose name appears seven times in Exodus, is first mentioned here. Moses's *staff* can secure military victory (as in the sea crossing, 14.16) and produce water (17.5–6) or make it undrinkable (7.15–19); see 4.20n. **10:** *Hur*, an associate of Moses and Aaron (also 24.14), is likely a Levite here, but is a Judahite in 31.2.

with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the sun set. 13 And Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the sword.

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a reminder in a book and recite it in the hearing of Joshua: I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." 15 And Moses built an altar and called it, The LORD is my banner. 16 He said, "A hand upon the banner of the LORD![a] The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

18 Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro took her back, 3 along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, "I have been an alien[b] in a foreign land"), 4 and the name of the other, Eliezer[c] (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). 5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came into the wilderness where Moses was encamped at the mountain of God, bringing Moses' sons and wife to him. 6 He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife and her two sons." 7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed down and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent. 8 Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had beset them on the way, and how the LORD had delivered them. 9 Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD had done to Israel, in delivering them from the Egyptians.

10 Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. 11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from the Egyptians,[d] when they dealt arrogantly with them." 12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.

13 The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him from morning until evening. 14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?" 15 Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make

[a] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *ger*
[c] Heb *Eli*, my God; *ezer*, help
[d] The clause *because . . . Egyptians* has been transposed from verse 10

14: The instruction to *write* is the first biblical mention of Israelite literacy. *Reminder* and *remembrance*, indications of the commemorative aspects of the Exodus story; see 13.9n.; cf. 11.1–13.16n. *Book*, better "document." *Recite* gives oral form to written recollections. **15–16:** Constructing an *altar* may be a third commemorative act.

18.1–27: Meeting with Jethro, who solves an organizational crisis. **1:** *Jethro*, see 2.18n. *Father-in-law,* Heb *ḥoten*, connotes marriage as a bond between a man and his wife's father and thus between two families, not just a bond between the conjugal pair; its frequent and redundant use in ch 18 thus emphasizes the Israelites' connection with the Midianites. **2:** *Sent away* to her father for safety; he thus *took her back*, accepted her. **3–4:** *Gershom*'s symbolic name appears in 2.22 but *Eliezer*'s only here. **5:** *Mountain of God*, i.e., Sinai/Horeb (see 3.1n.). Another tradition (19.2) implies that the Israelites reach the mountain after the Jethro episode. **10–12:** As a priest (v. 1, see 2.16n.) who blesses the LORD, acknowledges the LORD (see 5.2n.) as greater than other deities (see 15.11n.), and sacrifices to the LORD, Jethro may reflect Midianite familiarity with this deity; see 3.15n. **12:** *Eat bread* denotes a communal sacrificial meal binding the Israelites, Jethro, and God (see 24.5n). **13–27** (cf. Deut 1.9–18): Rendering justice will be the responsibility of a hierarchy of administrative officials (vv. 13,22; NRSV

known to them the statutes and instructions of God." [17] Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. [18] You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. [19] Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; [20] teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. [21] You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. [22] Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. [23] If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace."

[24] So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. [25] Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. [26] And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves. [27] Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went off to his own country.

19 On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai. [2] They had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. [3] Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: [4] You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. [5] Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, [6] but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites."

[7] So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. [8] The people all answered as one: "Everything that the LORD has spoken we will do." Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. [9] Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after."

"judges"). In the retelling of this episode in Deut 1.9–18, the initiative is Moses's alone. **20:** *Statutes*, see 15.25b n. *Instructions* (Heb "torot," pl. of "torah"), see 12.49n. **26:** *Case,* Heb *dabar*, also, "thing, word, matter," uses a root ("dbr") that appears ten times in ch 18, anticipating the ten "words" of the Decalogue; see 20.1–17n.

19.1–25: Revelation at the mountain. God's second appearance at Sinai/Horeb (cf. ch 3) is a composite of traditions, at times contradictory or redundant, together conveying the mystery of this momentous theophany. Sinai/Horeb is depicted as an earthly manifestation of the cosmic mountain (see 17.6n.), axis of the mythic connection between divine and human realms. **1:** The location of *Sinai* (or Horeb; see 3.1n.) is uncertain. Some passages (Deut 33.2; Judg 5.4; Hab 3.3,7) locate it in southern Jordan; the traditional site in the southern Sinai Peninsula (see map on p. 101) is unlikely. **3:** *House of Jacob* is parallel with "sons of Israel" (*Israelites*), the two names of the ancestor of the twelve tribes (Gen 32.28). **4:** The reminder of God's past actions for the Israelites, as preface to the covenant, is typical of Near Eastern treaties between a stronger and a weaker king, in which the overlord states past benefactions; also 20.2. *Eagle's wings*, image of parental protection and nurturance (Deut 32.11–13). **5:** *Obey . . . keep* signifies the people's responsibility to the god who saved them, thus anticipating the Sinai *covenant*, first mentioned here (cf. 2.24; 6.4–5). The concept of a pact or covenant between God and Israel is a theologized form of Near Eastern treaty agreements in which a ruler is the patron of a vassal, who has obligations in return. Unlike most vassals, Israel will have special status as its overlord's *treasured possession* (Deut 7.6; 14.2; 26.18). **6:** *Priestly kingdom . . . holy nation* poetically presents all Israelites as priests: they will have privileges of intimacy with God and responsibilities of physical and moral purity. **8:** This unanimous agreement is reaffirmed after the covenant is presented (24.7). **9:** *Cloud*, see 3.2n. *Hear*, denoting an auditory the-

When Moses had told the words of the people to the LORD, 10 the LORD said to Moses: "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes 11 and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 You shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Be careful not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Any who touch the mountain shall be put to death. 13 No hand shall touch them, but they shall be stoned or shot with arrows;[a] whether animal or human being, they shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain." 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He consecrated the people, and they washed their clothes. 15 And he said to the people, "Prepare for the third day; do not go near a woman."

16 On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. 19 As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. 20 When the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, the LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. 21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people not to break through to the LORD to look; otherwise many of them will perish. 22 Even the priests who approach the LORD must consecrate themselves or the LORD will break out against them." 23 Moses said to the LORD, "The people are not permitted to come up to Mount Sinai; for you yourself warned us, saying, 'Set limits around the mountain and keep it holy.'" 24 The LORD said to him, "Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you; but do not let either the priests or the people break through to come up to the LORD; otherwise he will break out against them." 25 So Moses went down to the people and told them.

20 Then God spoke all these words: 2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of

[a] Heb lacks *with arrows*

ophany; v. 11 implies a visual one. The people will truly *trust* Moses when they hear him converse directly with God (v. 19; cf. 4.1–9; 14.31n.) and then will accept what God communicates to them through Moses. **10–15:** God's presence will render the mountain intensely holy and too dangerous for people (cf. 24.11) to approach (see 3.6n.); even being at a slight remove requires purification. **10:** *People*, perhaps only men; see v. 15n. *Consecrate*, that is, make ritually fit to approach divine sanctity (Josh 3.5); *wash*, an antidote to ritual impurity (see 29.4). **12:** *Limits* (and v. 23), the border around dangerous sanctity. *Death*, because the intense holiness of God's presence has a dangerous quality (also v. 21; 20.19); see 24.9–11n. and Num 4.15. **13:** *Go up on the mountain* differs from v. 12, in which the people do not ascend the mountain. **14:** *Consecrated . . . washed*, see v. 10n. **15:** *Go near a woman*, that is, have sex, which causes ritual impurity (Lev 15.18). Addressed to men, this seems to exclude women from experiencing the theophany; but see 20.1–17n. **16–19:** Intense natural phenomena—*thunder*, *lightning*, a thick *cloud*, dense *smoke*, *violent* shaking—together connote the extraordinary phenomenon of revelation (Judg 5.4–5; Pss 18.7–15; 68.7–8; Hab 3.3–6; cf. 1 Kings 19.11–13). A blaring *trumpet*, otherwise used to herald sovereigns (as 1 Kings 1.34) or signal momentous (as 1 Sam 13.3; Isa 18.3) and sacred (as Lev 25.9) events, augments the sensory images. **20–25:** Three zones of sanctity are established: holiest at the top for God and Moses (vv. 20,24); a middle stage for Aaron (v. 24) and perhaps leaders (v. 22; 24.1–2,9–11); least holy at the bottom for the people (vv. 12,17,21,23). These zones correspond to the tabernacle's three levels of holiness (see 25.1–31.17n.).

20.1–24.18: Covenant. The stipulations of the covenant—Decalogue (20.1–17) and covenant rules (20.22–23.19)—are interspersed with additional Sinai narratives (20.18–21; 23.20–24.18).

20.1–17: Decalogue (also Deut 5.6–21). These "Ten Commandments," also found with some variations in Deuteronomy 5, are not numbered or titled here but are later called "ten words," that is, "ten sayings" or "ten matters" in 34.28; Deut 4.13; 10.4 (see 18.26n.; 35.1n.). Set forth in apodictic (absolute) form, they are not universal laws nor a concise summary of biblical law. Rather, they are unconditional community precepts, both injunctions and prohi-

the house of slavery; [3] you shall have no other gods before[a] me.

[4] You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. [5] You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, [6] but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation[b] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

[7] You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

[a] Or *besides*
[b] Or *to thousands*

bitions, rather than laws, which typically have punishments. Unlike any other ancient Near Eastern materials, the Decalogue creates moral standards for a society; obedience is to be a function of divine authority, not fear of punishment. Containing more than ten statements, and not numbered in the Bible, they are counted in diverse ways.

NUMBERING OF THE DECALOGUE IN EXODUS 20.1–17

	MOST JEWISH TRADITIONS	EASTERN ORTHODOX, ANGLICAN, MOST PROTESTANT CHURCHES	ROMAN CATHOLIC AND LUTHERAN CHURCHES
Ex 20.2 (divine self-identification)	1	prologue	1
20.3 (other gods)	2	1	1
20.4–6 (idols)	2	2	1
20.7 (divine name)	3	3	2
20.8–11 (sabbath)	4	4	3
20.12 (parents)	5	5	4
20.13 (murder)	6	6	5
20.14 (adultery)	7	7	6
20.15 (theft)	8	8	7
20.16 (perjury)	9	9	8
20.17a (coveting)	10	10	9
20.17b (coveting)	10	10	10

The first several deal with human obligations to God and are accompanied by motive clauses (explanations); the others concern social issues and usually do not mention God. Because its pronouns are all second-person masculine singular, the Decalogue seems to address individually adult men responsible for land-holding Israelite households with servants (as v. 17), with its stipulations otherwise applying to all people as appropriate. Yet, in Hebrew the masculine singular can be inclusive; cf. v. 10 (and see Gen 2.24). **1:** *God spoke* these words to the people directly, not through Moses. **2:** Divine self-identification and recapitulation of past benefaction (see 19.4n.). **3:** Worship of the LORD alone, without denying other deities; see 15.11n. **4–6:** Worship of God without anthropomorphic images perhaps distinguished Israelite religion from those of their neighbors. **4:** *Idol* (Heb "pesel"), a carved image; cf. 34.17n. **5:** *Jealous* (or "zealous") *God* is a recurring phrase (also 34.14; Deut 4.24; 5.9; 6.15) indicating God's passionate resolve to deal with those worshiping other deities. *To the . . . generation*, transgenerational guilt (see 34.7; cf. Gen 15.16) is sometimes rejected (Jer 31.29–30; Ezek 18). **7:** God's *name*, which represents God's presence (20.24; Deut 5.12; etc.), is potent and cannot be misused (as in false oaths,

[8] Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.
[9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work.
[10] But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. [11] For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

[12] Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

[13] You shall not murder.[a]

[14] You shall not commit adultery.

[15] You shall not steal.

[16] You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

[17] You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

[18] When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid[b] and trembled and stood at a distance, [19] and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." [20] Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin." [21] Then the people stood at a distance, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

[22] The LORD said to Moses: Thus you shall say to the Israelites: "You have seen for your-

[a] Or *kill*

[b] Sam Gk Syr Vg: MT *they saw*

Jer 7.9). **8:** The *sabbath* is to be *holy* (v. 8; the same Heb word is translated *consecrated* in v. 11), that is, distinct from other days (see 16.23–30n.), and is directed to God as creator (v. 11, as in the Priestly creation story [Gen 1.1–2.3]; contrast Deut 5.15). **8:** *Remember* (contrast Deut 5.12) suggests that memory involves action. **9:** *Work*, perhaps skilled work, though the term is never defined in any sabbath legislation; however, cooking is implied in ch 35.1–3 (see 35.3n.). **10:** "Wife" is omitted from the otherwise inclusive list of seven entities enjoined to observe the sabbath, perhaps because she is included in *you*; see 20.1–17n. **12:** Parental authority, akin to that of God, likewise deserves *honor* (see 14.4n., where "glory" is from the same root as *honor*, and 21.15,17n.). **13:** *Murder* is forbidden, but not killing in war or in capital punishment. **14:** *Adultery*, sexual intercourse between a man and a married or betrothed woman, is a grave offense (Lev 20.10; Deut 22.22) because lineages could be compromised by this infidelity. **15:** Theft of both persons and property is prohibited; the Heb word for "kidnap" (21.16) is the same as for *steal*. **16:** Forbidding *false witness* indicates strong concerns for justice (23.1–3). **17:** Considered two separate precepts in some traditions (cf. Deut 5.21), this one addresses the male head of household; see 20.1–17n. Forbidding the mental process of coveting, the cause of the transgressions of adultery and theft (already prohibited in vv. 14 and 15), is unusual; but the intense emotional state of *covet* (Heb root "ḥmd") here implies the results of that state as well as the state itself (see Mic 2.1–2). *Covet* appears twice in succession; first before the general category *house* (better "household"), and the second before an enumeration of some of a household's components.

20.18–21: The Sinai account resumes, with the people insisting that Moses transmit God's word. **18:** *Thunder . . . lightning . . . trumpet . . . smoking*, see 19.16–19n. **19:** *Die*, see 19.13n.

20.22–23.33: Community regulations. This collection of legal materials, called "book of the covenant" [Heb "sefer ha-berit"] (24.7) or "Covenant Code" or "Covenant Collection," has affinities of form and content with other ancient law legal traditions. A discrete scribal collection, with laws—especially agricultural ones and those mentioning houses—inapplicable to a wilderness setting, it was likely incorporated into the Sinai narrative to afford it divine authority. The oldest of the legal materials in the Pentateuch, many of its stipulations probably arose in premonarchic village settings. Introductory instructions (20.22–26) and a concluding narrative (23.20–33) frame a two-part enumeration of legal materials. The first part (21.1–22.17) consists mainly of casuistic materials (case laws with attached punishments). The second part (22.18–23.19) comprises ethical or religious norms and exhortations typically expressed in apodictic or absolute form. These two parts may reflect the merging of ancient customary regulations with covenant-oriented materials.

20.22–26: Introductory instructions in the second-person plural. The forbidden statues (see 20.4–5) made of costly *silver* and *gold* are contrasted with simple, low sacrificial altars of *earth* or unhewn *stones*. Sacrifice can

selves that I spoke with you from heaven.
23 You shall not make gods of silver alongside
me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of
gold. 24 You need make for me only an altar of
earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings
and your offerings of well-being, your sheep
and your oxen; in every place where I cause
my name to be remembered I will come to
you and bless you. 25 But if you make for me
an altar of stone, do not build it of hewn
stones; for if you use a chisel upon it you
profane it. 26 You shall not go up by steps to
my altar, so that your nakedness may not be
exposed on it."

21 These are the ordinances that you shall
set before them:

2 When you buy a male Hebrew slave, he
shall serve six years, but in the seventh he
shall go out a free person, without debt. 3 If
he comes in single, he shall go out single;
if he comes in married, then his wife shall
go out with him. 4 If his master gives him
a wife and she bears him sons or daugh-
ters, the wife and her children shall be her
master's and he shall go out alone. 5 But if
the slave declares, "I love my master, my
wife, and my children; I will not go out a
free person," 6 then his master shall bring
him before God.[a] He shall be brought to the
door or the doorpost; and his master shall
pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall
serve him for life.

7 When a man sells his daughter as a slave,
she shall not go out as the male slaves do. 8 If
she does not please her master, who desig-
nated her for himself, then he shall let her be
redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to
a foreign people, since he has dealt unfairly
with her. 9 If he designates her for his son, he
shall deal with her as with a daughter. 10 If he
takes another wife to himself, he shall not di-
minish the food, clothing, or marital rights of
the first wife.[b] 11 And if he does not do these
three things for her, she shall go out without
debt, without payment of money.

12 Whoever strikes a person mortally shall
be put to death. 13 If it was not premeditated,
but came about by an act of God, then I will
appoint for you a place to which the killer
may flee. 14 But if someone willfully attacks
and kills another by treachery, you shall take
the killer from my altar for execution.

15 Whoever strikes father or mother shall
be put to death.

16 Whoever kidnaps a person, whether that
person has been sold or is still held in posses-
sion, shall be put to death.

[a] Or *to the judges*
[b] Heb *of her*

take place wherever people invoke God's *name* (presence); contrast 27.1–8 and the single "place" for sacrifice in Deuteronomy (Deut 12.5–14; etc.). **26:** *Nakedness may not be exposed*, perhaps because undergarments were not normally worn; contrast 28.42.

21.1–22.20: Ordinances (rulings) and statutes (rules). In form and content, this section resembles other ancient Near Eastern legal collections. It comprises four sections: two groups of rulings (*ordinances*, v. 1), beginning with *when* or *if*, on specific cases (21.1–11; 21.18–22.17), and stringent rules (statutes) beginning with *whoever* or *you* (21.12–17; 22.18–20).

21.2–11: Manumission regulations (cf. Deut 15.12–18; Lev 25.39–55) for indentured Israelite (lit., "Hebrew," v. 2; see 1.15n.) servants; they provide procedures rather than penalties. Laws dealing with servitude usually come at the end of ancient Near Eastern law collections; here they are first, indicating the humanitarian interests of the "book of the covenant" and/or its placement immediately after Israel's liberation from slavery. **2–6:** Regulations for a manservant. **2:** *Buy*, better "acquire." *Slave*, better "debt-servant" (also v. 7). *Six years*, term limit for debt servitude. **5–6:** The servant can irrevocably forego independence; a physical mark involving little trauma signifies his subjugation (v. 6). **6:** *Before God*, probably at a local sanctuary (also 22.9). **7–11:** A maidservant's rights are different because her master or his son has rights to both her reproductive capacity and her labor; contrast Deut 15.12, 17.

21.12–32: Violence regulations include absolute rules for capital offenses (vv. 12–17) and case rulings concerning assaults by humans (18–27) and animals (28–32). **12–14:** Important distinction, appearing three other times in the Hebrew Bible (Num 35.9–29,31–34; Deut 19.1–13; Josh 20.1–9) between deliberate and accidental homicide. **13:** *Place to . . . flee* because the victim's kin would seek revenge. **15,17:** Two rules supporting parental authority, probably over adult children in an extended family (also Lev 20.9). **16:** *Kidnap*, lit., "steal"; see 20.15n.

17 Whoever curses father or mother shall
be put to death.
18 When individuals quarrel and one
strikes the other with a stone or fist so
that the injured party, though not dead, is
confined to bed, 19 but recovers and walks
around outside with the help of a staff, then
the assailant shall be free of liability, except
to pay for the loss of time, and to arrange for
full recovery.
20 When a slaveowner strikes a male or
female slave with a rod and the slave dies
immediately, the owner shall be punished.
21 But if the slave survives a day or two, there
is no punishment; for the slave is the owner's
property.
22 When people who are fighting injure a
pregnant woman so that there is a miscar-
riage, and yet no further harm follows, the
one responsible shall be fined what the
woman's husband demands, paying as much
as the judges determine. 23 If any harm fol-
lows, then you shall give life for life, 24 eye
for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot
for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound,
stripe for stripe.
26 When a slaveowner strikes the eye of a
male or female slave, destroying it, the owner
shall let the slave go, a free person, to com-
pensate for the eye. 27 If the owner knocks out
a tooth of a male or female slave, the slave
shall be let go, a free person, to compensate
for the tooth.
28 When an ox gores a man or a woman to
death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh
shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox
shall not be liable. 29 If the ox has been ac-
customed to gore in the past, and its owner
has been warned but has not restrained it,
and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall
be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to
death. 30 If a ransom is imposed on the owner,
then the owner shall pay whatever is imposed
for the redemption of the victim's life. 31 If it
gores a boy or a girl, the owner shall be dealt
with according to this same rule. 32 If the ox
gores a male or female slave, the owner shall
pay to the slaveowner thirty shekels of silver,
and the ox shall be stoned.
33 If someone leaves a pit open, or digs a pit
and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey
falls into it, 34 the owner of the pit shall make
restitution, giving money to its owner, but
keeping the dead animal.
35 If someone's ox hurts the ox of another,
so that it dies, then they shall sell the live
ox and divide the price of it; and the dead
animal they shall also divide. 36 But if it was
known that the ox was accustomed to gore in
the past, and its owner has not restrained it,
the owner shall restore ox for ox, but keep the
dead animal.

22 [a] When someone steals an ox or a
sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, the
thief shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four
sheep for a sheep.[b] The thief shall make resti-
tution, but if unable to do so, shall be sold for
the theft. 4 When the animal, whether ox or
donkey or sheep, is found alive in the thief's
possession, the thief shall pay double.
2 [c] If a thief is found breaking in, and is
beaten to death, no bloodguilt is incurred;

[a] Ch 21.37 in Heb
[b] Verses 2, 3, and 4 rearranged thus: 3b, 4, 2, 3a
[c] Ch 22.1 in Heb

17: *Curses* were believed to have potency and thus were as serious as physical assault. **18–19:** Temporary injury, less serious than permanent injury, has lesser punishments. **20:** *Slave*, probably a non-Israelite (cf. vv. 21,32). **22–27:** Measure-for-measure punishment, or "lex talionis" (Lev 24.19–20; Deut 19.21) is a principle of fair treatment of assailants and not necessarily a literal prescription for retaliatory treatment in all cases. Note that compensation is sometimes acceptable (vv. 22,26,27) and that the rabbinic understanding of talion calls for paying damages **28–32:** Goring ox cases, similar to those in Mesopotamian law (see esp. Laws of Hammurabi 250–52), mandate liability for accidental or negligent homicide, though in Israelite law no benefit may accrue from the ox. **30:** *Ransom* instead of death, because the cause was negligence, not murder. **32:** A chattel *slave* (as in v. 21) rather than an indentured servant (as in vv. 2–11), because monetary value is assigned. A *shekel* weighed about .4 oz (11.4 gm).

21.33–22.15: Property and restitution, more case rulings. **21.33–36:** Compensation for death or injury to animals because of negligence. **22.1–4:** Theft of property (cf. 22.16n.). *Sold*, debt-servitude to secure funds for the fine. **2–3:** Nighttime theft is more serious, presumably because the intruder's intent is less clear.

[3] but if it happens after sunrise, bloodguilt is incurred.

[5] When someone causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets livestock loose to graze in someone else's field, restitution shall be made from the best in the owner's field or vineyard.

[6] When fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, the one who started the fire shall make full restitution.

[7] When someone delivers to a neighbor money or goods for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, then the thief, if caught, shall pay double. [8] If the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall be brought before God,[a] to determine whether or not the owner had laid hands on the neighbor's goods.

[9] In any case of disputed ownership involving ox, donkey, sheep, clothing, or any other loss, of which one party says, "This is mine," the case of both parties shall come before God;[a] the one whom God condemns[b] shall pay double to the other.

[10] When someone delivers to another a donkey, ox, sheep, or any other animal for safekeeping, and it dies or is injured or is carried off, without anyone seeing it, [11] an oath before the LORD shall decide between the two of them that the one has not laid hands on the property of the other; the owner shall accept the oath, and no restitution shall be made. [12] But if it was stolen, restitution shall be made to its owner. [13] If it was mangled by beasts, let it be brought as evidence; restitution shall not be made for the mangled remains.

[14] When someone borrows an animal from another and it is injured or dies, the owner not being present, full restitution shall be made. [15] If the owner was present, there shall be no restitution; if it was hired, only the hiring fee is due.

[16] When a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged to be married, and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife. [17] But if her father refuses to give her to him, he shall pay an amount equal to the bride-price for virgins.

[18] You shall not permit a female sorcerer to live.

[19] Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death.

[20] Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the LORD alone, shall be devoted to destruction.

[21] You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. [22] You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. [23] If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; [24] my wrath

[a] Or *before the judges*
[b] Or *the judges condemn*

5–6: Restitution for agricultural damages caused by negligence. **7–15:** Restitution for loss of property in another's care. **9–11:** Two cases of judicial impasse. Disputes lacking evidence or witnesses are decided, as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, using unspecified ritual mechanisms to elicit divine judgment; cf. Num 5.11–31. **9:** *This is mine*, an oath tantamount to a self-curse, causing divine punishment if the person is lying.

22.16–20: Social and religious stipulations, including one case ruling (22.16–17) and three rules (22.18–20). **16–17:** Consensual premarital sex obligates the man to marry the woman or compensate her father for the decrease, because of her lost virginity, in the *bride-price* (better "marital gift" or "bridewealth," because the payment did not mean a man was buying a wife) a future husband might pay. **16:** *Seduces*, not coerces, implying her consent. **18–20:** Like 21.12–17, this second group of absolute rules—prohibiting sorcery (cf. Deut 18.10–11), bestiality (cf. Lev 18.23; 20.15–16; Deut 27.21), and apostasy—are unequivocal and involve capital punishment. **20:** *Devoted to destruction* (execution) elsewhere entails eradicating the offender's family and confiscating their property (Lev 27.28–29).

22.21–23.19. Ethical and religious exhortations and norms. The stipulations of the second part of the community regulations (see 20.22–23.33n.) are mostly unconditional. Some concern social relationships and justice (22.21–27; 23.1–12) and others involve obligations to God (22.28–31; 23.13–19), thus linking humanitarian and religious matters. **22.21–27:** Concern for the disadvantaged appears repeatedly in the Pentateuch (e.g., 23.6,9–12; Lev 19.33–34; 23.22; Deut 1.16; 10.18–19; 24.17–22) but not in other ancient Near Eastern law collections. **22–24**: The concept of measure for measure, or "one reaps what one sows" (cf. Judg 1. 7; Obad 15), appears in the

will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.

25 If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. 26 If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; 27 for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.

28 You shall not revile God, or curse a leader of your people.

29 You shall not delay to make offerings from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses.[a]

The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me. 30 You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall remain with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to me.

31 You shall be people consecrated to me; therefore you shall not eat any meat that is mangled by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

23 You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness. 2 You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; 3 nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit.

4 When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.

5 When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free.[a]

6 You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. 7 Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. 8 You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

9 You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

10 For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; 11 but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

12 Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the resident alien may be refreshed. 13 Be attentive to all that I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.

14 Three times in the year you shall hold a festival for me. 15 You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread; as I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt.

No one shall appear before me empty-handed.

16 You shall observe the festival of harvest, of the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

warning that God will punish with death those who abuse *widows* and *orphans*; the wives of such people will be widowed and their children fatherless. **28–31:** Several religious matters: prohibitions (vv. 28,31) and prescriptions (vv. 29–30). **28:** A human *leader*, like God, is unassailable. Cf. Lev 24.15–16; 1 Kings 21.10,13. **29–30:** Appears to require child sacrifice, like animal sacrifice, or perhaps the dedication of the firstborn to service at a sanctuary; but see 13.2.n.; 34.19–20; Num 18.27; no provision for redemptions is given. **31:** *Consecrated* (lit., "holy"), see 19.6n. Elsewhere, to be edible animals must be drained of their blood (Lev 7.24; 17.13–15). **23.1–12:** Judicial integrity (vv. 1–3,6–8) and the protection of animals and marginal groups (vv. 4–5,6,9–12). **1–3:** 20.16; Lev 19.12,15; Deut 19.15–19. **4–5:** Cf. Deut 22.1–4. **6–9:** See 22.21–27n. **10–11:** A seventh-year agricultural hiatus to benefit the poor. **12:** A seventh-day rest (see 16.23–30n.) benefits animals, servants, and foreigners; contrast 20.8–11. **13–19:** Obligations to God. **13:** See 15.11n, 20.3. **14–19a:** The three major agricultural festivals, commemorated as pilgrimage festivals to the local shrine (cf. 34.22–23): *unleavened bread* (linked to passover and the Exodus; see 12.15n.); *harvest*, or *first fruits*, also called Shavuot or Festival of Weeks or Pentecost (34.22,26; Lev 23.15–21;

you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. [17] Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.

[18] You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the fat of my festival remain until the morning.

[19] The choicest of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

[20] I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. [21] Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him.

[22] But if you listen attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

[23] When my angel goes in front of you, and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, [24] you shall not bow down to their gods, or worship them, or follow their practices, but you shall utterly demolish them and break their pillars in pieces. [25] You shall worship the Lord your God, and I[a] will bless your bread and your water; and I will take sickness away from among you. [26] No one shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. [27] I will send my terror in front of you, and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. [28] And I will send the pestilence[b] in front of you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. [29] I will not drive them out from before you in one year, or the land would become desolate and the wild animals would multiply against you. [30] Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. [31] I will set your borders from the Red Sea[c] to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will hand over to you the inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive them out before you. [32] You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. [33] They shall not live in your land, or they will make you sin against me; for if you worship their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

24 Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship at a distance. [2] Moses alone shall

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *he*
[b] Or *hornets*: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Or *Sea of Reeds*

Deut 16.9–12); *ingathering*, also called Sukkot or Festival of Booths (Lev 23.33–43; Deut 16.13–15). **17:** *All your males,* contrast Deut 31.11–12. *Before the Lord God*, presumably wherever there is an altar (20.22–26n.); contrast Deut 16.2,6,7,11,15,16, which stipulate pilgrimage to one place. **18:** The blood prohibition applies to all sacrifices, not just festival ones. *Until the morning*, cf. 12.8. **19a:** *House*, general designation for a shrine (Gen 28.22). The *first fruits* elsewhere constitute a tax to support priests (also Deut 26.1–3; Neh 10.36–37; see 29.26–34n.) **19b:** *Milk*, perhaps "fat," likely prohibiting the slaughter of the kid's mother to protect her breeding potential (also 34.26b; Deut 14.21).

23.20–33: The Sinai narrative resumes with further divine promises and admonitions. **20–23:** The *angel* (lit., "messenger") represents God's presence (see 3.2n.; 3.19–20n.). **22:** *Enemy . . . foes* employs Near Eastern treaty language. **23–33:** Cf. 34.11–17. **23,28:** See 3.2n. 3.8n. **24:** Cf. 20.3; 23.13. *Pillars*, upright stones, considered idolatrous (34.13; Lev 26.1; Deut 12.3, etc.), but in some sources and circumstances acceptable (e.g., Gen 28.16–22). **25–26:** Sustenance, health, and progeny are the blessings produced by covenant fealty (Lev 26.3–10; Deut 28.1–6). **27–30:** The land's indigenous inhabitants will be gradually expelled; in Deuteronomy and related literature, they are to be exterminated (e.g., Deut 7.2; Josh 10–11). **31:** One of several traditions about the extent of the land (e.g., Gen 15.18; Num 34.1–12). *Red Sea*, see 13.18n. *The sea of the Philistines*, the Mediterranean. **32–33:** *Their gods*, see 15.11n.

24.1–18: Theophanies and covenant ceremonies. Repetitive or conflicting details again (see 19.1–25n.) indicate a composite narrative about God's appearance—to Moses and the leaders (vv. 1–2,9–11), and to Moses alone (vv. 12–18). Covenant ratification rituals are known from ancient Near Eastern documents. **1–2**: Several zones of sanctity are implied; see 19.20–25n. **1:** *Nadab* and *Abihu*, Aaron's two eldest sons; see 6.23n.

come near the LORD; but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him."

3 Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do." 4 And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen as offerings of well-being to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he dashed against the altar. 7 Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." 8 Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, "See the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. 11 God[a] did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; also they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

12 The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." 13 So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. 14 To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them."

15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. 17 Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. 18 Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

25 The LORD said to Moses: 2 Tell the Israelites to take for me an offering; from all whose hearts prompt them to

[a] Heb *He*

3–8: Covenant ceremony. **3:** *Words,* referring to the Decalogue (see 20.1–17n.), and *ordinances*, referring to the community rulings (see 20.22–23.33n.). *One voice*, unanimous agreement; cf. 19.8. **4:** *Moses wrote*, see 24.12n. *Pillars*, see 23.24n. **5:** *Burnt offerings . . . offerings of well-being* (cf. 18.12), the former burned entirely, with the rising smoke constituting God's portion (Lev 1); the latter provided a ceremonial feast for the participants (v. 11; cf. Deut 27.6–7). Celebratory repasts bind those sharing the meal (here, God and the people); see 18.12n. **6–8:** Another ratification ritual, again involving the reading and ratification of the covenant, draws on the life-death quality of blood (see 22.31n.); throwing half on the people and half on the altar (for God, as 20.24) links them. **7:** *Book of the covenant,* see 20.22–23.33n. **8:** *On the people*, perhaps on the pillars (v. 4) representing them. *Made*, lit., "cut," denotes covenant making (also 34.10,12,15 and elsewhere, e.g., Gen 26.28; Judg 2.2). **9–11:** Partway up the mountain (continuing from vv. 1–2), the leaders too have a ceremonial meal and, despite the danger (see 3.6n.), have a visual experience of God. **10:** *Saw . . . God . . . feet* suggests anthropomorphism; elsewhere, seeing God directly is too dangerous (see 3.2n.,6n.; 33.11n.,23n.). *Sapphire*, better "lapis lazuli"; cf. Ezek 1.26. **12–18:** The theophany to Moses alone in the holiest zone combines two sources: the E narrative of vv.12–14 will resume in the golden calf episode of 31.18–34.35, and the P narrative of vv. 25–18 continues in the next chapter **12:** *Tablets*, probably two (31.18; 32.15); important documents were recorded in duplicate. *I have written,* i.e., God writes the document (also 31.18; 32.16; 34.1; Deut 9.10); contrast 24.4; 34.27–28. **13–14:** *Joshua* and *Hur* appear for the second time (17.9n.; 17.10n.). **15–17:** *Cloud* and *fire*, see 3.2n. and 19.16–19n. *Glory of the LORD*, see 16.7n. **15:** *Covered*, see 40.34n. **16:** *Settled*, better "dwelled," uses the same Heb root as the noun for God's wilderness dwelling, the tabernacle, introduced in the following chapter; see 25.9n.

Chs 25–40: Sanctuary and new covenant. The focus of the rest of Exodus is the construction of the wilderness tabernacle as an earthly home for God. Detailed directions for building the portable shrine (25.1–27.21; 30.1–31.18) and for clothing and inaugurating its priests (28.1–29.46) are followed by an account of its construc-

give you shall receive the offering for me.
3 This is the offering that you shall receive
from them: gold, silver, and bronze, 4 blue,
purple, and crimson yarns and fine linen,
goats' hair, 5 tanned rams' skins, fine leather,[a]
acacia wood, 6 oil for the lamps, spices for the
anointing oil and for the fragrant incense,
7 onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod
and for the breastpiece. 8 And have them
make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell
among them. 9 In accordance with all that I
show you concerning the pattern of the tab-
ernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall
make it.

10 They shall make an ark of acacia wood;
it shall be two and a half cubits long, a cubit
and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high.
11 You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside
and outside you shall overlay it, and you
shall make a molding of gold upon it all
around. 12 You shall cast four rings of gold
for it and put them on its four feet, two rings
on the one side of it, and two rings on the
other side. 13 You shall make poles of acacia
wood, and overlay them with gold. 14 And
you shall put the poles into the rings on the
sides of the ark, by which to carry the ark.
15 The poles shall remain in the rings of the
ark; they shall not be taken from it. 16 You
shall put into the ark the covenant[b] that I
shall give you.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

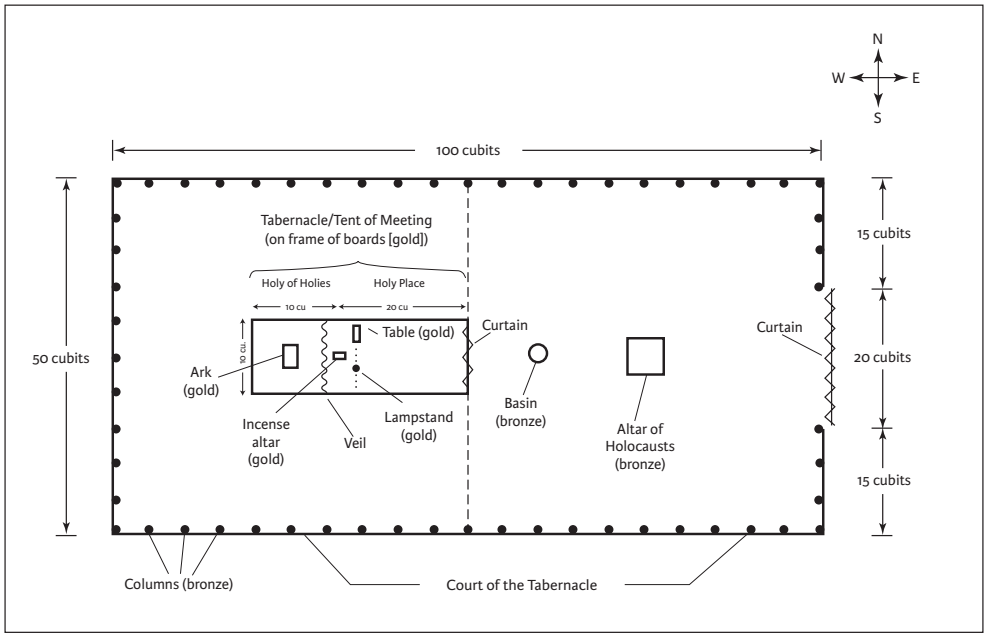
tion so God's presence can enter (35.1–40.38). Much of the information in the second section is the same as in the first, although the internal order differs. Between the two sections comes the golden calf episode (chs 32–34), in which the covenant is broken and restored.

25.1–31.18: Instructions for building the tabernacle and inaugurating the priesthood. Unlike religious edifices today, which are places that people enter to worship, temples and shrines in the ancient world were considered earthly residences for deities (see 25.8) and were off-limits for most humans. They were costly, well-furnished structures, befitting their divine occupants. A modest tent-shrine, perhaps reflected in the term "tent of meeting" (see 27.21n.), may have existed in early Israel; but the elaborate and costly Exodus tabernacle is likely a virtual structure, based somewhat on knowledge of the later Jerusalem Temple. Like Mount Sinai (and the Jerusalem Temple), the portable wilderness shrine has three zones of sanctity; see 19.20–25n. Following an introduction (25.1–9) and instructions for making the sacred furnishings (25.10–40) are directions for making the structure (ch 26) and its courtyard and altar (27.1–19). Directives for lamp oil (27.20–21) precede a concluding section (28.1–31.18) that includes instructions for the vestments (ch 28), the consecration (ch 29) of the priests, and the making of other furnishings and of incense (ch 30) and ends with God's announcing the two chief artisans and mandating sabbath observance (ch 31).

25.1–9: Introduction: the materials (also 35.4–29). Seven kinds of substances (metals, yarn, skins, wood, oil, spices, and gemstones) signify the totality of supplies. **2:** *Offering . . . hearts*, indicating that materials will come from donations, not taxes. **3:** Three precious metals will be used according to the three zones of sanctity (see 19.20–25n.), with *gold* for the most holy and *bronze* for the least holy. **5:** *Acacia,* an insect-resistant hardwood found in arid regions. **8:** *Sanctuary*, see 15.17n. *Dwell among them*, indicating that the shrine will be God's earthly residence (see 25.1–31.17n.). The Heb term for *dwell* denotes a moveable presence rather than one tied to a fixed location. **9:** *Pattern* designates the heavenly abode that is model for the earthly one (see 3.8n.). *Tabernacle*, a noun formed from the Heb verb "to dwell" (see v. 8n.). Used fifty-eight times in Exodus, here it refers to the entire sacred complex. It can also denote just the tent structure (e.g., 26.1).

25.10–40: Interior furnishings. Described first, the most holy item, the gold-covered ark (vv. 10–22), will be situated in the inner sanctum. Three more gold items—table (vv. 23–30), lampstand (vv. 31–40), and incense altar (not prescribed in this section; see 30.1–10)—will be near the ark, in the main room of the shrine.

25.10–22: The ark and its cover (also 37.1–9). A gilded chest that will contain the sacred covenant document, the ark has a lid surmounted by winged creatures over which God's invisible presence rests. In ancient Israel's aniconic tradition, the ark comes becomes a material symbol of God (see 1 Sam 4.4; 2 Sam 6.2; cf. Ex 25.31–40n.). **10:** It is similar in size (ca. 45 × 27 × 27 in = 114 × 69 × 69 cm) to ancient Egyptian chests for keeping valuables. **12–15:** *Rings* and *poles* for transport are known from ancient Egypt and Syria. **16:** The Heb word for *covenant* here ("'edut"; cf. 2.24n.; 20.22–23.33n.) is favored by the Priestly writer; perhaps referring to the tablets of 24.12, it is similar to the word for "meet," thus signifying the role of the ark as a place for oracular



Chs 25–31; 36–39: The structure of the Tabernacle as described in the book of Exodus

[17] Then you shall make a mercy seat[a] of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its width. [18] You shall make two cherubim of gold; you shall make them of hammered work, at the two ends of the mercy seat.[b] [19] Make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other; of one piece with the mercy seat[b] you shall make the cherubim at its two ends. [20] The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat[b] with their wings. They shall face one to another; the faces of the cherubim shall be turned toward the mercy seat.[b] [21] You shall put the mercy seat[b] on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the covenant[c] that I shall give you. [22] There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat,[b] from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the covenant,[c] I will deliver to you all my commands for the Israelites.

[23] You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and a cubit and a half high. [24] You shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a molding of gold around it. [25] You shall make around it a rim a handbreadth wide, and a molding of gold around the rim. [26] You shall make for it four

[a] Or *a cover*
[b] Or *the cover*
[c] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

revelations (v. 22; 29.42–43; 33.7–10) and alluding to another name ("tent of meeting"; see 27.20n.; 27.21n.; 38.8n.) for the wilderness shrine. **17–22:** The ark's cover (*mercy seat*) features composite beings (*cherubim*) whose wings form the throne, with the ark as its footstool, on which God's invisible presence rests (1 Sam 4.4; 1 Chr 28.2; Pss 99.1,5; 132.7); see 16.34n. Similar figures as components of thrones are known from ancient Near Eastern art. **22:** *Meet,* see v. 16n.

25.23–30: The table (also 37.10–16; cf. 1 Kings 7.48) is the repository for sacred vessels and for the bread offering. A dwelling place for a deity, as for humans, needs a table for food. Meat, bread, and liquids are the comestibles set before God, though the priests, not God, consume the bread (Lev 24.5–9). **23:** The table's dimensions (36 × 18 in = 1 × .5 m; height: 27 in = .75 m) are similar to those of offering tables depicted in ancient Near

rings of gold, and fasten the rings to the four corners at its four legs. 27 The rings that hold the poles used for carrying the table shall be close to the rim. 28 You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, and the table shall be carried with these. 29 You shall make its plates and dishes for incense, and its flagons and bowls with which to pour drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold. 30 And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me always.

31 You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The base and the shaft of the lampstand shall be made of hammered work; its cups, its calyxes, and its petals shall be of one piece with it; 32 and there shall be six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; 33 three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with calyx and petals, on one branch, and three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with calyx and petals, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. 34 On the lampstand itself there shall be four cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its calyxes and petals. 35 There shall be a calyx of one piece with it under the first pair of branches, a calyx of one piece with it under the next pair of branches, and a calyx of one piece with it under the last pair of branches—so for the six branches that go out of the lampstand. 36 Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it one hammered piece of pure gold. 37 You shall make the seven lamps for it; and the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it. 38 Its snuffers and trays shall be of pure gold. 39 It, and all these utensils, shall be made from a talent of pure gold. 40 And see that you make them according to the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.

26 Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and crimson yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skillfully worked into them. 2 The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; all the curtains shall be of the same size. 3 Five curtains shall be joined to one another; and the other five curtains shall be joined to one another. 4 You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the first set; and likewise you shall make loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second set. 5 You shall make fifty loops on the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is in the second set; the loops shall be opposite one another. 6 You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps, so that the tabernacle may be one whole.

7 You shall also make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle; you shall make eleven curtains. 8 The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the eleven curtains shall be of the same size. 9 You shall join five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and the sixth curtain you shall double over at the front of the tent. 10 You

Eastern art. **27–28:** Its *rings* and *poles* provide portability; see 25.12–15n. **29:** *Incense*, see 30.7n., 22–38n., 34–38. **30:** *Bread of the Presence* ("bread [set] before [God]") refers to loaves offered to God on the sabbath.

25.31–40: The lampstand (Heb "menorah"; also 37.17–24) will hold oil lamps for illuminating God's dwelling (cf. the ten lampstands of the Jerusalem Temple, 1 Kings 7.49). No dimensions are provided. The wealth of botanical terms (branches, calyxes, almond blossoms, petals) suggests that in shape and decoration, it represented a sacred tree and perhaps even God as source of fertility (see 3.2n.). **31:** *Base* and *shaft* together denote a cylindrical stand flared at the bottom. **37:** Seven lamps, perhaps one on each branch; otherwise, a single lamp in the middle (see 27.20n.; Lev 24.2). **39:** A *talent*, or 3,000 shekels, is about 34 kg = 75.5 lb. **40:** *Pattern*, see 25.9n. The divine blueprint must be followed exactly so that God dwells among the people.

26.1–37: The tabernacle structure (also 36.8–38). The tent itself consists of coverings (vv. 1–14), frames (vv. 15–30), and textile partitions (vv. 31–37) that form two interior spaces: the most holy place for the ark, and the holy place where the furnishings will be placed. **1–14: Coverings.** The tentlike structure will be formed with two fabric layers—panels of linen and tricolored wools decorated with *cherubim* (see 25.17–22n.), and unadorned goat-hair panels—covered with two layers of animal skins (v. 14). **1:** *Tabernacle*, referring to the tent itself; see 25.9n. *Linen* renders an Egyptian term for a luxury fabric. *Blue*, *purple*, and *crimson* were the most costly and

shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in one set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the second set.

11 You shall make fifty clasps of bronze, and put the clasps into the loops, and join the tent together, so that it may be one whole. 12 The part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. 13 The cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, of what remains in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and that side, to cover it. 14 You shall make for the tent a covering of tanned rams' skins and an outer covering of fine leather.[a]

15 You shall make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. 16 Ten cubits shall be the length of a frame, and a cubit and a half the width of each frame. 17 There shall be two pegs in each frame to fit the frames together; you shall make these for all the frames of the tabernacle. 18 You shall make the frames for the tabernacle: twenty frames for the south side; 19 and you shall make forty bases of silver under the twenty frames, two bases under the first frame for its two pegs, and two bases under the next frame for its two pegs; 20 and for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side twenty frames, 21 and their forty bases of silver, two bases under the first frame, and two bases under the next frame; 22 and for the rear of the tabernacle westward you shall make six frames. 23 You shall make two frames for corners of the tabernacle in the rear; 24 they shall be separate beneath, but joined at the top, at the first ring; it shall be the same with both of them; they shall form the two corners. 25 And so there shall be eight frames, with their bases of silver, sixteen bases; two bases under the first frame, and two bases under the next frame.

26 You shall make bars of acacia wood, five for the frames of the one side of the tabernacle, 27 and five bars for the frames of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the side of the tabernacle at the rear westward. 28 The middle bar, halfway up the frames, shall pass through from end to end. 29 You shall overlay the frames with gold, and shall make their rings of gold to hold the bars; and you shall overlay the bars with gold. 30 Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain.

31 You shall make a curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. 32 You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, which have hooks of gold and rest on four bases of silver. 33 You shall hang the curtain under the clasps, and bring the ark of the covenant[b] in there, within the curtain; and the curtain shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy. 34 You shall put the mercy seat[c] on the ark of the covenant[b] in the most holy place. 35 You shall set the table outside the curtain, and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the table; and you shall put the table on the north side.

36 You shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework. 37 You shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them.

27 You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide; the altar shall be square, and it shall be

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[c] Or *the cover*

highly prized dyes. **15–30: Frames.** A complex system of wooden boards and bars, with metal fastenings and bases, will form frames for the hangings. The information is incomplete, and the size and manner of assembly remain conjectural. But the tent is clearly rectangular (ca. 45 x 15 ft = 13.8 × 4.6 m). **31–37: Partitions.** A textile curtain with *cherubim* decorations (see 25.17–22n.) will subdivide the interior space into two zones of holiness (v. 33), and a textile panel will form the entrance; both will be made of linen and tricolored wool (see 26.1–14n.). **33:** *Most holy [place]*, or inner sanctuary (see 1 Kings 6.16).

27.1–19: The courtyard and its altar (also 38.1–20). Directions for making the courtyard altar (27.1–8), on which animals will be burnt (29.13,18) and animal blood will be splashed (29.12,16), precede instructions for making the enclosure wall (ca. 7.5 ft = 2.3 m high), which forms a courtyard (27.9–19) measuring ca. 150 × 75 ft = 45.7 × 22.9 m. **1–8: Altar.** The only courtyard object in this passage (see 30.17–21 for the courtyard basin) is

three cubits high. 2 You shall make horns for it on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze. 3 You shall make pots for it to receive its ashes, and shovels and basins and forks and firepans; you shall make all its utensils of bronze. 4 You shall also make for it a grating, a network of bronze; and on the net you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. 5 You shall set it under the ledge of the altar so that the net shall extend halfway down the altar. 6 You shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze; 7 the poles shall be put through the rings, so that the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar when it is carried. 8 You shall make it hollow, with boards. They shall be made just as you were shown on the mountain.

9 You shall make the court of the tabernacle. On the south side the court shall have hangings of fine twisted linen one hundred cubits long for that side; 10 its twenty pillars and their twenty bases shall be of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be of silver. 11 Likewise for its length on the north side there shall be hangings one hundred cubits long, their pillars twenty and their bases twenty, of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be of silver. 12 For the width of the court on the west side there shall be fifty cubits of hangings, with ten pillars and ten bases. 13 The width of the court on the front to the east shall be fifty cubits. 14 There shall be fifteen cubits of hangings on the one side, with three pillars and three bases. 15 There shall be fifteen cubits of hangings on the other side, with three pillars and three bases. 16 For the gate of the court there shall be a screen twenty cubits long, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework; it shall have four pillars and with them four bases. 17 All the pillars around the court shall be banded with silver; their hooks shall be of silver, and their bases of bronze. 18 The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, the width fifty, and the height five cubits, with hangings of fine twisted linen and bases of bronze. 19 All the utensils of the tabernacle for every use, and all its pegs and all the pegs of the court, shall be of bronze.

20 You shall further command the Israelites to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, so that a lamp may be set up to burn regularly. 21 In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that is before the covenant,[a] Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a perpetual ordinance to be observed throughout their generations by the Israelites.

28 Then bring near to you your brother Aaron, and his sons with him, from among the Israelites, to serve me as priests—

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

the large (ca. 7.5 × 7.5 × 4.5 ft = 2.3 × 2.3 × 1.4 m) and elaborate but portable altar; contrast the earthen altar of 20.24–26. **2:** *Horns*, quarter-round pieces, on the corners (as for the incense altar, 30.2), are attested in many excavated examples; they are used in the ritual of 29.12. **9–19: Enclosure.** As the least sacred zone, the courtyard will have unadorned textiles and metal fittings and utensils mainly of bronze; the linen panel for the entrance, however, will be decorated with tricolored wool (see 26.1n.). The location of the tent within the court is unspecified.

27.20–21: Lamp oil (also 35.8,28). **20:** A single *lamp* belongs to the tradition that uses "tent of meeting" for the wilderness shrine; see v. 21n. (cf. 25.37n.). *Regularly* means perpetually: light symbolizing divine presence will always be there. **21:** *Tent of meeting*, designating the place where Israelites or their representatives meet God, refers to the tent-shrine thirty-four times in Exodus (see 25.16n.); it may reflect a tradition that is separate from and older than texts using "tabernacle" (see 25.9n; see also 39.32n.). *Covenant*, perhaps elliptical for "ark [or tablets] of the covenant." *Aaron* appears for the first time in the tabernacle texts, anticipating the following unit.

28.1–43: Vestments for the priests (also 39.1–31). Included in the instructions for the tabernacle, the vestments are not simply priests' clothing; some are sacred furnishings and even ritual objects. After an introduction (vv. 1–5), the focus is on Aaron's apparel (vv. 6–39) and not that of his sons, who were second-tier priests (vv. 40–43). **1–5: Introduction.** The priestly lineage is announced, followed by a summary of the six prescribed vestments to be made of linen and tricolored wool. **1:** See the genealogy of 6.16–25, especially v. 23. *Aaron* has

Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 2 You shall make sacred vestments for the glorious adornment of your brother Aaron. 3 And you shall speak to all who have ability, whom I have endowed with skill, that they make Aaron's vestments to consecrate him for my priesthood. 4 These are the vestments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, and a sash. When they make these sacred vestments for your brother Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests, 5 they shall use gold, blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine linen.

6 They shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen, skillfully worked. 7 It shall have two shoulder-pieces attached to its two edges, so that it may be joined together. 8 The decorated band on it shall be of the same workmanship and materials, of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen. 9 You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, 10 six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth. 11 As a gem-cutter engraves signets, so you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel; you shall mount them in settings of gold filigree. 12 You shall set the two stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for remembrance. 13 You shall make settings of gold filigree, 14 and two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; and you shall attach the corded chains to the settings.

15 You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, in skilled work; you shall make it in the style of the ephod; of gold, of blue and purple and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen you shall make it. 16 It shall be square and doubled, a span in length and a span in width. 17 You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of carnelian,[a] chrysolite, and emerald shall be the first row; 18 and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire,[b] and a moonstone; 19 and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; 20 and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree. 21 There shall be twelve stones with names corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes. 22 You shall make for the breastpiece chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; 23 and you shall make for the breastpiece two rings of gold, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece. 24 You shall put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece; 25 the two ends of the two cords you shall attach to the two settings, and so attach it in front to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. 26 You shall make two rings of gold, and put them at the two ends of the breast-

[a] The identity of several of these stones is uncertain
[b] Or *lapis lazuli*

appeared frequently but is first called *priest* here. No title is given for him in the Pentateuch; the titles "high priest" (as Hag 1.12; Zech 3.1) and "chief priest" (2 Kings 25.18) are in non-Torah texts. **2:** *Sacred*, better "holy," because they are worn in and correspond to the shrine's holy space. **3:** *All . . . ability*, including women; see 35.4–29n. **5:** Sumptuous fabrics, corresponding to those of the shrine's holy space; see 26.1n. **6–39: Aaron's garments.** The first two—ephod (vv. 6–14) and breastpiece (vv. 15–30), and the turban (vv.36–38), have ritual functions; the others—robe (vv. 31–35), turban (vv. 36–38), tunic (v. 39), and sash (v. 39)—are opulent garments like those clothing royalty and statues of the gods in the ancient Near East. **6–14:** The somewhat enigmatic *ephod* (contrast other biblical uses, e.g., Judg 8.27; 1 Sam 2.18; 14.3) is a ceremonial garment like a bib or apron, adorned with engraved stones (vv. 9–12) representing and commemorating (*remembrance*, v. 12; see 13.9n.) the Israelite tribes. Wearing this garment and the breastpiece (next note), Aaron embodies all Israel; oracles he will receive (v. 30) are thus for all Israelites. **15–30:** Just as enigmatic in design is the *breastpiece of judgment*. Like the *ephod* to which it is attached, it has gemstones (twelve of them) representing (vv. 17–21) and commemorating (*remembrance*, v. 29; see 13.9n.) the Israelite tribes. Also, it has a pouch for the *Urim* and *Thummim* (v. 30). They are specially marked pebbles or rocks cast or thrown to secure divine decisions, a form of divination (cf. Num 27.21; 1 Sam 14.41) like casting lots, often used to decide difficult matters (e.g., Josh 18.6,8; Prov 16.33). Set close to its wearer's heart, the site of intellect and wisdom, the breastpiece was to be used in seeking divine

piece, on its inside edge next to the ephod.
27 You shall make two rings of gold, and attach
them in front to the lower part of the two
shoulder-pieces of the ephod, at its joining
above the decorated band of the ephod. 28 The
breastpiece shall be bound by its rings to the
rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it
may lie on the decorated band of the ephod,
and so that the breastpiece shall not come
loose from the ephod. 29 So Aaron shall bear
the names of the sons of Israel in the breast-
piece of judgment on his heart when he goes
into the holy place, for a continual remem-
brance before the LORD. 30 In the breastpiece
of judgment you shall put the Urim and the
Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart
when he goes in before the LORD; thus Aaron
shall bear the judgment of the Israelites on his
heart before the LORD continually.

31 You shall make the robe of the ephod
all of blue. 32 It shall have an opening for the
head in the middle of it, with a woven binding
around the opening, like the opening in a coat
of mail,[a] so that it may not be torn. 33 On its
lower hem you shall make pomegranates of
blue, purple, and crimson yarns, all around the
lower hem, with bells of gold between them all
around— 34 a golden bell and a pomegranate
alternating all around the lower hem of the
robe. 35 Aaron shall wear it when he ministers,
and its sound shall be heard when he goes into
the holy place before the LORD, and when he
comes out, so that he may not die.

36 You shall make a rosette of pure gold,
and engrave on it, like the engraving of a
signet, "Holy to the LORD." 37 You shall fasten
it on the turban with a blue cord; it shall be
on the front of the turban. 38 It shall be on
Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take on
himself any guilt incurred in the holy offering
that the Israelites consecrate as their sacred
donations; it shall always be on his forehead,
in order that they may find favor before the
LORD.

39 You shall make the checkered tunic of
fine linen, and you shall make a turban of
fine linen, and you shall make a sash embroi-
dered with needlework.

40 For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics
and sashes and headdresses; you shall make
them for their glorious adornment. 41 You
shall put them on your brother Aaron, and
on his sons with him, and shall anoint them
and ordain them and consecrate them, so
that they may serve me as priests. 42 You
shall make for them linen undergarments
to cover their naked flesh; they shall reach
from the hips to the thighs; 43 Aaron and his
sons shall wear them when they go into the
tent of meeting, or when they come near the
altar to minister in the holy place; or they will
bring guilt on themselves and die. This shall
be a perpetual ordinance for him and for his
descendants after him.

29 Now this is what you shall do to them
to consecrate them, so that they may
serve me as priests. Take one young bull and
two rams without blemish, 2 and unleavened

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

judgment on legal matters. **31–35:** The *robe* is adorned at its hem with tricolored woolen *pomegranates*, like the tassels appearing on the clothing of deities and royalty in ancient Near Eastern iconography. The *golden bells* at the hem bring the auditory sense into the shrine; their jingling was perhaps apotropaic as the priest approached the dangerous, most holy zone (v. 35; see 3.6n.; 19.13n.; 30.7n.). **36–38:** The headpiece was to be a *turban* (also v. 39) notable for its golden *rosette* (and also a crown; see *diadem*, 29.6). The rosette's engraved words were perhaps part of a ritual protecting the priest as he approached the perfect (and dangerous) purity of God's presence; see preceding note. *Favor* (or "acceptance"; cf. Jer 14.10) is the opposite of any *guilt* (better "sin") that Israelites may commit in their sacrifices. **39:** An embroidered *sash* and a *checkered* (more likely, "fringed") *tunic* complete the vestments for Aaron. **40–43: Vestments for other priests**, less elaborate and costly than those for Aaron. **42:** *Undergarments*, perhaps "trousers"; see 20.26n. **43:** *Perpetual . . . descendants*, that is, the hereditary priestly lineage.

29.1–46: Consecration of the priests. Priestly authority derives from installation rites as well as from symbolic garments. The rites are described (vv. 1–37), followed by instructions for a regular sacrifice (vv. 38–43) and a final summation (vv. 44–46). **1–37: Installation procedures** (enacted in Lev 8), which will last seven days and are performed by Moses acting as priest, comprise three rites and the sacrifice of three animals for expiatory and purificatory purposes. **1–9: Three rites:** washing, dressing, anointing. **1:** *Consecrate* (to make holy) appears

bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. You shall make them of choice wheat flour. 3 You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, and bring the bull and the two rams. 4 You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water. 5 Then you shall take the vestments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastpiece, and gird him with the decorated band of the ephod; 6 and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy diadem on the turban. 7 You shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him. 8 Then you shall bring his sons, and put tunics on them, 9 and you shall gird them with sashes[a] and tie headdresses on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain Aaron and his sons.

10 You shall bring the bull in front of the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull, 11 and you shall slaughter the bull before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, 12 and shall take some of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and all the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. 13 You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and turn them into smoke on the altar. 14 But the flesh of the bull, and its skin, and its dung, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

15 Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, 16 and you shall slaughter the ram, and shall take its blood and dash it against all sides of the altar. 17 Then you shall cut the ram into its parts, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its parts and its head, 18 and turn the whole ram into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the LORD; it is a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD.

19 You shall take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, 20 and you shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the lobes of the right ears of his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet, and dash the rest of the blood against all sides of the altar. 21 Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his vestments and on his sons and his sons' vestments with him; then he and his vestments shall be holy, as well as his sons and his sons' vestments.

22 You shall also take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the appendage of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), 23 and one loaf of bread, one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer, out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the LORD; 24 and you shall place all these on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and raise them as an elevation offering before the LORD. 25 Then you shall take them from their hands, and turn them into smoke on the altar on top of

[a] Gk: Heb *sashes, Aaron and his sons*

seven times in this chapter. **4:** *Wash*, see 19.10n. **7:** *Anointing* Aaron (but not his sons; contrast 28.41; 30.30) is a symbolic procedure marking transition to a new status (as for royalty, 1 Sam 9.16); here it affords priests the requisite holiness for entering the tabernacle's holy space. **5:** *Vestments*, see notes to ch 28. **9:** *Ordain*, lit., "fill the hand," an idiom alluding to the scepter or staff often held by an officer; it thus signifies the rights and duties of a position. **10–37: Animal sacrifices.** The first two—bull of purification (vv. 10–14; see Lev 4.1–12) and ram for burnt offering (vv. 15–18; see Lev 1)—prepare the priests; the third and most elaborate is the ram for their ordination (vv. 19–34; see the well-being offering, Lev 3). **12:** *Horns*, see 27.2n. The altar itself must be purified. **14:** The *sin offering* effects the moral purification necessary for approaching God's total purity. Some scholars consider this an offering that removes ritual impurity from sections of the tabernacle. **18:** *Burnt offering*, see 24.5n. *Pleasing odor*, see Gen 8.21. **20:** Sprinkling the ram's blood on the priests' extremities (*lobes . . . thumbs . . . toes*), which represent their entire bodies, substitutes animal blood and death for that of the priests; their symbolic death means they belong to God. **22:** *Ordination*, see v. 9n. **24:** *Elevation offering*, lifted to God.

the burnt offering of pleasing odor before the LORD; it is an offering by fire to the LORD.

[26] You shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's ordination and raise it as an elevation offering before the LORD; and it shall be your portion. [27] You shall consecrate the breast that was raised as an elevation offering and the thigh that was raised as an elevation offering from the ram of ordination, from that which belonged to Aaron and his sons. [28] These things shall be a perpetual ordinance for Aaron and his sons from the Israelites, for this is an offering; and it shall be an offering by the Israelites from their sacrifice of offerings of well-being, their offering to the LORD.

[29] The sacred vestments of Aaron shall be passed on to his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them. [30] The son who is priest in his place shall wear them seven days, when he comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.

[31] You shall take the ram of ordination, and boil its flesh in a holy place; [32] and Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. [33] They themselves shall eat the food by which atonement is made, to ordain and consecrate them, but no one else shall eat of them, because they are holy. [34] If any of the flesh for the ordination, or of the bread, remains until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is holy.

[35] Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, just as I have commanded you; through seven days you shall ordain them. [36] Also every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement. Also you shall offer a sin offering for the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it, to consecrate it. [37] Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar, and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy; whatever touches the altar shall become holy.

[38] Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old regularly each day. [39] One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening; [40] and with the first lamb one-tenth of a measure of choice flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering. [41] And the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD. [42] It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. [43] I will meet with the Israelites there, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; [44] I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. [45] I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God. [46] And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.

30 You shall make an altar on which to offer incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. [2] It shall be one cubit long, and one cubit wide; it shall be square, and shall be two cubits high; its horns shall be of one piece with it. [3] You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top, and its sides all around and its horns; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. [4] And you shall make two golden rings for it; under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall hold the poles with which to carry it. [5] You shall make the poles of acacia wood,

26–34: Without lands or agricultural holdings, priests depended on a portion of the sacrifice for their maintenance (Lev 7.31–36; 22.1–16; see 23.19n.); the meat and accompanying bread are eaten in sacred space, affirming their special relationship with God (see 24.5n.). **35–37:** During the seven-day installation ceremonies, the altar too must be purified and sanctified (also v. 12). **38–42:** Regular sacrifices. A *daily burnt offering* (see 24.5n.) of animals with grain, oil, and wine is prescribed (see Num 28.3–8). **40:** *Hin*, a liquid measure (4 qts = 3.8 L). **42–43:** *Meet*, see 25.16n. **44–46: Summation**, using covenant language (see 6.7n.; 19.4n.; 20.2n.). **45–46:** *Dwell*, see 25.8n.

30.1–31.18. Additional instructions. The instructions conclude with information about four more components (incense altar, basin, oil, incense) of the shrine and about a census, the artisans, and the sabbath. **30.1–10: Incense altar** (also 37.25–28). Smaller (ca. 18 × 18 × 36 in = 5 × .5 × 1.0 m) than the horned courtyard

and overlay them with gold. 6 You shall place it in front of the curtain that is above the ark of the covenant,[a] in front of the mercy seat[b] that is over the covenant,[a] where I will meet with you. 7 Aaron shall offer fragrant incense on it; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall offer it, 8 and when Aaron sets up the lamps in the evening, he shall offer it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. 9 You shall not offer unholy incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering; and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. 10 Once a year Aaron shall perform the rite of atonement on its horns. Throughout your generations he shall perform the atonement for it once a year with the blood of the atoning sin offering. It is most holy to the LORD.

11 The LORD spoke to Moses: 12 When you take a census of the Israelites to register them, at registration all of them shall give a ransom for their lives to the LORD, so that no plague may come upon them for being registered. 13 This is what each one who is registered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the LORD. 14 Each one who is registered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the LORD's offering. 15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when you bring this offering to the LORD to make atonement for your lives. 16 You shall take the atonement money from the Israelites and shall designate it for the service of the tent of meeting; before the LORD it will be a reminder to the Israelites of the ransom given for your lives.

17 The LORD spoke to Moses: 18 You shall make a bronze basin with a bronze stand for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it; 19 with the water[c] Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. 20 When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to make an offering by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. 21 They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die: it shall be a perpetual ordinance for them, for him and for his descendants throughout their generations.

22 The LORD spoke to Moses: 23 Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two hundred fifty, and two hundred fifty of aromatic cane, 24 and five hundred of cassia—measured by the sanctuary shekel—and a hin of olive oil; 25 and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. 26 With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the covenant,[a] 27 and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, 28 and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its stand; 29 you shall consecrate them, so that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[b] Or *the cover*
[c] Heb *it*

altar (see 27.2n.), it is the third golden object to be placed in front of the inner sanctum (see 25.10–40n.). **7:** *Fragrant incense* (vv. 34–38) involves the olfactory senses. **9:** Food is not offered on this altar. **10:** See Lev 16.29–34; cf. Num 16.46. *Sin offering*, see 29.14n. **11–16: Census.** People are counted for taxes or for conscription (Num 1). Ancient peoples believed that counting people could bring disaster (as 2 Sam 24), and the payment here is to prevent misfortune. **13:** *Shekel*, a weight (ca. 4 oz = 11.4 gm), not a coin. The half-shekel ("beka") of the census is mentioned in the metal inventory (38.26). *Shekel of the sanctuary* may allude to a priestly role in maintaining standard weights. **16:** *Reminder*, see 13.9n. **17–21**: *Basin* (also 38.8; 40.7,30). Made of bronze, the least holy metal, the washstand will be placed in the least sacred zone, the courtyard. Washing is part of the process of purification before approaching the perfect purity of God's presence (see 19.10n.). **22–38: Oil and incense** (also 37.29) are to be made of costly aromatic substances: *myrrh*, *cinnamon*, *aromatic cane*, and *cassia*, along with *olive oil*, for the oil (vv. 22–25); and several kinds of resin (*stacte*, *galbanum*, *frankincense*), a variety of cinnamon (*onycha*), and *salt* for the incense (v. 34). Anointing will change the status of the shrine, its furnishings, and its personnel from profane to holy; see 29.7n. **24:** *Hin*, see

holy. 30 You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, in order that they may serve me as priests. 31 You shall say to the Israelites, "This shall be my holy anointing oil throughout your generations. 32 It shall not be used in any ordinary anointing of the body, and you shall make no other like it in composition; it is holy, and it shall be holy to you. 33 Whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an unqualified person shall be cut off from the people."

34 The LORD said to Moses: Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (an equal part of each), 35 and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy; 36 and you shall beat some of it into powder, and put part of it before the covenant[a] in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you; it shall be for you most holy. 37 When you make incense according to this composition, you shall not make it for yourselves; it shall be regarded by you as holy to the LORD. 38 Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from the people.

31 The LORD spoke to Moses: 2 See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: 3 and I have filled him with divine spirit,[b] with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, 4 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, 5 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft. 6 Moreover, I have appointed with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have given skill to all the skillful, so that they may make all that I have commanded you: 7 the tent of meeting, and the ark of the covenant,[a] and the mercy seat[c] that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, 8 the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, 9 and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its stand, 10 and the finely worked vestments, the holy vestments for the priest Aaron and the vestments of his sons, for their service as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the holy place. They shall do just as I have commanded you.

12 The LORD said to Moses: 13 You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: "You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. 14 You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people. 15 Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall be put to death. 16 Therefore the Israelites shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. 17 It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."

18 When God[d] finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant,[a] tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[b] Or *with the spirit of God*
[c] Or *the cover*
[d] Heb *he*

29.40n. **36:** *Tent of meeting . . . meet*, see 27.21n. **31.1–11: Artisans** (also 35.30–36.7). Two chief artisans are designated, one from the southernmost tribe (Judah) and one from the northernmost (Dan). **2:** *Bezalel*, see 1 Chr 2.18–20. *Hur*, see 17.10n. **3:** *Divine spirit*, see v. 11n. *Ability* (or "wisdom, skill"), *intelligence*, and *knowledge* constitute artistic genius (cf. 1 Kings 7.14). **6:** *Oholiab* is otherwise unknown. **11:** *Do . . . commanded* implies that human creativity is subordinated to divine inspiration. **12–17: Sabbath** (also 35.2–3), see 16.23–30n. The sabbath injunction adds the theme of sacred time to the sacred space set forth in the preceding chapters. **12:** The command for the seventh-day observance is introduced by a phrase—*The LORD said/spoke to Moses*—used here for the seventh time in this section (25.1; 30.11,17,22,34; 31.1,12). **17:** In Priestly tradition, as circumcision signifies the covenant with Abraham (Gen 17), so the sabbath is the *sign* of the covenant with Israel. **18:** This verse concludes the tabernacle instructions and resumes the narrative of the Sinai theophany (24.18). *Two tablets . . . written*, see 24.12n.

32 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." [2] Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." [3] So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. [4] He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold,[a] and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" [5] When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD." [6] They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

[7] The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; [8] they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!' " [9] The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. [10] Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation."

[11] But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? [12] Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. [13] Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' " [14] And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

[a] Or *fashioned it with a graving tool*; Meaning of Heb uncertain

32.1–34.35: Covenant violation and restoration. The golden-calf apostasy (also Deut 9.7–21; Ps 106.19–23; Neh 9.16–21) interrupts the tabernacle sequence, yet parallels it in some ways: a command to construct, contributions of gold, construction, an altar and sacrifices. It thus contrasts the proper response to God in the chapters following this section, with the sinful one it describes. The people's sins arouse divine wrath; Moses too is angry but intercedes several times (ch 32). After Moses seeks God's presence and pleads again for his people (ch 33), God reestablishes the covenant (ch 34). **32.1–35: Sin, divine anger, and several intercessions by Moses.** This episode shares many details with the account of Jeroboam (first king of the northern kingdom, 928–907 BCE) erecting golden calves in Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12.28–33; see also Deut 9.7–10.11). **1:** *Delayed*, for forty days and nights (24.18). *Make gods*, that is, provide visible evidence of divine presence. *Man who brought*, that is, Moses; not acknowledging that God had actually rescued them, they seek a replacement for Moses, whose prolonged absence creates anxiety. **2–3:** *Gold rings* (earrings); cf. 3.22; Gen 35.4; Judg 8.24. **4:** A *calf* (better "young bull"), like cherubim, could form the pedestal for the deity to stand on when descending to earth; or it may have been an object of worship, representing bovine strength and fertility associated with the LORD. *Gods*, a plural form (also vv. 1,8,23,31) like 1 Kings 12.28; contrast Neh 9.18 and Ps 106.19–20, which refer to a single deity. **5:** *Festival to the LORD*, indicating that the calves are not images of another deity. **6:** *Burnt offerings . . . well-being*, see 24.5n. *Eat . . . drink,* typical components of sacrificial events, which were occasions for community enjoyment as well as ritual activity. *Revel* (perhaps "dance"), another component of festal events. **7:** *Your people*, not "my people" (3.7; 5.1; etc.). *You*, that is, Moses (also 33.1; cf. 20.2; 32.11–12, where God secures Israel's freedom). **8:** *Cast . . .image*, of metal: see 34.17n. **10–12:** *Wrath . . . burn hot . . . consume*, invokes the language of conflagration to express the intense and utter destructiveness of punitive plagues (Num 11.33; 16.35,46; 25.4,8–9,11). **11:** Moses's first plea for the people. *Mighty hand*, see 3.19n. **13:** Moses reminds God that the ancestral covenant (see 2.24n.)

15 Then Moses turned and went down
from the mountain, carrying the two tablets
of the covenant[a] in his hands, tablets that
were written on both sides, written on the
front and on the back. 16 The tablets were
the work of God, and the writing was the
writing of God, engraved upon the tab-
lets. 17 When Joshua heard the noise of the
people as they shouted, he said to Moses,
"There is a noise of war in the camp." 18 But
he said,

"It is not the sound made by victors,
or the sound made by losers;
it is the sound of revelers that I hear."

19 As soon as he came near the camp and
saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger
burned hot, and he threw the tablets from
his hands and broke them at the foot of the
mountain. 20 He took the calf that they had
made, burned it with fire, ground it to pow-
der, scattered it on the water, and made the
Israelites drink it.

21 Moses said to Aaron, "What did this
people do to you that you have brought so
great a sin upon them?" 22 And Aaron said,
"Do not let the anger of my lord burn hot; you
know the people, that they are bent on evil.
23 They said to me, 'Make us gods, who shall
go before us; as for this Moses, the man who
brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we
do not know what has become of him.' 24 So I
said to them, 'Whoever has gold, take it off';
so they gave it to me, and I threw it into the
fire, and out came this calf!"

25 When Moses saw that the people were
running wild (for Aaron had let them run
wild, to the derision of their enemies), 26 then
Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said,
"Who is on the LORD's side? Come to me!"
And all the sons of Levi gathered around him.
27 He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the
God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side,
each of you! Go back and forth from gate
to gate throughout the camp, and each of
you kill your brother, your friend, and your
neighbor.' " 28 The sons of Levi did as Moses
commanded, and about three thousand of
the people fell on that day. 29 Moses said,
"Today you have ordained yourselves[b] for the
service of the LORD, each one at the cost of a
son or a brother, and so have brought a bless-
ing on yourselves this day."

30 On the next day Moses said to the
people, "You have sinned a great sin. But
now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can
make atonement for your sin." 31 So Moses
returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, this
people has sinned a great sin; they have made
for themselves gods of gold. 32 But now, if you
will only forgive their sin—but if not, blot me
out of the book that you have written." 33 But
the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned
against me I will blot out of my book. 34 But
now go, lead the people to the place about
which I have spoken to you; see, my angel
shall go in front of you. Nevertheless, when
the day comes for punishment, I will punish
them for their sin."

35 Then the LORD sent a plague on the
people, because they made the calf—the one
that Aaron made.

33 The LORD said to Moses, "Go, leave this
place, you and the people whom you
have brought up out of the land of Egypt, and
go to the land of which I swore to Abraham,

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[b] Gk Vg Compare Tg: Heb *Today ordain yourselves*

is unconditional and irrevocable (Gen 13.15–16; etc.). **15–16:** *Tablets . . . written*, see 24.12n. **17:** *Joshua* is partway up the mountain (24.9–14). **19:** The Heb term for *dancing* denotes circle dancing, usually done by women (as 15.20). **20:** *Burned . . . ground* is idiomatic language for complete demolition (cf. 2 Kings 23.15). Moses subjects the people to a trial by ordeal (cf. Num 5.16–28). Those who suffer ill effects from coerced drinking are considered guilty and are punished (v. 35). **21–24:** Aaron, however, remains unpunished (cf. Num 12), perhaps because the priesthood in later times was traced to him. **24:** By saying he *threw* the *gold* into the fire, Aaron claims he did not intend to make a calf, contra v. 4. **26–29:** The shocking violence of the Levites, perhaps reflecting an ancient power struggle, earns them eternal priesthood. **30:** *Perhaps*, suggesting that divine forgiveness cannot be assumed. **31–32:** Moses's second plea for the people. **32–33:** *Book*, cf. Ps 69.28; Dan 12.1; Mal 3.16. **33:** God asserts individual rather than communal responsibility. **34:** *The people*, not "my people"; see v. 7n. *Angel*, see 3.2n.; 23.23. **35:** The *plague* is punitive (see 7.8–10.29n.; 32.10–12n.).

33.1–23. The divine presence is secured through a third plea by Moses. 1: *You*, see 32.7n. *The people*, see

Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' [2] I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. [3] Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, or I would consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."

[4] When the people heard these harsh words, they mourned, and no one put on ornaments. [5] For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, and I will decide what to do to you.' " [6] Therefore the Israelites stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

[7] Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. [8] Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand, each of them, at the entrance of their tents and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. [9] When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. [10] When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and bow down, all of them, at the entrance of their tent. [11] Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp; but his young assistant, Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the tent.

[12] Moses said to the LORD, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' [13] Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." [14] He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." [15] And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. [16] For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

[17] The LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." [18] Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." [19] And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD';[a] and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. [20] But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." [21] And the LORD continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; [22] and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; [23] then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

[a] Heb *YHWH*; see note at 3.15

32.34n. **2:** *Angel*, see 3.2n.; 23.23; 32.34. *Canaanites . . . Hivites*, see 3.8n. **3:** *Flowing . . . honey*, see 3.8n. *Among*, see 17.6n.; the divine presence can be punitive as well as beneficial. *Consume*, see 32.10–12n. **7:** *Tent of meeting* refers to a simple tent shrine, with oracular functions, mentioned in Exodus along with the more elaborate Priestly tabernacle structure. This indicates that Exodus combines several traditions about a community shrine; see 25.16n.; 27.20n.,21n.; 39.32n. *Sought the LORD*, elliptical for seeking an oracular pronouncement from God, here procured by Moses, not priests; see 28.6–14n., 15–30n. **9–10:** *Pillar of cloud*, divine presence; see 3.2n. **11:** *Face to face*, an expression of intimacy available only to Moses (see Num 12.7–8; Deut 34.10–12) rather than an indication that he literally sees God's face (see vv. 20,23n). **13:** *Your people* is covenant terminology (see 6.7n.); Moses reminds God of this relationship (contrast 32.7; 33.1). **14:** *My presence will go*, better, "I personally will go." **17:** God knows Moses's *name*, and Moses will know God's (v. 19; see 3.15n), an expression of reciprocal intimacy **18:** *Glory*, God's royal splendor or appearance, rather than the Priestly idea of fire in a cloud; see 3.2n.; 16.7n. **19:** *I will be gracious . . . mercy*, see 34.6. **20:** *Face*, see 3.2n.; 3.6n.; 24.10n.; 33.11n.,23n. **23:** *Back* (like arm, hand, and face) refers to God in anthropomorphic terms; see also 31.18; cf. 3.6n.

34 The LORD said to Moses, "Cut two tablets of stone like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets, which you broke. [2] Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to me, on the top of the mountain. [3] No one shall come up with you, and do not let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; and do not let flocks or herds graze in front of that mountain." [4] So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the former ones; and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tablets of stone. [5] The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, "The LORD."[a] [6] The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed,

"The LORD, the LORD,
a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,
[7] keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation,[b]
forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,
yet by no means clearing the guilty,
but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children
and the children's children,
to the third and the fourth generation."

[8] And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. [9] He said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."

[10] He said: I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform marvels, such as have not been performed in all the earth or in any nation; and all the people among whom you live shall see the work of the LORD; for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.

[11] Observe what I command you today. See, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. [12] Take care not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you are going, or it will become a snare among you. [13] You shall tear down their altars, break their pillars, and cut down their sacred poles[c] [14] (for you shall worship no other god, because the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God). [15] You shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to their gods, someone among them will invite you, and you will eat of the sacrifice. [16] And you will take wives from among their daughters for your sons, and their daughters who prostitute themselves to their gods will

[a] Heb *YHWH*; see note at 3.15
[b] Or *for thousands*
[c] Heb *Asherim*

34.1–35: Covenant restoration and Moses's fourth plea to God. 1: Moses is to *cut* (lit., "carve") the *tablets* (see 24.12n.; contrast 32.16, where God makes them); *write*, see 24.12n. *Words*, referring to the ten words (sayings, matters) of the Decalogue, v. 28; see 18.26n.; 20.1–17n. **3:** As a holy zone, access to the mountain is restricted; cf. 19.13n., 20–25n. **5:** *Cloud*, see 3.2n. *Name*, see 33.17n. **6–7:** This catalogue of divine qualities, part of which is known in Jewish tradition as the Thirteen Attributes of God, appears fully or in part repeatedly in the Bible, sometimes omitting transgenerational punishment (20.5–6; Num 14.18–19; Deut 7.9–10; etc.). *Generation*, see 20.5n. **9:** *Inheritance*, or "possession"; see 15.17n. **11–26:** These stipulations concerning religious obligations and festivals include features of the Decalogue (especially 20.3,4,8–11) and of the community regulations (especially 23.14–19). Because its primary focus is on worship, it is often considered an alternative Decalogue, part of the J source, called the Ritual Decalogue; however, it could also be a redactional supplement. **10:** *Make* a covenant (also vv. 12,15), see 24.8n. **11:** *Drive*, see 23.27–30n. *Amorites . . . Jebusites*, see 3.8n. **13:** *Altars* and *pillars* (see 23.24n.) dedicated to gods of other peoples are forbidden, as are *sacred poles,* probably symbols of Asherah, a Canaanite goddess associated with the LORD in several ancient inscriptions. See also Deut 7.5; 12.3. **14:** See 20.3n.; 20.5n. **15–16:** See Num 25.1–15 for an example of such conduct. *Prostitute*, sexual metaphors sometimes characterize human-deity relationships, both positively and negatively (e.g., Isa 62.4–5; Jer 2.2; Ezek 16; 23; Hos 1–3). **16:** Intermarriage with local peoples—but not with

make your sons also prostitute themselves to their gods.

17 You shall not make cast idols.

18 You shall keep the festival of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.

19 All that first opens the womb is mine, all your male[a] livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep. 20 The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem.

No one shall appear before me empty-handed.

21 Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even in plowing time and in harvest time you shall rest. 22 You shall observe the festival of weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the festival of ingathering at the turn of the year. 23 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel. 24 For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

25 You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven, and the sacrifice of the festival of the passover shall not be left until the morning.

26 The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

27 The LORD said to Moses: Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. 28 He was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.[b]

29 Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant[c] in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; 34 but whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

[a] Gk Theodotion Vg Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *words*
[c] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

all other peoples—is prohibited only for men (Gen 24.3; Ezra 9.2; etc.; but cf. Deut 7.3; Josh 23.12–13; etc.). **17:** *Cast* (Heb "massekah"), made of metal rather than the sculpted image (see 20.4n.) of the Decalogue, an apparent rebuke for the golden calf incident. **18–26:** For the three festivals, see 23.14–19a n.; for unleavened bread, see 12.5n.; for the sabbath (v. 21), see 16.23–30n.; for the kid-cooking regulation, see 23.19bn.; for the firstborn redemption, see 13.2n.,13n. **27:** Moses is to *write*; see 24.12n. For *words*, see 34.1n.; for *tablets*, see 24.12n. **28:** *Forty . . . nights,* like the first time, 24.18. *Ten commandments*, better "ten words" or "ten matters" (see 18.26n.; 20.1–17n.), refers here to the ritual regulations in vv.11–26, although listing ten discrete regulations is difficult. **29–35:** Moses's special status, as mediator between the people and God, is manifest in his radiating countenance, akin to divine luminosity (Ps 104.2; Ezek 1.27–28; Hab 3.4) too intense to be routinely visible (see 3.2n.; 3.6n.). **29,35:** *Shone* and *shining*, better "radiant." The verb used here (from the Heb root "qrn") means "to radiate." The related noun "qeren," usually meaning "horn," has produced the erroneous notion that Moses had horns.

35 Moses assembled all the congregation of the Israelites and said to them: These are the things that the LORD has commanded you to do:

2 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy sabbath of solemn rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. 3 You shall kindle no fire in all your dwellings on the sabbath day.

4 Moses said to all the congregation of the Israelites: This is the thing that the LORD has commanded: 5 Take from among you an offering to the LORD; let whoever is of a generous heart bring the LORD's offering: gold, silver, and bronze; 6 blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine linen; goats' hair, 7 tanned rams' skins, and fine leather;[a] acacia wood, 8 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 9 and onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and the breastpiece.

10 All who are skillful among you shall come and make all that the LORD has commanded: the tabernacle, 11 its tent and its covering, its clasps and its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; 12 the ark with its poles, the mercy seat,[b] and the curtain for the screen; 13 the table with its poles and all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; 14 the lampstand also for the light, with its utensils and its lamps, and the oil for the light; 15 and the altar of incense, with its poles, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance, the entrance of the tabernacle; 16 the altar of burnt offering, with its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils, the basin with its stand; 17 the hangings of the court, its pillars and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court; 18 the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court, and their cords; 19 the finely worked vestments for ministering in the holy place, the holy vestments for the priest Aaron, and the vestments of his sons, for their service as priests.

20 Then all the congregation of the Israelites withdrew from the presence of Moses. 21 And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the LORD's offering to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the sacred vestments. 22 So they came, both men and women; all who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and pendants, all sorts of gold objects, everyone bringing an offering of gold to the LORD. 23 And everyone who possessed blue or purple or crimson yarn or fine linen or goats' hair or tanned rams' skins or fine leather,[a] brought them. 24 Everyone who could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD's offering; and everyone who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work, brought it. 25 All the skillful women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson yarns and fine linen; 26 all the women whose hearts moved them to use their skill spun the goats' hair. 27 And the leaders brought onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and the breastpiece, 28 and spices and oil for the light, and for the

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *the cover*

Chs 35–40: The tabernacle is constructed, and God's presence enters it. The tabernacle narrative (which began with the instructions of chs 25–31) resumes: performing preliminary procedures (35.2–36.7); making tabernacle components (36.8–39.43); erecting the tabernacle and God's presence filling it (40.1–38). These chapters contain nearly verbatim repetitions of many passages of chs 25–31, except that they describe actions taken (rather than commanded) and are arranged according to pragmatic construction concerns rather than degree of sanctity. In the LXX version of these chapters, the actions taken are in a different order, and also some of those in the MT are omitted.

35.1–36.7: Preliminary procedures. 35.1–3: Sabbath directives conclude the instructions section (31.12–17; see 16.23–30n.) and begin the construction one, linking the two sections and making the sabbath the temporal equivalent of the spatial construction, the tabernacle. Both involve rest: the people rest on the sabbath, and the Tabernacle is the divine resting place (cf. Isa 66.1; cf. Num 10.33). **1:** *Things*, see 18.26n.; 20.1–17n. **3:** *Kindle no fire* suggests that cooking was the work forbidden on the sabbath; cf. 20.9n. **4–29: Materials** (see 25.1–9), provided by both women and men (vv. 22,29; see 11.2n.) include fabrics made by female craftspersons (vv. 25–26; cf.

anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense.
29 All the Israelite men and women whose
hearts made them willing to bring anything
for the work that the LORD had commanded
by Moses to be done, brought it as a freewill
offering to the LORD.

30 Then Moses said to the Israelites: See,
the LORD has called by name Bezalel son of
Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; 31 he has
filled him with divine spirit,[a] with skill, intel-
ligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft,
32 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold,
silver, and bronze, 33 in cutting stones for
setting, and in carving wood, in every kind
of craft. 34 And he has inspired him to teach,
both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of
the tribe of Dan. 35 He has filled them with
skill to do every kind of work done by an ar-
tisan or by a designer or by an embroiderer in
blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine
linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of artisan
or skilled designer.

36 Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful
one to whom the LORD has given skill
and understanding to know how to do any
work in the construction of the sanctuary
shall work in accordance with all that the
LORD has commanded.

2 Moses then called Bezalel and Oholiab
and every skillful one to whom the LORD had
given skill, everyone whose heart was stirred
to come to do the work; 3 and they received
from Moses all the freewill offerings that the
Israelites had brought for doing the work on
the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him
freewill offerings every morning, 4 so that
all the artisans who were doing every sort of
task on the sanctuary came, each from the
task being performed, 5 and said to Moses,
"The people are bringing much more than
enough for doing the work that the LORD has
commanded us to do." 6 So Moses gave com-
mand, and word was proclaimed throughout
the camp: "No man or woman is to make any-
thing else as an offering for the sanctuary."
So the people were restrained from bringing;
7 for what they had already brought was more
than enough to do all the work.

8 All those with skill among the workers
made the tabernacle with ten curtains; they
were made of fine twisted linen, and blue,
purple, and crimson yarns, with cherubim
skillfully worked into them. 9 The length of
each curtain was twenty-eight cubits, and
the width of each curtain four cubits; all the
curtains were of the same size.

10 He joined five curtains to one another,
and the other five curtains he joined to one
another. 11 He made loops of blue on the
edge of the outermost curtain of the first set;
likewise he made them on the edge of the
outermost curtain of the second set; 12 he
made fifty loops on the one curtain, and he
made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain
that was in the second set; the loops were
opposite one another. 13 And he made fifty
clasps of gold, and joined the curtains one to
the other with clasps; so the tabernacle was
one whole.

14 He also made curtains of goats' hair for a
tent over the tabernacle; he made eleven cur-
tains. 15 The length of each curtain was thirty
cubits, and the width of each curtain four
cubits; the eleven curtains were of the same
size. 16 He joined five curtains by themselves,
and six curtains by themselves. 17 He made
fifty loops on the edge of the outermost cur-
tain of the one set, and fifty loops on the edge

[a] Or *the spirit of God*

2 Kings 23.7). **35.30–36.7: Artisans** (see 31.1–11), who have the added role of teachers (v. 34), receive materials. **5–7**: The amount to be contributed is not specified but is abundant—*more than enough* (vv.5,7)—and may reflect guilt over the golden calf incident.

36.8–39.42: The tabernacle components are made: structure (36.8–38), interior furnishings (37.1–29), courtyard and its furnishings (38.1–20), inserted inventory (38.21–31), vestments (39.1–31). Then the work is completed (39.32–42).

36.8–38: Structure (see 26.1–37), consisting of fabrics (vv. 8–19) over frames (vv. 20–34) followed by the internal fabric divider and entry screen (vv. 35–38). **10:** *He* here and in vv. 11–38 is third-person singular, which would imply Bezalel is constructing the tabernacle by himself. More likely, the third-person singular is used impersonally as a passive; thus this verse would read "The five curtains were joined. . . ." Compare v. 8 and 39.1, where the subject (*they*) of the tabernacle work is plural.

of the other connecting curtain. 18 He made fifty clasps of bronze to join the tent together so that it might be one whole. 19 And he made for the tent a covering of tanned rams' skins and an outer covering of fine leather.[a]

20 Then he made the upright frames for the tabernacle of acacia wood. 21 Ten cubits was the length of a frame, and a cubit and a half the width of each frame. 22 Each frame had two pegs for fitting together; he did this for all the frames of the tabernacle. 23 The frames for the tabernacle he made in this way: twenty frames for the south side; 24 and he made forty bases of silver under the twenty frames, two bases under the first frame for its two pegs, and two bases under the next frame for its two pegs. 25 For the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, he made twenty frames 26 and their forty bases of silver, two bases under the first frame and two bases under the next frame. 27 For the rear of the tabernacle westward he made six frames. 28 He made two frames for corners of the tabernacle in the rear. 29 They were separate beneath, but joined at the top, at the first ring; he made two of them in this way, for the two corners. 30 There were eight frames with their bases of silver: sixteen bases, under every frame two bases.

31 He made bars of acacia wood, five for the frames of the one side of the tabernacle, 32 and five bars for the frames of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the tabernacle at the rear westward. 33 He made the middle bar to pass through from end to end halfway up the frames. 34 And he overlaid the frames with gold, and made rings of gold for them to hold the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

35 He made the curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine twisted linen, with cherubim skillfully worked into it. 36 For it he made four pillars of acacia, and overlaid them with gold; their hooks were of gold, and he cast for them four bases of silver. 37 He also made a screen for the entrance to the tent, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework; 38 and its five pillars with their hooks. He overlaid their capitals and their bases with gold, but their five bases were of bronze.

37 Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; it was two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. 2 He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold around it. 3 He cast for it four rings of gold for its four feet, two rings on its one side and two rings on its other side. 4 He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold, 5 and put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark. 6 He made a mercy seat[b] of pure gold; two cubits and a half was its length, and a cubit and a half its width. 7 He made two cherubim of hammered gold; at the two ends of the mercy seat[c] he made them, 8 one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat[c] he made the cherubim at its two ends. 9 The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat[c] with their wings. They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were turned toward the mercy seat.[c]

10 He also made the table of acacia wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and a cubit and a half high. 11 He overlaid it with pure gold, and made a molding of gold around it. 12 He made around it a rim a handbreadth wide, and made a molding of gold around the rim. 13 He cast for it four rings of gold, and fastened the rings to the four corners at its four legs. 14 The rings that held the poles used for carrying the table were close to the rim. 15 He made the poles of acacia wood to carry the table, and overlaid them with gold. 16 And he made the vessels of pure gold that were to be on the table, its plates and dishes

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *a cover*
[c] Or *the cover*

37.1–29: Interior furnishings (see 25.10–40; 30.1–10), and **anointing oil** and **incense** (see 30.22–28). The ark for the holiest space comes first (vv. 1–9), followed by all three objects for the holy space: lampstand (vv. 17–24), table, and incense altar (vv. 25–28), which appears separately from the table and the lampstand in the instructions (see 31.1–11n.). The account of making anointing oil and incense (v. 29) is much briefer than in the instructions.

for incense, and its bowls and flagons with which to pour drink offerings.

17 He also made the lampstand of pure gold. The base and the shaft of the lampstand were made of hammered work; its cups, its calyxes, and its petals were of one piece with it. 18 There were six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; 19 three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with calyx and petals, on one branch, and three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with calyx and petals, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. 20 On the lampstand itself there were four cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its calyxes and petals. 21 There was a calyx of one piece with it under the first pair of branches, a calyx of one piece with it under the next pair of branches, and a calyx of one piece with it under the last pair of branches. 22 Their calyxes and their branches were of one piece with it, the whole of it one hammered piece of pure gold. 23 He made its seven lamps and its snuffers and its trays of pure gold. 24 He made it and all its utensils of a talent of pure gold.

25 He made the altar of incense of acacia wood, one cubit long, and one cubit wide; it was square, and was two cubits high; its horns were of one piece with it. 26 He overlaid it with pure gold, its top, and its sides all around, and its horns; and he made for it a molding of gold all around, 27 and made two golden rings for it under its molding, on two opposite sides of it, to hold the poles with which to carry it. 28 And he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold.

29 He made the holy anointing oil also, and the pure fragrant incense, blended as by the perfumer.

38 He made the altar of burnt offering also of acacia wood; it was five cubits long, and five cubits wide; it was square, and three cubits high. 2 He made horns for it on its four corners; its horns were of one piece with it, and he overlaid it with bronze. 3 He made all the utensils of the altar, the pots, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the firepans: all its utensils he made of bronze. 4 He made for the altar a grating, a network of bronze, under its ledge, extending halfway down. 5 He cast four rings on the four corners of the bronze grating to hold the poles; 6 he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with bronze. 7 And he put the poles through the rings on the sides of the altar, to carry it with them; he made it hollow, with boards.

8 He made the basin of bronze with its stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

9 He made the court; for the south side the hangings of the court were of fine twisted linen, one hundred cubits long; 10 its twenty pillars and their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands were of silver. 11 For the north side there were hangings one hundred cubits long; its twenty pillars and their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands were of silver. 12 For the west side there were hangings fifty cubits long, with ten pillars and ten bases; the hooks of the pillars and their bands were of silver. 13 And for the front to the east, fifty cubits. 14 The hangings for one side of the gate were fifteen cubits, with three pillars and three bases. 15 And so for the other side; on each side of the gate of the court were hangings of fifteen cubits, with three pillars and three bases. 16 All the hangings around the court were of fine twisted linen. 17 The bases for the pillars were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands were of silver; the overlaying of their capitals was also of silver, and all the pillars of the court were banded with silver. 18 The screen for the entrance to the court was embroidered with needlework in blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine twisted

38.1–20: Altar (see 27.1–8), **basin** (see 30.17–21), **and courtyard** (see 27.9–19). Unlike in the instructions, the altar (vv. 1–7) and basin (v. 8) here appear sequentially. The basin lacks the functional details of ch 30 but adds that its *bronze* comes from *mirrors* of women (also 1 Sam 2.22), who were low-rank temple servitors. **8:** The *entrance to the tent of meeting* (cf. 27.20n.; 27.21n.; 29.32n.; 38.8n.), the highly significant site of Moses's oracular interactions with God (33.9–10), was not off-limits to women (see Num 27.1–2).

linen. It was twenty cubits long and, along the width of it, five cubits high, corresponding to the hangings of the court. 19 There were four pillars; their four bases were of bronze, their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of their capitals and their bands of silver. 20 All the pegs for the tabernacle and for the court all around were of bronze.

21 These are the records of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the covenant,[a] which were drawn up at the commandment of Moses, the work of the Levites being under the direction of Ithamar son of the priest Aaron. 22 Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the LORD commanded Moses; 23 and with him was Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, engraver, designer, and embroiderer in blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine linen.

24 All the gold that was used for the work, in all the construction of the sanctuary, the gold from the offering, was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred thirty shekels, measured by the sanctuary shekel. 25 The silver from those of the congregation who were counted was one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred seventy-five shekels, measured by the sanctuary shekel; 26 a beka a head (that is, half a shekel, measured by the sanctuary shekel), for everyone who was counted in the census, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred three thousand, five hundred fifty men. 27 The hundred talents of silver were for casting the bases of the sanctuary, and the bases of the curtain; one hundred bases for the hundred talents, a talent for a base. 28 Of the thousand seven hundred seventy-five shekels he made hooks for the pillars, and overlaid their capitals and made bands for them. 29 The bronze that was contributed was seventy talents, and two thousand four hundred shekels; 30 with it he made the bases for the entrance of the tent of meeting, the bronze altar and the bronze grating for it and all the utensils of the altar, 31 the bases all around the court, and the bases of the gate of the court, all the pegs of the tabernacle, and all the pegs around the court.

39 Of the blue, purple, and crimson yarns they made finely worked vestments, for ministering in the holy place; they made the sacred vestments for Aaron; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

2 He made the ephod of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen. 3 Gold leaf was hammered out and cut into threads to work into the blue, purple, and crimson yarns and into the fine twisted linen, in skilled design. 4 They made for the ephod shoulder-pieces, joined to it at its two edges. 5 The decorated band on it was of the same materials and workmanship, of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

38.21–31: The inventory of work and metal materials, beginning with the most valuable (gold), has no parallel in the instructions except for the reference (v. 26) to the silver acquired at the census assessment and earmarked for operating, not construction, expenses. **21:** *Records*, tallies of resources, not accounts of labor. *Tabernacle of the covenant*, alluding to the tabernacle's receptacle (ark) for the covenant document (tablets). *Work of the Levites* here is collecting and accounting; they will eventually maintain and move the shrine (Num 4; 7.1–8). *Ithamar*, Aaron's youngest son (6.23; 28.1), has a major administrative role. **22–23:** *Bezalel . . . Oholiab*, see 31.1–11n. **24:** *Talent*, see 25.39n. The amount of *gold* is slightly less than Hezekiah's tribute to Sennacherib (2 Kings 18.14). *Sanctuary shekel*, see 30.13n. **25–26:** For the collected *silver*, see 30.11–16. The *men* are slightly more in number (603,550) than in ch 12; see 12.37n. **27–28:** Information about the use of *silver* acquired by census (but not donated) is provided; such information is absent for gold. **30–31:** The *bronze* items are specified; but the basin made of women's mirrors (38.8) is omitted.

39.1–31: Vestments (see 28.1–43). This section includes some technical details, such as how the ephod's golden threads were made (v. 3), absent from the instructions section. And it omits some aspects of function: "breastpiece of judgment" appears three times in ch 28 (vv. 15,29,30; see 28.15–30n.) in reference to its oracular function but not here, nor are the Urim and Thummim used for divination (28.30) mentioned. **1:** Aaron is named only here and in v. 27, at the beginning and end of this section, whereas he appears frequently (sixteen times) in the instructions. *Moses* appears seven times (vv. 1,5,7,21,26,29,31), indicating his total involvement, in a formula punctuating the narrative: *as the LORD had commanded Moses*; cf. 40.16n.).

twisted linen; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

6 The onyx stones were prepared, enclosed in settings of gold filigree and engraved like the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the sons of Israel. 7 He set them on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, to be stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

8 He made the breastpiece, in skilled work, like the work of the ephod, of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen. 9 It was square; the breastpiece was made double, a span in length and a span in width when doubled. 10 They set in it four rows of stones. A row of carnelian,[a] chrysolite, and emerald was the first row; 11 and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire,[b] and a moonstone; 12 and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; 13 and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they were enclosed in settings of gold filigree. 14 There were twelve stones with names corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they were like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes. 15 They made on the breastpiece chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; 16 and they made two settings of gold filigree and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece; 17 and they put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece. 18 Two ends of the two cords they had attached to the two settings of filigree; in this way they attached it in front to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. 19 Then they made two rings of gold, and put them at the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inside edge next to the ephod. 20 They made two rings of gold, and attached them in front to the lower part of the two shoulder-pieces of the ephod, at its joining above the decorated band of the ephod. 21 They bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it should lie on the decorated band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece should not come loose from the ephod; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

22 He also made the robe of the ephod woven all of blue yarn; 23 and the opening of the robe in the middle of it was like the opening in a coat of mail,[c] with a binding around the opening, so that it might not be torn. 24 On the lower hem of the robe they made pomegranates of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen. 25 They also made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates on the lower hem of the robe all around, between the pomegranates; 26 a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate all around on the lower hem of the robe for ministering; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

27 They also made the tunics, woven of fine linen, for Aaron and his sons, 28 and the turban of fine linen, and the headdresses of fine linen, and the linen undergarments of fine twisted linen, 29 and the sash of fine twisted linen, and of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, embroidered with needlework; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

30 They made the rosette of the holy diadem of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription, like the engraving of a signet, "Holy to the LORD." 31 They tied to it a blue cord, to fasten it on the turban above; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

32 In this way all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished; the Israelites had done everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 33 Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its utensils, its hooks, its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; 34 the covering of tanned rams' skins and the covering of fine leather,[c] and the curtain for the screen; 35 the ark of

[a] The identification of several of these stones is uncertain

[b] Or *lapis lazuli*

[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

39.32–43: Completing and inspecting the work, listing the components of the tabernacle in the same order as in chs 35–39 (rather than the order of chs 25–31); see chs 35–40n. **32:** *Work . . . finished* echoes the Priestly language of Gen 2.2, as does 40.33; the construction of the tabernacle, a microcosm of the cosmos, thus echoes creation. *Tabernacle of the tent of meeting*, used only here and in 40.2,6,29, combines the two designations of the wilderness shrine and thus its two functions: a place for God's earthly presence, and a locale for oracular in-

the covenant[a] with its poles and the mercy seat;[b] 36 the table with all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; 37 the pure lampstand with its lamps set on it and all its utensils, and the oil for the light; 38 the golden altar, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance of the tent; 39 the bronze altar, and its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils; the basin with its stand; 40 the hangings of the court, its pillars, and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court, its cords, and its pegs; and all the utensils for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; 41 the finely worked vestments for ministering in the holy place, the sacred vestments for the priest Aaron, and the vestments of his sons to serve as priests. 42 The Israelites had done all of the work just as the LORD had commanded Moses. 43 When Moses saw that they had done all the work just as the LORD had commanded, he blessed them.

40 The LORD spoke to Moses: 2 On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. 3 You shall put in it the ark of the covenant,[a] and you shall screen the ark with the curtain. 4 You shall bring in the table, and arrange its setting; and you shall bring in the lampstand, and set up its lamps. 5 You shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the covenant,[a] and set up the screen for the entrance of the tabernacle. 6 You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, 7 and place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. 8 You shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen for the gate of the court. 9 Then you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture, so that it shall become holy. 10 You shall also anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, so that the altar shall be most holy. 11 You shall also anoint the basin with its stand, and consecrate it. 12 Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall wash them with water, 13 and put on Aaron the sacred vestments, and you shall anoint him and consecrate him, so that he may serve me as priest. 14 You shall bring his sons also and put tunics on them, 15 and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests: and their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout all generations to come.

16 Moses did everything just as the LORD had commanded him. 17 In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was set up. 18 Moses set up the tabernacle; he laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars; 19 and he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent over it; as the LORD had commanded Moses. 20 He took the covenant[a] and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark, and set the mercy seat[b] above the ark; 21 and he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the curtain for screening, and screened the ark of the covenant;[a] as the LORD had commanded Moses. 22 He put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the curtain, 23 and set the bread in order on it before the

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[b] Or *the cover*

teractions; see 25.16n.; 27.21n. **43:** *Saw*, reminiscent of God seeing the completion of creation (Gen 1.31). *Blessed*, just as God offers blessings in the creation account (Gen 1.22,28; 2.3).

40.1–38: Erection of the tabernacle, and God's presence filling it. After the final instructions for assembling and anointing God's earthly abode (vv. 1–15; cf. 29.4–9; 30.26–30) are carried out (vv. 16–33), except for anointing and consecrating, which take place in Lev 8.10–13, God's presence enters it (vv. 34–38). Moses alone assembles and sanctifies the tabernacle's components and consecrates the priests and their vestments. **2:** Setting up the tabernacle on the *first day of the first month* (of the second year after the Exodus; v. 17), that is (the spring) New Year's day, keys it to creation, to the new creation after the flood (Gen 8.13), and to the beginning of freedom (see 12.2n.). **16:** *As the LORD had commanded him* appears in this introductory command and seven more times, following seven units of assembly (vv. 19,21,23,25,27,29,32), perhaps replicating the seven days of creation (see 39.2n.) but also emphasizing the importance that everything must be done exactly according to

LORD; as the LORD had commanded Moses.
24 He put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle, 25 and set up the lamps before the LORD; as the LORD had commanded Moses. 26 He put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the curtain, 27 and offered fragrant incense on it; as the LORD had commanded Moses. 28 He also put in place the screen for the entrance of the tabernacle.
29 He set the altar of burnt offering at the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the grain offering as the LORD had commanded Moses. 30 He set the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing, 31 with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. 32 When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed; as the LORD had commanded Moses. 33 He set up the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and put up the screen at the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work.

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 Whenever the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on each stage of their journey; 37 but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud[a] by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel at each stage of their journey.

[a] Heb *it*

divine specifications in order for God to take up residence. **33:** *Finished the work*, see 39.32n. **34–38:** *Cloud*, see 3.2n.; 13.21n. *Glory of the LORD*, see 16.7n. **34:** The cloud *covered* the shrine, just as it covered the mountain of revelation (24.15). Here it indicates divine satisfaction with the tabernacle as a residence for the divine. **38:** *House of Israel*, which designates the Israelites only here and 16.31 in Exodus, may reflect a wordplay: the Israelites are a house and the LORD now has an earthly house (cf. 2 Sam 7.11,13,16). The *cloud* and *fire* (divine presence) will guide the people as they continue their *journey* (see 12.37n.; 13.21n.; Num 9.15–23; 10.11–28).

LEVITICUS

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

Leviticus is situated at the center of the Torah (Pentateuch). It derives its English name from the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, where the book is titled "Leviticus" because its main concern is worship practices officiated by the high priest Aaron and his descendants, who belong to the tribe of Levi. Because Levites not belonging to Aaron's line are mentioned only briefly in Leviticus (25.32–33), the early rabbinic title, "The Priests' Instruction" (Heb *torat kohanim*), is perhaps more fitting. The book's Hebrew name, *wayyiqra'* ("And he [the LORD] summoned"), follows the custom of titling ancient literary works according to their opening word(s).

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

Leviticus presents itself as God's speech to Moses (e.g., 1.1; 26.46; 27.34), and Moses has traditionally been understood to be its author. Modern scholars consider the book to be part of the larger Priestly source in the Pentateuch, which appears primarily in Genesis–Numbers and is so named because its content, theological ideas, and literary style reflect priestly perspectives. This source was penned by several different anonymous authors or groups of authors. The two main compositional strata in Leviticus are known as P ("Priestly"), which comprises most of chs 1–16; and H ("Holiness"), which includes the "Holiness Collection" (chs 17–26; so named because of its repeated exhortation to the Israelites to be holy), the addendum on vows, dedications, and tithes in ch 27, and brief interpolations in chs 1–16. These two strata are distinguishable on the basis of ideological and stylistic differences as well as narrative characteristics.

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that H was composed to supplement, revise, and complete the Priestly source's earlier P stratum, which is responsible for the source's overall narrative structure and plot. H agrees with P's basic historical myth and religious ideology, and many of its innovations over against P are mediating positions between P and non-Priestly pentateuchal legislation. For example, in P the only Israelites who are holy are priests. In the Deuteronomic source, all of Israel is holy. H mediates between these positions by providing a means for lay Israelites to attain holiness by obeying the divine commandments. H also introduces ethical commandments that parallel non-Priestly pentateuchal laws but fall outside the scope of P's ritual concerns.

Scholars have proposed various methods for dating Leviticus. One of the most promising exploits correspondences between its H portions and laws in the book of Deuteronomy. Strong evidence suggests that at least the core of Deuteronomy originated in the late seventh century BCE. Because H appears to revise this Deuteronomic core, it must postdate Deuteronomy. The P portions of Leviticus, which predate H, exhibit little or no correspondence with Deuteronomy and thus may be contemporary with or older than Deuteronomy; at the very least, they did not know Deuteronomy. Thus, Leviticus, like other books of the Torah, was composed over a long period: it preserves some preexilic traditions, but its literary form likely originated in the exilic or postexilic period. Correlations between Leviticus and the exilic book of Ezekiel also support this view.

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

Though its content is primarily religious ritual and law, Leviticus is part of the larger Priestly story in the Pentateuch. This story rationalizes the deity's creation of the world and subsequent decision to live among the Israelites rather than in heaven. This decision necessitates special measures to accommodate the deity, for he did not create the world with the intention of dwelling in it. These special measures include both special blessings for the Israelites so that they can provide for their god and an extensive set of rules to ensure that his habitation is suitable. Comprising the long, middle section of the Priestly account, Leviticus narrates a set of divine speeches that enumerate rules for Israel. Leviticus also includes two sections of narratives not dominated by divine instruction (8.1–10.20; 24.10–23); yet even these narrative sections serve as historical context and rationale for the laws embedded within them. The Priestly narrative thus explains the need for Leviticus's laws and secures the proper pedigree for them.

Set at Mount Sinai, Leviticus begins exactly one year after the Israelites' departure from Egypt, immediately following Moses's construction of the tent of meeting and its indwelling by the deity at the end of the book

of Exodus (Ex 40.17–35), which serve as a prerequisite for the book. The Priestly source's plot continues in the book of Numbers from the exact moment that Leviticus ends. The date in Num 1.1 ("the first day of the second month, in the second year") confirms that the series of divine speeches delivered in Leviticus and the other events recorded in the book ostensibly occurred over a period of one month.

Leviticus can be divided into five major sections:

1. **Sacrifice** (chs 1–7). In the Priestly source, no sacrifices are offered prior to receiving these laws, which follow P's narrative of the construction of the divinely ordained tabernacle. The sacrificial laws must precede the consecration of the priests and dedication of the tabernacle in chs 8–9 because Moses and the priests must know how to perform the sacrifices at these events. This section is subdivided into two parts: basic prescriptions for presenting sacrificial offerings (1.1–6.7); and elaborations on the preceding instructions (6.8–7.38), with particular emphasis on priestly concerns.
2. **The dedication of the tabernacle and priests and the transgression of Aaron's sons** (chs 8–10). This unit is subdivided into two sections: the seven-day consecration of the priests by Moses, including the dedication of the tabernacle (ch 8); and the inaugural service of the priests on the eighth day, culminating in the revelation of the divine glory, and the subsequent transgression and death of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu (9.1–10.20).
3. **Ritual purity** (chs 11–16). This section is subdivided into two parts: the impurity laws (chs 11–15); and the day of purgations (ch 16). The impurity laws are enumerated prior to the description of the day of purgations in order to clarify the impurities cleansed in the annual ritual.
4. **The Holiness Collection** (chs 17–26). This unit (also called the Holiness Code; see 17.1–26.46n.) has six subdivisions:
    - laws governing sacrifice and meat consumption (ch 17);
    - miscellaneous ethical laws (chs 18–20);
    - priestly and sacrificial rules (chs 21–22);
    - laws governing calendrical observances (23.1–24.9; 25.1–26.2);
    - the account of the blasphemer, with related measure-for-measure laws, which interrupt the calendrical observance laws (24.10–23);
    - inducements for Israel's obedience, with summary postscript (26.3–46).
5. **Addendum concerning vows, dedications, and tithes** (ch 27).

INTERPRETATION

Leviticus is difficult to understand and appreciate because it is highly technical and regularly assumes knowledge of its ritual system. Its sparse narrative structure is also easily obscured due to the large blocks of laws that comprise the book. In addition, its authors' approaches to the issues they treat and their assumptions about them are often far removed from modern Western views.

One attempt by the translators of the NRSV to bridge the gap between the ancient text of Leviticus and its modern readers is their substitution of gender-neutral language for many of the masculine pronouns and verbal forms in the book. While the intent motivating this effort is laudable, elimination of male-centered language has resulted in sometimes confusing alterations to the underlying Hebrew text. For example, laws expressed with third-person masculine forms ("If *his* offering is from the herd, *he* shall make it an unblemished male") are regularly left untranslated or rendered into English with (nongendered) second-person forms ("If *the* offering is from the herd, *you* shall offer a male without blemish"). Likewise, singular verbs ("When any of you *brings* an offering") are translated as plurals ("When any of you *bring* an offering") or converted from active ("*he shall slaughter* the bull") to passive voice ("the bull *shall be slaughtered*"). The foregoing examples, drawn from Lev 1.2–5, are representative of similar changes elsewhere in the book. They are problematic for two reasons. First, such changes may prevent the reader from understanding both individual verses and the larger religious program of the Priestly authors. Second, these alterations sometimes obscure the formal characteristics of biblical legislation and distinguishing features of both smaller, preexisting units assembled by P and, at times, even differences between P and H. In each case, the result can be to move the reader further from the text rather than to make it more accessible.

Particularly important for understanding Leviticus are the Priestly authors' views of the Israelite god and his orientation toward the world, viewpoints developed especially in the Priestly portions of Genesis and Exodus. As the Priestly authors describe him, Israel's deity is a majestic and absolute ruler who prefers to dwell in splendid and

uninterrupted repose. The Israelites therefore must carefully attend to his preferences and expectations and face dire consequences for failing to do so. At the same time, the Priestly authors consider fulfillment of the divine commands as not only eminently attainable but the norm in the Israelite community. Thus, unlike other biblical texts that present the Israelites as persistently rebellious, pentateuchal Priestly texts portray Israel primarily in positive terms.

The laws of Leviticus became a major source for early Jewish *halakhah* (law) and remain the basis for many modern Jewish religious practices, such as dietary rules, purity rules, and holidays. The laws of Leviticus also inform many New Testament and other early Christian texts.

Because the focus of Leviticus's narrative is the law in its divine speeches, the book is most profitably read first according to legal topic rather than from beginning to end. An initial reading might begin with a sampling of Leviticus's purity and ethical laws in chs 11–12 and 19 and rules for removal of impurity and sin, as found in chs 4 and 16. The reader could then turn to other exemplary chapters: chs 8 and 21 on the priesthood, ch 17 on slaughter and meat consumption, ch 23 on festivals, ch 25 on the sabbatical and jubilee years, and ch 26 on divine inducements for obedience. Further study may focus on a particular chapter or group of thematically related chapters, as outlined earlier. The distinctiveness of the laws in Leviticus and the theological perspectives they express can also be appreciated through comparison with topically related laws in Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Ezekiel 40–48. The authors of Leviticus created a remarkably coherent system of ritual and theology, and the different parts of the book should be read with an eye toward this larger internal logic.

Jeffrey Stackert

1 The LORD summoned Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying:
2 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When any of you bring an offering of livestock to the LORD, you shall bring your offering from the herd or from the flock.

1.1–7.38: Sacrificial prescriptions. This section comprises two parts: 1.1–6.7 and 6.8–7.38. In Priestly thought, sacrifice, a ritualized meal for the deity at times shared with its offerers, is the basic mode of interaction with God. To be accepted, sacrifices must be performed according to the divine instructions.

1.1–6.7: Basic sacrificial instructions. These laws address basic procedures for presenting food gift offerings (1.1–3.17) and purification and reparation offerings (4.1–6.7). These sacrifices can also be categorized according to the quality of each offering's sanctity. The grain, purification, and reparation offerings are each "most holy," a designation that reserves their edible portions for the priests (cf. 6.17; Num 18.8–10). Well-being offerings, portions of which are consumed by lay Israelites, are less holy sacrifices. Because burnt offerings are not eaten by humans, their holiness status is undesignated. The offerings in Leviticus are all based on a model of sacrifice common to the ancient Near East: they are enticements that rouse the deity's good will or mitigate potential threats. Yet the Priestly authors generally avoid acknowledging that sacrifices might benefit their offerers. They instead present sacrifices simply as requirements for God's habitation on earth that accord with the deity's preferences and expectations.

1.1–3.17: Instructions for gift offerings of food. The burnt offering, grain offering, and well-being offerings (thanksgiving, votive, or freewill; cf. 7.11–18) presented by Israelite laypersons are impromptu sacrifices. Each is described as "an offering by fire" (e.g., 1.9; 2.2; 3.3), better translated "a gift offering (of food)" (cf. 3.11,16). Presentation of gift offerings provides laypersons a specific means of expressing devotion to the deity and of favorably disposing God toward the offerer. As gifts, sacrifices become personal possessions of the deity. Further, God is understood to consume the sacrificial portions burned on the altar (cf. 21.6,8), though this view is partially sublimated in Priestly theology.

1.1–17: The burnt offering. The burnt offering (Heb "'olah") is completely consumed in fire on the altar. Its name literally means "that which goes up" (in smoke from the altar; cf. 1.9). Three different types of animals for burnt offerings are listed (in descending order of value): a bull (vv. 3–9), a male sheep or goat (vv. 10–13), and turtledoves or pigeons (vv. 14–17). **1:** *Tent of meeting*, see Ex 26; 29.42–46; 40.34–38. The tent of meeting is situated in the middle of the Israelite wilderness camp (Num 2.2) and is the divine dwelling place; it is the Priestly author's precursor of the Jerusalem Temple. **2:** This is a general introduction to the burnt offering here and the well-being offering in ch 3. It clarifies that all animal food gift

3 If the offering is a burnt offering from
the herd, you shall offer a male without
blemish; you shall bring it to the entrance
of the tent of meeting, for acceptance in
your behalf before the LORD. 4 You shall lay
your hand on the head of the burnt offer-
ing, and it shall be acceptable in your behalf
as atonement for you. 5 The bull shall be
slaughtered before the LORD; and Aaron's
sons the priests shall offer the blood, dash-
ing the blood against all sides of the altar
that is at the entrance of the tent of meet-
ing. 6 The burnt offering shall be flayed and
cut up into its parts. 7 The sons of the priest
Aaron shall put fire on the altar and arrange
wood on the fire. 8 Aaron's sons the priests
shall arrange the parts, with the head and
the suet, on the wood that is on the fire on
the altar; 9 but its entrails and its legs shall
be washed with water. Then the priest shall
turn the whole into smoke on the altar as a
burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing
odor to the LORD.

10 If your gift for a burnt offering is from
the flock, from the sheep or goats, your
offering shall be a male without blemish.
11 It shall be slaughtered on the north side
of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's
sons the priests shall dash its blood against
all sides of the altar. 12 It shall be cut up into
its parts, with its head and its suet, and the
priest shall arrange them on the wood that
is on the fire on the altar; 13 but the entrails
and the legs shall be washed with water.
Then the priest shall offer the whole and
turn it into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt
offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor
to the LORD.

14 If your offering to the LORD is a burnt
offering of birds, you shall choose your
offering from turtledoves or pigeons. 15 The
priest shall bring it to the altar and wring
off its head, and turn it into smoke on the
altar; and its blood shall be drained out
against the side of the altar. 16 He shall
remove its crop with its contents[a] and
throw it at the east side of the altar, in the
place for ashes. 17 He shall tear it open by its
wings without severing it. Then the priest
shall turn it into smoke on the altar, on the
wood that is on the fire; it is a burnt offer-
ing, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to
the LORD.

2 When anyone presents a grain offer-
ing to the LORD, the offering shall be of
choice flour; the worshiper shall pour oil on

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

offerings must be from domesticated animals (cf. 17.1–16n.). Omission of birds here suggests that vv. 14–17 are a secondary addition. *You shall bring your offering,* lit., "he shall bring his offering." Throughout this chapter, the offerer in Heb is masculine singular. **3:** *Without blemish*, cf. 22.21–30; Mal 1.6–14. Burnt offerings are impromptu sacrifices of religious devotion (cf. 22.18–20). They are also regularly included in statutory religious observances (Ex 29.38–42; Num 28–29). Because of the prominence of burnt offerings in sacrificial worship, the main altar in the tabernacle courtyard is called the "altar of burnt offering" (Ex 38.1; 40.6). *The entrance of the tent of meeting* is the courtyard area between the altar of burnt offering and the tent (Ex 29.4; 30.17–21); see plan on p. 120. **4:** *Lay your hand*, one hand only, to designate ownership of the animal prior to sacrifice. *And it shall be acceptable*, better, "and it will be accepted" (cf. 19.5–8). The language of acceptance in vv. 3–4 underscores the sacrifice as a gift eliciting divine favor (cf. Mal 1.6–14). *As atonement for you*, better, "as a ransom for him"; see 17.11n. **5:** *The bull shall be slaughtered*, lit., "he [the offerer] shall slaughter the bull" (contrast Ezek 44.11). Dashing blood on the altar may serve to ransom the life of the offerer who kills the animal (cf. 17.4,11; see 17.11n.); it is also found in the cases of the well-being offering (3.2,8,13), the reparation offering (7.2), and the offering of firstborn animals (Num 18.17); cf. Ex 24.6. **7:** *The sons of the priest Aaron*, though referring immediately to the male children of Aaron; these include all subsequent priests from Aaron's lineage (cf. v. 8). **9:** *Turn the whole into smoke*, emphasizing that God enjoys the entire sacrifice and concretizing the image of the sacrifice's *pleasing odor* (cf. Gen 8.21). Though the Priestly authors view the earthly tabernacle as God's dwelling place, the imagery of smoke rising from the altar suggests that the deity is in the heavens. Burning sacrificial portions is a ritualized manner of effecting divine consumption.

2.1–16: The grain offering. Instructions for the grain offering, whose name literally means "gift, tribute (eliciting favor)" (Heb "minḥah") interrupt the animal food gift offerings in chs 1 and 3 (cf. 1.2). Like the

it, and put frankincense on it, [2] and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. After taking from it a handful of the choice flour and oil, with all its frankincense, the priest shall turn this token portion into smoke on the altar, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD. [3] And what is left of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons, a most holy part of the offerings by fire to the LORD.

[4] When you present a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be of choice flour: unleavened cakes mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers spread with oil. [5] If your offering is grain prepared on a griddle, it shall be of choice flour mixed with oil, unleavened; [6] break it in pieces, and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. [7] If your offering is grain prepared in a pan, it shall be made of choice flour in oil. [8] You shall bring to the LORD the grain offering that is prepared in any of these ways; and when it is presented to the priest, he shall take it to the altar. [9] The priest shall remove from the grain offering its token portion and turn this into smoke on the altar, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD. [10] And what is left of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings by fire to the LORD.

[11] No grain offering that you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you must not turn any leaven or honey into smoke as an offering by fire to the LORD. [12] You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of choice products, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing odor. [13] You shall not omit from your grain offerings the salt of the covenant with your God; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

[14] If you bring a grain offering of first fruits to the LORD, you shall bring as the grain offering of your first fruits coarse new grain from fresh ears, parched with fire. [15] You shall add oil to it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. [16] And the priest shall turn a token portion of it into smoke—some of the coarse grain and oil with all its frankincense; it is an offering by fire to the LORD.

passage on the birds in 1.14–17, these instructions are inserted secondarily in order to provide a still more affordable alternative for the burnt offering (cf. 1.1–17n.; 5.1–13). The second-person address of vv. 4–16, which accurately reflects the underlying Hebrew text, further sets these verses apart from vv. 1–3 and chs 1 and 3, all of which employ third-person language to describe the offerer (see Introduction). The grain offering is also a regular accompaniment to the burnt offering presented in statutory religious observances and on other occasions (cf. Ex 29.38–42; 40.29; Lev 9.17; Num 15.1–12; 28.4–6). Two main types of grain offerings are described: raw (vv. 1–3) and cooked (vv. 4–10). The cooked type is further subdivided according to method of preparation. While the raw variety is accompanied by oil and frankincense, only oil accompanies the cooked varieties, perhaps to make them more affordable for the poor. The required preparation may compensate for the lack of frankincense. **1:** *Frankincense*, an aromatic resin from shrubs found in Arabia and East Africa. **2–3:** *Token portion*, unlike the burnt offering, only a portion of the grain offering is burned. The remainder is designated as compensation for the priests (cf. Num 18.8–10). *Offering by fire*, see 1.1–3.17n. *Pleasing odor*, see 1.9n. While the frankincense is aromatic, the pleasing smell to God is not from incense, for the grain offering without frankincense produces the same effect (cf. v. 9). *Most holy part*, see 1.1–6.7n. **11:** *Honey*, fruit syrup made from dates or grapes, not bees' honey (cf. 2 Chr 31.5). Leavening agents (including honey, which supports fermentation) are prohibited from grain offerings, perhaps to expedite their preparation (cf. Ex 12.39; Deut 16.3). **12:** *Choice products*, first-processed products, such as oil, wine, grain, and dough (cf. Num 15.20–21; 18.12–13). Contrast the first-harvested grain offering of vv. 14–16. **13:** NRSV omits the beginning of this verse: "You shall season each of your grain offerings with salt." *Salt* inhibits fermentation and thus may be a corollary to the prohibitions against leaven and honey. It is more likely, however, that salt functions as a flavor enhancer for the deity's food, as it does in Mesopotamian food offerings (cf. 1.1–3.17n.; 1.9n.; Job 6:6). *Salt of the covenant*, the term *covenant* (Heb "berit") here refers to a statutory requirement, not to a bilateral agreement between God and Israel (cf. Ex 31:16; contrast Lev 24.8–9, Num 18.19, and Num 25.13, where "*covenant*" refers to a due or allotment). The text is better translated, "You shall not omit from your grain offering the salt required by your God." **14–16:** The first ripe offering may be a form of the offering in 23.10–11.

3 If the offering is a sacrifice of well-being, if you offer an animal of the herd, whether male or female, you shall offer one without blemish before the LORD. [2] You shall lay your hand on the head of the offering and slaughter it at the entrance of the tent of meeting; and Aaron's sons the priests shall dash the blood against all sides of the altar. [3] You shall offer from the sacrifice of well-being, as an offering by fire to the LORD, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is around the entrails; [4] the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the appendage of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys. [5] Then Aaron's sons shall turn these into smoke on the altar, with the burnt offering that is on the wood on the fire, as an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

[6] If your offering for a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD is from the flock, male or female, you shall offer one without blemish. [7] If you present a sheep as your offering, you shall bring it before the LORD [8] and lay your hand on the head of the offering. It shall be slaughtered before the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar. [9] You shall present its fat from the sacrifice of well-being, as an offering by fire to the LORD: the whole broad tail, which shall be removed close to the backbone, the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat that is around the entrails; [10] the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the appendage of the liver, which you shall remove with the kidneys. [11] Then the priest shall turn these into smoke on the altar as a food offering by fire to the LORD.

[12] If your offering is a goat, you shall bring it before the LORD [13] and lay your hand on its head; it shall be slaughtered before the tent of meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar. [14] You shall present as your offering from it, as an offering by fire to the LORD, the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat that is around the entrails; [15] the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the appendage of the liver, which you shall remove with the kidneys. [16] Then the priest shall turn these into smoke on the altar as a food offering by fire for a pleasing odor.

All fat is the LORD's. [17] It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, in all your settlements: you must not eat any fat or any blood.

4 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2] Speak to the people of Israel, saying: When anyone sins unintentionally in any of the LORD's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them:

[3] If it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, he shall offer

3.1–17: The well-being offering. There are three subtypes of well-being offerings: thanksgiving, votive, and freewill (7.11–18; 22.21). The meaning of the Heb name of the offering, *shelamim*, is uncertain. Proposals include "gift," "payment," "communion," "covenant," "peace," "whole," and "salvific." "Well-being" is preferable because the offering is motivated by the positive circumstance of its offerer. It is the only sacrifice whose meat may be consumed by laypersons (and not just priests). As such, it is a less holy offering (cf. 1.1–6.7n.; 7.19–21). According to the Priestly authors, all sacrificeable animals must be presented as offerings at the tabernacle if their meat is to be eaten (cf. 17.3–7). They serve as a communal feast between the Israelites and God. Both male and female herd (vv. 1–5) and flock animals (vv. 6–16) are eligible as well-being sacrifices, for their primary purpose is to provide meat for lay consumption. Portions of the sacrifice are burned on the altar (3.9–10,14–15), and portions are designated for the priests (7.28–36), but the main share is retained by the offerer (7.15–21; 19.6–8). **1:** *Without blemish*, see 1.3n. **2:** *Lay your hand*, see 1.4n. *Dash the blood*, see 1.5n. **3–5:** The visceral fat and the organs are considered the most desirable portions and are thus reserved for God alone (cf. vv. 16–17). In Heb, *fat* often connotes "best." **5:** *With the burnt offering*, referring to the statutory daily morning offering (Ex 29.38–42); *pleasing odor*, see 1.9n. **9:** *Broad tail*, the predominant species of sheep in the Levant has a fatty area surrounding the tail that can weigh up to 33 lb (15 kg). **16b–17:** See 17.10–14n.; Gen 9.4; Ezek 44.7. These verses are an H addition to P.

4.1–6.7: Instructions for purification and reparation offerings. Unlike gift offerings, which are spontaneous acts of worship, purification offerings are required to purge the sanctuary of ritual contamination

for the sin that he has committed a bull of the herd without blemish as a sin offering to the LORD. [4] He shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD and lay his hand on the head of the bull; the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD. [5] The anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it into the tent of meeting. [6] The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. [7] The priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is in the tent of meeting before the LORD; and the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. [8] He shall remove all the fat from the bull of sin offering: the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is around the entrails; [9] the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins; and the appendage of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys, [10] just as these are removed from the ox of the sacrifice of well-being. The priest shall turn them into smoke upon the altar of burnt offering. [11] But the skin of the bull and all its flesh, as well as its head, its legs, its entrails, and its dung— [12] all the rest of the bull—he shall carry out to a clean place outside the camp, to the ash heap, and shall burn it on a wood fire; at the ash heap it shall be burned.

[13] If the whole congregation of Israel errs unintentionally and the matter escapes the notice of the assembly, and they do any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done and incur guilt; [14] when the sin that they have committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull of the herd for a sin offering and bring it before the tent of meeting. [15] The elders of the congregation shall lay their

caused by various sins and impurities. In H's view, the accumulation of sin and impurity in the tabernacle threatens the abiding presence of the deity. If God should depart, Israel will lose all divine protection and benefaction (Lev 26.30–33; cf. Ezek 8–11). P, however, appears not to countenance divine abandonment. It instead expects Israel to perform the requisite purgation, which eliminates any cause that might be posited for the deity's departure. In P, God's presence among the Israelites is wholly for his own benefit. The threat of divine abandonment, which is meant to motivate humans to serve the deity and in so doing preserve the benefits they enjoy from God's presence in their midst, is thus inconsistent with P's claims.

4.1–35: The purification offering (Heb "ḥaṭṭa't"). Traditionally translated "sin offering," this sacrifice purifies the sanctuary from the defilement of sin or impurity, which are understood to be physical (if invisible) substances that are attracted to and accumulate at the sanctuary. The sacrifice is thus better translated "purification offering" or "purgation offering." The purification offering's blood acts as a ritual detergent, cleansing the tabernacle complex from inadvertent transgressions of divine prohibitions. Numbers 15.22–31 expands the application of the purification offering to inadvertent transgression of all divine prescriptions, including positive commandments. Ch 4 considers inadvertent sins of four different parties: the high priest (vv. 3–12), the entire Israelite congregation (vv. 13–21), a chieftain (vv. 22–26), and an ordinary Israelite (vv. 27–35). The severity of the resulting sanctuary pollution relates to the status of the sinner and is reflected by the animal required for the offering and the locations where its blood is applied. Sins of the high priest and entire community penetrate into the outer room of the tabernacle (vv. 5–7,16–18), while sins of a chieftain or ordinary layperson are less potent, accumulating only on the outer sacrificial altar (vv. 25,30,34). Ch 16 adds a third tier to this gradation: deliberate sins penetrate into and pollute the holy of holies, the inner sanctum of the deity, and must be cleansed annually on the day of purgations (16.11–17). **2:** *Unintentionally*, lit., "in error," actions done in negligence or ignorance (cf. vv. 13–14). **3–12:** Offering of the high priest. **3:** *Without blemish,* see 1.3n. **4:** *Entrance of the tent of meeting*, see 1.3n. *Lay his hand*, see 1.4n. **6:** *Curtain*, Ex 26.31–33. Sprinkling blood purges the outer room of the tent. **7:** *Horns*, see Ex 27.2; 30.2–3. *The altar of fragrant incense* is in the outer room of the tabernacle (Ex 30.1–10); see plan on p. 120. Daubing blood on the altar's horns purges it from sin and pollution. The remainder of the blood is poured on the ground for disposal (cf. 17.13; Deut 12.16,27). **8–10:** See 3.3–5. **11–12:** Unlike purification offerings from the flock (cf. 6.24–29), no meat from the bull purification offering may be eaten (cf. 6.30), presumably because the priest should not benefit from his own transgression. **13–21:** Offering

hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD. 16 The anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting, 17 and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, in front of the curtain. 18 He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the LORD in the tent of meeting; and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 19 He shall remove all its fat and turn it into smoke on the altar. 20 He shall do with the bull just as is done with the bull of sin offering; he shall do the same with this. The priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven. 21 He shall carry the bull outside the camp, and burn it as he burned the first bull; it is the sin offering for the assembly.

22 When a ruler sins, doing unintentionally any one of all the things that by commandments of the LORD his God ought not to be done and incurs guilt, 23 once the sin that he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a male goat without blemish. 24 He shall lay his hand on the head of the goat; it shall be slaughtered at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered before the LORD; it is a sin offering. 25 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering. 26 All its fat he shall turn into smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of well-being. Thus the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.

27 If anyone of the ordinary people among you sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done and incurs guilt, 28 when the sin that you have committed is made known to you, you shall bring a female goat without blemish as your offering, for the sin that you have committed. 29 You shall lay your hand on the head of the sin offering; and the sin offering shall be slaughtered at the place of the burnt offering. 30 The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and he shall pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. 31 He shall remove all its fat, as the fat is removed from the offering of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar for a pleasing odor to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf, and you shall be forgiven.

32 If the offering you bring as a sin offering is a sheep, you shall bring a female without blemish. 33 You shall lay your hand on the head of the sin offering; and it shall be slaughtered as a sin offering at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered. 34 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. 35 You shall remove all its fat, as the fat of the sheep is removed from the sacrifice of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, with the offerings by fire to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the sin that you have committed, and you shall be forgiven.

5 When any of you sin in that you have heard a public adjuration to testify and—though able to testify as one who has seen or learned of the matter—do not speak up, you are subject to punishment. 2 Or when any of you touch any unclean thing—whether the carcass of an unclean

for the entire congregation. **20:** *For them*, meaning "on their behalf," i.e., in response to their sin. *And they shall be forgiven*, forgiveness is assured once the required ritual procedure is accomplished. Though this concluding formula is omitted from the high priest's offering, it should be assumed there as well (cf. vv. 26,31,35). **22–26:** Offering for a chieftain (see 4:1–35n.). **22:** *Ruler* probably means "chieftain" or "clan leader" (see Num 1.16). **27–35:** Offering for an ordinary Israelite.

5.1–13: Purification offerings for specific offenses. This passage extends the scope of ch 4, detailing four specific sins that require purification offerings. In each case (v. 1, withholding testimony; v. 2,

beast or the carcass of unclean livestock or the carcass of an unclean swarming thing—and are unaware of it, you have become unclean, and are guilty. 3 Or when you touch human uncleanness—any uncleanness by which one can become unclean—and are unaware of it, when you come to know it, you shall be guilty. 4 Or when any of you utter aloud a rash oath for a bad or a good purpose, whatever people utter in an oath, and are unaware of it, when you come to know it, you shall in any of these be guilty. 5 When you realize your guilt in any of these, you shall confess the sin that you have committed. 6 And you shall bring to the LORD, as your penalty for the sin that you have committed, a female from the flock, a sheep or a goat, as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for your sin.

7 But if you cannot afford a sheep, you shall bring to the LORD, as your penalty for the sin that you have committed, two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. 8 You shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering, wringing its head at the nape without severing it. 9 He shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, while the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it is a sin offering. 10 And the second he shall offer for a burnt offering according to the regulation. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the sin that you have committed, and you shall be forgiven.

11 But if you cannot afford two turtledoves or two pigeons, you shall bring as your offering for the sin that you have committed one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour for a sin offering; you shall not put oil on it or lay frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering. 12 You shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall scoop up a handful of it as its memorial portion, and turn this into smoke on the altar, with the offerings by fire to the LORD; it is a sin offering. 13 Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for whichever of these sins you have committed, and you shall be forgiven. Like the grain offering, the rest shall be for the priest.

contracting impurity from an animal; v. 3, contracting impurity from a person; v. 4, failure to fulfill an oath due to negligence), the sin or pollution has persisted over a prolonged period (vv. 4–5). This lapse of time, which exacerbates the gravity of sin or pollution, unites the case of withholding testimony, which is premeditated, with the final three cases, which involve inadvertent actions. Vv. 1–4 each present the circumstance of a person's actions and state of mind but do not render a verdict or outline a required response, which comes only in vv. 5–13. **1:** *You are subject to punishment*, lit., "and he bears his sin" (cf. 1.2n.). P portrays sin both as a weight of guilt shouldered by the offender until it is borne away through forgiveness and as a defiling object attracted to the sanctuary like certain metals to a magnet. Left unremedied, such sins will accumulate in the sanctuary and irritate the deity (cf. 16.1–34n.). **2–3:** *You have become unclean, and are guilty*, emendation yields, "but he has realized it and now feels guilt." For impurity contracted by touching animal carcasses, see 11.8,24–40. *When you come to know it, you shall be guilty*, lit., "but he has realized it and now feels guilt." For impurity contracted by touching a human, see 15.4–10,19–24,26–27; Num 19.11–13,16. In each of these cases, had the person who contracted pollution immediately purified him- or herself, no purification offering would have been required. **4:** *When you come to know it . . . be guilty*, lit., "but he has realized it and now feels guilt." *In any of these* was inadvertently inserted here from v. 5 because the scribe's eye skipped. **5–6:** The ritual procedure for sanctuary purification in these four cases requires confession as well as a purification offering, unlike the unintentional sins in ch 4. **7–13:** Less costly alternatives for the purification offering. It is not clear whether these substitutions may be made only in cases of the four sins in vv. 1–4 or for any purification offering. **7:** Two birds are necessary, one for the purifying blood, and the other for the fat pieces to be burned on the altar. **10:** *According to the regulation*, see 1.14–17. **11–13:** The substitution of a grain offering is a noteworthy accommodation because it includes no blood, the essential component of the purification offering. Because this grain offering is presented in response to wrongdoing, frankincense and oil, symbols of joy, are excluded from it. **11:** *Ephah,* about 21 qts (23 L).

14 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
15 When any of you commit a trespass and sin unintentionally in any of the holy things of the Lord, you shall bring, as your guilt offering to the Lord, a ram without blemish from the flock, convertible into silver by the sanctuary shekel; it is a guilt offering. 16 And you shall make restitution for the holy thing in which you were remiss, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. The priest shall make atonement on your behalf with the ram of the guilt offering, and you shall be forgiven.

17 If any of you sin without knowing it, doing any of the things that by the Lord's commandments ought not to be done, you have incurred guilt, and are subject to punishment. 18 You shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, or the equivalent, as a guilt offering; and the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the error that you committed unintentionally, and you shall be forgiven. 19 It is a guilt offering; you have incurred guilt before the Lord.

6 [a] The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
2 When any of you sin and commit a trespass against the Lord by deceiving a neighbor in a matter of a deposit or a pledge, or by robbery, or if you have defrauded a neighbor, 3 or have found something lost and lied about it—if you swear falsely regarding any of the various things that one may do and sin thereby— 4 when you have sinned and realize your guilt, and would restore what you took by robbery or by fraud or the deposit that was committed to you, or the lost thing that you found, 5 or anything else about which you have sworn falsely, you shall repay the principal amount and shall add one-fifth to it. You shall pay it to its owner when you realize your guilt. 6 And you shall bring to the priest, as your guilt offering to the Lord, a ram without blemish from the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering. 7 The priest shall make atonement on your behalf before the Lord, and you shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and incur guilt thereby.

8 [b] The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 9 Command Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the ritual of the burnt offering. The burnt offering itself shall remain on the hearth upon the altar all night until the morning, while the fire on the altar shall be kept burning. 10 The priest shall put on his linen vestments after putting on his linen undergarments next to his body; and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering

[a] Ch 5.20 in Heb
[b] Ch 6.1 in Heb

5.14–6.7: The reparation offering (Heb "'asham"). Traditionally translated "guilt offering," this sacrifice serves as compensation for sacrilege against the sacred items (vv. 14–16), an unknown sin (vv. 17–19; the "unknown sin" is a common motif in Near Eastern texts), or fraud arising from a false oath (presumably spoken in the name of the Lord and thus sacrilege; 6.1–7). The cases of sacrilege require the offering and restitution plus damages (cf. 22.14). This sacrifice is thus better understood as a "reparation offering." The ritual procedure for this "most holy" sacrifice is found in 7.1–6. **14–16:** Inadvertent trespass against sacred items. **15:** *Holy things*, the most holy sacrificial portions, the altar, and the tabernacle and its furnishings belong to and exist in close proximity to the deity. They are thus sacred. *Without blemish,* see 1.3n. **5.15,18; 6.6:** *Convertible into silver*, a person may bring the *equivalent* value of the offering in silver. **5.16,18; 6.7:** *Make atonement*, appease the deity on behalf of the sinner (cf. 7.1–6n.). **5.17–19:** Unknown sin. Though ambiguous, this case may differ from those addressed by the purification offering because here the person senses that he or she sinned, but the act itself is unknown. **6.1–7:** See Num 5.5–10 and contrast damages in Ex 22.7–15.

6.8–7.38: Elaborations on the sacrificial instructions. This section, which contains five divine speeches, offers further instructions for each of the offerings detailed in 1.1–6.7 and may represent a separate subsource. It focuses especially upon ritual performance, distribution of sacrificial pieces, and disposal procedures. The first three speeches are ostensibly directed to the priests alone (6.9–7.21), although the instructions in 7.11–21 are pertinent to both priests and laypersons. The final two speeches are directed to all of the Israelites (7.22–36), and 7.37–38 serves as a subscript to this section.

6.8–13: The burnt offering. Cf. 1.3–13. Alternatively, this may refer to the statutory daily burnt offerings (cf. Ex 29.38–42; Num 28.3–8). **9:** *Ritual*, better, "instruction" (Heb "torah"). **10–11:** The priestly garb is described in Ex 28.39–43. The linen garments must be worn in approaching the sacred altar, while nonsacral garb is worn for

on the altar, and place them beside the altar. 11 Then he shall take off his vestments and put on other garments, and carry the ashes out to a clean place outside the camp. 12 The fire on the altar shall be kept burning; it shall not go out. Every morning the priest shall add wood to it, lay out the burnt offering on it, and turn into smoke the fat pieces of the offerings of well-being. 13 A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the altar; it shall not go out.

14 This is the ritual of the grain offering: The sons of Aaron shall offer it before the LORD, in front of the altar. 15 They shall take from it a handful of the choice flour and oil of the grain offering, with all the frankincense that is on the offering, and they shall turn its memorial portion into smoke on the altar as a pleasing odor to the LORD. 16 Aaron and his sons shall eat what is left of it; it shall be eaten as unleavened cakes in a holy place; in the court of the tent of meeting they shall eat it. 17 It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of my offerings by fire; it is most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. 18 Every male among the descendants of Aaron shall eat of it, as their perpetual due throughout your generations, from the LORD's offerings by fire; anything that touches them shall become holy.

19 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 20 This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall offer to the LORD on the day when he is anointed: one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour as a regular offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. 21 It shall be made with oil on a griddle; you shall bring it well soaked, as a grain offering of baked[a] pieces, and you shall present it as a pleasing odor to the LORD. 22 And so the priest, anointed from among Aaron's descendants as a successor, shall prepare it; it is the LORD's—a perpetual due—to be turned entirely into smoke. 23 Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned; it shall not be eaten.

24 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 25 Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the ritual of the sin offering. The sin offering shall be slaughtered before the LORD at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered; it is most holy. 26 The priest who offers it as a sin offering shall eat of it; it shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting. 27 Whatever touches its flesh shall become holy; and when any of its blood is spattered on a garment, you shall wash the bespattered part in a holy place. 28 An earthen vessel in which it was boiled shall be broken; but if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water. 29 Every male among the priests shall eat of it; it is most

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

ash disposal outside the camp. **12:** This verse may be punctuated differently: *lay out the burnt offering on it* may actually be a new sentence, viz., "He shall arrange the burnt offering upon it and turn into smoke the fat pieces of the well-being offering." If so, this burnt offering is likely not the daily statutory offering (cf. 3.5). **12–13:** The perpetual fire maintains a direct link to the divine fire that ignites the altar in 9.24. It is God who consumes all sacrificial pieces burned on the altar.

6.14–23: The grain offerings. 14–18: These verses provide instructions for the grain offering described in 2.1–13. **14:** *Ritual*, see 6.9n. **15:** *Frankincense*, see 2.1n. *Pleasing odor*, see 1.9n. **16:** *Holy place*, the priests' portions of most holy offerings must be consumed within the sanctuary complex in order to ensure their sanctity and to avoid communicating holiness (cf. v. 18). *Court*, see Ex 27.9–19. **17:** *Offerings by fire*, see 1.1–3.17n. **18:** *Shall eat*, better, "may eat." All males of Aaron's line are priests and thus may share in most holy sacrificial portions (cf. 21.22). Women belonging to priestly families may partake of lesser holy sacrificial portions assigned to the priests (22.10–13). *Become holy*, holiness is conceptualized as an invisible divine essence that is communicable through physical contact (cf. v. 27; Ex 29.37; 30.29; Ezek 44.19). **19–23:** These verses provide instructions for the statutory grain offerings that the high priest must present daily. **20:** *On the day when he is anointed*, better, "once he has been anointed." Aaron, the first high priest, is not anointed until ch 8. This statute is also applicable to all future high priests (cf. v. 22). *Ephah,* see 5.11n.

6.24–30: The purification offering. 24–29: These verses provide instructions for purification offerings whose blood is applied to the outer altar (cf. 4.22–35). Portions of these most holy offerings may be eaten by the priests (see 1.1–6.7n.). **25:** *Sin offering*, see 4.1–35n. **26:** *Holy place*, see 6.16n. *Court*, see Ex 27.9–19. **27–28:** *Become holy*, see 6.18n. The blood of the purification offering seems to decontaminate by absorbing impurities,

holy. 30 But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting for atonement in the holy place; it shall be burned with fire.

7 This is the ritual of the guilt offering. It is most holy; 2 at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered, they shall slaughter the guilt offering, and its blood shall be dashed against all sides of the altar. 3 All its fat shall be offered: the broad tail, the fat that covers the entrails, 4 the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the appendage of the liver, which shall be removed with the kidneys. 5 The priest shall turn them into smoke on the altar as an offering by fire to the LORD; it is a guilt offering. 6 Every male among the priests shall eat of it; it shall be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy.

7 The guilt offering is like the sin offering, there is the same ritual for them; the priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. 8 So, too, the priest who offers anyone's burnt offering shall keep the skin of the burnt offering that he has offered. 9 And every grain offering baked in the oven, and all that is prepared in a pan or on a griddle, shall belong to the priest who offers it. 10 But every other grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall belong to all the sons of Aaron equally.

11 This is the ritual of the sacrifice of the offering of well-being that one may offer to the LORD. 12 If you offer it for thanksgiving, you shall offer with the thank offering unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of choice flour well soaked in oil. 13 With your thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being you shall bring your offering with cakes of leavened bread. 14 From this you shall offer one cake from each offering, as a gift to the LORD; it shall belong to the priest who dashes the blood of the offering of well-being. 15 And the flesh of your thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being shall be eaten on the day it is offered; you shall not leave any of it until morning. 16 But if the sacrifice you offer is a votive offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that you offer your sacrifice, and what is left of it shall be eaten the next day; 17 but what is left of the flesh of the sacrifice shall be burned up on the third day. 18 If any of the flesh of your sacrifice of well-being is eaten on the third day, it shall not be acceptable, nor shall it be credited to the one who offers it; it shall be an abomination, and the one who eats of it shall incur guilt.

19 Flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten; it shall be burned up. As for other flesh, all who are clean may eat such flesh. 20 But those who eat flesh from the LORD's sacrifice of well-being while in a state of uncleanness shall be cut off from their kin. 21 When any one of you touches any unclean thing—human uncleanness or an unclean animal or any unclean creature—and then eats flesh from the LORD's sacrifice of well-being, you shall be cut off from your kin.

which may explain how the offering in turn contaminates garments and vessels (cf. 10.16–20). **29:** *Shall eat*, better, "may eat" (cf. 6.18n.). **30:** This verse refers to the purification offering for more virulent contamination and any purification offering of a priest (cf. Ex 29.14; Lev 4.1–21; 6.23; 8.17; 9.11; 16.27).

7.1–10: The reparation offering. See 5.14–6.7n. **1:** *Ritual*, see 6.9n. *Guilt offering*, see 5.14–6.7n. **2:** *Its blood shall be dashed*, see 1.5n. **6:** *Shall eat*, better, "may eat" (cf. 6.18n.). **7–10:** These verses summarize some of the compensation given to the priests for their ritual activities (cf. Num 18.8–20).

7.11–38: The well-being offerings. Cf. 3.1–17; 22.21–23. This unit provides instructions for three different types of well-being offerings: thanksgiving, votive, and freewill. The thanksgiving offering (Heb "todah") is more complex than the votive and freewill offerings, requiring accompanying grain offerings (cf. 2.4–10) and leavened bread (contrast 2.11–12). In addition, the thanksgiving offering may be eaten only on the day it is presented, while other well-being sacrifices may be consumed for two days. **11:** *Ritual*, see 6.9n. **13:** Lit., "The foregoing he shall offer with loaves of leavened bread, together with his well-being offering of thanksgiving." **18:** *Acceptable*, better, "accepted" (cf. 1.4n.; 19.5–8; 22.17–30). *Incur guilt*, cf. 5.1n. **19–21:** Sacrificial portions are to be kept from impurity because, as holy food, they belong to God, who prefers not to come into contact with impurity (cf. 4.1–35n.; 11.1–16.34n.; 19.8). *Cut off*, this penalty is applied by the Priestly authors to several offenses against God and likely refers to the complete destruction of the of-

22 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
23 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: You shall eat no fat of ox or sheep or goat. 24 The fat of an animal that died or was torn by wild animals may be put to any other use, but you must not eat it. 25 If any one of you eats the fat from an animal of which an offering by fire may be made to the Lord, you who eat it shall be cut off from your kin. 26 You must not eat any blood whatever, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements. 27 Any one of you who eats any blood shall be cut off from your kin.

28 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
29 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: Any one of you who would offer to the Lord your sacrifice of well-being must yourself bring to the Lord your offering from your sacrifice of well-being. 30 Your own hands shall bring the Lord's offering by fire; you shall bring the fat with the breast, so that the breast may be raised as an elevation offering before the Lord. 31 The priest shall turn the fat into smoke on the altar, but the breast shall belong to Aaron and his sons. 32 And the right thigh from your sacrifices of well-being you shall give to the priest as an offering; 33 the one among the sons of Aaron who offers the blood and fat of the offering of well-being shall have the right thigh for a portion. 34 For I have taken the breast of the elevation offering, and the thigh that is offered, from the people of Israel, from their sacrifices of well-being, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel. 35 This is the portion allotted to Aaron and to his sons from the offerings made by fire to the Lord, once they have been brought forward to serve the Lord as priests; 36 these the Lord commanded to be given them, when he anointed them, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel throughout their generations.

37 This is the ritual of the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the offering of ordination, and the sacrifice of well-being, 38 which the Lord commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, when he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the Lord, in the wilderness of Sinai.

8 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Take Aaron and his sons with him, the vestments, the anointing oil, the bull of sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread; 3 and assemble the whole congregation at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 4 And Moses did as the Lord commanded him. When the congregation was assembled at the entrance of the tent of meeting, 5 Moses said to the congregation, "This is what the Lord has commanded to be done."

6 Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward, and washed them with water. 7 He put the tunic on him, fastened the sash

fender's lineage. **22–27:** These commands develop further the prohibition against fat and blood in 3.17. **23:** *Ox or sheep or goat*, i.e., sacrificeable animals. **25,27:** *Cut off*, see 7.19–21n. **28–36:** The priests' portion of the well-being offering. **30:** *Elevation*, a ritual act, also found in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, dedicating the offering to the deity. **31–33:** The breast belongs to all of the priests, while the thigh is designated for the priest who officiates over the sacrifice. **37–38:** A summarizing postscript to 6.8–7.36. The inclusion of the ordination offering here may be due to its similarity to the well-being offering (cf. 8.22–32n.). **38:** *On Mount Sinai*, better, "at Mount Sinai," namely, at the tabernacle erected at the foot of the mountain after Moses's descent (Ex 34.29).

8.1–10.20: The dedication of the tabernacle and priests and the transgression of Aaron's sons. Chs 8–10 narrate the consecration of the tabernacle complex, the seven-day ordination of the priests, the inaugural priestly service on the eighth day that culminates in the revelation of the divine presence through fire, and the subsequent illicit ritual of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu.

8.1–36: The dedication of the tabernacle and priests. A fulfillment of the consecration rituals as instructed by God (cf. vv. 5,9,13,17,21,29,31,34) to Moses in Ex 28–29; 30.26–30; 40.9–15. This dedication appears here rather than immediately following the tabernacle building account in Ex 35–40 because it includes the performance of sacrifices whose instructions are only first given in Lev 1–7. **2:** *Anointing oil*, Ex 30.22–33; 37.29. *Bull of sin offering*, see Lev 4.3. For the offerings listed here, see Ex 29.1–3. **5:** *What the Lord has commanded*, i.e., Ex 29. **7–9,13:** For descriptions of the priestly vestments, see Ex 28.1–43; 39.1–31. The high priest's clothing is intended

around him, clothed him with the robe,
and put the ephod on him. He then put the
decorated band of the ephod around him,
tying the ephod to him with it. 8 He placed the
breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he
put the Urim and the Thummim. 9 And he set
the turban on his head, and on the turban, in
front, he set the golden ornament, the holy
crown, as the LORD commanded Moses.

10 Then Moses took the anointing oil and
anointed the tabernacle and all that was in
it, and consecrated them. 11 He sprinkled
some of it on the altar seven times, and
anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the
basin and its base, to consecrate them. 12 He
poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's
head and anointed him, to consecrate him.
13 And Moses brought forward Aaron's sons,
and clothed them with tunics, and fastened
sashes around them, and tied headdresses on
them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

14 He led forward the bull of sin offering;
and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon
the head of the bull of sin offering, 15 and
it was slaughtered. Moses took the blood
and with his finger put some on each of the
horns of the altar, purifying the altar; then
he poured out the blood at the base of the
altar. Thus he consecrated it, to make atone-
ment for it. 16 Moses took all the fat that was
around the entrails, and the appendage of the
liver, and the two kidneys with their fat, and
turned them into smoke on the altar. 17 But
the bull itself, its skin and flesh and its dung,
he burned with fire outside the camp, as the
LORD commanded Moses.

18 Then he brought forward the ram of
burnt offering. Aaron and his sons laid their
hands on the head of the ram, 19 and it was
slaughtered. Moses dashed the blood against
all sides of the altar. 20 The ram was cut into
its parts, and Moses turned into smoke the
head and the parts and the suet. 21 And after
the entrails and the legs were washed with
water, Moses turned into smoke the whole
ram on the altar; it was a burnt offering for a
pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD,
as the LORD commanded Moses.

22 Then he brought forward the second ram,
the ram of ordination. Aaron and his sons laid
their hands on the head of the ram, 23 and it
was slaughtered. Moses took some of its blood
and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and
on the thumb of his right hand and on the
big toe of his right foot. 24 After Aaron's sons
were brought forward, Moses put some of the
blood on the lobes of their right ears and on
the thumbs of their right hands and on the big
toes of their right feet; and Moses dashed the
rest of the blood against all sides of the altar.
25 He took the fat—the broad tail, all the fat
that was around the entrails, the appendage
of the liver, and the two kidneys with their
fat—and the right thigh. 26 From the basket of
unleavened bread that was before the LORD, he
took one cake of unleavened bread, one cake
of bread with oil, and one wafer, and placed
them on the fat and on the right thigh. 27 He
placed all these on the palms of Aaron and
on the palms of his sons, and raised them as
an elevation offering before the LORD. 28 Then
Moses took them from their hands and turned
them into smoke on the altar with the burnt
offering. This was an ordination offering for a
pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD.
29 Moses took the breast and raised it as an el-
evation offering before the LORD; it was Moses'
portion of the ram of ordination, as the LORD
commanded Moses.

30 Then Moses took some of the anoint-
ing oil and some of the blood that was on
the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and
his vestments, and also on his sons and their
vestments. Thus he consecrated Aaron and
his vestments, and also his sons and their
vestments.

for his "honor and beauty" (Ex 28.2) and distinguishes him from the other priests, whose ritual attire is simpler. **10–12,30:** Anointing infuses the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the priests with ritual holiness, setting them apart as the personal possessions of the deity and his ceremonial servants. Anointing with oil was a common transition rite for persons and objects in the ancient Near East (cf. 14.15–18,26–29) and was therefore also used in Israel to change the status of a commoner to king (e.g., 1 Sam 10.1; 16.13). **14–17:** 4.1–12. **18–21:** 1.10–13. **22–32:** *Ram of ordination*, cf. Ex 29.22–28,31–34. The ordination offering is similar (but not identical) to the well-being offering. It inaugurates the system for priestly compensation, as indicated by its name: *ordination*, lit., "filling (the hand)," refers to the assignment of part of the offerings to the priests. **23–24:** *Ear . . . thumb . . . big toe*, the

31 And Moses said to Aaron and his sons,
"Boil the flesh at the entrance of the tent of
meeting, and eat it there with the bread that
is in the basket of ordination offerings, as I
was commanded, 'Aaron and his sons shall
eat it'; 32 and what remains of the flesh and
the bread you shall burn with fire. 33 You shall
not go outside the entrance of the tent of
meeting for seven days, until the day when
your period of ordination is completed. For
it will take seven days to ordain you; 34 as has
been done today, the LORD has commanded
to be done to make atonement for you. 35 You
shall remain at the entrance of the tent of
meeting day and night for seven days, keeping the LORD's charge so that you do not die;
for so I am commanded." 36 Aaron and his
sons did all the things that the LORD commanded through Moses.

9 On the eighth day Moses summoned
Aaron and his sons and the elders of
Israel. 2 He said to Aaron, "Take a bull calf for
a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering,
without blemish, and offer them before the
LORD. 3 And say to the people of Israel, 'Take
a male goat for a sin offering; a calf and a
lamb, yearlings without blemish, for a burnt
offering; 4 and an ox and a ram for an offering
of well-being to sacrifice before the LORD;
and a grain offering mixed with oil. For today
the LORD will appear to you.'" 5 They brought
what Moses commanded to the front of the
tent of meeting; and the whole congregation
drew near and stood before the LORD. 6 And
Moses said, "This is the thing that the LORD
commanded you to do, so that the glory of
the LORD may appear to you." 7 Then Moses
said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar and
sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself and
for the people; and sacrifice the offering of
the people, and make atonement for them; as
the LORD has commanded."

8 Aaron drew near to the altar, and slaughtered the calf of the sin offering, which was
for himself. 9 The sons of Aaron presented
the blood to him, and he dipped his finger in
the blood and put it on the horns of the altar;
and the rest of the blood he poured out at the
base of the altar. 10 But the fat, the kidneys,
and the appendage of the liver from the sin
offering he turned into smoke on the altar, as
the LORD commanded Moses; 11 and the flesh
and the skin he burned with fire outside the
camp.

12 Then he slaughtered the burnt offering.
Aaron's sons brought him the blood, and he
dashed it against all sides of the altar. 13 And
they brought him the burnt offering piece
by piece, and the head, which he turned into
smoke on the altar. 14 He washed the entrails
and the legs and, with the burnt offering,
turned them into smoke on the altar.

15 Next he presented the people's offering. He took the goat of the sin offering that
was for the people, and slaughtered it, and
presented it as a sin offering like the first
one. 16 He presented the burnt offering, and
sacrificed it according to regulation. 17 He
presented the grain offering, and, taking a

bodily extremities symbolize the entire person. **31:** Once the ordination process has begun, the priests may partake of the sacred offering portions. **33:** *It will take seven days to ordain you*, better, "He (i.e., God) will fill your hand for seven days." Sacrifices are the possession of the deity, who shares a portion with the priests. **33–35:** The purification and ordination ritual is to be repeated for seven days (cf. Ex 29.35–37), during which the priests must remain in the sanctuary complex to preserve their purity. **36:** This verse covers the time period of the six remaining days of the priestly ordination. Priestly literature often describes the fulfillment of complex instructions through short report statements (cf. 16.34b).

9.1–10.20: The inauguration of priestly service and the transgression of Nadab and Abihu. Chs 9–10 narrate the events of the eighth day, i.e., the day after the consecration of the priests is completed. The priests perform their first sacrifices, and the divine glory appears to the people with fire, confirming the deity's presence and approval of the priests' ritual activities. Immediately following this joyous occasion, however, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, commit sacrilege by making an unauthorized incense offering, which prompts the divine fire to emerge once more to consume them. The deaths of Nadab and Abihu occasion further instructions for the priests.

9.1–24: The inauguration of priestly service. 4,6: The deity's appearance is the fire that emerges from the tabernacle (vv. 23–24; cf. Ex 40.38). **6–21:** While Moses performed the sacrificial ritual in lieu of the priests in

handful of it, he turned it into smoke on the altar, in addition to the burnt offering of the morning.

18 He slaughtered the ox and the ram as a sacrifice of well-being for the people. Aaron's sons brought him the blood, which he dashed against all sides of the altar, 19 and the fat of the ox and of the ram—the broad tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat on them,[a] and the appendage of the liver. 20 They first laid the fat on the breasts, and the fat was turned into smoke on the altar; 21 and the breasts and the right thigh Aaron raised as an elevation offering before the LORD, as Moses had commanded.

22 Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he came down after sacrificing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well-being. 23 Moses and Aaron entered the tent of meeting, and then came out and blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. 24 Fire came out from the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

10 Now Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his censer, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered unholy fire before the LORD, such as he had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. 3 Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when he said,

'Through those who are near me
I will show myself holy,
and before all the people
I will be glorified.' "

And Aaron was silent.

4 Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come forward, and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp." 5 They came forward and carried them by their tunics out of the camp, as Moses had ordered. 6 And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not dishevel your hair, and do not tear your vestments, or you will die and wrath will strike all the congregation; but your kindred, the whole house of Israel, may mourn the burning that the LORD has sent. 7 You shall not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting, or you will die; for the anointing oil of the LORD is on you." And they did as Moses had ordered.

8 And the LORD spoke to Aaron: 9 Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die; it is a statute forever throughout your generations. 10 You are to distinguish between the holy and the com-

[a] Gk: Heb *the broad tail, and that which covers, and the kidneys*

ch 8, here the priests, having been fully ordained, perform the sacrifices as described in chs 1–5. **22–23:** *Lifted his hands*, a ritual action accompanying the blessing. The people receive two blessings—one from Aaron and one from Moses and Aaron together. For a priestly blessing, see Num 6.22–27. **22:** *Came down*, an anachronistic reference to the altar of burnt offering in the Temple, which was elevated (cf. 2 Kings 16.10–13; Ezek 43.13–17). The tabernacle's altar was portable and had no steps (Ex 27.1). **23–24:** God's fiery *glory* is also manifested in the cloud and fire pillar that led the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness, and that rested over the tent of meeting (Ex 13.21; 40.38; Num 9.15–23); see also Ex 24.17; Ezek 1.27–28. **24:** *They shouted*, for joy, not out of fear. Prostration is a ritual act of submission.

10.1–20: The transgression of Nadab and Abihu. 1: *Unholy fire*, lit., "strange fire," referring to the unauthorized incense offering. **2:** *Fire*, because God had not instructed the priests to present incense offerings, the fire that would consume the offerings instead consumed Nadab and Abihu. The Korah rebellion ends similarly with divine fire consuming the offerers of illicit incense (Num 16.35). For God viewed as a consuming fire in P, see Ex 24.17. **3:** *When he said*, perhaps referring to Ex 29.43–44, but more likely quoting a text that is now lost. **4–7:** Because of their ritual holiness, the priests are not allowed to contact a corpse or to mourn for the dead (though cf. 21.1–6,10–12, which permit limited mourning). **8–11:** These verses, the only instance in Leviticus of God speaking to Aaron alone, are likely an H insertion into P. The stated mourning restrictions motivate the introduction of further priestly responsibilities. **10:** *The holy and the common . . . the unclean and the clean*, the two fundamental binary distinctions in Priestly literature. All persons, objects, and places are characterized by

mon, and between the unclean and the clean;
[11] and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.

[12] Moses spoke to Aaron and to his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar: Take the grain offering that is left from the LORD's offerings by fire, and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy; [13] you shall eat it in a holy place, because it is your due and your sons' due, from the offerings by fire to the LORD; for so I am commanded. [14] But the breast that is elevated and the thigh that is raised, you and your sons and daughters as well may eat in any clean place; for they have been assigned to you and your children from the sacrifices of the offerings of well-being of the people of Israel. [15] The thigh that is raised and the breast that is elevated they shall bring, together with the offerings by fire of the fat, to raise for an elevation offering before the LORD; they are to be your due and that of your children forever, as the LORD has commanded.

[16] Then Moses made inquiry about the goat of the sin offering, and—it had already been burned! He was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and said, [17] "Why did you not eat the sin offering in the sacred area? For it is most holy, and God[a] has given it to you that you may remove the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement on their behalf before the LORD. [18] Its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary. You should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded." [19] And Aaron spoke to Moses, "See, today they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and yet such things as these have befallen me! If I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been agreeable to the LORD?" [20] And when Moses heard that, he agreed.

11 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them: [2] Speak to the people of Israel, saying:

[a] Heb *he*

one quality of each pair: holy and clean (e.g., the properly functioning sanctuary, including its priests); common and clean (the default status of lay Israelites not suffering from impurities such as found in chs 11–15 and Num 19); common and impure (e.g., lay Israelites suffering from impurity); and, less frequently, holy and impure (such as holy ritual items that become impure during the course of purification rituals, e.g., purification offering carcasses, cf. 6.27–28; 16.26–28). **11:** *To teach . . . all the statutes*, better, "to give rulings regarding all the statutes." The priests do not actively instruct the people in the law (cf. Hag 2.11–13). **12–15:** Cf. 7.11–14,28–36. Aaron and his remaining sons must complete the rituals as prescribed, even after the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. **16–20:** A somewhat enigmatic section, in which Moses is upset that the priests did not consume the people's purification offering, although he never explicitly commanded them to do so in ch 9. V. 17 suggests that the priestly consumption of the offering itself is expiatory (cf. 6.24–30, although these verses imply that eating the purification offering is a privilege, not a requirement). Aaron's response is unclear, yet Moses accepts it, perhaps because of the unique circumstance of the eighth day.

11.1–16.34: Ritual impurity and purification. Chs 11–16 narrate divine instructions concerning impurity and various processes for purification. In Priestly literature, impurity is a real, though invisible, film that adheres to persons and objects and is attracted to the tabernacle as some metals are attracted to a magnet. However, impurity is fundamentally different from sin: impurity is contracted in the course of normal, daily activities and carries no moral stigma (see further 10.10n.). Yet because impurity is contagious and vexes the deity in the sanctuary, the Israelites must carefully dispose of it. Therefore failure to purify is sinful and carries dire consequences (cf. 15.31). The sources of impurity are human and animal corpses (ch 11; Num 19), normal and abnormal genital discharges (chs 12; 15), and a disease, "surface affliction," often mistranslated as "leprosy" (chs 13–14). The common denominator among these sources of impurity may be their association with death or loss of life force. In cases of minor impurity, purification is accomplished through some combination of bathing, laundering, and the passage of time. In addition to these rites, major impurities also require presentation of a purification offering to cleanse the sanctuary, for major impurities penetrate into the tabernacle complex. Because of their regular contact with the sanctuary and the threat of its contamination, priests are required to avoid virtually all impurity (cf. 21.1–15).

11.1–47: Dietary laws. The dietary laws provide a bridge between the sacrificial instructions that precede them and the following purity rules. In their concern for meat consumption, the instructions in ch 11 correlate

From among all the land animals, these are the creatures that you may eat. 3 Any animal that has divided hoofs and is cleft-footed and chews the cud—such you may eat. 4 But among those that chew the cud or have divided hoofs, you shall not eat the following: the camel, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. 5 The rock badger, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. 6 The hare, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. 7 The pig, for even though it has divided hoofs and is cleft-footed, it does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. 8 Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean for you.

9 These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the streams—such you may eat. 10 But anything in the seas or the streams that does not have fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and among all the other living creatures that are in the waters—they are detestable to you 11 and detestable they shall remain. Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall regard as detestable. 12 Everything in the waters that does not have fins and scales is detestable to you.

13 These you shall regard as detestable among the birds. They shall not be eaten; they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, 14 the buzzard, the kite of any kind; 15 every raven of any kind; 16 the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind; 17 the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, 18 the water hen, the desert owl,[a] the carrion vulture, 19 the stork, the heron of any kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.[b]

20 All winged insects that walk upon all fours are detestable to you. 21 But among the winged insects that walk on all fours you may eat those that have jointed legs above their feet, with which to leap on the ground. 22 Of them you may eat: the locust according to its kind, the bald locust according to its kind, the cricket according to its kind, and the grasshopper according to its kind. 23 But all other winged insects that have four feet are detestable to you.

24 By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until the evening, 25 and whoever carries any part of the carcass of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. 26 Every animal that has divided hoofs but is not cleft-footed or does not chew the cud is unclean for you; everyone who touches one of them shall be unclean. 27 All that walk on their paws, among the animals that walk on all fours, are unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until the evening, 28 and the one who carries the

[a] Or *pelican*

[b] Identification of several of the birds in verses 13-19 is uncertain

strongly with the sacrificial laws, which themselves outline the foods that the deity eats and restrict meat consumption according to its sanctity. A comparison of the sacrificial and dietary laws reveals that the Israelite God has the most restrictive diet, followed by the priests, the Israelite laypersons, and finally non-Israelites. By following the dietary rules, the Israelites observe the order of creation and are separated from the other nations. Such separateness is a fundamental component of holiness (vv. 44–45). Ch 11 also looks forward to the issues of impurity and its disposal in chs 12–16, for animals deemed unsuitable for consumption are termed impure, and contact with their corpses explicitly defiles. **2b–23:** Cf. Deut 14.3–21. It is likely that a common source stands behind these two texts. **2b–8:** Permitted large land animals must have split hooves and chew their cud. The examples of prohibited animals suggests that undomesticated animals are the main focus of this chapter (see 1.2n.; 17.1–16n.). **5–6:** Contrary to these verses' claims, the *rock badger* and *hare* do not have multichambered stomachs and thus are not ruminants. It is likely that the mouth movements typical of these animals led to the claim that they chewed cud. **9–12:** Permitted water creatures must have fins and scales. **13–19:** Rather than providing dual characteristics, as with large land animals and sea creatures, a list of prohibited birds is provided. **20–23:** Winged insects are generally forbidden. The only exceptions are those with jumping legs, which are specifically enumerated. **24–40:** Laws concerning impurity contracted through contact with animal corpses. Generally speaking, more intense contact (e.g., carrying or eating vs. touching) requires more complex purifica-

carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; they are unclean for you.

29 These are unclean for you among the creatures that swarm upon the earth: the weasel, the mouse, the great lizard according to its kind, 30 the gecko, the land crocodile, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. 31 These are unclean for you among all that swarm; whoever touches one of them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. 32 And anything upon which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether an article of wood or cloth or skin or sacking, any article that is used for any purpose; it shall be dipped into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening, and then it shall be clean. 33 And if any of them falls into any earthen vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break the vessel. 34 Any food that could be eaten shall be unclean if water from any such vessel comes upon it; and any liquid that could be drunk shall be unclean if it was in any such vessel. 35 Everything on which any part of the carcass falls shall be unclean; whether an oven or stove, it shall be broken in pieces; they are unclean, and shall remain unclean for you. 36 But a spring or a cistern holding water shall be clean, while whatever touches the carcass in it shall be unclean. 37 If any part of their carcass falls upon any seed set aside for sowing, it is clean; 38 but if water is put on the seed and any part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.

39 If an animal of which you may eat dies, anyone who touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening. 40 Those who eat of its carcass shall wash their clothes and be unclean until the evening; and those who carry the carcass shall wash their clothes and be unclean until the evening.

41 All creatures that swarm upon the earth are detestable; they shall not be eaten. 42 Whatever moves on its belly, and whatever moves on all fours, or whatever has many feet, all the creatures that swarm upon the earth, you shall not eat; for they are detestable. 43 You shall not make yourselves detestable with any creature that swarms; you shall not defile yourselves with them, and so become unclean. 44 For I am the LORD your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming creature that moves on the earth. 45 For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy.

46 This is the law pertaining to land animal and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms upon the earth, 47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.

12 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
2 Speak to the people of Israel, saying:

If a woman conceives and bears a male child, she shall be ceremonially unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. 3 On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. 4 Her time of blood purification shall be thirty-three days; she shall not touch any holy thing, or come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are completed. 5 If she bears a female child, she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation; her time of blood purification shall be sixty-six days.

tion rites. **41–45:** Small land animals are forbidden. *Be holy, for I am holy*, see 11.1–47n., 19.2n. **43,44:** *Defile yourselves*, see 18.20n. **46–47:** A typical Priestly summary postscript. **46:** *Law*: better, "instruction" (Heb "torah").

12.1–8: Childbirth. Childbirth produces impurity because of the mother's postpartum flow of blood, which is viewed as analogous to menstruation (cf. vv. 2,5). The period of impurity differs according to the sex of the child and is divided into a shorter, major phase (seven or fourteen days) and a longer, minor phase (thirty-three or sixty-six days). In each case, the entire period of impurity is a multiple of forty, a common biblical number representing completion. **2–5:** *As at the time of her menstruation*, see 15.19–24. Because this reference anticipates ch 15, it is possible that the purity laws were once ordered differently, with ch 12 following ch 15. During the initial, major phase, the parturient can contaminate the sanctuary as well as common objects and persons through physical contact. During the subsequent, minor phase, her impurity only threatens to contaminate the sanctuary. **3:** Circumcision is unrelated to impurity or purification. It is mentioned here because it is performed on the eighth day after birth (see Gen 17.12) and thus immediately follows the initial seven-day period

6 When the days of her purification
are completed, whether for a son or for a
daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the
entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its
first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon
or a turtledove for a sin offering. 7 He shall
offer it before the LORD, and make atonement
on her behalf; then she shall be clean from
her flow of blood. This is the law for her who
bears a child, male or female. 8 If she cannot
afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves
or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and
the other for a sin offering; and the priest
shall make atonement on her behalf, and she
shall be clean.

13 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron,
saying:

2 When a person has on the skin of his
body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and
it turns into a leprous[a] disease on the skin
of his body, he shall be brought to Aaron
the priest or to one of his sons the priests.
3 The priest shall examine the disease on
the skin of his body, and if the hair in the
diseased area has turned white and the
disease appears to be deeper than the skin
of his body, it is a leprous[a] disease; after the
priest has examined him he shall pronounce
him ceremonially unclean. 4 But if the spot is
white in the skin of his body, and appears no
deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has
not turned white, the priest shall confine the
diseased person for seven days. 5 The priest
shall examine him on the seventh day, and
if he sees that the disease is checked and the
disease has not spread in the skin, then the
priest shall confine him seven days more.
6 The priest shall examine him again on the
seventh day, and if the disease has abated and
the disease has not spread in the skin, the
priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an
eruption; and he shall wash his clothes, and
be clean. 7 But if the eruption spreads in the
skin after he has shown himself to the priest
for his cleansing, he shall appear again before
the priest. 8 The priest shall make an exami-
nation, and if the eruption has spread in the
skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean;
it is a leprous[a] disease.

9 When a person contracts a leprous[a]
disease, he shall be brought to the priest.
10 The priest shall make an examination, and
if there is a white swelling in the skin that
has turned the hair white, and there is quick
raw flesh in the swelling, 11 it is a chronic
leprous[a] disease in the skin of his body. The
priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall
not confine him, for he is unclean. 12 But if
the disease breaks out in the skin, so that
it covers all the skin of the diseased person
from head to foot, so far as the priest can see,
13 then the priest shall make an examination,
and if the disease has covered all his body,

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

of impurity. **6–8:** *Sin offering*, better, "purification offering"; see 4.1–35n. The new mother has committed no sin; she must present a purification offering because her impurity polluted the altar (see 4.1–35n.). Verse 8 is an addendum that follows the original ending of the law in v. 7b, providing a more affordable sacrificial option for a poor mother. **7:** *Law*, see 11.46n.

13.1–14.57: Surface afflictions. Though consolidated under a single term (Heb "tsaraʿat") traditionally translated "leprosy," the surface afflictions described in these chapters are not modern leprosy (Hansen's disease), which was likely unknown in the ancient Near East when these texts were written. The inclusion of conditions affecting fabrics and houses alongside human disease also rules out modern leprosy, as do the symptoms of the human diseases described. The Priestly authors do not view disease in general as causing impurity; surface affliction likely causes impurity because it is associated with death (cf. Num 12.12).

13.1–46: Surface affliction on humans. Various symptoms are enumerated for determining whether a condition is surface affliction. In each case, the priest must give a ruling regarding the skin disease, differentiating between clean and unclean (cf. 10.10). The skin conditions most consistent with the various symptoms described include eczema, psoriasis, and vitiligo. **2:** *He shall be brought*, perhaps "It shall be reported." In either case, others in the community have an interest in diagnosing surface affliction not because the disease is contagious but because the impurity it produces contaminates the sanctuary. **3:** *Examine*, without touching the affected skin, for the impurity of surface affliction is communicable. *His body*, or her body: the law applies to both men and women (cf. vv. 2,29). **4:** *The priest shall confine*, in order to determine whether the skin disease

he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; since it has all turned white, he is clean. 14 But if raw flesh ever appears on him, he shall be unclean; 15 the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him unclean. Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous[a] disease. 16 But if the raw flesh again turns white, he shall come to the priest; 17 the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has turned white, the priest shall pronounce the diseased person clean. He is clean.

18 When there is on the skin of one's body a boil that has healed, 19 and in the place of the boil there appears a white swelling or a reddish-white spot, it shall be shown to the priest. 20 The priest shall make an examination, and if it appears deeper than the skin and its hair has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; this is a leprous[a] disease, broken out in the boil. 21 But if the priest examines it and the hair on it is not white, nor is it deeper than the skin but has abated, the priest shall confine him seven days. 22 If it spreads in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is diseased. 23 But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread, it is the scar of the boil; the priest shall pronounce him clean.

24 Or, when the body has a burn on the skin and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a spot, reddish-white or white, 25 the priest shall examine it. If the hair in the spot has turned white and it appears deeper than the skin, it is a leprous[a] disease; it has broken out in the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. This is a leprous[a] disease. 26 But if the priest examines it and the hair in the spot is not white, and it is no deeper than the skin but has abated, the priest shall confine him seven days. 27 The priest shall examine him the seventh day; if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. This is a leprous[a] disease. 28 But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread in the skin but has abated, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; for it is the scar of the burn.

29 When a man or woman has a disease on the head or in the beard, 30 the priest shall examine the disease. If it appears deeper than the skin and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an itch, a leprous[a] disease of the head or the beard. 31 If the priest examines the itching disease, and it appears no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, the priest shall confine the person with the itching disease for seven days. 32 On the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch; if the itch has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the itch appears to be no deeper than the skin, 33 he shall shave, but the itch he shall not shave. The priest shall confine the person with the itch for seven days more. 34 On the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch; if the itch has not spread in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes and be clean. 35 But if the itch spreads in the skin after he was pronounced clean, 36 the priest shall examine him. If the itch has spread in the skin, the priest need not seek for the yellow hair; he is unclean. 37 But if in his eyes the itch is checked, and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed, he is clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

38 When a man or a woman has spots on the skin of the body, white spots, 39 the priest shall make an examination, and if the spots on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is a rash that has broken out on the skin; he is clean.

40 If anyone loses the hair from his head, he is bald but he is clean. 41 If he loses the hair from his forehead and temples, he has baldness of the forehead but he is clean. 42 But if there is on the bald head or the bald forehead a reddish-white diseased spot, it is a leprous[a] disease breaking out on his bald head or his bald forehead. 43 The priest shall examine him; if the diseased swelling is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, which resembles a leprous[a] disease in the skin of the body, 44 he is leprous,[a] he

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

produces impurity and to limit exposure to impurity in the event that it is surface affliction. **38–44:** These verses consider difficult cases and supplement vv. 2–37 by focusing upon skin conditions that do not cause

is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; the disease is on his head.

45 The person who has the leprous[a] disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." 46 He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

47 Concerning clothing: when a leprous[a] disease appears in it, in woolen or linen cloth, 48 in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin, 49 if the disease shows greenish or reddish in the garment, whether in warp or woof or in skin or in anything made of skin, it is a leprous[a] disease and shall be shown to the priest. 50 The priest shall examine the disease, and put the diseased article aside for seven days. 51 He shall examine the disease on the seventh day. If the disease has spread in the cloth, in warp or woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, this is a spreading leprous[a] disease; it is unclean. 52 He shall burn the clothing, whether diseased in warp or woof, woolen or linen, or anything of skin, for it is a spreading leprous[a] disease; it shall be burned in fire.

53 If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has not spread in the clothing, in warp or woof or in anything of skin, 54 the priest shall command them to wash the article in which the disease appears, and he shall put it aside seven days more. 55 The priest shall examine the diseased article after it has been washed. If the diseased spot has not changed color, though the disease has not spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in fire, whether the leprous[a] spot is on the inside or on the outside.

56 If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has abated after it is washed, he shall tear the spot out of the cloth, in warp or woof, or out of skin. 57 If it appears again in the garment, in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, it is spreading; you shall burn with fire that in which the disease appears. 58 But the cloth, warp or woof, or anything of skin from which the disease disappears when you have washed it, shall then be washed a second time, and it shall be clean.

59 This is the ritual for a leprous[a] disease in a cloth of wool or linen, either in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, to decide whether it is clean or unclean.

14 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 This shall be the ritual for the leprous[a] person at the time of his cleansing:

He shall be brought to the priest; 3 the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall make an examination. If the disease is healed in the leprous[a] person, 4 the priest shall command that two living clean birds and cedarwood and crimson yarn and hyssop be brought for the one who is to be cleansed. 5 The priest shall command that one of the birds be slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel. 6 He shall take the living bird with the cedarwood and the crimson yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. 7 He shall sprinkle

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

impurity. **45–46:** The afflicted person dresses as a mourner (cf. 10.6; Ezek 24.17,22) because of the association between surface affliction and death. *He shall live alone . . . outside the camp*, cf. 2 Kings 7.3–8; 15.5; 2 Chr 26.21; Lk 17.12. Separation from the camp limits the spread of impurity, but impurity still contaminates the sanctuary (cf. 14.1–32).

13.47–59: Surface affliction on cloth. Illustrating the systematization of Priestly thought, the instructions for fabrics are similar in structure and detail to the preceding instructions for skin diseases. The surface affliction includes various forms of mold, fungus, and mildew. **51:** Unlike a person with surface affliction, an afflicted fabric, like the twice-afflicted house (14.45), cannot be cleansed. **59:** Summary postscript for vv. 47–59, which interrupts 13.1–46 and 14.1–32. *Ritual*, see 6.9n.

14.1–32: Purification after surface affliction. The ritual here does not heal surface affliction; it only purifies the already healed individual; the priest performs it only after confirming the person's recovery (v. 3). **2:** *Ritual*, see 6.9n. *He shall be brought*, better, "It shall be reported," cf. v. 3. **4–7:** The same ritual is found in vv. 49–53 for purifying houses. **4:** Many of the materials in this verse probably have symbolic significance and are well attested in biblical and other ancient Near Eastern rituals (cf. Ex 12.22; Num 19.6; Job 9.19; Ps 51.7). **6–7:** The person's

it seven times upon the one who is to be cleansed of the leprous[a] disease; then he shall pronounce him clean, and he shall let the living bird go into the open field. 8 The one who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, but shall live outside his tent seven days. 9 On the seventh day he shall shave all his hair: of head, beard, eyebrows; he shall shave all his hair. Then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean.

10 On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish, and a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, and one log[b] of oil. 11 The priest who cleanses shall set the person to be cleansed, along with these things, before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 12 The priest shall take one of the lambs, and offer it as a guilt offering, along with the log[b] of oil, and raise them as an elevation offering before the LORD. 13 He shall slaughter the lamb in the place where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered in the holy place; for the guilt offering, like the sin offering, belongs to the priest: it is most holy. 14 The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot. 15 The priest shall take some of the log[b] of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand, 16 and dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and sprinkle some oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. 17 Some of the oil that remains in his hand the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering. 18 The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed. Then the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the LORD: 19 the priest shall offer the sin offering, to make atonement for the one to be cleansed from his uncleanness. Afterward he shall slaughter the burnt offering; 20 and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall make atonement on his behalf and he shall be clean.

21 But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be elevated, to make atonement on his behalf, and one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering and a log[b] of oil; 22 also two turtledoves or two pigeons, such as he can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. 23 On the eighth day he shall bring them for his cleansing to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, before the LORD; 24 and the priest shall take the lamb of the guilt offering and the log[b] of oil, and the priest shall raise them as an elevation offering before the LORD. 25 The priest shall slaughter the lamb of the guilt offering and shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot. 26 The priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, 27 and shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before the LORD. 28 The priest shall put some of the oil that is in his hand on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

[b] A liquid measure

impurity is purged by the sprinkling of blood and transferred to the living bird, which carries it away (cf. the goat in 16.21–22). **8–9:** The staged transition constitutes a rite of passage from impure to pure and underscores the severity of impurity caused by surface affliction. **10–20:** The eighth-day sacrifices purge the tabernacle of impurity (cf. 4.1–6.7). **10:** *Ephah,* about 21 qts (23 L). *Log,* about 11 oz (.32 l). **12:** *Guilt offering*, better, "reparation offering"; see 5.14–6.7n. *Elevation offering*, see 7.30n. **14,17,25,28:** For smearing of blood and oil and the significance of the ear, thumb, and toe, see 8.10–12,30n.; 8.23–24n. **20:** *And he shall be clean*, a summary statement for the foregoing purification rituals. The sacrifices purify the tabernacle, not the person. **21–32:** More affordable provisions for purification (cf. 2.1–16n.; 5.7–13n.; 12.6–8n.).

the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot, where the blood of the guilt offering was placed. 29 The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make atonement on his behalf before the LORD. 30 And he shall offer, of the turtledoves or pigeons such as he can afford, 31 one[a] for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, along with a grain offering; and the priest shall make atonement before the LORD on behalf of the one being cleansed. 32 This is the ritual for the one who has a leprous[b] disease, who cannot afford the offerings for his cleansing.

33 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

34 When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a leprous[b] disease in a house in the land of your possession, 35 the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, "There seems to me to be some sort of disease in my house." 36 The priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the disease, or all that is in the house will become unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to inspect the house. 37 He shall examine the disease; if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface, 38 the priest shall go outside to the door of the house and shut up the house seven days. 39 The priest shall come again on the seventh day and make an inspection; if the disease has spread in the walls of the house, 40 the priest shall command that the stones in which the disease appears be taken out and thrown into an unclean place outside the city. 41 He shall have the inside of the house scraped thoroughly, and the plaster that is scraped off shall be dumped in an unclean place outside the city. 42 They shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and take other plaster and plaster the house.

43 If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, 44 the priest shall go and make inspection; if the disease has spread in the house, it is a spreading leprous[b] disease in the house; it is unclean. 45 He shall have the house torn down, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and taken outside the city to an unclean place. 46 All who enter the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening; 47 and all who sleep in the house shall wash their clothes; and all who eat in the house shall wash their clothes.

48 If the priest comes and makes an inspection, and the disease has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, the priest shall pronounce the house clean; the disease is healed. 49 For the cleansing of the house he shall take two birds, with cedarwood and crimson yarn and hyssop, 50 and shall slaughter one of the birds over fresh water in an earthen vessel, 51 and shall take the cedarwood and the hyssop and the crimson yarn, along with the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. 52 Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the fresh water, and with the living bird, and with the cedarwood and hyssop and crimson yarn; 53 and he shall let the living bird go out of the city into the open field; so he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *afford,* [31] *such as he can afford, one*

[b] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

14.33–53: Surface affliction in houses. 34: *When you come into the land:* In the narrative, the Israelites are living in the wilderness camp; they therefore do not currently live in houses. *I put*, in non-Priestly texts, surface affliction is viewed as divine punishment (Num 12.10; Deut 28.27,35; 2 Sam 3.29; 2 Kings 5.26–27; 2 Chr 26.16–21); however, in the Priestly view, all natural occurrences ultimately stem from the deity's command. P thus attributes outbreaks of surface affliction to God even when they are not divine punishments. **35:** *The owner*, though it is potentially inconvenient and even a potentially significant financial loss (cf. vv. 43–45), the homeowner is expected to report possible surface affliction because of the threat of contamination and its effect on the entire community. **36:** The impurity caused by surface affliction will contaminate other objects and persons in the house (cf. vv. 46–47), but an allowance is made for removing objects before the priest officially diagnoses surface affliction. **40–41,45:** Disposal outside the city parallels the exclusion of surface-afflicted persons outside the camp (13.46). **46–47:** See

54 This is the ritual for any leprous[a] disease: for an itch, 55 for leprous[a] diseases in clothing and houses, 56 and for a swelling or an eruption or a spot, 57 to determine when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the ritual for leprous[a] diseases.

15 The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them:

When any man has a discharge from his member,[b] his discharge makes him ceremonially unclean. 3 The uncleanness of his discharge is this: whether his member[b] flows with his discharge, or his member[b] is stopped from discharging, it is uncleanness for him. 4 Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean; and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. 5 Anyone who touches his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 6 All who sit on anything on which the one with the discharge has sat shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 7 All who touch the body of the one with the discharge shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 8 If the one with the discharge spits on persons who are clean, then they shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 9 Any saddle on which the one with the discharge rides shall be unclean. 10 All who touch anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening, and all who carry such a thing shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 11 All those whom the one with the discharge touches without his having rinsed his hands in water shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 12 Any earthen vessel that the one with the discharge touches shall be broken; and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.

13 When the one with a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, he shall count seven days for his cleansing; he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in fresh water, and he shall be clean. 14 On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the Lord to the entrance of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. 15 The priest shall offer them, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the Lord for his discharge.

16 If a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water, and be unclean until the evening. 17 Everything made of cloth or of skin on which the semen falls shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the evening. 18 If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening.

19 When a woman has a discharge of blood that is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. 20 Everything upon which

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

[b] Heb *flesh*

11.24–40n. **54–57:** A typical Priestly conclusion formula for chs 13–14, though the items in the summary are ordered differently in the chapters. **15.1–33: Sexual discharges.** This chapter outlines impurities caused by regular and irregular discharges from the genitals. As with other causes of contamination, sexual flows generate impurity because of the perceived loss of life that accompanies them. The chapter exhibits a chiastic structure of impurity sources: **A:** Abnormal male discharge (vv. 2–15); **B:** Normal male discharge (seminal emission; vv. 16–17); C: Seminal discharge during sexual intercourse, affecting both men and women (v. 18); **B':** Normal female discharge (menstruation; vv. 19–24); **A':** Abnormal female discharge (vv. 25–30). None of these sexual discharges is considered sinful; rather, the contamination caused by them threatens the presence of the deity and thus requires careful measures for containment and purification (cf. 11.1–16.34n.). **3:** *Flows . . . stopped*, likely due to one of several infections of the urethra, including gonorrhea. **4–12:** Impurity is contagious through physical contact with the impure person or objects contaminated by him. **13–15:** See 14.8–9n.; 14.10–20n. *Sin offering*, better, "purification offering." **18:** Normal sexual relations cause impurity, yet according to the Priestly authors, God commands humans to "be fruitful and multiply" (e.g., Gen 1.28; 9.1,7). In P, sources of impurity are generally unrelated to sin. **19–24:** Menstrual impurity persists for seven days, presumably approximating the longest duration of regular menstruation.

she lies during her impurity shall be unclean; everything also upon which she sits shall be unclean. 21 Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 22 Whoever touches anything upon which she sits shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening; 23 whether it is the bed or anything upon which she sits, when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. 24 If any man lies with her, and her impurity falls on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

25 If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. 26 Every bed on which she lies during all the days of her discharge shall be treated as the bed of her impurity; and everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her impurity. 27 Whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 28 If she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count seven days, and after that she shall be clean. 29 On the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 30 The priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf before the LORD for her unclean discharge.

31 Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, so that they do not die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.

32 This is the ritual for those who have a discharge: for him who has an emission of semen, becoming unclean thereby, 33 for her who is in the infirmity of her period, for anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and for the man who lies with a woman who is unclean.

16 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when

The strength of the impurity communicated by the menstruant is related to the intensity of contact with her (cf. 11.24–40n.). No rules for purification are given; presumably the woman bathes and launders on the seventh day, and waits until evening (2 Sam 11.2,4; cf. Num 19.19). The requirement to bathe in a ritual bath (Heb "mikveh") is a later institution. Although many such structures have been uncovered in late Second Temple period sites, none has been uncovered from earlier periods. **24:** *If any man lies with her, and her impurity falls on him*, better, "If any man lies with her, with the result that her impurity falls on him." Although it communicates impurity, intercourse with a menstruant is permitted by P (contrast 18.19 and 20.18, which are H). **25–30:** Irregular female blood flow, like irregular male discharge, produces impurity until the flow stops and requires a seven-day waiting period and sacrificial blood for sanctuary purification (cf. vv. 13–15). **31:** The rationale for proper disposal of impurity: impurity is attracted to the sanctuary, where it will accumulate and threaten the divine presence (cf. 4.1–6.7n.; 11.1–16.34n.). **32–33:** A typical Priestly summary postscript (cf. 7.37–38; 11.46–47; 13.59; 14.54–57). **32:** *Ritual*, see 6.9n.

16.1–34: The day of purgations. This chapter describes the annual purification of the entire tabernacle complex, including the purgation of the inner sanctum of the deity, the holy of holies. According to v. 29, this occurs on the tenth day of the seventh month, which in 23.26–32; 25.9 is called "the day of purgations" (Heb "yom hakippurim"),and in later Judaism "Yom Kippur" (often mistranslated as the Day of Atonement). Though the sanctuary complex is regularly purged by the blood of purification offerings, further purification ensures thorough cleansing. Moreover, routine purification does not purge the contamination of intentional sins, which penetrates all the way into the holy of holies and is therefore especially offensive to the deity (cf. 4.1–35n.). This system creates the remarkable circumstance that the holy of holies, purged only once each year, could become the most polluted area in the tabernacle complex. This potential flaw in the Priestly system of purification reveals the fundamental optimism of its authors: in their view, once Israel knows the commandments of God, they will carefully obey them. Intentional sin is expected to be a rare occurrence; unintentional sin and impurities, by contrast, are unavoidable and thus greater concerns. **1:** *After the death of the two sons of Aaron:* Some interpreters have argued that ch 16 originally followed ch 10 and that its purification ritual was intended to purge the tabernacle of corpse contamination after the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, and after other emergencies, rather than once a year on Yom Kippur. Alternatively, this reference simply situates ch 16 in the chronology of

they drew near before the LORD and died.
2 The LORD said to Moses:

Tell your brother Aaron not to come just at any time into the sanctuary inside the curtain before the mercy seat[a] that is upon the ark, or he will die; for I appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.[a] 3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and shall have the linen undergarments next to his body, fasten the linen sash, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy vestments. He shall bathe his body in water, and then put them on. 5 He shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

6 Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. 7 He shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting; 8 and Aaron shall cast lots on the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel.[b] 9 Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD, and offer it as a sin offering; 10 but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel[b] shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.[b]

11 Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house; he shall slaughter the bull as a sin offering for himself. 12 He shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of crushed sweet incense, and he shall bring it inside the curtain 13 and put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat[a] that is upon the covenant,[c] or he will die. 14 He shall take some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat,[a] and before the mercy seat[a] he shall sprinkle the blood with his finger seven times.

15 He shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the curtain, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it upon the mercy seat[a] and before the mercy seat.[a] 16 Thus he shall make atonement for the sanctuary, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which remains with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. 17 No one shall be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the sanctuary until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel. 18 Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement on its behalf, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, and put it on each of the horns of the altar. 19 He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.

[a] Or *the cover*
[b] Traditionally rendered *a scapegoat*
[c] Or *treaty*, or *testament*; Heb *eduth*

the overall narrative, perhaps indicating that chs 11–15 were not actually narrated immediately after the events of ch 10 (cf. 16.34b n.). **2:** *Mercy seat*, the cover of the ark upon which the cherubim are set (cf. Ex 25.17–22). **3:** See 4.3. *Sin offering*, better, "purification offering"; see. 4.1–35n. **4:** See 8.6–9. **6–22:** Aaron applies the sacrificial blood to the sanctuary and its furnishings, effecting their purification. In later Judaism, after the Temple is destroyed, the focus of Yom Kippur shifts to the repentance and forgiveness of individuals, a minor element in this chapter (see v. 30). **7:** *Tent of meeting*, see 1.1n. **8:** *Azazel*, probably, "angry" or "fierce god," a demonic figure (cf. 17.7), in contrast to the Israelite deity. Rabbinic interpreters understood *Azazel* as "the goat that goes away," i.e., "the scapegoat." **13:** When he enters the holy of holies, Aaron must burn incense to conceal the deity from his sight (cf. v. 2). **15:** The blood of the first goat serves as a detergent to release any sins that have accumulated in the holy of holies. This procedure then allows Aaron to load those sins onto the other goat (v. 21). **16:** The beginning of the verse is better translated, "He shall purify the sanctuary from the Israelites' impurities and, of all their sins, from their rebellious acts." Impurity and intentional sins are hereby both purged from the inner sanctum. *And so he shall do for the tent of meeting*, referring to the cleansing of the outer room of the tabernacle (cf. 4.5–7,16–18; Ex 30.10). *Remains*, better, "dwells." **18–19:** Working out from the inner and outer rooms of the

20 When he has finished atoning for the
holy place and the tent of meeting and the
altar, he shall present the live goat. 21 Then
Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of
the live goat, and confess over it all the iniqui-
ties of the people of Israel, and all their trans-
gressions, all their sins, putting them on the
head of the goat, and sending it away into the
wilderness by means of someone designated
for the task.[a] 22 The goat shall bear on itself
all their iniquities to a barren region; and the
goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

23 Then Aaron shall enter the tent of meet-
ing, and shall take off the linen vestments
that he put on when he went into the holy
place, and shall leave them there. 24 He shall
bathe his body in water in a holy place, and
put on his vestments; then he shall come out
and offer his burnt offering and the burnt
offering of the people, making atonement for
himself and for the people. 25 The fat of the sin
offering he shall turn into smoke on the altar.
26 The one who sets the goat free for Azazel[b]
shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in
water, and afterward may come into the camp.
27 The bull of the sin offering and the goat of
the sin offering, whose blood was brought in
to make atonement in the holy place, shall be
taken outside the camp; their skin and their
flesh and their dung shall be consumed in
fire. 28 The one who burns them shall wash
his clothes and bathe his body in water, and
afterward may come into the camp.

29 This shall be a statute to you forever: In
the seventh month, on the tenth day of the
month, you shall deny yourselves,[c] and shall
do no work, neither the citizen nor the alien
who resides among you. 30 For on this day
atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse
you; from all your sins you shall be clean
before the LORD. 31 It is a sabbath of complete
rest to you, and you shall deny yourselves;[c]
it is a statute forever. 32 The priest who is
anointed and consecrated as priest in his
father's place shall make atonement, wear-
ing the linen vestments, the holy vestments.
33 He shall make atonement for the sanctuary,
and he shall make atonement for the tent of
meeting and for the altar, and he shall make
atonement for the priests and for all the
people of the assembly. 34 This shall be an
everlasting statute for you, to make atone-
ment for the people of Israel once in the year
for all their sins. And Moses did as the LORD
had commanded him.

17 The LORD spoke to Moses:
2 Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all
the people of Israel and say to them: This is

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Traditionally rendered *a scapegoat*
[c] Or *shall fast*

tabernacle, Aaron is to purify the altar of burnt offerings in the courtyard. **21–22:** The second goat carries away the intentional sins released from the sanctuary through the application of blood. Aaron loads these sins onto the goat by reciting them while placing *both his hands* on its head (contrast 1.4). *Wilderness*, a region viewed in the ancient Near East as the domain of demons. **29–34a:** An H addition to vv. 1–28,34b, which are P. H expands the ritual to include fasting and work cessation and thereby provides the laity a role in the day of purgations. **31:** *Sabbath of complete rest*, emphasizing the requirement for a complete cessation of work. This term is also applied to the sabbath day (Ex 31.15; 35.2; Lev 23.3,32) and to the sabbath year (Lev 25.4). **34b:** Moses delivers the divine commands to Aaron (cf. v. 2), but Aaron does not perform them immediately because the day of purgations is six months away (see Introduction).

17.1–26.46: The Holiness Collection. Most scholars agree that chs 17–26 (H) comprise a compositional stratum in the book of Leviticus separate from chs 1–16 (P). Chs 17–26 are especially concerned with holiness and extend the potential for holiness beyond the priests to the Israelite laity. For this reason, chs 17–26 are titled the Holiness Collection, abbreviated as H (see Introduction). Many scholars call this unit the Holiness Code, but like other ancient Near Eastern law collections, it is not a code: it has redundancies and contradictions (e.g., doubled laws in chs 18 and 20), is not organized for use by judges, and is not complete. Though previously believed to be older than chs 1–16, it is now clear that chs 17–26, as well as ch 27, are later additions to the preceding chapters meant to revise and supplement them. It is likely that H supplements P in part by borrowing and revising non-Priestly laws from the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy.

17.1–16: Slaughter. In light of the sacrificial laws in chs 1–7, H here provides a new set of regulations concerning eating meat. Most notably, H requires that the Israelites present as offerings at the sanctuary

what the LORD has commanded. 3 If anyone of the house of Israel slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or slaughters it outside the camp, 4 and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to present it as an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, he shall be held guilty of bloodshed; he has shed blood, and he shall be cut off from the people. 5 This is in order that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices that they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD, to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and offer them as sacrifices of well-being to the LORD. 6 The priest shall dash the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and turn the fat into smoke as a pleasing odor to the LORD, 7 so that they may no longer offer their sacrifices for goat-demons, to whom they prostitute themselves. This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations.

8 And say to them further: Anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, 9 and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to sacrifice it to the LORD, shall be cut off from the people.

10 If anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut that person off from the people. 11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement. 12 Therefore I have said to the people of Israel: No person among you shall eat blood, nor shall any alien who resides among you eat blood. 13 And anyone of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside among them, who hunts down an animal or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.

14 For the life of every creature—its blood is its life; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off. 15 All persons, citizens or aliens, who eat what dies of itself or what has been torn by wild animals, shall wash their clothes, and bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the evening; then they shall be clean. 16 But if they do not wash themselves or bathe their body, they shall bear their guilt.

all sacrificeable animals that are slaughtered (vv. 3–7). This command supplements the P rules in Gen 9.3–4, which permit nonsacrificial slaughter of animals for meat, provided that no blood is consumed. Having now received the sacrificial laws, Israel is obligated to treat every slaughter of a domesticated animal as a sacrifice. The Priestly source thus divides culinary history into three epochs: (1) Creation to Flood (vegetarianism, Gen 1.29–31); (2) Post-Flood to Sinai (nonsacrificial slaughter, Gen 9.3–4); (3) After Sinai (sacrificial slaughter of all domesticated animals, Lev 1–7; 17.3–7). Lev 17 contrasts markedly with Deut 12.15–27, which expressly permit profane slaughter of sacrificeable animals. **3–4:** All slaughtered sacrificeable animals must be presented as offerings. In the Priestly system, such sacrifices, intended to provide meat for eating, are well-being offerings (cf. 3.1–17; 7.11–34). Within its wilderness setting, H envisions a single sanctuary, making adherence to this command possible. **4:** Nonsacrificial slaughter is tantamount to murder (cf. 1.4; 17.11), a view that enforces sanctuary slaughter. **5,7:** With the introduction of sacrifice, what was once nonsacrificial slaughter is perceived as sacrificial. Any slaughter of sacrificeable animals outside of the sanctuary is viewed as sacrifice to other deities or to demons. Prostitution is a frequent metaphor for worshiping other gods. *Goat demons*, cf. 16.8n.; 2 Chr 11.15; Isa 13.21; 34.14. **8–9:** Foreigners residing among the Israelites presumably may slaughter domesticated animals nonsacrificially, but neither Israelites nor foreigners may offer sacrifices to any deity but the LORD. **10–14:** Consumption of blood from both wild and domesticated animals is prohibited (cf. Gen 9.4; Lev 3.17; Deut 12.23–25). Once the blood is drained, the meat may be eaten. **11:** *For making atonement for your lives*, better, "as a ransom for your lives." According to H, sacrificial blood not only purifies the altar but also ransoms (Heb "kipper") the offerer who shed the animal's blood (cf. 1.4; 17.4). Compare the payment of a ransom in Ex 30.11–16 and Num 31.48–50 to appease divine wrath. **15–16:** Laypersons (but not priests; cf. 22.8) may eat an animal that died naturally or was killed by other animals, but they must purify afterwards (cf. 11.40; contrast Ex 22.31; Deut 14.21). Later Judaism prohibits such eating, following Deut 14.21.

18 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
2 Speak to the people of Israel and say
to them: I am the Lord your God. 3 You shall
not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where
you lived, and you shall not do as they do in
the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing
you. You shall not follow their statutes. 4 My
ordinances you shall observe and my statutes
you shall keep, following them: I am the Lord
your God. 5 You shall keep my statutes and my
ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I am
the Lord.

6 None of you shall approach anyone near
of kin to uncover nakedness: I am the Lord.
7 You shall not uncover the nakedness of
your father, which is the nakedness of your
mother; she is your mother, you shall not
uncover her nakedness. 8 You shall not un-
cover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is
the nakedness of your father. 9 You shall not
uncover the nakedness of your sister, your
father's daughter or your mother's daughter,
whether born at home or born abroad. 10 You
shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's
daughter or of your daughter's daughter, for
their nakedness is your own nakedness. 11 You
shall not uncover the nakedness of your
father's wife's daughter, begotten by your
father, since she is your sister. 12 You shall not
uncover the nakedness of your father's sister;
she is your father's flesh. 13 You shall not un-
cover the nakedness of your mother's sister,
for she is your mother's flesh. 14 You shall
not uncover the nakedness of your father's
brother, that is, you shall not approach his
wife; she is your aunt. 15 You shall not uncover
the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she
is your son's wife; you shall not uncover
her nakedness. 16 You shall not uncover the
nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your
brother's nakedness. 17 You shall not uncover
the nakedness of a woman and her daughter,
and you shall not take[a] her son's daughter or
her daughter's daughter to uncover her na-
kedness; they are your[b] flesh; it is depravity.
18 And you shall not take[a] a woman as a rival
to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while
her sister is still alive.

19 You shall not approach a woman to
uncover her nakedness while she is in her
menstrual uncleanness. 20 You shall not have
sexual relations with your kinsman's wife,
and defile yourself with her. 21 You shall not
give any of your offspring to sacrifice them[c]
to Molech, and so profane the name of your
God: I am the Lord. 22 You shall not lie with a
male as with a woman; it is an abomination.
23 You shall not have sexual relations with any
animal and defile yourself with it, nor shall
any woman give herself to an animal to have
sexual relations with it: it is perversion.

24 Do not defile yourselves in any of these
ways, for by all these practices the nations
I am casting out before you have defiled

[a] Or *marry*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *your*
[c] Heb *to pass them over*

18.1–30: Foreign abominations. The prohibitions in this chapter are primarily sexual in nature, though child sacrifice to Molech is also included. These sins are associated with foreigners and especially the Canaanites, whom God will remove from their land so that Israel may dwell in it. There is no evidence that the Canaanites actually engaged in these practices. **1–5:** A general prohibition against following the statutes of the Egyptians and Canaanites, and adjuration instead to obey the Lord's commands, which follow in vv. 6–23. **2,4:** *I am the Lord your God*, a characteristic H expression, underscoring that because the Israelites belong to the Lord, they must be holy, namely, distinct from other nations and follow the rules of their god alone. **6–20,22–23:** Sexual prohibitions, with special focus on various forms of incest. 20.10–21 prescribes the punishments for sexual sins; cf. Deut 27.20–23. **6:** *Uncover nakedness:* nakedness is a euphemism for the genitals, and the entire phrase refers to intercourse. **17:** *Depravity*, a term of opprobrium employed by H for sexual sins. **19:** Contrast 15.24, which allows intercourse with a menstruant. **20:** *Defile yourself*, referring to moral impurity, which is prohibited by H. Ritual impurity, by contrast, is permitted (cf. 15.18n.). **21:** *Molech*, a Canaanite deity associated with child sacrifice; see 20.2–5; 2 Kings 23.10; Jer 32.35. *Profane the name*, to deny the Israelite God the honor and fame due him or to dishonor him directly. It also seems to connote diminishing the deity's holiness. **22:** Among the biblical legal corpora, only H contains a prohibition against same-sex intercourse. The prohibition may be due to its nonreproductive nature. **24–30:** God avenged the land for the defilement caused by its inhabitants, whom the land in turn expelled. Such will be the fate of the Israelites if they too commit the sins prohibited in vv. 6–23.

themselves. 25 Thus the land became defiled; and I punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. 26 But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and commit none of these abominations, either the citizen or the alien who resides among you 27 (for the inhabitants of the land, who were before you, committed all of these abominations, and the land became defiled); 28 otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. 29 For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people. 30 So keep my charge not to commit any of these abominations that were done before you, and not to defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God.

19 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. 3 You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. 4 Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves: I am the LORD your God.

5 When you offer a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD, offer it in such a way that it is acceptable in your behalf. 6 It shall be eaten on the same day you offer it, or on the next day; and anything left over until the third day shall be consumed in fire. 7 If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination; it will not be acceptable. 8 All who eat it shall be subject to punishment, because they have profaned what is holy to the LORD; and any such person shall be cut off from the people.

9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God.

11 You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. 12 And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD.

13 You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. 14 You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

15 You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. 16 You shall not go around as a slanderer[a] among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood[b] of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *stand against the blood*

Punishment for prohibited moral impurity is often exile or other destruction (Isa 64.4–11; Ezek 20.38; 22.2–16; 39.23–24; cf. Lev 26.33–39). **25:** For crimes and sins polluting the land, see Num 35.33–34; Isa 24.5–7; Ezek 22.24; Ezra 9.11. **29:** *Cut off*, see 7.19–21n.

19.1–37: Holiness of Israelite laypersons. This chapter is a miscellany of ethical and ritual laws introduced by the command for all Israelites to be holy (v. 2), an imperative fulfilled through careful observance of all the statutes presented by the Priestly authors. **2:** Lay holiness expresses the separateness of Israel from the other peoples (cf. vv. 36–37; 25.38,55): Israelites worship the LORD and express their fidelity through obedience to the LORD's commands (cf. 11.44–45; 20.7–8,24–26; Num 15.40–41). Cf. Ex 19.6; Deut 14.2,21; 26.19; 28.6. **3–4,11–13:** These verses correspond closely with the Decalogue (cf. Ex 20.2–17; Deut 5.6–21). **5–8:** Cf. 7.15–18. The grammatical formulation here differs in part from 7.15–18 (here, genuine second-person plural construction; in ch 7, third-person singular). 7.15–18 is addressed to the priests alone (6.24) while this chapter is addressed to the Israelite laity (v. 2). V. 8 also clarifies the nature of the penalty for one who eats the well-being offering on the third day: as in the case of consuming the sacrifice in an impure state, eating on the third day leads to complete destruction of the offender's lineage (cf. 7.19–21). **9–10:** Cf. Ex 23.10–11; Lev 23.22; 25.2–7; Deut 24.19–22; Ruth 2.1–10. **15:** Cf. Ex 23.2–3; Deut 1.17; 16.18–20. **17–18:** For attitudes and actions toward foreigners, see 17.8–9; 19.33–34; 25.39–46. **18b:** This verse, along with Deut 6.5, is quoted in Mt 22.37–40 (cf. Mk 12.28–33; Lk 10.27;

any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

19 You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your animals breed with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall you put on a garment made of two different materials.

20 If a man has sexual relations with a woman who is a slave, designated for another man but not ransomed or given her freedom, an inquiry shall be held. They shall not be put to death, since she has not been freed; 21 but he shall bring a guilt offering for himself to the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, a ram as guilt offering. 22 And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of guilt offering before the LORD for his sin that he committed; and the sin he committed shall be forgiven him.

23 When you come into the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall regard their fruit as forbidden;[a] three years it shall be forbidden[b] to you, it must not be eaten. 24 In the fourth year all their fruit shall be set apart for rejoicing in the LORD. 25 But in the fifth year you may eat of their fruit, that their yield may be increased for you: I am the LORD your God.

26 You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice augury or witchcraft. 27 You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard. 28 You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the LORD.

29 Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, that the land not become prostituted and full of depravity. 30 You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

31 Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

32 You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old; and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

33 When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. 34 The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

35 You shall not cheat in measuring length, weight, or quantity. 36 You shall have honest balances, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. 37 You shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and observe them: I am the LORD.

20 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Say further to the people of Israel:

Any of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death. 3 I myself will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people, because they have given of their offspring to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name. 4 And if the people of the land should

[a] Heb *as their uncircumcision*
[b] Heb *uncircumcision*

Rom 13.9; Gal 5.14). The neighbor here is a fellow Israelite (cf. vv. 17,34). **19:** One reason mixtures are prohibited is to remind the people to keep themselves distinct, i.e., holy (cf. Deut 22.9–11). The mixture of wool and linen is reserved for the priestly vestments (Ex 28.6; 39.29) and possibly for fringes to be worn by lay Israelites (Num 15.37–41). **20–22:** Contrast the case of the free, betrothed woman in 20.10; cf. Ex 22.16–17; Deut 22.23–27. **23:** *You shall regard its fruit as forbidden*, lit., "You shall treat as foreskin its foreskin with its fruit." The metaphor of circumcision is applied to fruit, with the likely meaning that in the first *three years*, the bud (i.e., the foreskin) is to be plucked with the fruit still inside. *Forbidden*, lit., "uncircumcised." **25:** Cf. *Laws of Hammurabi* §60, which suggests a five-year maturation for date orchards. **26:** *Blood*, cf. 3.17n.; 17.10–14n. For prohibitions against various forms of divination, see also v. 31; Ex 22.18; Deut 18.9–14. **27–28:** Cf. 21.5n. **29:** Combination of literal and metaphorical meanings of prostitution. **34:** Cf. v. 18; Ex 22.21; Deut 10.19; 24.17–18. **35–36:** Cf. Deut 25.13–16; Am 8.5; Mic 6.11. *Ephah*, a dry measure equivalent to ca. 21 qts (23 L); *hin*, a liquid measure equivalent to ca. 1 gal (3.8 L).

20.1–27: Various prohibitions. Some of the laws in chs 18–19 are repeated here, although many are in a different legal form: some of the absolute prohibitions (apodictic laws) of ch 18 are here formulated as legal cases (casuistic laws) with stated penalties. Other laws are also added. The significant overlap between the two chapters suggests that they are independent reflections of a common tradition subsequently compiled by H. **2:** *Molech*,

ever close their eyes to them, when they give of their offspring to Molech, and do not put them to death, [5] I myself will set my face against them and against their family, and will cut them off from among their people, them and all who follow them in prostituting themselves to Molech.

[6] If any turn to mediums and wizards, prostituting themselves to them, I will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people. [7] Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am the LORD your God. [8] Keep my statutes, and observe them; I am the LORD; I sanctify you. [9] All who curse father or mother shall be put to death; having cursed father or mother, their blood is upon them.

[10] If a man commits adultery with the wife of [a] his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death. [11] The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall be put to death; their blood is upon them. [12] If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed perversion, their blood is upon them. [13] If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them. [14] If a man takes a wife and her mother also, it is depravity; they shall be burned to death, both he and they, that there may be no depravity among you. [15] If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he shall be put to death; and you shall kill the animal. [16] If a woman approaches any animal and has sexual relations with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them.

[17] If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace, and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people; he has uncovered his sister's nakedness, he shall be subject to punishment. [18] If a man lies with a woman having her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow and she has laid bare her flow of blood; both of them shall be cut off from their people. [19] You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for that is to lay bare one's own flesh; they shall be subject to punishment. [20] If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they shall be subject to punishment; they shall die childless. [21] If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.

[22] You shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and observe them, so that the land to which I bring you to settle in may not vomit you out. [23] You shall not follow the practices of the nation that I am driving out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. [24] But I have said to you: You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am the LORD your God; I have separated you from the peoples. [25] You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you shall not bring abomination on yourselves by animal or by bird or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. [26] You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine.

[27] A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them.

[a] Heb repeats *if a man commits adultery with the wife of*

see 18.21n. **5:** *Cut them off*, see 7.19–21n. **5–6:** *Prostituting*, cf. 17.5,7n. **6:** See v. 27; 19.26n. **7–8:** *Consecrate yourselves*, i.e., separate from foreign worship practices by following the LORD's commands (cf. vv. 24–26). **9:** Cf. Ex 21.17. **10–21:** Cf. 18.6–20,22–23. **18:** *Sickness*, i.e., her menstrual period (cf. 15.33). Contrast 15.24. **20–21:** *Die childless*, perhaps a variant of the "cut off" formula (cf. 7.19–21n.). **22–26:** A concluding exhortation similar to 18.24–30; cf. 20.7–8n. **24:** *Milk and honey*, a typical biblical description of the land of Canaan (e.g., Ex 3.8; Deut 6.3). **26:** This verse makes clear that *holy* means "separated" for God. **27:** Because it follows the concluding paragraph, this verse is likely a later insertion; cf. v. 6; 19.31.

21 The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them:

No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his relatives, [2] except for his nearest kin: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother; [3] likewise, for a virgin sister, close to him because she has had no husband, he may defile himself for her. [4] But he shall not defile himself as a husband among his people and so profane himself. [5] They shall not make bald spots upon their heads, or shave off the edges of their beards, or make any gashes in their flesh. [6] They shall be holy to their God, and not profane the name of their God; for they offer the LORD's offerings by fire, the food of their God; therefore they shall be holy. [7] They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled; neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband. For they are holy to their God, [8] and you shall treat them as holy, since they offer the food of your God; they shall be holy to you, for I the LORD, I who sanctify you, am holy. [9] When the daughter of a priest profanes herself through prostitution, she profanes her father; she shall be burned to death.

[10] The priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been consecrated to wear the vestments, shall not dishevel his hair, nor tear his vestments. [11] He shall not go where there is a dead body; he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother. [12] He shall not go outside the sanctuary and thus profane the sanctuary of his God; for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD. [13] He shall marry only a woman who is a virgin. [14] A widow, or a divorced woman, or a woman who has been defiled, a prostitute, these he shall not marry. He shall marry a virgin of his own kin, [15] that he may not profane his offspring among his kin; for I am the LORD; I sanctify him.

[16] The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [17] Speak to Aaron and say: No one of your offspring throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the food of his God. [18] For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, one who is blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long, [19] or one who has a broken foot or a broken hand, [20] or a hunchback, or a dwarf, or a man with a blemish in his eyes or an itching disease or scabs or crushed testicles. [21] No descendant of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the LORD's offerings by fire; since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God. [22] He may eat the food of his God, of the most holy as well as of the holy. [23] But he shall not come near the curtain or approach the altar, because he has a blemish, that he may not profane my sanctuaries; for I am the LORD; I sanctify them. [24] Thus Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the people of Israel.

21.1–22.33: Priestly restrictions and sacrificial rules. These chapters are directed primarily to the priests (21.1,17; 22.2; cf. 21.24; 22.18) and are especially concerned with maintaining their ritual holiness, which was granted to them through ordination (ch 8), as well as the holiness of the sacrifices. These laws supplement the earlier P laws on the priesthood, treating several topics not treated in P.

21.1–15: Because of their regular contact with the sanctuary, priests must avoid impurities otherwise tolerated for lay Israelites. The high priest must observe greater restrictions (vv. 10–15) because of his closer contact with the sacred. **1:** *Defile himself*, through corpse contamination (cf. 10.4–7n.; Num 19). **4:** *As a husband among his people,* meaning of Heb uncertain. **5:** Apparently mourning rituals, also prohibited to nonpriests (19.27–28); cf. Deut 14.1–2; Isa 22.12; Jer 16.6. **6:** *Profane the name*, cf. 18.21n. *Offerings by fire*, see 1.1–3.17n. *Food of their God*, cf. 1.1–3.17n.; 1.9n. **8:** Though vv. 1b–15 are ostensibly directed to the priests and not the Israelite laity, this verse addresses all Israelites. **9:** *Prostitution* may refer more generally here to extramarital sexual relations. *Burned to death,* cf. Gen 38.24; Judg 16.6. **10–15:** Stricter regulations for the high priest. **10:** See 8.10–12,30n. **16–23:** Bodily defects disqualify priests from altar service, for they undermine the priest's wholeness, which God prefers and thus requires in those who come near him. God expresses a similar preference for unblemished sacrificial animals (22.17–25). Note, however, that defects do not render priests impure. Such priests may still eat of the offering portions designated for the priests (cf. Num 18.8–10).

22 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Direct Aaron and his sons to deal carefully with the sacred donations of the people of Israel, which they dedicate to me, so that they may not profane my holy name; I am the Lord. 3 Say to them: If anyone among all your offspring throughout your generations comes near the sacred donations, which the people of Israel dedicate to the Lord, while he is in a state of uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from my presence: I am the Lord. 4 No one of Aaron's offspring who has a leprous[a] disease or suffers a discharge may eat of the sacred donations until he is clean. Whoever touches anything made unclean by a corpse or a man who has had an emission of semen, 5 and whoever touches any swarming thing by which he may be made unclean or any human being by whom he may be made unclean—whatever his uncleanness may be— 6 the person who touches any such shall be unclean until evening and shall not eat of the sacred donations unless he has washed his body in water. 7 When the sun sets he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat of the sacred donations, for they are his food. 8 That which died or was torn by wild animals he shall not eat, becoming unclean by it: I am the Lord. 9 They shall keep my charge, so that they may not incur guilt and die in the sanctuary[b] for having profaned it: I am the Lord; I sanctify them.

10 No lay person shall eat of the sacred donations. No bound or hired servant of the priest shall eat of the sacred donations; 11 but if a priest acquires anyone by purchase, the person may eat of them; and those that are born in his house may eat of his food. 12 If a priest's daughter marries a layman, she shall not eat of the offering of the sacred donations; 13 but if a priest's daughter is widowed or divorced, without offspring, and returns to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food. No lay person shall eat of it. 14 If a man eats of the sacred donation unintentionally, he shall add one-fifth of its value to it, and give the sacred donation to the priest. 15 No one shall profane the sacred donations of the people of Israel, which they offer to the Lord, 16 causing them to bear guilt requiring a guilt offering, by eating their sacred donations: for I am the Lord; I sanctify them.

17 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 18 Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel and say to them: When anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens residing in Israel presents an offering, whether in payment of a vow or as a freewill offering that is offered to the Lord as a burnt offering, 19 to be acceptable in your behalf it shall be a male without blemish, of the cattle or the sheep or the goats. 20 You shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable in your behalf.

21 When anyone offers a sacrifice of well-being to the Lord, in fulfillment of a vow or as a freewill offering, from the herd or from the flock, to be acceptable it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it. 22 Anything blind, or injured, or maimed, or having a discharge or an itch or scabs—these you shall not offer to the Lord or put any of them on the altar as offerings by fire to the Lord. 23 An ox or a lamb that has a limb too long or too short you may present for a freewill offering; but it will not be accepted for a vow. 24 Any animal that has its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut, you shall not offer to the Lord; such you shall not do within your

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

[b] Vg: Heb *incur guilt for it and die in it*

22.1–16: Rules for avoiding defilement of offerings. Vv. 1–9 focus on priests and their impurity (cf. 11.1–16.34n.), while vv. 10–16 focus on laypersons. **2:** *Direct Aaron . . . sacred donations*, better, "Speak to Aaron and his sons so that they will keep themselves from the sacred donations," referring to times when priests who have contracted impurity are barred from eating holy offering portions (cf. 7.20–21). **7:** *For they are his food*, offering portions are the priests' primary remuneration (Num 18.8–10). **8:** Unlike laypersons (cf. 11.39–40; 17.15–16), priests are prohibited from eating such animals. **9:** Death is the assumed penalty for trespass upon the sacred (cf. 10.2; 16.2). **14–16:** Cf. 5.14–16. **17–30:** Animals not accepted as well-being offerings. **17–25:** The topic of physical defect or impurity-causing disease connects these verses to 21.16–22.9. Anything or anyone contacting the altar must be without defect; cf. Mal 1.6–14. **19–21:** *Acceptable*, better, "accepted." See 1.4n.; cf. 22.25. **23:** This

land, [25] nor shall you accept any such animals from a foreigner to offer as food to your God; since they are mutilated, with a blemish in them, they shall not be accepted in your behalf.

[26] The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [27] When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as the LORD's offering by fire. [28] But you shall not slaughter, from the herd or the flock, an animal with its young on the same day. [29] When you sacrifice a thanksgiving offering to the LORD, you shall sacrifice it so that it may be acceptable in your behalf. [30] It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall not leave any of it until morning: I am the LORD.

[31] Thus you shall keep my commandments and observe them: I am the LORD. [32] You shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel: I am the LORD; I sanctify you, [33] I who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD.

23 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2] Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: These are the appointed festivals of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations, my appointed festivals.

[3] Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work: it is a sabbath to the LORD throughout your settlements.

[4] These are the appointed festivals of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall celebrate at the time appointed for them. [5] In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight,[a] there shall be a passover offering to the LORD, [6] and on the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of unleavened bread to the LORD; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. [7] On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. [8] For seven days you shall present the LORD's offerings by fire; on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation: you shall not work at your occupations.

[9] The LORD spoke to Moses: [10] Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. [11] He shall raise the sheaf before the LORD, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall raise it. [12] On the day when you raise the sheaf, you shall offer a lamb a year old, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. [13] And the grain offering with it shall be two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, an

[a] Heb *between the two evenings*

verse asserts differentiation and hierarchical valuation among freewill offerings (cf. 7.15–16). **27:** An animal is not eligible to be sacrificed until it is deemed viable. The number seven, associated with completion, marks the period of maturation. **30:** Cf. 7.15–18; 19.5–8. **31–33:** The Israelites' adherence to the commandments brings honor to the deity and assures his presence among the people. Failure to follow the commandments profanes that aspect of the holy God that is directly accessible to the people, his "name," i.e., his reputation (cf. 19.2,37; 20.7–8,24–26).

23.1–44: Calendar of sacred occasions. Alongside Num 28–29, which focus on the offerings required for each sacred occasion, this chapter outlines the Priestly calendar of religious holidays. For non-Priestly calendars, see Ex 23.10–17; 34.18–24; Deut 16. **2:** *Convocations*, better, "occasions." **2b–3:** An interpolation that elevates the sabbath to the level of the other sacred festivals. Note the nearly identical formulation of v. 2b and v. 4, which originally followed v. 2a. The equation of sabbath and sacred festivals may have led to the prohibition of work on the festivals, which is not attested in the non-Priestly calendars. *Sabbath of complete rest*, referring to the prohibition of all work (cf. v. 28; Num 29.7; Lev 16.31n.). On other holy occasions, regular occupational work is prohibited but not light work such as food preparation (cf. Ex 12.16; Lev 23.7–8,21,25,35–36; Num 28.18,25–26; 29.1,12,35). **5–8:** The combined observance of Passover and the immediately following pilgrimage festival of unleavened bread—two separate, sequential festivals— is the first sacred occasion of the year. It coincides with the barley harvest. For further Priestly prescriptions concerning Passover and the festival of unleavened bread, see Ex 12.1–20,43–49; Num 9.1–14; 28.16–25. **5:** *First month*, March-April. **9–14:** The first-fruits offering from the barley harvest; cf. 19.23–25. **13:** *Ephah . . . hin,* see 19.35–36n.

offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. 14 You shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements.

15 And from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete. 16 You shall count until the day after the seventh sabbath, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to the LORD. 17 You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering, each made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of choice flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD. 18 You shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, one young bull, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, along with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD. 19 You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of well-being. 20 The priest shall raise them with the bread of the first fruits as an elevation offering before the LORD, together with the two lambs; they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. 21 On that same day you shall make proclamation; you shall hold a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a statute forever in all your settlements throughout your generations.

22 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the LORD your God.

23 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 24 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of complete rest, a holy convocation commemorated with trumpet blasts. 25 You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall present the LORD's offering by fire.

26 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 27 Now, the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you: you shall deny yourselves[a] and present the LORD's offering by fire; 28 and you shall do no work during that entire day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God. 29 For anyone who does not practice self-denial[b] during that entire day shall be cut off from the people. 30 And anyone who does any work during that entire day, such a one I will destroy from the midst of the people. 31 You shall do no work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements. 32 It shall be to you a sabbath of complete rest, and you shall deny yourselves;[a] on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your sabbath.

33 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 34 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of booths[c] to the LORD. 35 The first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. 36 Seven days you shall present the LORD's offerings by fire; on the eighth day you shall observe a holy convocation and present the LORD's offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations.

[a] Or *shall fast*
[b] Or *does not fast*
[c] Or *tabernacles*: Heb *succoth*

14: *Statute forever . . . all your settlements,* hallmark H language (cf. vv. 21,31,41). **15–21:** Though this observance coincides with the pilgrimage "festival of weeks" elsewhere (Ex 34.22; Deut 16.10,16; cf. Ex 23.16), H leaves it unnamed and does not require any pilgrimage for it, perhaps because the community was occupied with the wheat harvest. **22:** See 19.9–10n. **23–25:** The end of the agricultural calendar (cf. Ex 23.16). In later Jewish tradition, the agricultural calendar became preeminent, and the seventh month was taken as the beginning of the new year (Rosh Hashanah). **24:** The *trumpet blasts* (or, alternatively, "shouts") are intended to remind God of his people (cf. Num 10.10). **26–32:** Cf. ch 16. These verses correspond especially with 16.29–34a (H). **26:** *Day of atonement,* better "day of purgations"; see 16.1–34n. **33–36:** The *festival of booths,* celebrating the fruit harvest

37 These are the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you shall celebrate as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD offerings by fire—burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day— 38 apart from the sabbaths of the LORD, and apart from your gifts, and apart from all your votive offerings, and apart from all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the LORD, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. 40 On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic[a] trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. 41 You shall keep it as a festival to the LORD seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations. 42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

44 Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed festivals of the LORD.

24 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning regularly. 3 Aaron shall set it up in the tent of meeting, outside the curtain of the covenant,[b] to burn from evening to morning before the LORD regularly; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. 4 He shall set up the lamps on the lampstand of pure gold[c] before the LORD regularly.

5 You shall take choice flour, and bake twelve loaves of it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. 6 You shall place them in two rows, six in a row, on the table of pure gold.[d] 7 You shall put pure frankincense with each row, to be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to the LORD. 8 Every sabbath day Aaron shall set them in order before the LORD regularly as a commitment of the people of Israel, as a covenant forever. 9 They shall be for Aaron and his descendants, who shall eat them in a holy place, for they are most holy portions for him from the offerings by fire to the LORD, a perpetual due.

10 A man whose mother was an Israelite and whose father was an Egyptian came out

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *treaty*, or *testament*; Heb *eduth*
[c] Heb *pure lampstand*
[d] Heb *pure table*

(cf. Ex 23.16; 34.22; Deut 16.13; 1 Kings 8.65). **37–38:** An earlier conclusion to the chapter. **39–42:** Further instructions for the festival of booths. **40:** In Neh 8.14–17, these branches are used to construct booths. **43:** Only here is the festival of booths historicized. There is no mention of the Israelites living in booths in the stories of the Exodus and wilderness period. This claim may originate by analogy to the deity's wilderness tent sanctuary.

24.1–9: Ritual lamps and bread. These two regular rites (lighting lamps and displaying bread) performed by the high priest effect the perpetual worship of God in his sanctuary. As such, they are an appropriate sequel to the ritual calendar in ch 23. **1–4:** The lampstand and its maintenance; cf. Ex 27.20–21. **2:** *Lamp*, cf. Ex 25.31–40; 26.35; 27.20–21; 30.7–8; 37.17–24; 40.24–25; Num 8.1–4. **5–9:** On this bread and its table, see Ex 25.23–30; 26.35; 37.10–16; 40.22–23. **8:** This verse is better translated, "Every sabbath day in perpetuity he shall arrange it before the LORD; it is required from the Israelites until the end of time." Cf. 2.13n. **9:** The bread is not eaten by the deity, but is given to the priests as remuneration for their ritual service. It must be eaten in the sanctuary complex because of its absorption of holiness by close and prolonged proximity to the deity.

24.10–23: The case of the blasphemer and laws arising from it. The incident of the blasphemer unexpectedly interrupts the divine revelation of law, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu (cf. 9.1–10.20n.). Because no law had yet been given to address such a case of blasphemy (v. 12), God intervenes to resolve the issue and gives further legislation prompted by this case (cf. Num 9.6–14; 15.32–36; 27.1–11). It is possible that this unit once served as the conclusion to an earlier scroll of H texts. Note that the unit is closely related thematically to the foregoing H laws. Moreover, 25.1 unnecessarily locates its lawgiving at Sinai and thus may represent an originally separate composition. **10:** The incident involves a "half-Israelite" of matrilineal descent, which prompts the question of

among the people of Israel; and the Israelite woman's son and a certain Israelite began fighting in the camp. 11 The Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name in a curse. And they brought him to Moses—now his mother's name was Shelomith, daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan— 12 and they put him in custody, until the decision of the LORD should be made clear to them.

13 The LORD said to Moses, saying: 14 Take the blasphemer outside the camp; and let all who were within hearing lay their hands on his head, and let the whole congregation stone him. 15 And speak to the people of Israel, saying: Anyone who curses God shall bear the sin. 16 One who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall be put to death; the whole congregation shall stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as citizens, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death. 17 Anyone who kills a human being shall be put to death. 18 Anyone who kills an animal shall make restitution for it, life for life. 19 Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return: 20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury inflicted is the injury to be suffered. 21 One who kills an animal shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death. 22 You shall have one law for the alien and for the citizen: for I am the LORD your God. 23 Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel; and they took the blasphemer outside the camp, and stoned him to death. The people of Israel did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

25 The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: 2 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a sabbath for the LORD. 3 Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; 4 but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the LORD: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. 5 You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. 6 You may eat what the land yields during its sabbath—you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound laborers who live with you; 7 for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food.

8 You shall count off seven weeks[a] of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. 9 Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. 10 And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. 11 That fiftieth year shall be a

[a] Or *sabbaths*

his culpability. V. 16 clarifies this issue. **11:** *Blasphemed*, likely referring to uttering a curse against the LORD (cf. v. 15), not simply pronouncing his *Name* (Yahweh). The name is holy—belonging to God—but is accessible to all and thus particularly vulnerable to trespass. **14:** *Lay their hands*, ritually placing guilt upon the blasphemer (cf. 1.4n.; 16.21–22n.). **17–22:** Further laws arising from the blasphemer's case, each of which exhibits the measure-for-measure (talion) principle (cf. Ex 21.23–35; Deut 19.21). **23b:** The enactment of the divine command in v. 14.

25.1–26.2: The sabbatical and jubilee years and their social implications. This unit institutes a fixed seventh-year and fiftieth-year rest for the land that is likely based on, and extends, the seventh-year laws in Ex 23.10–11 and Deut 15.1–18. It also ties manumission of Hebrew slaves (called "hired servants") to the fiftieth year, termed the "jubilee," a feature not found in the earlier legislation. The sabbatical and jubilee years are coordinated numerically, and each is part of the larger system of social welfare legislated here. These laws are motivated by the conviction that the land and the Israelites each belong to God (vv. 23,42,55). **2–7:** In every seventh year all agricultural work must cease so that the land may observe a *sabbath of complete rest* (see 16.31n.); cf. Ex 23.10–12. **5–6:** The *aftergrowth* (i.e., the volunteer crops) of the seventh year may be eaten, but it must not be harvested for use as in the preceding six years. **8–17:** The jubilee (from Heb "yobel," meaning "ram's horn," blown to signal the holy day) is to begin on the day of purgations (see 16.1–34n.) in the fiftieth year, counted according to the sabbatical years. All agricultural work must cease, debts and indentured servants are released, and ancestral property that

jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. 12 For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces.

13 In this year of jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property. 14 When you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not cheat one another. 15 When you buy from your neighbor, you shall pay only for the number of years since the jubilee; the seller shall charge you only for the remaining crop years. 16 If the years are more, you shall increase the price, and if the years are fewer, you shall diminish the price; for it is a certain number of harvests that are being sold to you. 17 You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.

18 You shall observe my statutes and faithfully keep my ordinances, so that you may live on the land securely. 19 The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely. 20 Should you ask, "What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?" 21 I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it will yield a crop for three years. 22 When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating from the old crop; until the ninth year, when its produce comes in, you shall eat the old. 23 The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. 24 Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.

25 If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold. 26 If the person has no one to redeem it, but then prospers and finds sufficient means to do so, 27 the years since its sale shall be computed and the difference shall be refunded to the person to whom it was sold, and the property shall be returned. 28 But if there are not sufficient means to recover it, what was sold shall remain with the purchaser until the year of jubilee; in the jubilee it shall be released, and the property shall be returned.

29 If anyone sells a dwelling house in a walled city, it may be redeemed until a year has elapsed since its sale; the right of redemption shall be one year. 30 If it is not redeemed before a full year has elapsed, a house that is in a walled city shall pass in perpetuity to the purchaser, throughout the generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. 31 But houses in villages that have no walls around them shall be classed as open country; they may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the jubilee. 32 As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites shall forever have the right of redemption of the houses in the cities belonging to them. 33 Such property as may be redeemed from the Levites—houses sold in a city belonging to them—shall be released in the jubilee; because the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the people of Israel. 34 But the open land around their cities may not be sold; for that is their possession for all time.

35 If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you,[a] you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens. 36 Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you. 37 You shall not lend them your money at interest taken in advance, or provide them

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

was sold reverts to its original owners. Contrast Ex 21.2–6; Deut 15.1–3,12–18; Jer 34.8–22, where the seventh year serves some of these purposes. There is no evidence for the practice of the jubilee in the biblical period. **13–17:** Because nonancestral property cannot be held in perpetuity, land "sales" are leases calculated according to the jubilee calendar. **18–22:** God will provide a miraculous bumper crop in the sixth year so that no one will suffer by observing the sabbatical or jubilee years. The sabbatical year cycle thus should not be viewed as a mythologized land-fallowing practice, for such a practice would presume decreasing fertility across the six years of growing and thus the least robust agricultural fertility in the sixth year. **23–55:** Successively greater levels of poverty are considered: property sale and redemption (vv. 25–34); dependence upon fellow Israelites' support (loans) (vv. 35–38); "hired service" (enslavement) to a fellow Israelite (vv. 39–43; vv. 44–46 address permanent enslavement of foreigners); "hired service" (enslavement) to a resident alien (vv. 47–55). **32:** *Cities of the Levites,* see Num 35.1–8; Josh 21.1–42. This is the only mention of Levites in the book. **36–37:** Cf. Ex 22.25; Deut 23.21.

food at a profit. 38 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God.

39 If any who are dependent on you become so impoverished that they sell themselves to you, you shall not make them serve as slaves. 40 They shall remain with you as hired or bound laborers. They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. 41 Then they and their children with them shall be free from your authority; they shall go back to their own family and return to their ancestral property. 42 For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold. 43 You shall not rule over them with harshness, but shall fear your God. 44 As for the male and female slaves whom you may have, it is from the nations around you that you may acquire male and female slaves. 45 You may also acquire them from among the aliens residing with you, and from their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property. 46 You may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property. These you may treat as slaves, but as for your fellow Israelites, no one shall rule over the other with harshness.

47 If resident aliens among you prosper, and if any of your kin fall into difficulty with one of them and sell themselves to an alien, or to a branch of the alien's family, 48 after they have sold themselves they shall have the right of redemption; one of their brothers may redeem them, 49 or their uncle or their uncle's son may redeem them, or anyone of their family who is of their own flesh may redeem them; or if they prosper they may redeem themselves. 50 They shall compute with the purchaser the total from the year when they sold themselves to the alien until the jubilee year; the price of the sale shall be applied to the number of years: the time they were with the owner shall be rated as the time of a hired laborer. 51 If many years remain, they shall pay for their redemption in proportion to the purchase price; 52 and if few years remain until the jubilee year, they shall compute thus: according to the years involved they shall make payment for their redemption. 53 As a laborer hired by the year they shall be under the alien's authority, who shall not, however, rule with harshness over them in your sight. 54 And if they have not been redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children with them shall go free in the jubilee year. 55 For to me the people of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

26 You shall make for yourselves no idols and erect no carved images or pillars, and you shall not place figured stones in your land, to worship at them; for I am the LORD your God. 2 You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

3 If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully, 4 I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. 5 Your threshing shall overtake the vintage, and the vintage shall overtake the sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and live securely in your land. 6 And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one shall make you afraid; I will remove dangerous

42,55: Israelites may not be enslaved because they are already enslaved to God (cf. 26.13). Contrast Ex 21.2–11; Deut 15.12–18. **26.1–2:** These verses conclude the H legislation and thus belong with the preceding, not with the rest of ch 26, which moves from legislation to inducements for obeying God's laws.

26.3–46: Inducements for obedience. This unit is the conclusion to chs 17–26, the Holiness Collection (ch 27 is a later addition). Although similar in structure and content to the blessings and curses in Deut 28 and in ancient Near Eastern political treaties, these verses never use the language of blessing and curse. Moreover, unlike the curse sections of Deut 28 and Near Eastern treaties, the threatened punishments in vv. 14–39 proceed incrementally and are explicitly aimed at compelling obedience (cf. vv. 18,21,23–24,27–28). For H, Israel's disobedience does not abrogate God's commitment (Heb "berit") to his people. Because he owns them as slaves (cf. 25.42,55), God will punish his people, but in so doing he never gives up ownership of them (cf. 44–45). The prominent use of covenant language and strong ties to Deut 28 suggest that H here may have borrowed from and revised D. **3–13:** Rewards for obedience.

animals from the land, and no sword shall go through your land. 7 You shall give chase to your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. 8 Five of you shall give chase to a hundred, and a hundred of you shall give chase to ten thousand; your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. 9 I will look with favor upon you and make you fruitful and multiply you; and I will maintain my covenant with you. 10 You shall eat old grain long stored, and you shall have to clear out the old to make way for the new. 11 I will place my dwelling in your midst, and I shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people. 13 I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be their slaves no more; I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

14 But if you will not obey me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15 if you spurn my statutes, and abhor my ordinances, so that you will not observe all my commandments, and you break my covenant, 16 I in turn will do this to you: I will bring terror on you; consumption and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away. You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down by your enemies; your foes shall rule over you, and you shall flee though no one pursues you. 18 And if in spite of this you will not obey me, I will continue to punish you sevenfold for your sins. 19 I will break your proud glory, and I will make your sky like iron and your earth like copper. 20 Your strength shall be spent to no purpose: your land shall not yield its produce, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.

21 If you continue hostile to me, and will not obey me, I will continue to plague you sevenfold for your sins. 22 I will let loose wild animals against you, and they shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock; they shall make you few in number, and your roads shall be deserted.

23 If in spite of these punishments you have not turned back to me, but continue hostile to me, 24 then I too will continue hostile to you: I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. 25 I will bring the sword against you, executing vengeance for the covenant; and if you withdraw within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into enemy hands. 26 When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven, and they shall dole out your bread by weight; and though you eat, you shall not be satisfied.

27 But if, despite this, you disobey me, and continue hostile to me, 28 I will continue hostile to you in fury; I in turn will punish you myself sevenfold for your sins. 29 You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. 30 I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars; I will heap your carcasses on the carcasses of your idols. I will abhor you. 31 I will lay your cities waste, will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing odors. 32 I will devastate the land, so that your enemies who come to settle in it shall be appalled at it. 33 And you I will scatter among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword against you; your land shall be a desolation, and your cities a waste.

34 Then the land shall enjoy[a] its sabbath years as long as it lies desolate, while you are in the land of your enemies; then the land shall rest, and enjoy[a] its sabbath years. 35 As long as it lies desolate, it shall have the rest it did not have on your sabbaths when you were living on it. 36 And as for those of you who survive, I will send faintness into their hearts

[a] Or *make up for*

9: *Covenant*, for P and H, this is the divine promise of land and progeny (Gen 17.1–8; 28.3–4; 35.11–12; Ex 6.2–8). **11–12:** The ultimate reward for obedience is the divine presence in Israel; cf. Ex 6.7; Jer 7.23; 30.22. **14–39:** Threats of successive punishments intended to ensure Israel's compliance. The punishments address the reverse topics mentioned in the rewards section. As in Deut 28 and Near Eastern treaties, rhetorical impact is heightened by focusing more on punishments than rewards. **18:** *Sevenfold*, likely not a literal accounting but a reference to full/extensive punishment (cf. vv. 21,24,28). **31:** *Sanctuaries*, multiple sanctuaries are not endorsed but presented as evidence of disobedience (cf. v. 30; 17.3–4n.). **33–45:** These verses address exile, indicating that this chapter may have been written or edited after Babylonian conquest of Judah in 586 BCE. **34:** *Sabbath years*, cf. 25.2–7; 2 Chr

in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall though no one pursues. 37 They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though no one pursues; and you shall have no power to stand against your enemies. 38 You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall devour you. 39 And those of you who survive shall languish in the land of your enemies because of their iniquities; also they shall languish because of the iniquities of their ancestors.

40 But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their ancestors, in that they committed treachery against me and, moreover, that they continued hostile to me— 41 so that I, in turn, continued hostile to them and brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, 42 then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; I will remember also my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. 43 For the land shall be deserted by them, and enjoy[a] its sabbath years by lying desolate without them, while they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they dared to spurn my ordinances, and they abhorred my statutes. 44 Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, or abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God; 45 but I will remember in their favor the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, to be their God: I am the LORD.

46 These are the statutes and ordinances and laws that the LORD established between himself and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai through Moses.

27 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When a person makes an explicit vow to the LORD concerning the equivalent for a human being, 3 the equivalent for a male shall be: from twenty to sixty years of age the equivalent shall be fifty shekels of silver by the sanctuary shekel. 4 If the person is a female, the equivalent is thirty shekels. 5 If the age is from five to twenty years of age, the equivalent is twenty shekels for a male and ten shekels for a female. 6 If the age is from one month to five years, the equivalent for a male is five shekels of silver, and for a female the equivalent is three shekels of silver. 7 And if the person is sixty years old or over, then the equivalent for a male is fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. 8 If any cannot afford the equivalent, they shall be brought before the priest and the priest shall assess them; the priest shall assess them according to what each one making a vow can afford.

9 If it concerns an animal that may be brought as an offering to the LORD, any such that may be given to the LORD shall be holy. 10 Another shall not be exchanged or substituted for it, either good for bad or bad for good; and if one animal is substituted for another, both that one and its substitute shall be holy. 11 If it concerns any unclean animal that may not be brought as an offering to the LORD, the animal shall be presented before the priest. 12 The priest shall assess it: whether good or bad, according to the assessment of the priest, so it shall be. 13 But if it is

[a] Or *make up for*

36.21. **40–45:** Those who remain and repent will be restored, for God's commitment to Israel is unmoved. This was likely a particularly meaningful promise to the exiles. **46:** Concluding summary to chs 1–26 (cf. 27.34). *On Mount Sinai*, better, "at Mount Sinai" (see 7.38n.).

27.1–34: Vows, dedications, and tithes. This chapter, which contains priestly material, is a later addition, inserted as an appendix to the earlier P and H material. Its author(s) attempted to integrate it into the composition by repeating the concluding summary from 26.46 in 27.34. **2–13:** Procedures for vows of persons and animals; cf. Num 30.1–16. Vows are promised gifts to God in exchange for divine favor. In the case of vows of humans (oneself or another), an equivalent monetary gift is presented in lieu of human sacrifice. Calculations are made according to the vowed person's socioeconomic worth. **3:** A *shekel* weighed about .4 oz (11.4 gr). **9–10:** Sacrificeable animals offered as vows are viewed as the deity's food and are thus holy. **11–12:** Nonsacrificeable animals vowed to God are intended to be sold by the sanctuary according to their valuation. **13:** *One-fifth*, cf.

to be redeemed, one-fifth must be added to the assessment.

14 If a person consecrates a house to the LORD, the priest shall assess it: whether good or bad, as the priest assesses it, so it shall stand. 15 And if the one who consecrates the house wishes to redeem it, one-fifth shall be added to its assessed value, and it shall revert to the original owner.

16 If a person consecrates to the LORD any inherited landholding, its assessment shall be in accordance with its seed requirements: fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed. 17 If the person consecrates the field as of the year of jubilee, that assessment shall stand; 18 but if the field is consecrated after the jubilee, the priest shall compute the price for it according to the years that remain until the year of jubilee, and the assessment shall be reduced. 19 And if the one who consecrates the field wishes to redeem it, then one-fifth shall be added to its assessed value, and it shall revert to the original owner; 20 but if the field is not redeemed, or if it has been sold to someone else, it shall no longer be redeemable. 21 But when the field is released in the jubilee, it shall be holy to the LORD as a devoted field; it becomes the priest's holding. 22 If someone consecrates to the LORD a field that has been purchased, which is not a part of the inherited landholding, 23 the priest shall compute for it the proportionate assessment up to the year of jubilee, and the assessment shall be paid as of that day, a sacred donation to the LORD. 24 In the year of jubilee the field shall return to the one from whom it was bought, whose holding the land is. 25 All assessments shall be by the sanctuary shekel: twenty gerahs shall make a shekel.

26 A firstling of animals, however, which as a firstling belongs to the LORD, cannot be consecrated by anyone; whether ox or sheep, it is the LORD's. 27 If it is an unclean animal, it shall be ransomed at its assessment, with one-fifth added; if it is not redeemed, it shall be sold at its assessment.

28 Nothing that a person owns that has been devoted to destruction for the LORD, be it human or animal, or inherited landholding, may be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD. 29 No human beings who have been devoted to destruction can be ransomed; they shall be put to death.

30 All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the LORD's; they are holy to the LORD. 31 If persons wish to redeem any of their tithes, they must add one-fifth to them. 32 All tithes of herd and flock, every tenth one that passes under the shepherd's staff, shall be holy to the LORD. 33 Let no one inquire whether it is good or bad, or make substitution for it; if one makes substitution for it, then both it and the substitute shall be holy and cannot be redeemed.

34 These are the commandments that the LORD gave to Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.

5.16; 6.5. **14–24:** Dedications of houses, ancestral land, and nonancestral land. Valuations of land are accounted according to the jubilee calendar (cf. 25.13–17n.). **16:** A *homer* was about 6.5 bushels (230 L). **26–27:** Firstborn animals already belong to God (Ex 13.1–2,12; 22.29–30; 34.19; Num 3.40–51; 18.17; Deut 15.19–20) and therefore cannot be dedicated or vowed. *It shall be ransomed*, better, "It may be ransomed"; cf. Num 18.15. **28:** *Devoted to destruction*, a type of dedication found mostly in biblical war texts (e.g., Num 21.2; Deut 2.34; 3.6; 7.2; Josh 6.17–21; 8.26; 10.1,28; 1 Sam 15) and in the Moabite Mesha Inscription. Here, such dedication (Heb "ḥerem") is applied to personal property. **29:** The dedication in this instance may refer to a judicial sentence. **30–33:** Tithes (cf. Num 18.20–32; Deut 14.22–29; 26.12). This is the only animal tithe in pentateuchal law, but see Gen 14.20; 28.22; 1 Sam 8.15–17; 2 Chr 31.5–6. **34:** A variation of the conclusion in 26.46.

NUMBERS

NAME AND CONTENTS

Numbers is the fourth book of the Pentateuch or Torah. Two titles are associated with the book. The title, "Numbers," derives from the Vulgate (*Numeri*) and the Septuagint (*Arithmoi*); the title "In the wilderness" (Heb *Bemidbar*) comes from the Masoretic Text, where pentateuchal books are named after a significant initial word. The distinct names suggest separate themes with divergent literary structure. "Numbers" accentuates the two accounts of the census of the Israelite people, which divide the book between the first (chs 1–25) and second (chs 26–36) generation of Israelites to leave Egypt. "In the wilderness" focuses on the theme of the journey from Mount Sinai to the Promised Land, which yields a three-part structure to the book: Chapters 1.1–10.10 contain descriptions of the wilderness camp; chs 10.11–21.35 tell of the tragic wilderness journey of the first generation; and chs 22.1–36.13 describe the second generation of Israelites on the plains of Moab as they prepare for entry into the Promised Land. The following diagram illustrates this overlapping structure:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="5">1–25
First Generation</td><td>26–36
Second Generation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">1.1–10.10
Wilderness of Sinai</td><td colspan="2">10.10–21.35
Wilderness Journey</td><td colspan="2">22.1–36.13
Plains of Moab</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.1–6.27
Holiness and Camp</td><td>7.1–10.10
Holiness and Tabernacle</td><td>10.11–36
Departure from Sinai</td><td>11.1–21.35
Rebellion and Death</td><td>22.1–25.18
Threats on the Plains of Moab</td><td>26.1–36.13
Preparation for the Promised Land</td></tr>
</table>

The top row highlights the two-part structure that emerges from the census of the first and second generations; the middle row clarifies the three-part geographical structure of the wilderness journey; and the bottom row breaks down the book into smaller thematic units.

The book of Numbers is closely related to the events at Mount Sinai narrated in Exodus and Leviticus, and to the teaching of Moses in Deuteronomy. Numbers continues the earlier setting of Sinai in the opening divine speech to Moses: "Yahweh spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt" (1.1). The instruction from the tent of meeting ties Numbers to Leviticus, where Yahweh also spoke to Moses, also from the tent of meeting (Lev 1.1). Numbers recounts the journey of the Israelites from the "wilderness of Sinai" to the "plains of Moab," located on the border of the Promised Land. It concludes with the summary statement: "These are the commandments and the ordinances that Yahweh commanded through Moses to the Israelites in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho" (36.13); this setting of Moab ties Numbers to Deuteronomy, where Moses replaces Yahweh in instructing the Israelites in divine law: "Beyond the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law as follows" (Deut 1.5). Thus, the introduction (1.1) of Numbers and its conclusion (36.13) link the Priestly legislation in Leviticus with the laws in Deuteronomy, helping to bring together the two law collections into a single Torah, even though each book contains distinct and even conflicting legislation on the sanctuary, the priesthood, and religious practice.

The book of Numbers presents an imagined past in which the life of faith is a rite of passage that requires the Israelite people to follow God through the wilderness toward the goal of reaching the Promised Land. Numbers narrates the journey from Sinai to Moab, which takes place over a forty-year period and spans two generations (32.13). The first generation experienced the Exodus from Egypt and received the Priestly legislation via Moses in Leviticus; they die on the wilderness journey as a result of rebellion against Yahweh and Moses, when they fear to enter the Promised Land (chs 13–14). The second generation did not experience the Exodus firsthand and did not receive direct revelation from Yahweh at Mount Sinai; they take center stage at the close of the book of Numbers, as they prepare to enter the Promised Land (26.63–65). The book of Deuteronomy narrates the instruction that they will receive from Moses (1.35,39).

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, AND CONTENTS

As in other parts of the Torah, the authors of Numbers are anonymous, and the composition of the book took place over an extended time, from the period of the monarchy into the postexilic era. The book contains three distinct bodies of literature: independent poems and records; non-Priestly literature about the wilderness journey; and Priestly literature and law from several different authors.

1. *Independent Sources*. These are comprised of different genres, including prayer (12.13), lampoon or folktale (22.22–35), diplomatic letter (20.14–19), civil law (27.1–11), religious law (15.17–21), ritual calendar (chs 28–29), oracular decision (15.32–36), census list (26.1–51), temple archive (7.10–88), itinerary (33.1–49), boundary list (ch 34), city list (ch 35) and narrative (11.4–35).

Independent poems and liturgies are also woven throughout the book of Numbers, including the priestly blessing (6.24–26) at the conclusion of the laws about camp defilement (chs 5–6); the song of the ark (10.35–36) at the outset of the wilderness journey (chs 11–21); an excerpt from the "Book of the Wars of Yahweh" (21.14–15), the song of the well (21.17–18) and the ballad over Heshbon (21.27–30) at the end of the wilderness journey; and the oracles of Balaam (23.7–10,18–24; 24.3–9,15–24) within the story of Balak king of Edom's desire to curse Israel. The poems are difficult to date and likely do not all derive from the same period, but some may reach back to Israel's earliest history (e.g., the song of the ark and the "Book of the Wars of Yahweh"). Material that likely originates from the monarchic period includes travel records (21.10–20; parts of ch 33), inheritance lists (parts of ch 32), a ritual etiology (21.4–9), as well laws concerning restitution (5.5–10), the wife suspected of adultery (5.11–28), homicide (35.9–15), and the nazirite vow (6.1–22). These independent laws and liturgies are known to the later writers, who incorporate them in the non-Priestly and Priestly composition.

2. *Non-Priestly Literature*. The central description of the wilderness journey includes a non-Priestly account of events. This version states that the ark leads Israel in its wilderness march from the mount of the LORD (10.29–35); it recounts conflict over the prophetic leadership of Moses (chs 11–12); the first generation loses the Promised Land because they fear to wage war against the indigenous people (parts of chs 13–14); Dathan and Abiram oppose the leadership of Moses (part of ch 16); the people march through Edom as they leave the wilderness (20.1–21.20) and wage war against the Amorite kings, Og and Sihon (21.21–35); God protects the people from the Moabite king Balak who hires the diviner Balaam to curse Israel (chs 22–24); the people sin at Baal-peor by having sex with Moabite women (25.1–5). The non-Priestly version of the wilderness journey concludes with summary accounts of the inheritance of the land (part of ch 32) and the wilderness journey (ch 33).
3. *Priestly Literature*. Priestly narrative and law dominates Numbers; the present form of the book is largely comprised of Priestly teaching on the tabernacle, worship practice and leadership, and inheritance law. Priestly sections on camp legislation (chs 1–10) and inheritance laws (chs 26–36) frame the book. The account of the wilderness journey in the middle section of the book also has a significant Priestly element (chs 11–21).

The camp legislation (chs 1–10) centers on the tabernacle first introduced in the Priestly account of revelation at Mount Sinai (Ex 25–31; 35–40). Imagined at the center of the camp, the tabernacle, where God's presence dwelled (Ex 40.34–38), establishes the theme of holiness that organizes this unit. The holiness of the tabernacle requires careful distribution of the tribes in the camp (ch 2) along with the need for the Levites to protect the sanctuary (chs 3–4); the camp must also be protected from defilement with laws that regulate human interaction (chs 5–6); the tribes provide dedication offerings for the tabernacle (chs 7–8); and religious festivals associated with the tabernacle are described (9.1–10.10).

Priestly authors also present a version of the wilderness journey (10.11–22.1). The tribes march from Sinai in a military formation with the tabernacle at the center (10.11–29); the first generation loses the Promised Land when they misjudge the land as a place that eats its inhabitants (parts of chs 13–14); the conflict over leadership results in the divine support of Aaron and his sons as priests (parts of chs 16–18); and the revelation of laws provides guidelines for worship in the Promised Land (chs 15,18,19).

The laws at the close of the book (chs 26–36) are also dominated by Priestly teaching on a variety of issues: the inheritance of daughters (27.12–23; 36.1–12); rules for fulfilling vows (ch 30); the danger of Midianite intermarriage (31.6–18); war (ch 31); prescribed offerings for various holy days (chs 28–29); levitical cities of asylum (35.1–15); and the distribution of the land (parts of ch 32 and 34).

The Priestly literature in the Torah is not unified, and reflects the work of different Priestly authors over an extended period of time. For example, the census of the first generation (ch 1) is presented as the fulfillment of the divine command at Sinai (Ex 30.11–16), even though an earlier census is described in Ex 38.25–28; the setting up of the tabernacle in 7.1 repeats an event that takes place in Ex 40.17; and the appearance of God in the sanctuary (7.89) also repeats earlier events (Ex 40.34–38; Lev 9.22). Numbers also contains Priestly themes not found in the Priestly material in Exodus and Leviticus, including the emphasis on war in the census (chs 1) as compared to the aim of the earlier census to collect material for the construction of the tabernacle (Ex 38.11–16; 38.25–28), and the separation of the Aaronide priests and Levites in Numbers (chs 1–4) as compared to the absence of this distinction in Exodus or Leviticus. This suggests that the Priestly author(s) of Numbers are different from, and by and large later than, those in Exodus and Leviticus.

The Priestly material in Numbers may include limited material from the monarchical period, such as the laws of vowing (30) or the cities of asylum (35); most of this material, however, reflects the religious organization of the Second Temple period with the rise of the high priests and the distinction between the Aaronide priests and the Levites. The progression of the wilderness journey from Mount Sinai toward the Promised Land provides organization and a unified plot to the Priestly literature in Numbers.

CENTRAL THEMES AND INTERPRETATION.

The central themes of the book of Numbers include the divine promises of nationhood and land; the holiness of God and its influence in ritual practice; the formation of covenant community along with its leadership and ethical requirements; and the wilderness journey as the intergenerational story of rebellion and hope in reaching the promised land.

Thomas B. Dozeman

1 The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:
2 Take a census of the whole congregation of Israelites, in their clans, by ancestral houses, according to the number of names, every male individually; **3** from twenty years old and upward, everyone in Israel able to go to war. You and Aaron shall enroll them, company by company.
4 A man from each tribe shall be with you, each man the head of his ancestral house. **5** These are the names of the men who shall assist you:
From Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur.
6 From Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.
7 From Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab.
8 From Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar.
9 From Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon.
10 From the sons of Joseph:
from Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud;
from Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.
11 From Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni.
12 From Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.
13 From Asher, Pagiel son of Ochran.
14 From Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel.
15 From Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.
16 These were the ones chosen from the congregation, the leaders of their ancestral tribes, the heads of the divisions of Israel.
17 Moses and Aaron took these men who had been designated by name, **18** and on the

1.1–10.10: The wilderness camp.

1.1–6.27: The community and the camp. The layout of the camp around the tabernacle introduces degrees of holiness depending on proximity to the sanctuary at the center: the closer to God, the holier. The arrangement of the camp, the order for marching, and the role of the Levites clarifies the important role of holiness in the life of the community.

1.1–47: Census of the first generation. Numbers begins with a census of males twenty years of age and older, of the generation that had left Egypt. **1:** *Tent of meeting*, another name for the tabernacle (see Ex 26). On the date, cf. Ex 40.17. **2:** *Congregation*, the entire community of Israel gathered around the tent of meeting; *ancestral houses*, lit., "fathers' house," a patriarchal term signifying extended families. **3:** *Enroll* indicates a military census for war; thus only males twenty and older are counted. **4–16:** Leaders are chosen from each tribe; all but one (v. 7) of these persons appear only here and in chs 2;7;10. **17–47:** The census of the tribes begins with

first day of the second month they assembled the whole congregation together. They registered themselves in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, individually, 19 as the LORD commanded Moses. So he enrolled them in the wilderness of Sinai.

20 The descendants of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, individually, every male from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 21 those enrolled of the tribe of Reuben were forty-six thousand five hundred.

22 The descendants of Simeon, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, those of them that were numbered, according to the number of names, individually, every male from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 23 those enrolled of the tribe of Simeon were fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

24 The descendants of Gad, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 25 those enrolled of the tribe of Gad were forty-five thousand six hundred fifty.

26 The descendants of Judah, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 27 those enrolled of the tribe of Judah were seventy-four thousand six hundred.

28 The descendants of Issachar, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 29 those enrolled of the tribe of Issachar were fifty-four thousand four hundred.

30 The descendants of Zebulun, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 31 those enrolled of the tribe of Zebulun were fifty-seven thousand four hundred.

32 The descendants of Joseph, namely, the descendants of Ephraim, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 33 those enrolled of the tribe of Ephraim were forty thousand five hundred.

34 The descendants of Manasseh, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 35 those enrolled of the tribe of Manasseh were thirty-two thousand two hundred.

36 The descendants of Benjamin, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 37 those enrolled of the tribe of Benjamin were thirty-five thousand four hundred.

38 The descendants of Dan, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 39 those enrolled of the tribe of Dan were sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

40 The descendants of Asher, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 41 those enrolled of the tribe of Asher were forty-one thousand five hundred.

42 The descendants of Naphtali, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 43 those enrolled of the tribe of Naphtali were fifty-three thousand four hundred.

44 These are those who were enrolled, whom Moses and Aaron enrolled with the

Reuben, *Israel's* (Jacob's) *firstborn*. The Levites are excluded because of their special priestly functions (see vv. 48–53), and the number of twelve tribes is maintained by separating the tribe of Joseph into Ephraim and Manasseh (see Gen 48). The census proceeds in a stereotypical format that includes lineage, clan, ancestral house, and the number of males twenty years and older able to go to war. The large, precise numbers in the census are probably symbolic, but difficult to interpret; they may indicate the fulfillment of the divine blessing of fertility promised to the ancestors in Genesis or the power of the nation "to go to war." **27:** *Judah* is the largest tribe.

help of the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each representing his ancestral house. 45 So the whole number of the Israelites, by their ancestral houses, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war in Israel— 46 their whole number was six hundred three thousand five hundred fifty. 47 The Levites, however, were not numbered by their ancestral tribe along with them.

48 The LORD had said to Moses: 49 Only the tribe of Levi you shall not enroll, and you shall not take a census of them with the other Israelites. 50 Rather you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the covenant,[a] and over all its equipment, and over all that belongs to it; they are to carry the tabernacle and all its equipment, and they shall tend it, and shall camp around the tabernacle. 51 When the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And any outsider who comes near shall be put to death. 52 The other Israelites shall camp in their respective regimental camps, by companies; 53 but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the covenant,[a] that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the Israelites; and the Levites shall perform the guard duty of the tabernacle of the covenant.[a] 54 The Israelites did so; they did just as the LORD commanded Moses.

2 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 The Israelites shall camp each in their respective regiments, under ensigns by their ancestral houses; they shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side. 3 Those to camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the regimental encampment of Judah by companies. The leader of the people of Judah shall be Nahshon son of Amminadab, 4 with a company as enrolled of seventy-four thousand six hundred. 5 Those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar. The leader of the Issacharites shall be Nethanel son of Zuar, 6 with a company as enrolled of fifty-four thousand four hundred. 7 Then the tribe of Zebulun: The leader of the Zebulunites shall be Eliab son of Helon, 8 with a company as enrolled of fifty-seven thousand four hundred. 9 The total enrollment of the camp of Judah, by companies, is one hundred eighty-six thousand four hundred. They shall set out first on the march.

10 On the south side shall be the regimental encampment of Reuben by companies. The leader of the Reubenites shall be Elizur son of Shedeur, 11 with a company as enrolled of forty-six thousand five hundred. 12 And those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon. The leader of the Simeonites shall be

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

46: The total number 603,550 is anticipated in Ex 38.26.

1.48–54: Separation of the Levites. The Levites are excluded from the census and separated from the Aaronide priests for the first time (see also chs 3,4,8); in Exodus and Leviticus, Levites are usually not separated from priests (e.g., Ex 29; Lev 8; but see Ex 38.21). **48–50a:** Because they are assigned special duties in caring for the tabernacle and are not imagined as participating in war, the Levites are not to be numbered. **50b–54:** The duties of the Levites are to perform service for the tabernacle, to carry the tabernacle and its vessels, and to provide a protective buffer around the tabernacle by pitching their tents between the sanctuary and the Israelite camp, comprised of "outsiders" (v. 51). The separation of the Levites continues in the Promised Land where they dwell in cities rather than receive an inheritance of land (ch 35).

2.1–34: Arrangement of the camp. The design of Num 2 indicates the role of holiness in the organization of the camp. The tabernacle ("the tent of meeting") is situated at the center of the Israelite camp, reflecting its significance and holiness. The tribes are distributed evenly on its four sides, largely grouped according to their maternal ancestors. The geographical distribution of the tribes suggests importance, with the east side of the camp receiving the most value as the location of the sanctuary's entrance. The first tribe listed in each group is assigned a leadership role over the "regimental encampment," which has its own insignia or banner. Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun camp on the east; Reuben, Simeon, and Gad on the south; the Levites at the center closest to the tent of meeting; Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin on the west; Dan, Asher, and Naphtali on the north. The arrangement of the camp indicates the primary position of Judah as the leader of the tribes on the east side of the tabernacle, with the tribe of Reuben, the firstborn, becoming the leader of the second regimental encampment. The arrangement of the campsite also provides the order for marching (see 10.14–28).

Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, [13] with a company as enrolled of fifty-nine thousand three hundred. [14] Then the tribe of Gad: The leader of the Gadites shall be Eliasaph son of Reuel, [15] with a company as enrolled of forty-five thousand six hundred fifty. [16] The total enrollment of the camp of Reuben, by companies, is one hundred fifty-one thousand four hundred fifty. They shall set out second.

[17] The tent of meeting, with the camp of the Levites, shall set out in the center of the camps; they shall set out just as they camp, each in position, by their regiments.

[18] On the west side shall be the regimental encampment of Ephraim by companies. The leader of the people of Ephraim shall be Elishama son of Ammihud, [19] with a company as enrolled of forty thousand five hundred. [20] Next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh. The leader of the people of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, [21] with a company as enrolled of thirty-two thousand two hundred. [22] Then the tribe of Benjamin: The leader of the Benjaminites shall be Abidan son of Gideoni, [23] with a company as enrolled of thirty-five thousand four hundred. [24] The total enrollment of the camp of Ephraim, by companies, is one hundred eight thousand one hundred. They shall set out third on the march.

[25] On the north side shall be the regimental encampment of Dan by companies. The leader of the Danites shall be Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, [26] with a company as enrolled of sixty-two thousand seven hundred. [27] Those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher. The leader of the Asherites shall be Pagiel son of Ochran, [28] with a company as enrolled of forty-one thousand five hundred. [29] Then the tribe of Naphtali: The leader of the Naphtalites shall be Ahira son of Enan, [30] with a company as enrolled of fifty-three thousand four hundred. [31] The total enrollment of the camp of Dan is one hundred fifty-seven thousand six hundred. They shall set out last, by companies.[a]

[32] This was the enrollment of the Israelites by their ancestral houses; the total enrollment in the camps by their companies was six hundred three thousand five hundred fifty. [33] Just as the LORD had commanded Moses, the Levites were not enrolled among the other Israelites.

[34] The Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses: They camped by regiments, and they set out the same way, everyone by clans, according to ancestral houses.

3 This is the lineage of Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. [2] These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar; [3] these are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to minister as priests. [4] Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they offered unholy fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children. Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests in the lifetime of their father Aaron.

[5] Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [6] Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, so that they may assist him. [7] They shall perform duties for him and for the whole congregation in front of the tent of meeting, doing service at the tabernacle; [8] they shall be in charge of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and attend to the duties for the Israelites as they do service at the tabernacle. [9] You shall give the Levites to Aaron and his descendants; they are unreservedly given to him from among the Israelites. [10] But you shall make a register of Aaron and his descendants; it is they who shall attend to the priesthood, and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death.

[a] Compare verses 9, 16, 24: Heb *by their regiments*

3.1–10: Genealogy and duties of the Levites. 1: *This is the lineage* (Heb "toledot," descendants), the genealogical formula that begins with creation (Gen 2.4), and traces the earliest humans (Gen 5; 10; 11.10–32) and the Israelite nation (Gen 11–50); the genealogy narrows in Exodus to the sons of Levi with a focus on Moses and Aaron (Ex 6.14–27); Num 3.1–4 narrows the genealogy further to Aaron. **4:** *Nadab and Abihu died*, see Lev 10.1–2. **5–10:** The Levites, subservient to the Aaronide priests, are positioned between them and the congregation for the purpose of serving the Aaronide priests in front of the tabernacle. **7:** *Duties*, guard duties, in which the Levites protect the sacred space of the tabernacle from encroachment from non-Levites.

11 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
12 I hereby accept the Levites from among the
Israelites as substitutes for all the firstborn
that open the womb among the Israelites.
The Levites shall be mine, 13 for all the first-
born are mine; when I killed all the firstborn
in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my
own all the firstborn in Israel, both human
and animal; they shall be mine. I am the
LORD.

14 Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the
wilderness of Sinai, saying: 15 Enroll the
Levites by ancestral houses and by clans.
You shall enroll every male from a month
old and upward. 16 So Moses enrolled them
according to the word of the LORD, as he was
commanded. 17 The following were the sons
of Levi, by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and
Merari. 18 These are the names of the sons
of Gershon by their clans: Libni and Shimei.
19 The sons of Kohath by their clans: Amram,
Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 20 The sons of Me-
rari by their clans: Mahli and Mushi. These
are the clans of the Levites, by their ancestral
houses.

21 To Gershon belonged the clan of the
Libnites and the clan of the Shimeites; these
were the clans of the Gershonites. 22 Their
enrollment, counting all the males from a
month old and upward, was seven thousand
five hundred. 23 The clans of the Gershonites
were to camp behind the tabernacle on the
west, 24 with Eliasaph son of Lael as head of
the ancestral house of the Gershonites. 25 The
responsibility of the sons of Gershon in the
tent of meeting was to be the tabernacle,
the tent with its covering, the screen for the
entrance of the tent of meeting, 26 the hang-
ings of the court, the screen for the entrance
of the court that is around the tabernacle
and the altar, and its cords—all the service
pertaining to these.

27 To Kohath belonged the clan of the
Amramites, the clan of the Izharites, the
clan of the Hebronites, and the clan of the
Uzzielites; these are the clans of the Ko-
hathites. 28 Counting all the males, from a
month old and upward, there were eight
thousand six hundred, attending to the duties
of the sanctuary. 29 The clans of the Kohath-
ites were to camp on the south side of the
tabernacle, 30 with Elizaphan son of Uzziel
as head of the ancestral house of the clans of
the Kohathites. 31 Their responsibility was to
be the ark, the table, the lampstand, the al-
tars, the vessels of the sanctuary with which
the priests minister, and the screen—all the
service pertaining to these. 32 Eleazar son
of Aaron the priest was to be chief over the
leaders of the Levites, and to have oversight
of those who had charge of the sanctuary.

33 To Merari belonged the clan of the
Mahlites and the clan of the Mushites: these
are the clans of Merari. 34 Their enrollment,
counting all the males from a month old
and upward, was six thousand two hundred.
35 The head of the ancestral house of the
clans of Merari was Zuriel son of Abihail;
they were to camp on the north side of the
tabernacle. 36 The responsibility assigned to
the sons of Merari was to be the frames of the
tabernacle, the bars, the pillars, the bases,
and all their accessories—all the service
pertaining to these; 37 also the pillars of the
court all around, with their bases and pegs
and cords.

3.11–13: Levites as substitutes for firstborn. God claims firstborn males of animals and humans (Ex 13.2; 22.29). **13:** The holy status of the firstborn originates here from the sparing of the firstborn during the night of passover; the Levites substitute for the firstborn, freeing them from their holy status. Elsewhere, the divine claim on the firstborn is associated with first fruits (Ex 23.14–17; Deut 26.1–11).

3.14–51: First census of the Levites. The role of the Levites as substitutes for the Israelite firstborn requires that they be counted. They are counted from one month of age and older, according to their three ancestral houses, and each family is assigned a particular duty and placed at campsites on the west, south, and north of the sanctuary. Together with the Aaronide priests who camp on the east side, they encircle the sanctuary protecting it from encroachment. **21–26:** *Gershon,* camped on the west, carried the tabernacle and covering (Ex 26.1–35), screen for entrance (Ex 26.36–37), hangings of the court (Ex 27.9), screen for the court (Ex 27.16), altar (Ex 27.1–8), and cords (Ex 29.9–19). **27–32:** *Kohath,* camped on the south, carried the ark (Ex 25,10–22), table (Ex 25.23–30), lampstand (Ex 25.31–40), altars (Ex 27.1–8; 30.1–10), vessels (Ex 37.16; 38.3), and screen (Ex 26.31–35). **33–37:** *Merari,* camped on the north, carried the frames, bars, pillars, and bases of the tabernacle

38 Those who were to camp in front of the tabernacle on the east—in front of the tent of meeting toward the east—were Moses and Aaron and Aaron's sons, having charge of the rites within the sanctuary, whatever had to be done for the Israelites; and any outsider who came near was to be put to death. 39 The total enrollment of the Levites whom Moses and Aaron enrolled at the commandment of the LORD, by their clans, all the males from a month old and upward, was twenty-two thousand.

40 Then the LORD said to Moses: Enroll all the firstborn males of the Israelites, from a month old and upward, and count their names. 41 But you shall accept the Levites for me—I am the LORD—as substitutes for all the firstborn among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites as substitutes for all the firstborn among the livestock of the Israelites. 42 So Moses enrolled all the firstborn among the Israelites, as the LORD commanded him. 43 The total enrollment, all the firstborn males from a month old and upward, counting the number of names, was twenty-two thousand two hundred seventy-three.

44 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 45 Accept the Levites as substitutes for all the firstborn among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites as substitutes for their livestock; and the Levites shall be mine. I am the LORD. 46 As the price of redemption of the two hundred seventy-three of the firstborn of the Israelites, over and above the number of the Levites, 47 you shall accept five shekels apiece, reckoning by the shekel of the sanctuary, a shekel of twenty gerahs. 48 Give to Aaron and his sons the money by which the excess number of them is redeemed.

49 So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those redeemed by the Levites; 50 from the firstborn of the Israelites he took the money, one thousand three hundred sixty-five shekels, reckoned by the shekel of the sanctuary; 51 and Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

4 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 Take a census of the Kohathites separate from the other Levites, by their clans and their ancestral houses, 3 from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who qualify to do work relating to the tent of meeting. 4 The service of the Kohathites relating to the tent of meeting concerns the most holy things.

5 When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the screening curtain, and cover the ark of the covenant[a] with it; 6 then they shall put on it a covering of fine leather,[b] and spread over that a cloth all of blue, and shall put its poles in place. 7 Over the table of the bread of the Presence they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the plates, the dishes for incense, the bowls, and the flagons for the drink offering; the regular bread also shall be on it; 8 then they shall spread over them a crimson cloth, and cover it with a covering of fine leather,[b] and shall put its poles in place. 9 They shall take a blue cloth, and cover the lampstand for the light, with its lamps, its snuffers, its trays, and all the vessels for oil with which it is supplied; 10 and they shall put it with all its utensils in

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

(Ex 26.1–35) and the pillars of the court (Ex 27.9–19). **38:** Aaronide priests camp on the east and most significant side of the tabernacle; their labor is within the sanctuary separate from the Levites who work outside. **40–51:** The total number of firstborn males one month of age and older is 22,273, an unrealistic figure that projects a total population of over two million people; the purpose of the number is likely intended to contrast with the number of levitical males one month of age and older as 22,000 (3.39). The extra 273 firstborn Israelite males require a separate process of redemption through payment to the Aaronide priests. **47:** See Ex 30.11–16; a *shekel* weighed ca. 0.4 oz (11.4 gr).

4.1–49: Second census of the Levites for work. The second census of the Levites focuses on those between the ages of thirty and fifty years, who are able to work. All the Levites are placed under the direction of the Aaronide priests, who pack the tabernacle and its objects for travel. **4–15:** The Kohathites are listed first since they carry the most holy objects of the tabernacle on the wilderness march, including the ark, the table of show-

a covering of fine leather,[a] and put it on the carrying frame. [11] Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of fine leather,[a] and shall put its poles in place; [12] and they shall take all the utensils of the service that are used in the sanctuary, and put them in a blue cloth, and cover them with a covering of fine leather,[a] and put them on the carrying frame. [13] They shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it; [14] and they shall put on it all the utensils of the altar, which are used for the service there, the firepans, the forks, the shovels, and the basins, all the utensils of the altar; and they shall spread on it a covering of fine leather,[a] and shall put its poles in place. [15] When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, as the camp sets out, after that the Kohathites shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things, or they will die. These are the things of the tent of meeting that the Kohathites are to carry.

[16] Eleazar son of Aaron the priest shall have charge of the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the regular grain offering, and the anointing oil, the oversight of all the tabernacle and all that is in it, in the sanctuary and in its utensils.

[17] Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: [18] You must not let the tribe of the clans of the Kohathites be destroyed from among the Levites. [19] This is how you must deal with them in order that they may live and not die when they come near to the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each to a particular task or burden. [20] But the Kohathites[b] must not go in to look on the holy things even for a moment; otherwise they will die.

[21] Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [22] Take a census of the Gershonites also, by their ancestral houses and by their clans; [23] from thirty years old up to fifty years old you shall enroll them, all who qualify to do work in the tent of meeting. [24] This is the service of the clans of the Gershonites, in serving and bearing burdens: [25] They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tent of meeting with its covering, and the outer covering of fine leather[a] that is on top of it, and the screen for the entrance of the tent of meeting, [26] and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the entrance of the gate of the court that is around the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords, and all the equipment for their service; and they shall do all that needs to be done with regard to them. [27] All the service of the Gershonites shall be at the command of Aaron and his sons, in all that they are to carry, and in all that they have to do; and you shall assign to their charge all that they are to carry. [28] This is the service of the clans of the Gershonites relating to the tent of meeting, and their responsibilities are to be under the oversight of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

[29] As for the Merarites, you shall enroll them by their clans and their ancestral houses; [30] from thirty years old up to fifty years old you shall enroll them, everyone who qualifies to do the work of the tent of meeting. [31] This is what they are charged to carry, as the whole of their service in the tent of meeting: the frames of the tabernacle, with its bars, pillars, and bases, [32] and the pillars of the court all around with their bases, pegs, and cords, with all their equipment and all their related service; and you shall assign by name the objects that they are required to carry. [33] This is the service of the clans of the Merarites, the whole of their service relating to the tent of meeting, under the hand of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *they*

bread, the lamp stand, the golden altar, and all the utensils (see 3.27–32n.). **16:** *Eleazar,* the oldest living son of Aaron, is responsible for the oil for the light (Ex 27.20), incense (Ex 30.7), grain offering (Lev 6.14–18), anointing oil (Ex 30.22–34), and all utensils. **17–20:** The Levites are forbidden to touch or even to "look on the holy things" upon the penalty of death; only Aaronide priests are able to package holy items. **21–27:** The Gershonites carry the curtains of the tabernacle (see 3.21–26n.). **29–32:** The Merarites carry the frames, bars, and pillars of the

34 So Moses and Aaron and the leaders of
the congregation enrolled the Kohathites, by
their clans and their ancestral houses, 35 from
thirty years old up to fifty years old, everyone
who qualified for work relating to the tent of
meeting; 36 and their enrollment by clans was
two thousand seven hundred fifty. 37 This was
the enrollment of the clans of the Kohathites,
all who served at the tent of meeting, whom
Moses and Aaron enrolled according to the
commandment of the LORD by Moses.

38 The enrollment of the Gershonites, by
their clans and their ancestral houses, 39 from
thirty years old up to fifty years old, everyone
who qualified for work relating to the tent of
meeting— 40 their enrollment by their clans
and their ancestral houses was two thousand
six hundred thirty. 41 This was the enroll-
ment of the clans of the Gershonites, all who
served at the tent of meeting, whom Moses
and Aaron enrolled according to the com-
mandment of the LORD.

42 The enrollment of the clans of the
Merarites, by their clans and their ancestral
houses, 43 from thirty years old up to fifty
years old, everyone who qualified for work
relating to the tent of meeting— 44 their
enrollment by their clans was three thousand
two hundred. 45 This is the enrollment of
the clans of the Merarites, whom Moses and
Aaron enrolled according to the command-
ment of the LORD by Moses.

46 All those who were enrolled of the
Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the
leaders of Israel enrolled, by their clans and
their ancestral houses, 47 from thirty years old
up to fifty years old, everyone who qualified
to do the work of service and the work of
bearing burdens relating to the tent of meet-
ing, 48 their enrollment was eight thousand
five hundred eighty. 49 According to the
commandment of the LORD through Moses
they were appointed to their several tasks of
serving or carrying; thus they were enrolled
by him, as the LORD commanded Moses.

5 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Com-
mand the Israelites to put out of the
camp everyone who is leprous,[a] or has a dis-
charge, and everyone who is unclean through
contact with a corpse; 3 you shall put out both
male and female, putting them outside the
camp; they must not defile their camp, where
I dwell among them. 4 The Israelites did so,
putting them outside the camp; as the LORD
had spoken to Moses, so the Israelites did.

5 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 6 Speak
to the Israelites: When a man or a woman
wrongs another, breaking faith with the
LORD, that person incurs guilt 7 and shall
confess the sin that has been committed.
The person shall make full restitution for the
wrong, adding one-fifth to it, and giving it
to the one who was wronged. 8 If the injured
party has no next of kin to whom restitution
may be made for the wrong, the restitution

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

tabernacle with its court (see 3.33–37n.). **34–45:** The divine commands are carried out. **46–49:** Summary. The camp is now ready for the journey.

5.1–6.27: Laws to protect the camp. The divinely given laws are arranged in relationship to the sanctuary, moving from the edge of the camp to its center. The section begins with social laws that are directed to practices outside of the camp (5.1–4) before moving to actions within the camp (5.5–6.21), and concludes with the priestly blessing (6.22–27).

5.1–10: Purity laws for the camp. 1–4: Three types of impurity threaten the camp: skin disease (Heb "tsara'at"), sometimes incorrectly translated as "leprosy" (see Lev 13.1–14.57); genital discharges (see Lev 12; 15); and contact with a corpse (see ch 19). The laws protect holiness from defilement and thus safeguard the presence of God in the camp. Any male or female with these conditions threatens the purity of the camp and must be expelled temporarily. **5–10:** These instructions for the guilt offering clarify restitution to a neighbor for a wrongful action (see Lev 5.14–6.7). The focus of the law is not secular crime, but the violation of the sacred; the breakdown of community relationships creates impurity that threatens holiness. **6:** *Breaking faith with* (or "against") *the LORD* indicates some form of sacrilege. The sacred character of the law is further reinforced when the offender is described as "incurring guilt." Guilt (Heb "'asham") is a legal term describing a situation that results from illegal action. The removal of the condition of guilt requires confession, ritual purification, and restitution, lest the guilty person infect the camp with pollution.

for wrong shall go to the LORD for the priest, in addition to the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for the guilty party. 9 Among all the sacred donations of the Israelites, every gift that they bring to the priest shall be his. 10 The sacred donations of all are their own; whatever anyone gives to the priest shall be his.

11 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12 Speak to the Israelites and say to them: If any man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him, 13 if a man has had intercourse with her but it is hidden from her husband, so that she is undetected though she has defiled herself, and there is no witness against her since she was not caught in the act; 14 if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife who has defiled herself; or if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife, though she has not defiled herself; 15 then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. And he shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley flour. He shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of remembrance, bringing iniquity to remembrance.

16 Then the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD; 17 the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. 18 The priest shall set the woman before the LORD, dishevel the woman's hair, and place in her hands the grain offering of remembrance, which is the grain offering of jealousy. In his own hand the priest shall have the water of bitterness that brings the curse. 19 Then the priest shall make her take an oath, saying, "If no man has lain with you, if you have not turned aside to uncleanness while under your husband's authority, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings the curse. 20 But if you have gone astray while under your husband's authority, if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has had intercourse with you," 21—let the priest make the woman take the oath of the curse and say to the woman—"the LORD make you an execration and an oath among your people, when the LORD makes your uterus drop, your womb discharge; 22 now may this water that brings the curse enter your bowels and make your womb discharge, your uterus drop!" And the woman shall say, "Amen. Amen."

23 Then the priest shall put these curses in writing, and wash them off into the water of bitterness. 24 He shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her and cause bitter pain. 25 The priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy out of the woman's hand, and shall elevate the grain offering before the LORD and bring it to the altar; 26 and the priest shall take a handful of the grain offering, as its memorial portion, and turn it into smoke on the altar,

5.11–31: Law regulating a woman accused of adultery. The law is written from the husband's point of view; its purpose is to test the fidelity of the wife through a ritual ordeal when the husband lacks a witness to confirm adultery. Adultery confirmed by a witness resulted in death (Lev 20.10). **12:** *Goes astray,* i.e., commits adultery. The rationale for the ritual, and the reason it is placed here, is that adultery "breaks faith with" the husband (see 5.6n.). **15–31:** The ritual consists of the woman drinking potions whose effects will determine her guilt or innocence. **15:** *One tenth of an ephah,* ca. 2 qts (2.3 L). *Frankincense*, an aromatic resin used in perfumes. **16:** The priest performs the ritual in the sanctuary. **17:** *Holy water* occurs only in this ritual in the Hebrew Bible, but may be related to running water, such as water from a spring (19.17). *Dust . . . on the floor of the tabernacle,* considered holy because of its location. **18:** *Dishevel the woman's hair,* perhaps a sign of mourning (Lev 10.6) or ritual impurity (Lev 13.45). *Water of bitterness* (Heb "mrr," "to be bitter") is the central potion in the ordeal, other possible translations are "water of rebellion" ("mry," "to rebel") and "water of instruction" ("yrh," "to teach"). **19–21**: *The oath of the curse* is taken by the women to determine guilt or innocence. Parallels to an ordeal; to determine guilt or innocence include *Code of Hammurabi* 132, where a person accused of sorcery must undergo a river ordeal; and Ex 32.20, where the Israelites must drink water mixed with powder from the golden calf to determine guilt. **21:** The priest states the content of the curse, which is repeated with ritual instructions (vv. 23–28); *her womb shall discharge, her uterus drop*, may signify miscarriage if the woman is pregnant or perhaps the inability to have children if not pregnant. *Execration,* to become a curse (see Jer 42.18; 44.12). **22:** *"Amen, Amen"* is a

and afterward shall make the woman drink the water. 27 When he has made her drink the water, then, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause bitter pain, and her womb shall discharge, her uterus drop, and the woman shall become an execration among her people. 28 But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, then she shall be immune and be able to conceive children.

29 This is the law in cases of jealousy, when a wife, while under her husband's authority, goes astray and defiles herself, 30 or when a spirit of jealousy comes on a man and he is jealous of his wife; then he shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall apply this entire law to her. 31 The man shall be free from iniquity, but the woman shall bear her iniquity.

6 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When either men or women make a special vow, the vow of a nazirite,[a] to separate themselves to the LORD, 3 they shall separate themselves from wine and strong drink; they shall drink no wine vinegar or other vinegar, and shall not drink any grape juice or eat grapes, fresh or dried. 4 All their days as nazirites[b] they shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins.

5 All the days of their nazirite vow no razor shall come upon the head; until the time is completed for which they separate themselves to the LORD, they shall be holy; they shall let the locks of the head grow long.

6 All the days that they separate themselves to the LORD they shall not go near a corpse. 7 Even if their father or mother, brother or sister, should die, they may not defile themselves; because their consecration to God is upon the head. 8 All their days as nazirites[b] they are holy to the LORD.

9 If someone dies very suddenly nearby, defiling the consecrated head, then they shall shave the head on the day of their cleansing; on the seventh day they shall shave it. 10 On the eighth day they shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting, 11 and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for them, because they incurred guilt by reason of the corpse. They shall sanctify the head that same day, 12 and separate themselves to the LORD for their days as nazirites,[b] and bring a male lamb a year old as a guilt offering. The former time shall be void, because the consecrated head was defiled.

13 This is the law for the nazirites[b] when the time of their consecration has been completed: they shall be brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting, 14 and they shall offer their gift to the LORD, one male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb a year old without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as an offering of well-being, 15 and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of choice flour mixed with oil and unleav-

[a] That is *one separated* or *one consecrated*
[b] That is *those separated* or *those consecrated*

double affirmation attached to oaths (Deut 27.15–26; Neh 5.22; 8.6). **29:** *This is the law* often concludes Priestly legislation (Lev 15.32).

6.1–21: Law of the nazirite. The term "nazirite" comes from the Heb verb *nazar*, probably meaning "to abstain." Any man or woman may become a nazirite by taking a vow, resulting in a priest-like status for the person for a set period or permanently; see Judg 13.4–7; 1 Sam 1.11; Am 2.11–12. The law of the nazirite has three parts: restrictions (vv. 1–8); cleansing from accidental defilement (vv. 9–12); proper procedures for ending the vow (vv. 13–20). **3–7:** During the period of their vow, nazirites may not drink wine or consume anything made from grapes; they may not cut their hair; and they may not come into contact with a corpse. Many of the restrictions resemble those applied to the priests (see Lev 10.9–11; 21.1–12; Ezek 44.31), suggesting that according to Priestly legislation, this institution allowed nonpriests to become, in some sense, temporary priests. **9:** Seven-day period of purification (cf. 19.11; Lev 14.10; 15.29), at the end of which his or her hair must be shaved. **10–12:** Eighth-day offerings of two turtledoves or pigeons are presented to the priest for sacrifice, followed by a guilt offering of a one-year-old male lamb, which allows the person to begin the nazirite vow anew. **13–20:** The procedures for ending the vow are complex since self-removal from the sacred is a dangerous procedure, requiring many sacrifices: a burnt offering (see Lev 1.1–17), sin offering (see Lev 4.1–5.13), offering of well-being (see Lev 3.1–17),

ened wafers spread with oil, with their grain offering and their drink offerings. 16 The priest shall present them before the LORD and offer their sin offering and burnt offering, 17 and shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest also shall make the accompanying grain offering and drink offering. 18 Then the nazirites[a] shall shave the consecrated head at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall take the hair from the consecrated head and put it on the fire under the sacrifice of well-being. 19 The priest shall take the shoulder of the ram, when it is boiled, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them in the palms of the nazirites,[a] after they have shaved the consecrated head. 20 Then the priest shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD; they are a holy portion for the priest, together with the breast that is elevated and the thigh that is offered. After that the nazirites[a] may drink wine.

21 This is the law for the nazirites[a] who take a vow. Their offering to the LORD must be in accordance with the nazirite[b] vow, apart from what else they can afford. In accordance with whatever vow they take, so they shall do, following the law for their consecration.

22 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
23 Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them,

24 The LORD bless you and keep you;
25 the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
26 the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

27 So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.

7 On the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, and had anointed and consecrated it with all its furnishings, and had anointed and consecrated the altar with all its utensils, 2 the leaders of Israel, heads of their ancestral houses, the leaders of the tribes, who were over those who were enrolled, made offerings. 3 They brought their offerings before the LORD, six covered wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for every two of the leaders, and for each one an ox; they presented them before the tabernacle. 4 Then the LORD said to Moses: 5 Accept these from them, that they may be used in doing the service of the tent of meeting, and give them to the Levites, to each according to his service. 6 So Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites. 7 Two wagons and four oxen he gave to the Gershonites, according to their service; 8 and four wagons and eight oxen he gave to the Merarites, according to their service, under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest. 9 But to the Kohathites he gave none, because they

[a] That is *those separated* or *those consecrated*
[b] That is *one separated* or *one consecrated*

and grain and drink offerings (see Lev 2.1–16). **18:** Burning the hair is part of the rite of passage that transfers the nazirite back to lay status. **20:** *An elevation offering* (see Lev 7.27–36) marks the completion of the ritual.

6.22–27: Priestly blessing. A priestly blessing of the congregation provides a safeguard against defilement by infusing the camp with the power of divine blessing. (5.1–6.27). **24–26**: The blessing consists of three lines of poetry; each line contains two verbs, the first of which summarizes an activity of Yahweh upon the worshipper ("bless, shine, lift"), and the second describes the results of God's actions ("keep, be gracious, give peace"). Each line of the blessing is longer than the previous one, reflecting the hope for ever-expanding blessing. The discovery of a form of this blessing on a sixth-century BCE silver amulet from a burial cave near Jerusalem underscores its central role in ancient Israel. **27:** God, rather than the priest, blesses. The priestly blessing provides an ideal portrait of the community where God pays attention to persons, where blessing and security drive out impurity, and where the achievement of wholeness and peace (Heb "shalom") is possible.

7.1–10.10: Tabernacle. In this section the scope narrows from the effects of holiness on the camp to that of the tabernacle at its center. The subject matter also changes from the social organization of Israel and their ethical relationships to the rituals associated with the care and dedication of the sanctuary.

7.1–88: Offerings of dedication. 1: The completion of the tabernacle and its dedication repeat a similar event from Ex 40.1,16, now including the offerings of the leaders of the tribes. **2–9:** The gifts of carts and oxen are for the levitical clans of Gershon and Merari to perform their work of transporting the tabernacle; the Kohathites receive no gifts since they carry the holy objects of the tabernacle by hand; additional gifts are for sacrificial

were charged with the care of the holy things that had to be carried on the shoulders.

10 The leaders also presented offerings for the dedication of the altar at the time when it was anointed; the leaders presented their offering before the altar. 11 The Lord said to Moses: They shall present their offerings, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar.

12 The one who presented his offering the first day was Nahshon son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah; 13 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 14 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 15 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 16 one male goat for a sin offering; 17 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

18 On the second day Nethanel son of Zuar, the leader of Issachar, presented an offering; 19 he presented for his offering one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 20 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 21 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, as a burnt offering; 22 one male goat as a sin offering; 23 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nethanel son of Zuar.

24 On the third day Eliab son of Helon, the leader of the Zebulunites: 25 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 26 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 27 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 28 one male goat for a sin offering; 29 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliab son of Helon.

30 On the fourth day Elizur son of Shedeur, the leader of the Reubenites: 31 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 32 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 33 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 34 one male goat for a sin offering; 35 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elizur son of Shedeur.

36 On the fifth day Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, the leader of the Simeonites: 37 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 38 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 39 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 40 one male goat for a sin offering; 41 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

42 On the sixth day Eliasaph son of Deuel, the leader of the Gadites: 43 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 44 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 45 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb

dedication of the altar. **10–88:** An extensive account of gifts presented by each tribal leader over a twelve-day period; the names of the tribal leaders are the same as in the census (see 1.5–15). The order of the presentation of gifts follows the sequence of tribes, in which Judah is first as in the description of the camp (see 2.3–31), rather than Reuben who is listed first in the census (see 1.17–47). Each tribe brings identical gifts. Similar lists are known from ancient temple records in Mesopotamia and Egypt. A *shekel* weighed ca. 0.4 oz (11.4 gr).

a year old, for a burnt offering; 46 one male goat for a sin offering; 47 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliasaph son of Deuel.

48 On the seventh day Elishama son of Ammihud, the leader of the Ephraimites: 49 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 50 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 51 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 52 one male goat for a sin offering; 53 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elishama son of Ammihud.

54 On the eighth day Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, the leader of the Manassites: 55 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 56 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 57 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 58 one male goat for a sin offering; 59 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

60 On the ninth day Abidan son of Gideoni, the leader of the Benjaminites: 61 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 62 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 63 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 64 one male goat for a sin offering; 65 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Abidan son of Gideoni.

66 On the tenth day Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, the leader of the Danites: 67 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 68 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 69 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 70 one male goat for a sin offering; 71 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

72 On the eleventh day Pagiel son of Ochran, the leader of the Asherites: 73 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 74 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 75 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 76 one male goat for a sin offering; 77 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Pagiel son of Ochran.

78 On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the Naphtalites: 79 his offering was one silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; 80 one golden dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense; 81 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; 82 one male goat for a sin offering; 83 and for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahira son of Enan.

84 This was the dedication offering for the altar, at the time when it was anointed, from the leaders of Israel: twelve silver plates, twelve silver basins, twelve golden dishes, 85 each silver plate weighing one hundred thirty shekels and each basin seventy, all the silver of the vessels two thousand four hundred shekels according to the shekel of the sanctuary, 86 the twelve golden dishes, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece

according to the shekel of the sanctuary, all the gold of the dishes being one hundred twenty shekels; [87] all the livestock for the burnt offering twelve bulls, twelve rams, twelve male lambs a year old, with their grain offering; and twelve male goats for a sin offering; [88] and all the livestock for the sacrifice of well-being twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, the male lambs a year old sixty. This was the dedication offering for the altar, after it was anointed.

[89] When Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD,[a] he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat[b] that was on the ark of the covenant[c] from between the two cherubim; thus it spoke to him.

8 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2] Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you set up the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand. [3] Aaron did so; he set up its lamps to give light in front of the lampstand, as the LORD had commanded Moses. [4] Now this was how the lampstand was made, out of hammered work of gold. From its base to its flowers, it was hammered work; according to the pattern that the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

[5] The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [6] Take the Levites from among the Israelites and cleanse them. [7] Thus you shall do to them, to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification on them, have them shave their whole body with a razor and wash their clothes, and so cleanse themselves. [8] Then let them take a young bull and its grain offering of choice flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull for a sin offering. [9] You shall bring the Levites before the tent of meeting, and assemble the whole congregation of the Israelites. [10] When you bring the Levites before the LORD, the Israelites shall lay their hands on the Levites, [11] and Aaron shall present the Levites before the LORD as an elevation offering from the Israelites, that they may do the service of the LORD. [12] The Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and he shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites. [13] Then you shall have the Levites stand before Aaron and his sons, and you shall present them as an elevation offering to the LORD.

[14] Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the other Israelites, and the Levites shall be mine. [15] Thereafter the Levites may

[a] Heb *him*
[b] Or *the cover*
[c] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

7.89: Moses in the tabernacle. *Mercy seat*, lit., "cover"; the translation "mercy seat," already found in the LXX, may derive from the rite of atonement that takes place at the ark (see Lev 16). The iconography of the cherubim may derive from the Jerusalem Temple of the monarchic period, where God is described as enthroned upon two cherubim (Ps 99.1–5) ten cubits (14.5 ft [4.4 m]) in height, each with a single wingspan of five cubits (1 Kings 6.23–28; 8.7). The wings stretched the width of the inner chamber of the Jerusalem Temple, providing a throne for God. (See further Ex 25.10–22.)

8.1–4: Lampstand. The lampstand (Heb "menorah"), described earlier in the divine instructions to Moses (Ex 25.31–40) and in the account of its construction (Ex 37.17–24), is now put into use. **4:** The lampstand is depicted as a stylized tree, perhaps symbolizing a tree of life.

8.5–26: Dedication of the Levites. The Levites were separated from the Israelites in the general census (see 1.48–53n.); they are now dedicated to the service of the tabernacle where they also function as substitutes for the Israelite firstborn (see chs 3–4). In contrast to the consecration of the Aaronide priests in Lev 8–9, the Levites undergo a process of purification. Consecration makes Aaronide priests holy, allowing them to handle sacred objects in the tabernacle and to officiate at the altar; purification separates Levites from lay Israelites, but they do not achieve the holy status of the Aaronide priests. Levites do not enter the tabernacle, nor do they officiate at the altar, but guard the sanctuary and serve the priests. **7:** *Water of purification* occurs only in this text; it may be related to the "water of cleansing" in 19.9. Shaving for purification is also involved in purification for skin disease (Lev 14.8) and in the instructions for the nazirite (Num 6.9). Washing clothes is also part of the purification ritual for skin disease (Lev 14.8) and the ritual preparation of the people for theophany at Mount Sinai (Ex 19.10). **9–13:** Laying on of hands and sacrifices follow the purification rituals. **11:** *Elevation offering,* ritual presentation of the offering to God; see 6.20; Ex 29.26–27; Lev 7.30. **12:** *Sin offering,* see Lev 4.1–5.13; *burnt*

go in to do service at the tent of meeting, once you have cleansed them and presented them as an elevation offering. 16 For they are unreservedly given to me from among the Israelites; I have taken them for myself, in place of all that open the womb, the firstborn of all the Israelites. 17 For all the firstborn among the Israelites are mine, both human and animal. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I consecrated them for myself, 18 but I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the Israelites. 19 Moreover, I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the Israelites, to do the service for the Israelites at the tent of meeting, and to make atonement for the Israelites, in order that there may be no plague among the Israelites for coming too close to the sanctuary.

20 Moses and Aaron and the whole congregation of the Israelites did with the Levites accordingly; the Israelites did with the Levites just as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning them. 21 The Levites purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes; then Aaron presented them as an elevation offering before the LORD, and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them. 22 Thereafter the Levites went in to do their service in the tent of meeting in attendance on Aaron and his sons. As the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did with them.

23 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 24 This applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall begin to do duty in the service of the tent of meeting; 25 and from the age of fifty years they shall retire from the duty of the service and serve no more. 26 They may assist their brothers in the tent of meeting in carrying out their duties, but they shall perform no service. Thus you shall do with the Levites in assigning their duties.

9 The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: 2 Let the Israelites keep the passover at its appointed time. 3 On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight,[a] you shall keep it at its appointed time; according to all its statutes and all its regulations you shall keep it. 4 So Moses told the Israelites that they should keep the passover. 5 They kept the passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight,[a] in the wilderness of Sinai. Just as the LORD had commanded Moses, so the Israelites did. 6 Now there were certain people who were unclean through touching a corpse, so that they could not keep the passover on that day. They came before Moses and Aaron on that day, 7 and said to him, "Although we are unclean through touching a corpse, why must we be kept from presenting the LORD's offering at its appointed time among the Israelites?" 8 Moses spoke to them, "Wait, so that I may hear what the LORD will command concerning you."

9 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 10 Speak to the Israelites, saying: Anyone of you or your descendants who is unclean through touching a corpse, or is away on a journey, shall still keep the passover to the LORD. 11 In the second month on the fourteenth day, at twilight,[a] they shall keep it; they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 12 They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break a bone of it; according to all the statute for the passover they shall keep it. 13 But anyone who is clean and is not on a journey, and yet refrains from keeping the passover, shall be cut off from the people for not presenting the LORD's offering at its appointed time; such a one shall bear the consequences for the sin.

[a] Heb *between the two evenings*

offering; see Lev 1.3–17. **20–22:** A typical Priestly fulfillment report (see Lev 8.36n.).

9.1–14: Passover. The first passover took place when Israel was in the land of Egypt (see Ex 12); the second, here, is the conclusion to the revelation at Mount Sinai. The law here summarizes the earlier instruction (Ex 12), and then addresses the problem of individuals who are unable to observe the festival at its mandated time. **9–14:** The solution is for Israelites and resident aliens unable to observe passover because of corpse contamination or because they are on a journey to do so exactly as prescribed in Exodus, but one month later. Provision for such a deferred celebration appears only with passover, highlighting its importance: all Israelites and resident aliens must observe it. *Cut off,* separated from *the people* of Israel; cf. 19.13.

14 Any alien residing among you who wishes to keep the passover to the LORD shall do so according to the statute of the passover and according to its regulation; you shall have one statute for both the resident alien and the native.

15 On the day the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the covenant;[a] and from evening until morning it was over the tabernacle, having the appearance of fire. 16 It was always so: the cloud covered it by day[b] and the appearance of fire by night. 17 Whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, then the Israelites would set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the Israelites would camp. 18 At the command of the LORD the Israelites would set out, and at the command of the LORD they would camp. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they would remain in camp. 19 Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the Israelites would keep the charge of the LORD, and would not set out. 20 Sometimes the cloud would remain a few days over the tabernacle, and according to the command of the LORD they would remain in camp; then according to the command of the LORD they would set out. 21 Sometimes the cloud would remain from evening until morning; and when the cloud lifted in the morning, they would set out, or if it continued for a day and a night, when the cloud lifted they would set out. 22 Whether it was two days, or a month, or a longer time, that the cloud continued over the tabernacle, resting upon it, the Israelites would remain in camp and would not set out; but when it lifted they would set out. 23 At the command of the LORD they would camp, and at the command of the LORD they would set out. They kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by Moses.

10 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Make two silver trumpets; you shall make them of hammered work; and you shall use them for summoning the congregation, and for breaking camp. 3 When both are blown, the whole congregation shall assemble before you at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 4 But if only one is blown, then the leaders, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall assemble before you. 5 When you blow an alarm, the camps on the east side shall set out; 6 when you blow a second alarm, the camps on the south side shall set out. An alarm is to be blown whenever they are to set out. 7 But when the assembly is to be gathered, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm. 8 The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; this shall be a perpetual institution for you throughout your generations. 9 When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, so that you may be remembered before the LORD your God and be saved from your enemies. 10 Also on your days of rejoicing, at your appointed festivals, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over your sacrifices of well-being; they shall serve as a reminder on your behalf before the LORD your God: I am the LORD your God.

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[b] Gk Syr Vg: Heb lacks *by day*

9.15–23: Cloud and wilderness march. A description of the cloud associated with the tabernacle that symbolizes the presence of God as fire (see Ex 24.15–18), anticipating the departure in 10.11–28. **15:** *On the day the tabernacle was set up,* see Ex 40.1,17. *Tent of the covenant,* another name for "the tent of meeting." **17–23:** The cloud guides Israel in the wilderness journey, signaling when they march and when and where they camp (see Ex 40.34–38). *The command of the LORD* (v. 18) is mediated through Moses (v. 23), who signals when to break down the camp for travel and when to set it up for periods of rest. The rest periods may reflect the Priestly ritual calendar (chs 28–29), where distinct sacrifices and feasts require different periods of time.

10.1–10: Trumpets, likely narrow tubes with a bell-shaped end. **1–8**: The purpose of the unit is to clarify that Aaronide priests blow the trumpets to summon the congregation and to prepare the camp for travel in the wilderness. **9–10:** Once the people reach the land, the trumpets will serve to summon the people to war and to observe feast days.

11 In the second year, in the second month,
on the twentieth day of the month, the
cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the
covenant.[a] 12 Then the Israelites set out by
stages from the wilderness of Sinai, and
the cloud settled down in the wilderness
of Paran. 13 They set out for the first time at
the command of the LORD by Moses. 14 The
standard of the camp of Judah set out first,
company by company, and over the whole
company was Nahshon son of Amminadab.
15 Over the company of the tribe of Issachar
was Nethanel son of Zuar; 16 and over the
company of the tribe of Zebulun was Eliab
son of Helon.

17 Then the tabernacle was taken down,
and the Gershonites and the Merarites, who
carried the tabernacle, set out. 18 Next the
standard of the camp of Reuben set out,
company by company; and over the whole
company was Elizur son of Shedeur. 19 Over
the company of the tribe of Simeon was
Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, 20 and over the
company of the tribe of Gad was Eliasaph son
of Deuel.

21 Then the Kohathites, who carried the
holy things, set out; and the tabernacle was
set up before their arrival. 22 Next the stand-
ard of the Ephraimite camp set out, company
by company, and over the whole company
was Elishama son of Ammihud. 23 Over the
company of the tribe of Manasseh was Gama-
liel son of Pedahzur, 24 and over the company
of the tribe of Benjamin was Abidan son of
Gideoni.

25 Then the standard of the camp of Dan,
acting as the rear guard of all the camps,
set out, company by company, and over the
whole company was Ahiezer son of Ammi-
shaddai. 26 Over the company of the tribe of
Asher was Pagiel son of Ochran, 27 and over
the company of the tribe of Naphtali was

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

10.11–22.1: Wilderness journey. The wilderness journey includes a series of complaint stories, sometimes called the murmuring tradition. The complaints begin immediately when the Israelites leave Egypt and continue through the entire wilderness journey (Ex 14.11–12; 15.22–26; 16; 17.1–7; Num 11.1–3,4–35; 14; 16–17; 20.2–13; 21.4–9). The murmuring of the Israelites arises from threatening situations in the wilderness over lack of food and water, disease, or fear of the inhabitants of Canaan, all of which cause the Israelites to protest their present condition. The complaint is accompanied by a longing to return to slavery in Egypt, which shows a lack of faith in the leadership of the LORD and Moses and eventually leads to the death of the generation that had escaped from Egypt. The murmuring stories intensify from episodes of testing (Ex 14–18) before the Israelites receive the law at Mount Sinai (Ex 19–Num 10) to instances of disobedience after the revelation of law (Num 11–21). The motif of complaint occurs in both non-Priestly and Priestly sources, indicating its importance. Non-Priestly accounts of complaint are the most prominent in the wilderness journey, appearing during the confrontation at the Red Sea (Ex 14.11–12); in the journey to the divine mountain when the people are confronted with diseased water (Ex 15.22–26) or lack water (Ex 17.1–7); and in the journey toward the Promised Land when the people complain about misfortune (Num 11.1–3), the lack of meat (11.4–35), the report on the land by the scouts (14.1b,3–4), and the leadership of Moses and God (16.1–2 partial, 12–14; 21.4–9). Priestly accounts of complaint are less frequent but equally important; the motif appears in the journey to the divine mountain in the complaint over food which results in the miracle of manna (Ex 16.1–3); and in the journey toward the Promised Land when the people complain about the report of the scouts (Num 14.1a,2) and the lack of water (20.2–4).

10.11–36: Leaving Sinai. Two accounts describe the Israelites' departure from Mount Sinai. The Priestly version (10.11–28) describes the departure from "the wilderness of Sinai" and the leading of the cloud; it incorporates the language, characters, and tribal organization from 1.1–10.10. The non-Priestly version (10.29–35) describes Israel's departure from "the mount of the LORD," led by the ark of the covenant.

10.11–28. Organization of the wilderness march. The divine instructions of chs 2–3 are carried out. **11:** The departure from Mount Sinai follows the second passover (see 9.1–14n.). **12:** The cloud guides Israel (see 9.17–23n.) *by stages* from *Sinai* to *Paran* (see 12.16). *Paran*, location uncertain; it is described as a desert site between Midian and Egypt (1 Kings 11.18) and as the desert home of the LORD (Hab 3.3). **13–28:** The organization of the wilderness march consists of four military standards: Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and the tabernacle carried by the Kohathites; Reuben, Simeon, and Gad; Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin; and the rear guard of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali.

Ahira son of Enan. 28 This was the order of march of the Israelites, company by company, when they set out.

29 Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for the LORD has promised good to Israel." 30 But he said to him, "I will not go, but I will go back to my own land and to my kindred." 31 He said, "Do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. 32 Moreover, if you go with us, whatever good the LORD does for us, the same we will do for you."

33 So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey with the ark of the covenant of the LORD going before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them, 34 the cloud of the LORD being over them by day when they set out from the camp.

35 Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say,

"Arise, O LORD, let your enemies be
scattered,
and your foes flee before you."

36 And whenever it came to rest, he would say,

"Return, O LORD of the ten thousand
thousands of Israel."[a]

11 Now when the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, the LORD heard it and his anger was kindled. Then the fire of the LORD burned against them, and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. 2 But the people cried out to Moses; and Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire abated. 3 So that place was called Taberah,[b] because the fire of the LORD burned against them.

4 The rabble among them had a strong craving; and the Israelites also wept again, and said, "If only we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; 6 but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

7 Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color was like the color of gum resin.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] That is *Burning*

10.29–36. The ark leading the people. A second, non-Priestly account of the departure, from "the mount of the LORD" rather than from "the wilderness of Sinai." **29–32**: The departure begins with a request for guidance between Moses and Hobab, his father-in-law (see Judg 4.11; named Jethro in Ex 3.1; 4.18; and 18.1, and Reuel in Ex 2.18; 3.1), which Hobab apparently refuses. **33**: The ark replaces Hobab as guide. **35–36:** The role of ark in war. The first verse, which assumes that Israel's enemies are also the LORD's enemies, describes the ability of the LORD, present in the ark, to overwhelm them (cf. Ps 68.2); the second envisions the successful return of the LORD from battle.

11.1–12.15: The prophetic spirit of Moses. Three stories of varying length describing conflicts: general complaint of the rabble, who are destroyed by fire (11.1–3); complaint about the lack of food (11.4–35); and challenge to the status of Moses as a prophetic leader (ch 12). The last two stories explore how portions of Moses's prophetic spirit can be transferred to other leaders (11.4–35) but maintain the unique status of Moses as a prophet (ch 12).

11.1–3: Complaint at Taberah. An etiology in the non-Priestly version of the wilderness journey, explaining the origin of the name Taberah, "burning." Its sequence of events provides the pattern for many of the following complaint stories (see 10.11–21.35n.): complaint by the people; divine punishment; the cry of the people; the intercession of Moses; and the end of the divine judgment. **1:** The complaint here lacks specific details. As in the stories of the golden calf (Ex 32.11–14) and the scouts (Num 14.13–20), Moses's intercession persuades God not to destroy the people.

11.4–35: Moses and the seventy elders. Continuing the non-Priestly account of the wilderness journey, this complaint story over food also explores the prophetic leadership of Moses and the transfer of a portion of his spirit on elders to assist in leadership (see also Ex 18). The overlapping roles of the spirit of the LORD and the spirit of Moses tie the events of the chapter together. **4:** *Rabble,* cf. Ex 12.38 (which uses a different Hebrew word). This group has *a strong craving* (Heb "ta'avah") for meat, thus rejecting the manna provided for Israel. This story too is etiological: in v. 34 the place is named Kibroth-hattaavah. **7–9:** For other descriptions of *manna,* see Ex

8 The people went around and gathered it,
ground it in mills or beat it in mortars, then
boiled it in pots and made cakes of it; and
the taste of it was like the taste of cakes
baked with oil. 9 When the dew fell on the
camp in the night, the manna would fall
with it.

10 Moses heard the people weeping
throughout their families, all at the en-
trances of their tents. Then the LORD be-
came very angry, and Moses was displeased.
11 So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have you
treated your servant so badly? Why have I
not found favor in your sight, that you lay
the burden of all this people on me? 12 Did
I conceive all this people? Did I give birth
to them, that you should say to me, 'Carry
them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a
sucking child, to the land that you promised
on oath to their ancestors'? 13 Where am I
to get meat to give to all this people? For
they come weeping to me and say, 'Give us
meat to eat!' 14 I am not able to carry all this
people alone, for they are too heavy for me.
15 If this is the way you are going to treat me,
put me to death at once—if I have found
favor in your sight—and do not let me see
my misery."

16 So the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for
me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom
you know to be the elders of the people and
officers over them; bring them to the tent of
meeting, and have them take their place there
with you. 17 I will come down and talk with
you there; and I will take some of the spirit
that is on you and put it on them; and they
shall bear the burden of the people along
with you so that you will not bear it all by
yourself. 18 And say to the people: Consecrate
yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat
meat; for you have wailed in the hearing of
the LORD, saying, 'If only we had meat to eat!
Surely it was better for us in Egypt.' Therefore
the LORD will give you meat, and you shall
eat. 19 You shall eat not only one day, or two
days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days,
20 but for a whole month—until it comes out
of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to
you—because you have rejected the LORD
who is among you, and have wailed before
him, saying, 'Why did we ever leave Egypt?' "
21 But Moses said, "The people I am with
number six hundred thousand on foot; and
you say, 'I will give them meat, that they may
eat for a whole month'! 22 Are there enough
flocks and herds to slaughter for them? Are
there enough fish in the sea to catch for
them?" 23 The LORD said to Moses, "Is the
LORD's power limited?[a] Now you shall see
whether my word will come true for you or
not."

24 So Moses went out and told the people
the words of the LORD; and he gathered sev-
enty elders of the people, and placed them all
around the tent. 25 Then the LORD came down
in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some
of the spirit that was on him and put it on the
seventy elders; and when the spirit rested
upon them, they prophesied. But they did not
do so again.

26 Two men remained in the camp, one
named Eldad, and the other named Medad,
and the spirit rested on them; they were
among those registered, but they had not
gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied
in the camp. 27 And a young man ran and told
Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying
in the camp." 28 And Joshua son of Nun, the

[a] Heb *LORD's hand too short?*

16.14–15,31; Ps 78.25. **11:** *Why have I not found favor in your sight*, cf. Ex 33.12–23. **12:** God is described as the mother who conceived and gave birth to the people, and Moses is their wet nurse. **15:** *Put me to death at once*, similar requests are made only by the prophets Elijah (1 Kings 19.4) and Jonah (Jon 4.8). **16–17:** God instructs Moses to select seventy elders who will share his *spirit* (Heb "ruaḥ"; also vv. 25,26,29) and thus aid him in leadership (see Ex 24.1,9). **25:** *But they did not do so again*: the charisma of Moses's spirit in the seventy elders idealizes prophetic inspiration, but the temporary nature of the experience distinguishes their charismatic leadership from classical prophets who prophesied continually. **26–30:** The unexpected transfer of the spirit of Moses to Eldad and Medad explores further the nature of prophecy. **26–27:** Eldad and Medad are *registered*, lit., "written (down)," as members of the camp, but not leaders. *The spirit rested on them*, the transfer of the spirit of Moses cannot be fully controlled through religious rituals nor restricted to designated leaders. **28–29:** *Joshua*, one of Moses's close associates (see further Ex 17.8–16; 24.13; 32.17; 33.11) and his eventual divinely designated successor (Num 27.12–23),

assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men,[a] said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" [29] But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!" [30] And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

[31] Then a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quails from the sea and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, about two cubits deep on the ground. [32] So the people worked all that day and night and all the next day, gathering the quails; the least anyone gathered was ten homers; and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. [33] But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague. [34] So that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah,[b] because there they buried the people who had the craving. [35] From Kibroth-hattaavah the people journeyed to Hazeroth.

12 While they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had indeed married a Cushite woman); [2] and they said, "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it. [3] Now the man Moses was very humble,[c] more so than anyone else on the face of the earth. [4] Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting." So the three of them came out. [5] Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the entrance of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forward. [6] And he said, "Hear my words:

When there are prophets among you,
I the LORD make myself known to them
in visions;
I speak to them in dreams.
[7] Not so with my servant Moses;
he is entrusted with all my house.
[8] With him I speak face to face—clearly,
not in riddles;
and he beholds the form of the LORD.

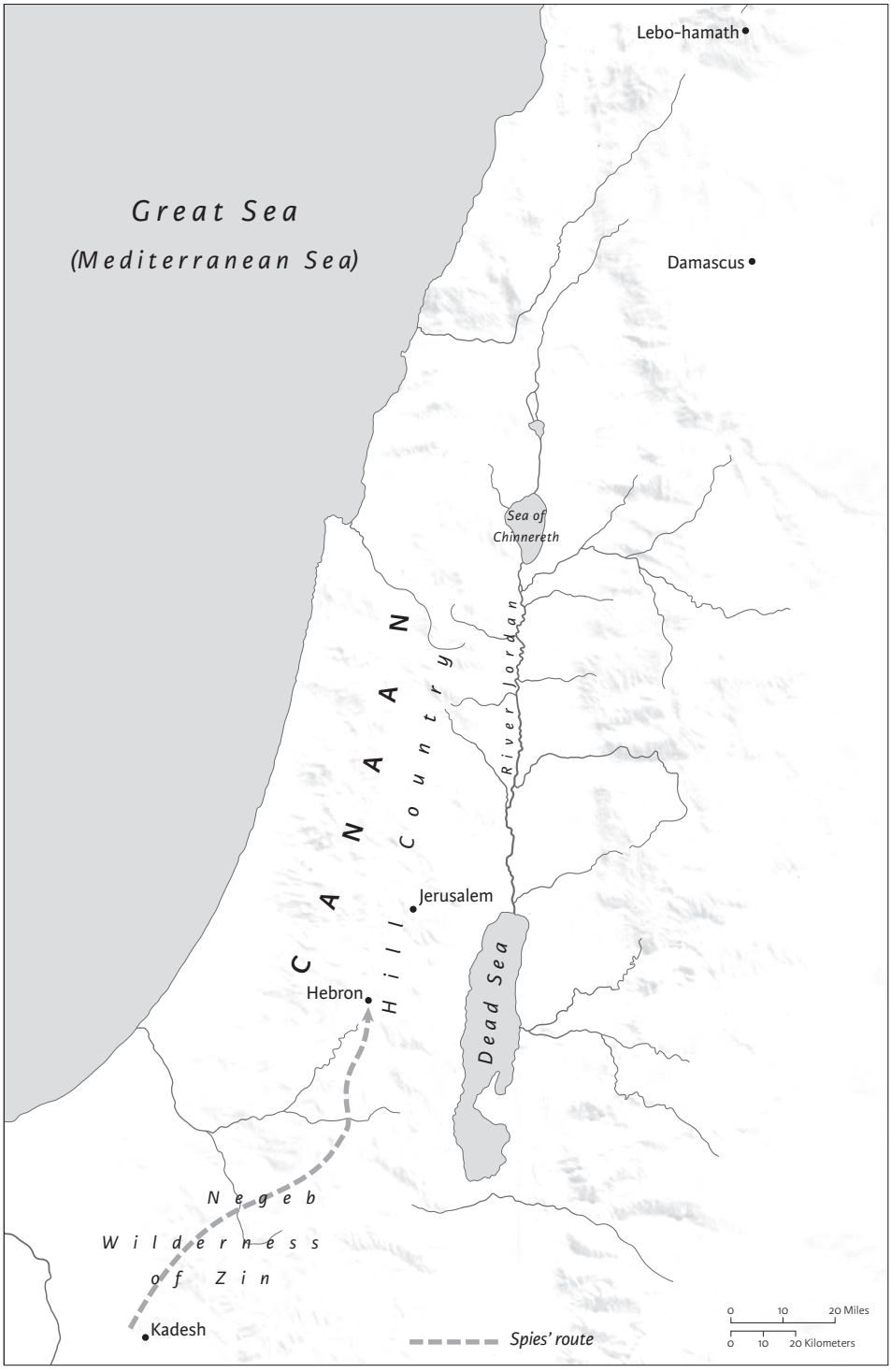
Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" [9] And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed.

[10] When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had become leprous,[d] as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam and saw that she was leprous. [11] Then Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, do not

[a] Or *of Moses from his youth*
[b] That is *Graves of craving*
[c] Or *devout*
[d] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

here described as one of the *chosen men,* seeks to control and to restrict the spirit, but Moses rejects any limitation of his spirit. **31–35:** A wind (Heb "ruaḥ"; see vv. 16–17n.) from God brings so many quails that they blanket a large area around the camp about 3 ft (0.9 m) deep. Everyone gathers at least 65 bu (2,300 L), but as they are eating God strikes them with a plague, and the chapter ends as it began. Cf. Ex 16.13; Ps 78.26–31.

12.1–15: Conflict between Miriam and Aaron, and Moses. The non-Priestly version of the wilderness journey probes the prophetic leadership of Moses further. Miriam and Aaron claim the same prophetic authority as Moses, but the story highlights the unique character and status of Moses. **1–2:** *Miriam* and *Aaron* are described as prophets during the Exodus (Ex 7.1; Ex 15.20). They challenge Moses because he is married to a *Cushite woman*; such a marriage is inconsistent with the tradition of Moses's marriage to Zipporah, a Midianite (see Ex 2.21–22). In most sources, Cush is in Africa south of Egypt, although in Hab 3.7 Cushan is parallel to Midian. **3:** The *humble* (Heb "'anaw") seek God (Ps 22.27), rejoice in God (Ps 63.33), and do justice (Isa 11.4), so that God hears (Ps 10.17), instructs (Ps 25.9), and saves them (Ps 76.10). **6–8:** God defends the incomparable nature of Moses in an oracle contrasting prophetic clairvoyance with the unique direct divine communication to Moses. **6:** *Vision and dream,* see Deut 13.1–5. **8:** *Face to face*, lit., "mouth to mouth"; similar language appears in Ex 33.11; 34.29–35; see also Deut 34.10. **10:** *Miriam had become leprous*. The reason for singling out Miriam for punishment is unclear; perhaps the unusual feminine form of the verb in v. 1, "she spoke against" (NRSV: "Miriam and Aaron spoke against") underscores Miriam's central role in the dispute with Moses. **11–12:** Illustrates the special status of Moses, when Aaron requests that he intercede for Miriam, whose "leprosy" (see textual note *d* and 5.1–4n.)



The route of the spies in chapter 13.

punish us[a] for a sin that we have so foolishly committed. 12 Do not let her be like one stillborn, whose flesh is half consumed when it comes out of its mother's womb." 13 And Moses cried to the LORD, "O God, please heal her." 14 But the LORD said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp for seven days, and after that she may be brought in again." 15 So Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days; and the people did not set out on the march until Miriam had been brought in again. 16 After that the people set out from Hazeroth, and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

13 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites; from each of their ancestral tribes you shall send a man, every one a leader among them." 3 So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran, according to the command of the LORD, all of them leading men among the Israelites. 4 These were their names: From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur; 5 from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori; 6 from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh; 7 from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph; 8 from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun; 9 from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu; 10 from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi; 11 from the tribe of Joseph (that is, from the tribe of Manasseh), Gaddi son of Susi; 12 from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli; 13 from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael; 14 from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi; 15 from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Machi. 16 These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses changed the name of Hoshea son of Nun to Joshua.

17 Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up there into the Negeb, and go up into the hill country, 18 and see what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, 19 and whether the land they live in is good or bad, and whether the towns that they live in are unwalled or fortified, 20 and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it

[a] Heb *do not lay sin upon us*

threatens to make her like a stillborn baby. **14:** *Spit in her face* may indicate contempt (Deut 25.9), insult (Isa 50.6), or impurity (Lev 15.8). *Seven days,* cf. Lev 13.4; 14.8. Moses's intercession prompts divine healing, illustrating his special status with God. **16:** *Paran,* see 10.12n.

13.1–14.45: Story of the scouts and its consequences. The story, which combines two different sources, explains why the first generation of Israelites to leave Egypt lost the gift of the land (chs 13–14). The non-Priestly version locates the Israelites at Kadesh (part of 13.26). The plot is centered on the mission of scouts to prepare for conquest (13.17b–20); they penetrate the land as far north as Hebron, take grapes from the Wadi Eschol, and all but Caleb (13.30) report on the fierce population (13.22–24,27–29,31); the people fear the Canaanite population and rebel (14.1b,3–4); Caleb again responds unsuccessfully to the people (part of 14.6,8–9); God and Moses debate the fate of the nation (14.11–25); the account ends with a failed attempt at conquest (14.39–45). The Priestly version takes place at Paran (see 12.16; 13.3, part of v. 26). The plot includes the mission of the scouts to evaluate the land itself, not the population (13.17a); to accomplish the mission they go to the northern border in their exploration (13.21,25); they give a bad report of the land stating that it eats its inhabitants (13.32–33); the congregation rebels (14.1a,2,5); Joshua and Caleb respond unsuccessfully to the people (part of 14. 6 and 10); and God desires to destroy the people (14.26–38)

13.1–20: Selection of the scouts and their instructions. 1: *To spy out*, Heb *tur*, better "to explore, to scout out." **4–16:** The list of the leaders from each tribe sent into the land is unique to this passage. **6:** *Caleb* will emerge as the hero of the story in one tradition (non-P, v. 30). **8:** *Hoshea,* alternate spelling of "Joshua" (see v. 16; Deut 32.44). In the P version of the story, both Joshua and Caleb are the heroes (14.6,30,38). **17:** *The Negeb,* the semidesert region in southern Israel. **20:** *The season,* late summer.

13.21–33: Mission and report of the scouts. 21–24: Two descriptions of the mission are stated: The men explore all of the land Canaan to the northernmost boundary of Lebo-hamath (in modern Lebanon; see 34.8) to provide an evaluation of the land (v. 21); and the men travel only to the southern border of the land for recon-

or not. Be bold, and bring some of the fruit of the land." Now it was the season of the first ripe grapes.

21 So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. 22 They went up into the Negeb, and came to Hebron; and Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the Anakites, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23 And they came to the Wadi Eshcol, and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them. They also brought some pomegranates and figs. 24 That place was called the Wadi Eshcol,[a] because of the cluster that the Israelites cut down from there.

25 At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. 26 And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the Israelites in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites live in the land of the Negeb; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live by the sea, and along the Jordan."

30 But Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it." 31 Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we." 32 So they brought to the Israelites an unfavorable report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are of great size. 33 There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

14 Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" 4 So they said to one another, "Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt."

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the Israelites. 6 And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to all the congregation of the Israelites, "The land that we went through as spies is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. 9 Only, do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are no more than bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." 10 But the whole congregation threatened to stone them.

Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. 11 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? 12 I will

[a] That is *Cluster*

naissance in preparation for conquest (vv. 22–24). **22:** *Anakites*, race of fearful giants descended from Anak (see Deut 9.2; Josh 14.12,15; 15.13–19). **25–33:** Two versions of the negative report of the scouts. **26:** *Kadesh*, also called "Kadesh-barnea" (32.8), where the Israelites will stay until 20.22, is usually identified with Ain el-Qudeirat, ca. 50 mi (80 km) south of Beer-sheba. **30:** *Caleb,* see v. 6n. **33:** *Nephilim,* see Gen 6.4.

14.1–45: Responses to the report of the scouts. 1–4: A rebellious attempt to return to Egypt; cf. 11.4–6; 20.4; Ex 16.3. **5:** *Fell on their faces* signifies anger (see 16.4). **6–9:** Joshua and Caleb (see 13.8n.) reaffirm the goodness of the land and attempt to dissuade the people. **9:** *Protection,* lit., "shadow, shade," of their deities; the same metaphor is frequently used of the LORD (e.g., Pss 91.1; 121.5). **11–38:** God responds twice; each speech begins with a

strike them with pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

13 But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for in your might you brought up this people from among them, 14 and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people; for you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go in front of them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. 15 Now if you kill this people all at one time, then the nations who have heard about you will say, 16 'It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land he swore to give them that he has slaughtered them in the wilderness.' 17 And now, therefore, let the power of the LORD be great in the way that you promised when you spoke, saying,

18 'The LORD is slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love,
forgiving iniquity and transgression,
but by no means clearing the guilty,
visiting the iniquity of the parents
upon the children
to the third and the fourth generation.'

19 Forgive the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have pardoned this people, from Egypt even until now."

20 Then the LORD said, "I do forgive, just as you have asked; 21 nevertheless—as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD— 22 none of the people who have seen my glory and the signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, 23 shall see the land that I swore to give to their ancestors; none of those who despised me shall see it. 24 But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me wholeheartedly, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it. 25 Now, since the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valleys, turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea."[a]

26 And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: 27 How long shall this wicked congregation complain against me? I have heard the complaints of the Israelites, which they complain against me. 28 Say to them, "As I live," says the LORD, "I will do to you the very things I heard you say: 29 your dead bodies shall fall in this very wilderness; and of all your number, included in the census, from twenty years old and upward, who have complained against me, 30 not one of you shall come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. 31 But your little ones, who you said would become booty, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have despised. 32 But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. 33 And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. 34 According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure." 35 I the LORD have spoken; surely I will do thus to all this wicked congregation gathered together

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

statement of disgust to Moses: "How long . . ." (vv.11,27). **13–19:** Moses intercedes for the nation with two arguments: killing the Israelites would lead the nations to judge the LORD to be unreliable (see Ex 32.11–14); and the central characteristic of the LORD is mercy (see Ex 34.6–7). **14:** *Face to face,* lit., "eye to eye." **20–24:** God agrees to forgive; the entire nation is not destroyed instantly, but the gift of the land is transferred to the children. **22:** *Ten times,* i.e., repeatedly. **24:** *Caleb,* see 13.6n. **25:** *Amalekites*, see Ex 17.8–16. *Red Sea,* See textual note *a* and Ex 13.18. **26–38:** Second response: God provides more detail on punishment. **29–30:** Those who murmured and were over the age of twenty (those included in the census; see 1.3) will die in the wilderness; here both Joshua and Caleb are exceptions (see 13.8n.). **31:** The children will inherit the land instead of their parents. **33:** *Faithlessness,* lit., "promiscuities," understood metaphorically. **34–35:** The length of the punishment is determined in a measure for measure manner by the offense, the forty days in which the land was explored is translated into forty years of wilderness wandering. Elsewhere these forty years are often interpreted positively, as a time when God

against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.

36 And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report about the land— 37 the men who brought an unfavorable report about the land died by a plague before the LORD. 38 But Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh alone remained alive, of those men who went to spy out the land.

39 When Moses told these words to all the Israelites, the people mourned greatly. 40 They rose early in the morning and went up to the heights of the hill country, saying, "Here we are. We will go up to the place that the LORD has promised, for we have sinned." 41 But Moses said, "Why do you continue to transgress the command of the LORD? That will not succeed. 42 Do not go up, for the LORD is not with you; do not let yourselves be struck down before your enemies. 43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will confront you there, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned back from following the LORD, the LORD will not be with you." 44 But they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country, even though the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, had not left the camp. 45 Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them, pursuing them as far as Hormah.

15 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving you, 3 and you make an offering by fire to the LORD from the herd or from the flock—whether a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or at your appointed festivals—to make a pleasing odor for the LORD, 4 then whoever presents such an offering to the LORD shall present also a grain offering, one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour, mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil. 5 Moreover, you shall offer one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb. 6 For a ram, you shall offer a grain offering, two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil; 7 and as a drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine, a pleasing odor to the LORD. 8 When you offer a bull as a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as an offering of well-being to the LORD, 9 then you shall present with the bull a grain offering, three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour, mixed with half a hin of oil, 10 and you shall present as a drink offering half a hin of wine, as an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD.

11 Thus it shall be done for each ox or ram, or for each of the male lambs or the kids. 12 According to the number that you offer, so you shall do with each and every one. 13 Every native Israelite shall do these things in this way, in presenting an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD. 14 An alien who lives with you, or who takes up permanent residence among you, and wishes to offer an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD, shall do as you do. 15 As for the assembly, there shall be for both you and the resident alien a single statute, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you and the alien shall be alike before the LORD. 16 You and the alien who resides with you shall have the same law and the same ordinance.

17 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 18 Speak to the Israelites and say to them: After you come into the land to which I am bringing you, 19 whenever you eat of the bread of the land, you shall present a

cared for Israel (e.g., Ex 16.5; Deut 2.7; 8.4; 29.5). **39–45:** The story concludes with an account of an unsuccessful war against the Canaanites, in which Yahweh, represented by the ark, is not with the people. **45:** *Hormah*, perhaps Tel Masos, ca. 7 mi (10 km) southeast of Beer-sheba; the town's name is explained by wordplay: Heb *ḥormah* means "utter destruction" (see also 21.2n., 3; Judg 1.17).

15.1–3: Legislation for Israel's future life in the land. The loss of the land is followed by instructions, most of which point ahead to Israel's life in the land (15.1–16,17–31). **1–16:** Instruction on the grain and liquid offerings to accompany animal sacrifices (see Lev 1–3; Ezek 46.5–14). **3:** *Pleasing odor*, acceptable sacrifice (see Gen 8.29; Ex 29.18; Lev 1.3; etc.). **4:** *One-tenth of an ephah,* ca. 2 qts (2.3 L); *one-fourth of a hin,* ca. 1 qt (.95 L). **14–16:** As with the passover (see 9.14; Ex 12.48), these instructions also apply to resident aliens. **17–21:** Requirement

donation to the LORD. 20 From your first batch of dough you shall present a loaf as a donation; you shall present it just as you present a donation from the threshing floor. 21 Throughout your generations you shall give to the LORD a donation from the first of your batch of dough.

22 But if you unintentionally fail to observe all these commandments that the LORD has spoken to Moses— 23 everything that the LORD has commanded you by Moses, from the day the LORD gave commandment and thereafter, throughout your generations— 24 then if it was done unintentionally without the knowledge of the congregation, the whole congregation shall offer one young bull for a burnt offering, a pleasing odor to the LORD, together with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one male goat for a sin offering. 25 The priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the Israelites, and they shall be forgiven; it was unintentional, and they have brought their offering, an offering by fire to the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their error. 26 All the congregation of the Israelites shall be forgiven, as well as the aliens residing among them, because the whole people was involved in the error.

27 An individual who sins unintentionally shall present a female goat a year old for a sin offering. 28 And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the one who commits an error, when it is unintentional, to make atonement for the person, who then shall be forgiven. 29 For both the native among the Israelites and the alien residing among them—you shall have the same law for anyone who acts in error. 30 But whoever acts high-handedly, whether a native or an alien, affronts the LORD, and shall be cut off from among the people. 31 Because of having despised the word of the LORD and broken his commandment, such a person shall be utterly cut off and bear the guilt.

32 When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the sabbath day. 33 Those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses, Aaron, and to the whole congregation. 34 They put him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. 35 Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him outside the camp." 36 The whole congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

37 The LORD said to Moses: 38 Speak to the Israelites, and tell them to make fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a blue cord on the fringe at each corner. 39 You have the fringe so that, when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and not follow the lust of your own heart and your own eyes. 40 So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God. 41 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God.

for a donation from the first batch of dough in the land (see Ezek 44.30). **22–31:** Rules regarding forgiveness from three distinct transgressions: unintentional communal sin (vv. 22–26); unintentional individual sin (vv. 27–29); intentional sin, which cannot be forgiven (vv. 30–31). The person must be "cut off" from the people, meaning excommunication (see 9.13) or execution (see Ex 12.15). **30:** *Affronts,* i.e., blasphemes.

15.32–41: Further legal material. 32–36: The case of a person collecting sticks on the sabbath. **32:** *Gathering sticks on the sabbath*, sabbath rest is commanded in the Decalogue (Ex 20.10–11) and in the revelation of the tabernacle (Ex 31.12–17; 35.1–3; see also Lev 23.3–4), but none of the texts address the topic of picking up sticks on the sabbath. The issue may be whether such activity constituted work. **35:** The lack of legal precedent requires a special revelation from the LORD to Moses for resolution, which is that the infraction required the death penalty. Other instances where an ambiguous situation demanded new law in the form of an oracle to Moses include the blasphemer (Lev 24.10–23); the second passover (9.6–13); and the rights of the daughters of Zelophehad (27.5–11). **37–41:** Divine instruction that the people sew blue tassels to the corners of their garments as a reminder of the law (see Deut 22.12).

16 Now Korah son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi, along with Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth—descendants of Reuben—took [2] two hundred fifty Israelite men, leaders of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men,[a] and they confronted Moses. [3] They assembled against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone too far! All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. So why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" [4] When Moses heard it, he fell on his face. [5] Then he said to Korah and all his company, "In the morning the LORD will make known who is his, and who is holy, and who will be allowed to approach him; the one whom he will choose he will allow to approach him. [6] Do this: take censers, Korah and all your[b] company, [7] and tomorrow put fire in them, and lay incense on them before the LORD; and the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the holy one. You Levites have gone too far!" [8] Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you Levites! [9] Is it too little for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to allow you to approach him in order to perform the duties of the LORD's tabernacle, and to stand before the congregation and serve them? [10] He has allowed you to approach him, and all your brother Levites with you; yet you seek the priesthood as well! [11] Therefore you and all your company have gathered together against the LORD. What is Aaron that you rail against him?"

[12] Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not come! [13] Is it too little that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, that you must also lord it over us? [14] It is clear you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Would you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come!"

[15] Moses was very angry and said to the LORD, "Pay no attention to their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, and I have not harmed any one of them." [16] And Moses said to Korah, "As for you and all your company, be present tomorrow before the LORD, you and they and Aaron; [17] and let each one of you take his censer, and put incense on it, and each one of you present his censer before the LORD, two hundred fifty censers; you also, and Aaron, each his censer." [18] So each man took his censer, and they put fire in the censers and laid incense on them, and they stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting with Moses and Aaron. [19] Then Korah assembled the whole congregation against them at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to the whole congregation.

[20] Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: [21] Separate yourselves from

[a] Cn: Heb *and they confronted Moses, and two hundred fifty men . . . well-known men*
[b] Heb *his*

16.1–17.13: Conflicts over priestly leadership.

16.1–40: Conflict with Korah and Dathan and Abiram. The narrative weaves together two conflicts over leadership. The non-Priestly version states that Dathan and Abiram from the tribe of Reuben (part of 16.1–2) accuse Moses of abusing power (16.12–14); Moses denies the accusation (16.15), approaches his accusers at the command of the LORD (part of 16.24 and 25), and warns the people to separate themselves (16.26b), before the families of Dathan and Abiram are swallowed up into the ground (16.27b–32a,33). The complaint of Dathan and Abiram is obscured in the present form of the story, in which the challenge to priestly power by Korah becomes the central theme. The Priestly version states that Korah from the tribe of Levi accuses Moses and Aaron of abusing priestly power in hoarding holiness (part of 16.1–2 and 3); at Moses's command the two parties undertake rituals with censers to determine who is holy (16.4–11,16–19); the LORD wishes to destroy the entire congregation in light of Korah's rebellion, prompting Moses and Aaron to intercede (16.20–22); Moses commands the people to separate themselves (part of 16.23 and 26b,27a); two hundred fifty persons offering incense are destroyed by fire (16.35); Eleazar the son of Aaron hammers the censers into plates as coverings for the altar (16.36–40). **15:** Moses defers the accusation to God, reversing his usual practice of interceding for the people with God. **18–19:** The ritual at the tent of meeting prompts a theophany of *the glory of the LORD* (see Ex 16.7n.). **21–22:** The LORD desires corporate punishment of the entire congregation for the Korah rebellion, but

this congregation, so that I may consume them in a moment. 22 They fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one person sin and you become angry with the whole congregation?"

23 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 24 Say to the congregation: Get away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. 25 So Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram; the elders of Israel followed him. 26 He said to the congregation, "Turn away from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, or you will be swept away for all their sins." 27 So they got away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrance of their tents, together with their wives, their children, and their little ones. 28 And Moses said, "This is how you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works; it has not been of my own accord: 29 If these people die a natural death, or if a natural fate comes on them, then the LORD has not sent me. 30 But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up, with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD."

31 As soon as he finished speaking all these words, the ground under them was split apart. 32 The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, along with their households—everyone who belonged to Korah and all their goods. 33 So they with all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol; the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. 34 All Israel around them fled at their outcry, for they said, "The earth will swallow us too!" 35 And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred fifty men offering the incense.

36 [a]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 37 Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to take the censers out of the blaze; then scatter the fire far and wide. 38 For the censers of these sinners have become holy at the cost of their lives. Make them into hammered plates as a covering for the altar, for they presented them before the LORD and they became holy. Thus they shall be a sign to the Israelites. 39 So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers that had been presented by those who were burned; and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar— 40 a reminder to the Israelites that no outsider, who is not of the descendants of Aaron, shall approach to offer incense before the LORD, so as not to become like Korah and his company—just as the LORD had said to him through Moses.

41 On the next day, however, the whole congregation of the Israelites rebelled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD." 42 And when the congregation had assembled against them, Moses and Aaron turned toward the tent of meeting; the cloud had covered it and the glory of the LORD appeared. 43 Then Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting, 44 and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 45 "Get away from this congregation, so that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces. 46 Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer, put fire on it from the altar and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them. For wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun." 47 So Aaron took it as Moses had ordered, and ran into the middle of the assembly, where the plague had already begun among the people. He put on the incense, and made atonement for the people. 48 He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stopped. 49 Those

[a] Ch 17.1 in Heb

Moses and Aaron intercede for individual punishment of the guilty only (see Ezek 18). *God of the spirits of all flesh,* an epithet used only here and in 27.16. **30:** *Sheol,* the abode of the dead. **36–40**: The episode concludes with an etiology concerning the origin of hammered plates on the altar made from the censers of Korah's company. The censers warn against assuming functions reserved for the priests descended from Aaron; they also demonstrate how what originated in sin became holy.

16.41–17.13: Special status of Aaron. Two stories underscore the special status of Aaron as priest: his ability to atone for the people (16.41–50), and his magical staff (17.1–13). **47:** Aaron repeats the ritual with censer that

who died by the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the affair of Korah. 50 When the plague was stopped, Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

17 [a]The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
2 Speak to the Israelites, and get twelve staffs from them, one for each ancestral house, from all the leaders of their ancestral houses. Write each man's name on his staff, 3 and write Aaron's name on the staff of Levi. For there shall be one staff for the head of each ancestral house. 4 Place them in the tent of meeting before the covenant,[b] where I meet with you. 5 And the staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout; thus I will put a stop to the complaints of the Israelites that they continually make against you. 6 Moses spoke to the Israelites; and all their leaders gave him staffs, one for each leader, according to their ancestral houses, twelve staffs; and the staff of Aaron was among theirs. 7 So Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the covenant.[b]

8 When Moses went into the tent of the covenant[b] on the next day, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted. It put forth buds, produced blossoms, and bore ripe almonds. 9 Then Moses brought out all the staffs from before the LORD to all the Israelites; and they looked, and each man took his staff. 10 And the LORD said to Moses, "Put back the staff of Aaron before the covenant,[b] to be kept as a warning to rebels, so that you may make an end of their complaints against me, or else they will die." 11 Moses did so; just as the LORD commanded him, so he did.

12 The Israelites said to Moses, "We are perishing; we are lost, all of us are lost! 13 Everyone who approaches the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all to perish?"

18 The LORD said to Aaron: You and your sons and your ancestral house with you shall bear responsibility for offenses connected with the sanctuary, while you and your sons alone shall bear responsibility for offenses connected with the priesthood. 2 So bring with you also your brothers of the tribe of Levi, your ancestral tribe, in order that they may be joined to you, and serve you while you and your sons with you are in front of the tent of the covenant.[b] 3 They shall perform duties for you and for the whole tent. But they must not approach either the utensils of the sanctuary or the altar, otherwise both they and you will die. 4 They are attached to you in order to perform the duties of the tent of meeting, for all the service of the tent; no outsider shall approach you.
5 You yourselves shall perform the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, so that wrath may never again come upon the Israelites. 6 It is I who now take your brother Levites from among the Israelites; they are now yours as a gift, dedicated to the LORD, to perform the service of the tent of meeting. 7 But you and your sons with you shall diligently perform your priestly duties in all

[a] Ch 17.16 in Heb
[b] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

destroyed Korah and followers, illustrating the priestly power to bring an end to the plague. **17.2:** The selection of one staff representing each tribal leader introduces a final ritual to demonstrate the election of the tribe of Levi and Aaron in particular for sanctuary duty. **7:** *Tent of the covenant*, see 9.15n. **8–11:** Only Aaron's staff has produced buds, blossoms, and ripe almonds, signifying his special status as priest. It is to be placed in the sanctuary as another warning against rebellion (cf. 16.40). **12–13:** The Israelites' fear that they will die if they approach the tabernacle sets the stage for the following regulations about approaching the sanctuary.

18.1–19.22: Responsibilities and rights of priests and Levites. The stories of conflict over priestly leadership are followed by guidelines of how to safeguard Israelites from divine wrath through proper rituals.

18.1–32: Rules for priests and Levites. 1–7: A divine speech to Aaron, rather than to Moses, outlines the safeguards to protect the people from perishing in the presence of God; Aaronide priests and Levites protect the Israelites from divine holiness. **1:** Direct divine address to Aaron is rare (18.1,8,20; Lev 10.8); all occur in situations of danger associated with the sanctuary, while also accentuating the authority of the priesthood. *Bear responsibility,* priests must monitor the purity of the sanctuary and its rituals, including the exclusion of any priests who are in an impure state (see Lev 10.8–11). **2–4:** Levites are designated to serve Aaronide priests, performing guard duty against encroachment. **5:** *Wrath may never again come,* cf. 1.51–53.

that concerns the altar and the area behind the curtain. I give your priesthood as a gift;[a] any outsider who approaches shall be put to death.

[8] The LORD spoke to Aaron: I have given you charge of the offerings made to me, all the holy gifts of the Israelites; I have given them to you and your sons as a priestly portion due you in perpetuity. [9] This shall be yours from the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs that they render to me as a most holy thing, whether grain offering, sin offering, or guilt offering, shall belong to you and your sons. [10] As a most holy thing you shall eat it; every male may eat it; it shall be holy to you. [11] This also is yours: I have given to you, together with your sons and daughters, as a perpetual due, whatever is set aside from the gifts of all the elevation offerings of the Israelites; everyone who is clean in your house may eat them. [12] All the best of the oil and all the best of the wine and of the grain, the choice produce that they give to the LORD, I have given to you. [13] The first fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours; everyone who is clean in your house may eat of it. [14] Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours. [15] The first issue of the womb of all creatures, human and animal, which is offered to the LORD, shall be yours; but the firstborn of human beings you shall redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. [16] Their redemption price, reckoned from one month of age, you shall fix at five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary (that is, twenty gerahs). [17] But the firstborn of a cow, or the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall dash their blood on the altar, and shall turn their fat into smoke as an offering by fire for a pleasing odor to the LORD; [18] but their flesh shall be yours, just as the breast that is elevated and as the right thigh are yours. [19] All the holy offerings that the Israelites present to the LORD I have given to you, together with your sons and daughters, as a perpetual due; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD for you and your descendants as well. [20] Then the LORD said to Aaron: You shall have no allotment in their land, nor shall you have any share among them; I am your share and your possession among the Israelites.

[21] To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for a possession in return for the service that they perform, the service in the tent of meeting. [22] From now on the Israelites shall no longer approach the tent of meeting, or else they will incur guilt and die. [23] But the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear responsibility for their own offenses; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations. But among the Israelites they shall have no allotment, [24] because I have given to the Levites as their portion the tithe of the Israelites, which they set apart as an offering to the LORD. Therefore I have said of them that they shall have no allotment among the Israelites.

[25] Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [26] You shall speak to the Levites, saying: When you receive from the Israelites the tithe that I have given you from them for your portion, you shall set apart an offering from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe. [27] It shall be reckoned to you as your gift, the same as the grain of the threshing floor and the fullness of the wine press. [28] Thus you also shall set apart an offering to the LORD from all the

[a] Heb *as a service of gift*

8–20: Aaronide priests are compensated for performing their sacred duties; compensation comes from the most holy offerings (vv. 8–10) and the holy offerings (vv. 11–19). **11–19:** Priests' families eat from the holy offerings. **11:** *Elevation offerings*, see 8.11n. **13:** *First fruits*, see Deut 26.1–10. **14:** *Every devoted thing* (Heb "ḥerem," often translated "the ban"), anything dedicated to the LORD that could not be redeemed (see Lev 27.28). **15–18:** The firstborn belong to the priests as part of their payment; on the divine claim of the firstborn, see 3.11–13; 8.14–19. **16:** *Shekel*, see 3.47n. **17:** *Pleasing odor*, see 15.3n. **19:** *Covenant of salt*, probably meaning a perpetual covenant, because of the use of salt as a preservative (see Lev 2.13; 2 Chr 13.15). **20:** Priests have no territory of their own. **21–32:** *Tithe,* one-tenth (see Lev 27.32). Levites receive a tithe for their service of maintaining the sanctuary and performing guard duty, but they are also required to pay a separate tithe to the priests.

tithes that you receive from the Israelites; and from them you shall give the LORD's offering to the priest Aaron. 29 Out of all the gifts to you, you shall set apart every offering due to the LORD; the best of all of them is the part to be consecrated. 30 Say also to them: When you have set apart the best of it, then the rest shall be reckoned to the Levites as produce of the threshing floor, and as produce of the wine press. 31 You may eat it in any place, you and your households; for it is your payment for your service in the tent of meeting. 32 You shall incur no guilt by reason of it, when you have offered the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy gifts of the Israelites, on pain of death.

19 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 This is a statute of the law that the LORD has commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which there is no blemish and on which no yoke has been laid. 3 You shall give it to the priest Eleazar, and it shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence. 4 The priest Eleazar shall take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle it seven times towards the front of the tent of meeting. 5 Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight; its skin, its flesh, and its blood, with its dung, shall be burned. 6 The priest shall take cedarwood, hyssop, and crimson material, and throw them into the fire in which the heifer is burning. 7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterwards he may come into the camp; but the priest shall remain unclean until evening. 8 The one who burns the heifer[a] shall wash his clothes in water and bathe his body in water; he shall remain unclean until evening. 9 Then someone who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the Israelites for the water for cleansing. It is a purification offering. 10 The one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.

This shall be a perpetual statute for the Israelites and for the alien residing among them. 11 Those who touch the dead body of any human being shall be unclean seven days. 12 They shall purify themselves with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, and so be clean; but if they do not purify themselves on the third day and on the seventh day, they will not become clean. 13 All who touch a corpse, the body of a human being who has died, and do not purify themselves, defile the tabernacle of the LORD; such persons shall be cut off from Israel. Since water for cleansing was not dashed on them, they remain unclean; their uncleanness is still on them.

[a] Heb *it*

19.1–22: Cleansing from corpse contamination. Death represents the most potent form of ritual impurity and thus must be carefully separated from the holiness of God within the sanctuary. Those contaminated by death through the handling of the corpse of a family member were banished from the camp (see 5.1–4). The chapter gives procedures for Israelites to be purified from corpse contamination in the ritual of the "water of cleansing" and thus to reenter the camp and the worship life of the community. The background for these regulations may be the rejection of ancestor worship, because the dead are a danger to divine holiness. **2:** The sacrificial animal is a *red heifer,* a cow that has not had a calf, with red probably symbolizing blood; *without defect*, meaning complete or whole; *no yoke has been laid*, not used for profane labor. **3–6:** The ritual departs from traditional sacrifice in location and procedure, and in its effects, since it renders those officiating unclean. **3:** *Eleazar,* Aaron's son: the slaughter of the red heifer requires priestly supervision; *outside the camp*, the location of the sacrifice is unusual in being removed from the altar. **5:** The blood of the cow is burned in the fire along with the skin, flesh, and dung, which is not done in rituals at the altar. The blood in the ashes of the cow is a ritual detergent that will purify humans from corpse contamination. **6:** *Hyssop*, aromatic plant associated with rituals of cleansing (see Ps 51.7). **7–10:** The participants—the priest, the assistant, and the one gathering the ashes—are rendered unclean by the ritual, requiring bathing to reenter the camp. **9:** The mixture of the ashes with water creates "cleansing," which in this case may mean the casting the impurity of corpse contamination. *It is a purification offering*, translation uncertain; perhaps meaning that the ritual with the water of cleansing allows the lay Israelite who gathered the ashes to return into the camp purified. **10b–13:** Summary of the law: corpse contamination applies to all persons in the camp in perpetuity. **13:** *Cut off,* see 9.13n.

Conflicts in the Negeb and Transjordan

14 This is the law when someone dies in a tent: everyone who comes into the tent, and everyone who is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. 15 And every open vessel with no cover fastened on it is unclean. 16 Whoever in the open field touches one who has been killed by a sword, or who has died naturally,[a] or a human bone, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. 17 For the unclean they shall take some ashes of the burnt purification offering, and running water shall be added in a vessel; 18 then a clean person shall take hyssop, dip it in the water, and sprinkle it on the tent, on all the furnishings, on the persons who were there, and on whoever touched the bone, the slain, the corpse, or the grave. 19 The clean person shall sprinkle the unclean ones on the third day and on the seventh day, thus purifying them on the seventh day. Then they shall wash their clothes and bathe themselves in water, and at evening they shall be clean. 20 Any who are unclean but do not purify themselves, those persons shall be cut off from the assembly, for they have defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. Since the water for cleansing has not been dashed on them, they are unclean.

21 It shall be a perpetual statute for them. The one who sprinkles the water for cleansing shall wash his clothes, and whoever touches the water for cleansing shall be unclean until evening. 22 Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean, and anyone who touches it shall be unclean until evening.

20 The Israelites, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. Miriam died there, and was buried there.

2 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and against Aaron. 3 The people quarreled with Moses and said, "Would that we had died when our kindred died before the LORD! 4 Why have you brought the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die here? 5 Why have you brought us up out of Egypt, to bring us to this wretched place? It is no place for grain, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates; and there is no water to drink." 6 Then Moses and Aaron went away from the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting; they fell on their faces, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. 7 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 8 Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and your brother Aaron, and command the rock before their eyes to yield its water. Thus you shall bring water out of the rock for them; thus you shall provide drink for the congregation and their livestock.

[a] Heb lacks *naturally*

14–22: The circumstances under which someone becomes defiled from contact with the dead. **14:** *Dies in a tent*, corpse contamination is airborne, polluting anyone who enters a tent where a corpse is present. **15:** *Open vessel*, objects in closed spaces like the tent also absorb contamination. **16:** *Open field*, contamination in open space is only through touch. **20:** *Defiled the sanctuary*, contaminated persons threaten the sanctuary. **22:** *Unclean person*, contaminated individuals are contagious to others through touch.

20.1–21.35: Leaving the wilderness. Chs 20–21 are a loose collection of stories that provide transition from the wandering in the wilderness to war east of the Jordan, tracing the death of the first generation and the emerging leadership of the second. The section includes two accounts of the journey. The non-Priestly version continues the setting of Kadesh from the story of the scouts (see 13.26); it includes the conflict with Edom, when Moses sends messengers to the king of Edom from the camp in Kadesh to request passage through his land (20.14–21); the defeat of the king of Arad (21.1–3); the attack of the fiery serpents (21.4–9); and the defeat of the Amorite kings Sihon and Og (21.10–35). The Priestly version notes the arrival of Israel at Kadesh, where Miriam dies (20.1); the failure of leadership by Moses and Aaron (20.2–13); and the death of Aaron (20.22–29).

20.1–13: Sin of Moses and Aaron. 1: *Wilderness of Zin*, see 13.21; 27.14; 33.36; 34.3–4; *Kadesh*, see 13.26n. **2–13:** The story emphasizes the individual responsibility of Moses and Aaron for not being allowed to enter the land because of disobedience in following the divine command to draw water from the rock. Different explanations are given in Deut 1.37; Ps 106.32–33. **7–8:** God instructs Moses to take the staff that is in the sanctuary, which may be the budding staff of Aaron (see ch 17; but cf. Ex 4.2–14); to assemble the people; and to speak to the rock in order to bring forth water for the Israelites and their cattle (see a similar but non-Priestly story in Ex 17.1–7).

9 So Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he had commanded him. 10 Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Listen, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff; water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank. 12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them." 13 These are the waters of Meribah,[a] where the people of Israel quarreled with the LORD, and by which he showed his holiness.

14 Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, "Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the adversity that has befallen us: 15 how our ancestors went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians oppressed us and our ancestors; 16 and when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt; and here we are in Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. 17 Now let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, or drink water from any well; we will go along the King's Highway, not turning aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory."

18 But Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through, or we will come out with the sword against you." 19 The Israelites said to him, "We will stay on the highway; and if we drink of your water, we and our livestock, then we will pay for it. It is only a small matter; just let us pass through on foot." 20 But he said, "You shall not pass through." And Edom came out against them with a large force, heavily armed. 21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through their territory; so Israel turned away from them.

22 They set out from Kadesh, and the Israelites, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor. 23 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, 24 "Let Aaron be gathered to his people. For he shall not enter the land that I have given to the Israelites, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah. 25 Take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and bring them up Mount Hor; 26 strip Aaron of his vestments, and put them on his son Eleazar. But Aaron shall be gathered to his people,[b] and shall die there." 27 Moses did as the LORD had commanded; they went up Mount Hor in the sight of the whole congregation. 28 Moses stripped Aaron of his vestments, and put them on his son Eleazar; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. 29 When all the congrega-

[a] That is *Quarrel*
[b] Heb lacks *to his people*

9–11: Moses judges the complaint of the people as an instance of disobedience, accusing the people of being "rebels"; as a consequence he does not follow the divine instructions exactly, and strikes the rock twice rather than speaking to it. **12:** God describes the action as disobedience that prevents holiness from being displayed for the entire people; the penalty is that Moses and Aaron are excluded from entry into the Promised Land. **13:** An etiology for the name *Meribah*, from Heb *rib* meaning "quarrel" or "legal dispute" (see also Ex 17.7; Deut 33.8; Pss 81.7; 95.8); *he showed his holiness*, Heb *yiqqadesh* may be an etiology of the name of the location Kadesh (Heb "qadesh"); cf. 27.14, where the location of this story is "Meribat-kadesh."

20.14–21: Conflict with Edom. The Israelites request passage through Edomite land. **14:** *Thus says your brother Israel*, reflecting the genealogy and narratives in Genesis in which the ancestor of Edom is Esau, the older brother of Jacob/Israel (Gen 25.25–26; 32.28; 36.1; cf. Am 1.11). **15–16:** The Israelites describe their deliverance from Egypt (see also Deut 26.5–9; Judg 11.16–18); *angel*, lit., "messenger," often a divine being (see Ex 14.19; 23.20–33; 33.2). **17:** *King's Highway*, trade route from Egypt through Transjordan and Syria to the Euphrates River in the northeast. **18–21:** Edom refuses the request and even threatens war, forcing Israel to travel around the land of Edom; contrast Deut 2.3–13, where the Israelites travel through Edom.

20.22–29: Death of Aaron. 23: *Mount Hor,* location unknown. **26:** Robing *Eleazar* with Aaron's vestments signals the transfer of the priestly office (see Ex 28; 29.29–30). **29:** Thirty days of mourning (see also Deut 34.8) contrasts with the normal seven-day period of mourning the dead (see Gen 50.10; 1 Sam 31.13; Sir 22.12).

tion saw that Aaron had died, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

21 When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel and took some of them captive. 2 Then Israel made a vow to the LORD and said, "If you will indeed give this people into our hands, then we will utterly destroy their towns." 3 The LORD listened to the voice of Israel, and handed over the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their towns; so the place was called Hormah.[a]

4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea,[b] to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. 5 The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." 6 Then the LORD sent poisonous[c] serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. 7 The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous[d] serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." 9 So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

10 The Israelites set out, and camped in Oboth. 11 They set out from Oboth, and camped at Iye-abarim, in the wilderness bordering Moab toward the sunrise. 12 From there they set out, and camped in the Wadi Zered. 13 From there they set out, and camped on the other side of the Arnon, in[e] the wilderness that extends from the boundary of the Amorites; for the Arnon is the boundary of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. 14 Wherefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD,

"Waheb in Suphah and the wadis.
The Arnon 15 and the slopes of the wadis
that extend to the seat of Ar,
and lie along the border of Moab."[f]

16 From there they continued to Beer;[g] that is the well of which the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." 17 Then Israel sang this song:

[a] Heb *Destruction*
[b] Or *Sea of Reeds*
[c] Or *fiery*; Heb *seraphim*
[d] Or *fiery*; Heb *seraph*
[e] Gk: Heb *which is in*
[f] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[g] That is *Well*

21.1–3: War against the king of Arad. The account of successful war against the Canaanite king of Arad. **1:** *Arad*, west of the Dead Sea, ca. 12 m (19 km) east of Beer-sheba. **2:** *Utterly destroy*, exterminate under the ban (Heb "ḥerem"), meaning all property is given over to God through destruction, rather than becoming spoil for the warriors (see also Deut 7.2; 20.17; Josh 10–11). **3:** God hears the request and aids the Israelites in the defeat of the king of Arad at *Hormah,* reversing the negative account of war at Hormah in Num 14.39–45, when the Israelites earlier disobeyed the deity and waged an unsuccessful war. The account of the victory marks a transition from the wilderness wandering to the conquest of the Promised Land.

21.4–9: The bronze serpent. The final murmuring story occurs when the Israelites leave Mount Hor and journey south around Edom on the Red Sea road. **5:** Again the complaint is about food. **6:** *Poisonous serpents*, see textual note *c.* "Seraphim" could refer either to dangerous desert reptiles (see Deut 8.15) or to members of the divine council (see Isa 6.1–7). **9:** Anyone who looks at the *serpent of bronze* (Heb "naḥash neḥoshet") will be healed. According to 2 Kings 18.4, the icon of the bronze serpent, called Nehushtan, was in the Jerusalem Temple, until King Hezekiah destroyed it.

21.10–35: Journey north through Transjordan. 10–20: The final stages of Israel's wilderness march to Mount Pisgah, in northern Moab (see also ch 33 and Deut 2). **12:** *Wadi Zered*, modern Wadi el-Hesa, the natural boundary between Moab and Edom. **13:** *Arnon*, modern Wadi Mujib, in northern Moab. *Amorites,* one of several groups that inhabited the Promised Land; see Gen 15.19–21. In these narratives the Amorites control territory later controlled by the Ammonites. **14–15:** *Book of the Wars of the LORD*, a no-longer surviving work mentioned only here; its title suggests that it was a collection of poems celebrating Israelite victories under divine guidance. The quoted poetic fragment seems to emphasize geography. **16:** *Beer*, see textual note *g.* **17–18:** Probably an ancient

"Spring up, O well!—Sing to it!—
18 the well that the leaders sank,
that the nobles of the people dug,
with the scepter, with the staff."
From the wilderness to Mattanah, 19 from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, 20 and from Bamoth to the valley lying in the region of Moab by the top of Pisgah that overlooks the wasteland.[a]

21 Then Israel sent messengers to King Sihon of the Amorites, saying, 22 "Let me pass through your land; we will not turn aside into field or vineyard; we will not drink the water of any well; we will go by the King's Highway until we have passed through your territory." 23 But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel to the wilderness; he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel. 24 Israel put him to the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as to the Ammonites; for the boundary of the Ammonites was strong. 25 Israel took all these towns, and Israel settled in all the towns of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all its villages. 26 For Heshbon was the city of King Sihon of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and captured all his land as far as the Arnon. 27 Therefore the ballad singers say,

"Come to Heshbon, let it be built;
let the city of Sihon be established.
28 For fire came out from Heshbon,
flame from the city of Sihon.
It devoured Ar of Moab,
and swallowed up[b] the heights of the Arnon.
29 Woe to you, O Moab!
You are undone, O people of Chemosh!
He has made his sons fugitives,
and his daughters captives,
to an Amorite king, Sihon.
30 So their posterity perished
from Heshbon[c] to Dibon,
and we laid waste until fire spread to Medeba."[d]

31 Thus Israel settled in the land of the Amorites. 32 Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they captured its villages, and dispossessed the Amorites who were there.

33 Then they turned and went up the road to Bashan; and King Og of Bashan came out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. 34 But the LORD said to Moses, "Do not be afraid of him; for I have given him into your hand, with all his people, and all his land. You shall do to him as you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon." 35 So they killed him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left; and they took possession of his land.

22 The Israelites set out, and camped in the plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho. 2 Now Balak son of Zippor saw

[a] Or *Jeshimon*
[b] Gk: Heb *and the lords of*
[c] Gk: Heb *we have shot at them; Heshbon has perished*
[d] Compare Sam Gk: Meaning of MT uncertain

work song celebrating the digging of a well. **18–20:** The locations of the sites named are uncertain. **21–35:** The defeat of the Transjordanian kings Sihon and Og (see also Deut 2.26–3.17; Josh 12.1–6; Judg 11.19–26). **21–22:** The Israelites request passage through the territory of Sihon, king of the Amorites, pledging to stay on the King's Highway (see 20.17n.). **23–25:** Sihon attacks at Jahaz (location uncertain) and is defeated by Israel, which takes over his territory. **26:** *Heshbon*, identified with Tall Hisban, ca. 12 mi (19 km) southwest of Amman. **27–30:** The poem may originally have been a non-Israelite ballad celebrating Sihon's defeat of the Moabites in establishing Heshbon, here used as a taunt against Sihon to celebrate his defeat by Israel. It is quoted in Jer 48.45–46 in an oracle against Moab. **29:** *Chemosh,* the principal Moabite god. **30–32:** *Dibon, Medeba,* and *Jazer*: see map on p. 220. **33–35:** The defeat of Og, king of Bashan, in northern Transjordan; see also Deut 3.11. *Edrei,* modern Der'a, ca. 65 mi (105 km) south of Damascus.

22.1–36.13: Preparing for entry into Canaan. The theme of preparation for entering Canaan is signaled by a change of setting from the wilderness to the plains of Moab. Conflicts with other nations in Transjordan continue (chs 22–24; 31), sometimes involving apostasy (ch 25). The section concludes with laws that prepare for Israel's future life in the land (chs 26–36), including a new census of the second generation (ch 26), inheritance laws (chs 27; 32; 36), and guidelines for worship (chs 28–30). Reference to the location of Israel on the plains of Moab near the Jordan River across from the city of Jericho frames the section (22.1; 36.13).

all that Israel had done to the Amorites.
3 Moab was in great dread of the people,
because they were so numerous; Moab was
overcome with fear of the people of Israel.
4 And Moab said to the elders of Midian, "This
horde will now lick up all that is around us,
as an ox licks up the grass of the field." Now
Balak son of Zippor was king of Moab at that
time. 5 He sent messengers to Balaam son of
Beor at Pethor, which is on the Euphrates, in
the land of Amaw,[a] to summon him, saying,
"A people has come out of Egypt; they have
spread over the face of the earth, and they
have settled next to me. 6 Come now, curse
this people for me, since they are stronger
than I; perhaps I shall be able to defeat them
and drive them from the land; for I know that
whomever you bless is blessed, and whom-
ever you curse is cursed."

7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of
Midian departed with the fees for divination
in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and
gave him Balak's message. 8 He said to them,
"Stay here tonight, and I will bring back word
to you, just as the LORD speaks to me"; so the
officials of Moab stayed with Balaam. 9 God
came to Balaam and said, "Who are these
men with you?" 10 Balaam said to God, "King
Balak son of Zippor of Moab, has sent me this
message: 11 'A people has come out of Egypt
and has spread over the face of the earth;
now come, curse them for me; perhaps I shall
be able to fight against them and drive them
out.' " 12 God said to Balaam, "You shall not
go with them; you shall not curse the people,
for they are blessed." 13 So Balaam rose in the
morning, and said to the officials of Balak,
"Go to your own land, for the LORD has re-
fused to let me go with you." 14 So the officials
of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said,
"Balaam refuses to come with us."

15 Once again Balak sent officials, more
numerous and more distinguished than
these. 16 They came to Balaam and said to
him, "Thus says Balak son of Zippor: 'Do not
let anything hinder you from coming to me;
17 for I will surely do you great honor, and
whatever you say to me I will do; come, curse
this people for me.' " 18 But Balaam replied
to the servants of Balak, "Although Balak
were to give me his house full of silver and
gold, I could not go beyond the command of
the LORD my God, to do less or more. 19 You
remain here, as the others did, so that I may
learn what more the LORD may say to me."
20 That night God came to Balaam and said to

[a] Or *land of his kinsfolk*

22.1–24.25: Balak and Balaam. The initial threat to Israel on the plains of Moab is from Balak, king of Moab, who fears the strength of Israel and requests the seer Balaam to curse them. The story of Balak and Balaam (chs 22–24) includes poetic oracles by Balaam (23.7–10; 23.18–24; 24.3–9; 24.15–24; see Introduction) and a folktale about Balaam, his donkey, and a confrontation with the angel of the LORD (22.22–35); these are organized within a larger narrative in which Balak twice seeks to hire Balaam, who rejects the initial offer (22.1–14) but accepts the second (22.15–24.35). Israel plays no active role in the drama and thus remains unaware of the threat. The LORD, on the other hand, is an active character, proclaiming his protection of Israel in a series of revelations to Balaam.

22.1–14: First mission. In this account, Balaam is depicted positively. **1:** *In the plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho*, the setting for the rest of Numbers (see 26.3,63; 31.12; 33.48,50; 35.1; 36.13). **3:** Cf. Ex 1.12. **4:** *Moab* and *Midian* are also connected in ch 25. **5:** *Balaam son of Beor* is also featured in an eighth-century BCE text from Tell Deir Alla in the Jordan Valley. That text indicates that Balaam was a well-known prophetic figure, and recounts his vision of a natural disaster brought on by Shagar, a fertility goddess, and the Shaddai-gods. *Pethor*, possibly Pitru in northeastern Syria mentioned in Assyrian sources. *In the land of Amaw*, uncertain location. The phrase could also be translated "in the land of the sons of his people," or emended to "in the land of the sons of Ammon [the Ammonites]." **7:** *Divination,* Balaam's power to bless and to curse. Although condemned in Deut 18.10 and 1 Sam 15.23, it nevertheless seems to be efficacious. **9–11:** Balaam's dialogue with the LORD shows that although he is a non-Israelite, Balaam has a relationship with the LORD.

22.15–21: Second mission. This narrative likely was immediately followed by vv. 36–38, where the arrival of Balaam is noted and the seer repeats his message to Balak that he can speak only what God puts in his mouth. In the original narrative Balaam is presented as a positive character who consults with God before undertaking his journey to Balak and departs on his journey only after God instructs him to do so (v. 20).

him, "If the men have come to summon you, get up and go with them; but do only what I tell you to do." 21 So Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the officials of Moab.

22 God's anger was kindled because he was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the road as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23 The donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand; so the donkey turned off the road, and went into the field; and Balaam struck the donkey, to turn it back onto the road. 24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. 25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it scraped against the wall, and scraped Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck it again. 26 Then the angel of the LORD went ahead, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. 28 Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" 29 Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me! I wish I had a sword in my hand! I would kill you right now!" 30 But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I been in the habit of treating you this way?" And he said, "No."

31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed down, falling on his face. 32 The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? I have come out as an adversary, because your way is perverse[a] before me. 33 The donkey saw me, and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let it live." 34 Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now therefore, if it is displeasing to you, I will return home." 35 The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men; but speak only what I tell you to speak." So Balaam went on with the officials of Balak.

36 When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at Ir-moab, on the boundary formed by the Arnon, at the farthest point of the boundary. 37 Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send to summon you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?" 38 Balaam said to Balak, "I have come to you now, but do I have power to say just anything? The word God puts in my mouth, that is what I must say." 39 Then Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. 40 Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent them to Balaam and to the officials who were with him.

41 On the next day Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-baal; and from there he could see part of the people of Israel.[a]

23 1 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me." 2 Balak did

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

22.22–35: Balaam and the angel of the LORD. A separate story that disrupts the plot of the second mission with an additional account of Balaam's journey to Balak, this time with his servants rather than with the messengers of Balak. In this folktale, the LORD is angry over Balaam's journey (v. 22), even though God has just instructed him to undertake the journey. The central theme of the story is the blindness of the seer to the threat of the divine being in his path, but which his donkey sees clearly. The story presents Balaam negatively, which becomes the dominant interpretation elsewhere in the Bible (see 31.8,16; Deut 23.5; Josh 13.22; 24.10; Neh 13.2). **22:** *The angel* (see 20.15–16n.) *of the LORD* is mentioned only in this story in the Balaam narrative; elsewhere the angel of the LORD often functions in stories of holy war (Ex 23.20–33), which may be the meaning of the confrontation in the story of Balaam. *Adversary* (Heb "satan"), an opponent who is seeking to kill him. **23:** *Drawn sword,* see Josh 5.13; 1 Chr 21.16.

22.36–23.12: First oracle. The presentation of the first oracle has three parts: setting in Moab (22.36–23.6); the oracle (23.7–10); and a concluding exchange between Balaam and Balak (23.11–12). **22.36:** *Ir-Moab* can be

as Balaam had said; and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. 3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your burnt offerings while I go aside. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet me. Whatever he shows me I will tell you." And he went to a bare height.

4 Then God met Balaam; and Balaam said to him, "I have arranged the seven altars, and have offered a bull and a ram on each altar." 5 The LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and this is what you must say." 6 So he returned to Balak,[b] who was standing beside his burnt offerings with all the officials of Moab. 7 Then Balaam[c] uttered his oracle, saying:

"Balak has brought me from Aram,
the king of Moab from the eastern mountains:
'Come, curse Jacob for me;
Come, denounce Israel!'
8 How can I curse whom God has not cursed?
How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced?
9 For from the top of the crags I see him,
from the hills I behold him.
Here is a people living alone,
and not reckoning itself among the nations!
10 Who can count the dust of Jacob,
or number the dust-cloud[d] of Israel?
Let me die the death of the upright,
and let my end be like his!"

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but now you have done nothing but bless them." 12 He answered, "Must I not take care to say what the LORD puts into my mouth?"

13 So Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only part of them, and shall not see them all; then curse them for me from there." 14 So he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah. He built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. 15 Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offerings, while I meet the LORD over there." 16 The LORD met Balaam, put a word into his mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and this is what you shall say."

17 When he came to him, he was standing beside his burnt offerings with the officials of Moab. Balak said to him, "What has the LORD said?" 18 Then Balaam uttered his oracle, saying:

"Rise, Balak, and hear;
listen to me, O son of Zippor:
19 God is not a human being, that he should lie,
or a mortal, that he should change his mind.
Has he promised, and will he not do it?
Has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?
20 See, I received a command to bless;
he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.
21 He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob;
nor has he seen trouble in Israel.
The LORD their God is with them,
acclaimed as a king among them.
22 God, who brings them out of Egypt,
is like the horns of a wild ox for them.
23 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,
no divination against Israel;
now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel,
'See what God has done!'

[a] Heb lacks *of Israel*
[b] Heb *him*
[c] Heb *he*
[d] Or *fourth part*

translated "city of Moab." **23.7:** *Aram*, Syria; *oracle*, Heb "mashal," in general a saying, such as a "parable" or "allegory" (Ezek 17.2), "proverb" (Prov 1.1), or even "taunt" (Isa 14.4). **7–10:** The oracle consists of three stanzas: vv. 7–8: the inability of Balaam to curse if it is not God's will; v. 9: the distinctive character of Israel; v. 10: reference to the Israelites' fertility.

23.13–26: Second oracle. 14: *Pisgah*, see 21.10–20n.; Deut 34.1. **18–24:** In contrast to the autobiographical focus of the first oracle, Balaam instructs Balak about God and Israel in the second. The oracle has three stanzas: vv. 18–19: the contrast between Balak and God underscores that the human attempt to manipulate the future is useless since God fulfills all divine promises; vv. 20–22: Israel's history of deliverance as an outgrowth of divine blessings; vv. 23–24: shift from the past to the present by comparing Israel to a lion that eats its prey.

[24] Look, a people rising up like a lioness,
and rousing itself like a lion!
It does not lie down until it has eaten the prey
and drunk the blood of the slain."
[25] Then Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all, and do not bless them at all." [26] But Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'Whatever the LORD says, that is what I must do'?"
[27] So Balak said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there." [28] So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland.[a] [29] Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me." [30] So Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

24 Now Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, so he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face toward the wilderness. [2] Balaam looked up and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. Then the spirit of God came upon him, [3] and he uttered his oracle, saying:

"The oracle of Balaam son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is clear,[b]
[4] the oracle of one who hears the words of God,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,[c]
who falls down, but with eyes uncovered:
[5] how fair are your tents, O Jacob,
your encampments, O Israel!
[6] Like palm groves that stretch far away,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes that the LORD has planted,
like cedar trees beside the waters.
[7] Water shall flow from his buckets,
and his seed shall have abundant water,
his king shall be higher than Agag,
and his kingdom shall be exalted.
[8] God who brings him out of Egypt,
is like the horns of a wild ox for him;
he shall devour the nations that are his foes
and break their bones.
He shall strike with his arrows.[d]
[9] He crouched, he lay down like a lion,
and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?
Blessed is everyone who blesses you,
and cursed is everyone who curses you."

[10] Then Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together. Balak said to Balaam, "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but instead you have blessed them these three times. [11] Now be off with you! Go home! I said, 'I will reward you richly,' but the LORD has denied you any reward." [12] And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, [13] 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own will; what the LORD says, that is what I will say'? [14] So now, I am going to my people; let me advise you what this people will do to your people in days to come."

[15] So he uttered his oracle, saying:
"The oracle of Balaam son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is clear,[b]
[16] the oracle of one who hears the words of God,

[a] Or *overlooks Jeshimon*
[b] Or *closed* or *open*
[c] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain

23.27–24.13: Third oracle. 23.28: *Peor,* see 25.3; 31.16. **24.2:** *Spirit of God*, suggests that Balaam achieves a new level of revelation in the third oracle. **3b–4:** A different word for *oracle* (Heb "ne'um"), often used of prophetic discourse. **5–9:** Balaam describes the Israelite nation with fertility imagery of palm trees, gardens, aloe tree, and cedars, before concluding with the ominous statement that those who curse Israel will be cursed and those who bless Israel will be blessed (see Gen 12.3). **7:** *Agag*, the name of an Amalekite king in 1 Sam 15.8–33.

24.14–25: Fourth oracle. The final scene contains oracles against Moab (vv. 15–17) and Edom (vv. 18–19), as well as an additional series of oracles against the nations that surround Israel (vv. 20–24), giving Balaam's fourth oracle a future prophetic orientation not present in the first three. **14:** *In days to come* indicates predictions about the distant future (e.g., Isa 2.2). **15–17:** The vision about Moab is eschatological; destruction is

and knows the knowledge of the Most High,[a]
who sees the vision of the Almighty,[b]
who falls down, but with his eyes uncovered:
17 I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near—
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the borderlands[c] of Moab,
and the territory[d] of all the Shethites.
18 Edom will become a possession,
Seir a possession of its enemies,[e]
while Israel does valiantly.
19 One out of Jacob shall rule,
and destroy the survivors of Ir."
20 Then he looked on Amalek, and uttered his oracle, saying:
"First among the nations was Amalek,
but its end is to perish forever."
21 Then he looked on the Kenite, and uttered his oracle, saying:
"Enduring is your dwelling place,
and your nest is set in the rock;
22 yet Kain is destined for burning.
How long shall Asshur take you away captive?"
23 Again he uttered his oracle, saying:
"Alas, who shall live when God does this?
24 But ships shall come from Kittim
and shall afflict Asshur and Eber;
and he also shall perish forever."
25 Then Balaam got up and went back to his place, and Balak also went his way.

25 While Israel was staying at Shittim, the people began to have sexual relations with the women of Moab. 2 These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 Thus Israel yoked itself to the Baal of Peor, and the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel. 4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people, and impale them in the sun before the LORD, in order that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." 5 And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you shall kill any of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor."

6 Just then one of the Israelites came and brought a Midianite woman into his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the Israelites, while they were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he got up and left the congregation. Taking a spear in his hand, 8 he went after the Israelite man into the tent, and pierced the two of them, the Israelite and the woman, through the belly. So the plague was stopped among the people of Israel. 9 Nevertheless those that died by the plague were twenty-four thousand.

[a] Or *of Elyon*
[b] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[c] Or *forehead*
[d] Some Mss read *skull*
[e] Heb *Seir, its enemies, a possession*

not now, and it is *not near*. The royal imagery may point to the victory of an Israelite king over Moab; it also influences expectations for a future leader, such as Bar Kokhba in the revolt against Rome (132–135 CE), and Jesus, "the bright morning star" in Rev 22.16. **17:** *Scepter* represents the insignia of the king (Ps 45.6); *star* is less common as a royal symbol in Israel (cf. Isa 14.12, referring to the king of Babylon). *Shethites*, meaning uncertain, perhaps a reference to all humanity, since Seth (Heb "Sheth") is the third son of Adam and Eve (Gen 4.26; 5.1–8). **19:** *Ir,* see 22.36n. **20:** *Amalek,* see 13.26n. **21:** *Kenites*, descendants of Cain (see Gen 4). **22:** *Asshur,* Assyria. **24:** *Kittim,* inhabitants of Cyprus (Gen 10.4). *Eber*, unknown, but see Gen 10.25.

25.1–19: Sin of Israel at Baal-peor. Israel's sin at Baal-peor is narrated in two versions, one about sexual relations and idolatry with the Moabites (vv. 1–5; non-Priestly), the other about intermarriage with the Midianites (vv. 6–19; Priestly). **1:** *Shittim*, the last stop on the wilderness journey, of unknown location; see 33.49; Josh 2.1. **3:** *Baal of Peor*, the Canaanite deity worshiped at this location. **4:** *Impale them in the sun* suggests a public execution for a most heinous crime; only this extreme action causes the divine anger to abate. **6:** Marriage between an Israelite man and a Midianite woman here condemned, but Moses's wife Zipporah was a Midianite (Ex 2.15–22). *Weeping,* perhaps because of the plague mentioned in vv. 8–9. **8:** *Tent* (Heb "qubbah," a word used only here) may indicate a marriage tent, since the description of the execution of the couple suggests the act

10 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron
the priest, has turned back my wrath
from the Israelites by manifesting such
zeal among them on my behalf that in my
jealousy I did not consume the Israelites.
12 Therefore say, 'I hereby grant him my
covenant of peace. 13 It shall be for him and
for his descendants after him a covenant of
perpetual priesthood, because he was zeal-
ous for his God, and made atonement for
the Israelites.' "
14 The name of the slain Israelite man, who
was killed with the Midianite woman, was
Zimri son of Salu, head of an ancestral house
belonging to the Simeonites. 15 The name of
the Midianite woman who was killed was
Cozbi daughter of Zur, who was the head of a
clan, an ancestral house in Midian.
16 The Lord said to Moses, 17 "Harass the
Midianites, and defeat them; 18 for they have
harassed you by the trickery with which they
deceived you in the affair of Peor, and in the
affair of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of
Midian, their sister; she was killed on the day
of the plague that resulted from Peor."

26 After the plague the Lord said to
Moses and to Eleazar son of Aaron the
priest, 2 "Take a census of the whole congre-
gation of the Israelites, from twenty years
old and upward, by their ancestral houses,
everyone in Israel able to go to war." 3 Moses
and Eleazar the priest spoke with them in the
plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jeri-
cho, saying, 4 "Take a census of the people,[a]
from twenty years old and upward," as the
Lord commanded Moses.

The Israelites, who came out of the land of
Egypt, were:
5 Reuben, the firstborn of Israel. The de-
scendants of Reuben: of Hanoch, the clan of
the Hanochites; of Pallu, the clan of the Pal-
luites; 6 of Hezron, the clan of the Hezronites;
of Carmi, the clan of the Carmites. 7 These
are the clans of the Reubenites; the number
of those enrolled was forty-three thousand
seven hundred thirty. 8 And the descendants
of Pallu: Eliab. 9 The descendants of Eliab:
Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. These are the
same Dathan and Abiram, chosen from the
congregation, who rebelled against Moses
and Aaron in the company of Korah, when
they rebelled against the Lord, 10 and the
earth opened its mouth and swallowed them
up along with Korah, when that company
died, when the fire devoured two hundred
fifty men; and they became a warning. 11 Not-
withstanding, the sons of Korah did not die.
12 The descendants of Simeon by their
clans: of Nemuel, the clan of the Nemuelites;
of Jamin, the clan of the Jaminites; of Jachin,
the clan of the Jachinites; 13 of Zerah, the clan
of the Zerahites; of Shaul, the clan of the
Shaulites.[b] 14 These are the clans of the Sime-
onites, twenty-two thousand two hundred.
15 The children of Gad by their clans: of
Zephon, the clan of the Zephonites; of Haggi,
the clan of the Haggites; of Shuni, the clan
of the Shunites; 16 of Ozni, the clan of the
Oznites; of Eri, the clan of the Erites; 17 of

[a] Heb lacks *take a census of the people*: Compare verse 2
[b] Or *Saul . . . Saulites*

of intercourse. **10–13:** Divine speech affirms the action of Phinehas, granting his offspring special status in the priesthood (see Sir 45.23–25). **12:** *Covenant of peace*, exact meaning unclear; it may indicate health in general or protection of Phinehas from bloodguilt and revenge by Zimri's clan. **16–18:** This divine command to Moses points ahead to the war against Midian in ch 31.

26.1–36.13: Generation of the conquest and instructions for inheritance. The central theme is the inheritance of the Promised Land by the second generation after the death of the first, signaled by a new census (ch 26) and a change of leadership; Eleazar replaces Aaron as high priest (26.1), and Joshua succeeds Moses as Israel's leader into the Promised Land (27.12–13).

26.1–65: Census of the second generation. The death of the first generation requires a new census of the second generation; the account of the census has three parts: the divine command and setting (26.1–4), the record of the census (26.5–62), and the conclusion (26.63–65). **1–4:** Parallels the divine command for the first census (1.1–4); in each case the census counts males twenty years of age and older in order to determine who is able to go to war. **5–56:** Recording of the census (cf. Gen 46.8–27) follows a two-part pattern in which each tribe is identified by clan, excluding Levi, followed by the total number of able-bodied fighting men. **9:** *Dathan*

Arod, the clan of the Arodites; of Areli, the clan of the Arelites. 18 These are the clans of the Gadites: the number of those enrolled was forty thousand five hundred.

19 The sons of Judah: Er and Onan; Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. 20 The descendants of Judah by their clans were: of Shelah, the clan of the Shelanites; of Perez, the clan of the Perezites; of Zerah, the clan of the Zerahites. 21 The descendants of Perez were: of Hezron, the clan of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the clan of the Hamulites. 22 These are the clans of Judah: the number of those enrolled was seventy-six thousand five hundred.

23 The descendants of Issachar by their clans: of Tola, the clan of the Tolaites; of Puvah, the clan of the Punites; 24 of Jashub, the clan of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the clan of the Shimronites. 25 These are the clans of Issachar: sixty-four thousand three hundred enrolled.

26 The descendants of Zebulun by their clans: of Sered, the clan of the Seredites; of Elon, the clan of the Elonites; of Jahleel, the clan of the Jahleelites. 27 These are the clans of the Zebulunites; the number of those enrolled was sixty thousand five hundred.

28 The sons of Joseph by their clans: Manasseh and Ephraim. 29 The descendants of Manasseh: of Machir, the clan of the Machirites; and Machir was the father of Gilead; of Gilead, the clan of the Gileadites. 30 These are the descendants of Gilead: of Iezer, the clan of the Iezerites; of Helek, the clan of the Helekites; 31 and of Asriel, the clan of the Asrielites; and of Shechem, the clan of the Shechemites; 32 and of Shemida, the clan of the Shemidaites; and of Hepher, the clan of the Hepherites. 33 Now Zelophehad son of Hepher had no sons, but daughters: and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 34 These are the clans of Manasseh; the number of those enrolled was fifty-two thousand seven hundred.

35 These are the descendants of Ephraim according to their clans: of Shuthelah, the clan of the Shuthelahites; of Becher, the clan of the Becherites; of Tahan, the clan of the Tahanites. 36 And these are the descendants of Shuthelah: of Eran, the clan of the Eranites. 37 These are the clans of the Ephraimites: the number of those enrolled was thirty-two thousand five hundred. These are the descendants of Joseph by their clans.

38 The descendants of Benjamin by their clans: of Bela, the clan of the Belaites; of Ashbel, the clan of the Ashbelites; of Ahiram, the clan of the Ahiramites; 39 of Shephupham, the clan of the Shuphamites; of Hupham, the clan of the Huphamites. 40 And the sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman: of Ard, the clan of the Ardites; of Naaman, the clan of the Naamites. 41 These are the descendants of Benjamin by their clans; the number of those enrolled was forty-five thousand six hundred.

42 These are the descendants of Dan by their clans: of Shuham, the clan of the Shuhamites. These are the clans of Dan by their clans. 43 All the clans of the Shuhamites: sixty-four thousand four hundred enrolled.

44 The descendants of Asher by their families: of Imnah, the clan of the Imnites; of Ishvi, the clan of the Ishvites; of Beriah, the clan of the Beriites. 45 Of the descendants of Beriah: of Heber, the clan of the Heberites; of Malchiel, the clan of the Malchielites. 46 And the name of the daughter of Asher was Serah. 47 These are the clans of the Asherites: the number of those enrolled was fifty-three thousand four hundred.

and Abiram, see ch 16. **19–22:** The genealogy of Judah includes reference to the deaths of Er and Onan in the land of Canaan and the line of Perez; both connect the census of Judah to the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen 38), which has to do with the levirate law for inheritance rights, requiring that upon premature death of the husband, the brother of the husband must produce children with his sister-in-law in order to carry on the clan of the lost brother. **28–37:** Tribes Manasseh and Ephraim represent the tribe of Joseph (see Gen 48); the order of Manasseh and Ephraim is reversed from the first census (compare 1.32–35 with 26.28–37). The genealogy of Manasseh also extends to seven generations: Joseph, Manasseh, Machir, Gilead, the six offspring of Gilead, Zelophehad, and the daughters of Zelophehad. The result is that Manasseh is the seventh tribe and the daughters of Zelophehad are the seventh generation of Manasseh, thus highlighting their request in 27.1–11 to inherit land apart from the levirate law. **44–50:** The genealogy of Asher is the first instance where a daughter, Serah, is

48 The descendants of Naphtali by their clans: of Jahzeel, the clan of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the clan of the Gunites; 49 of Jezer, the clan of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the clan of the Shillemites. 50 These are the Naphtalites[a] by their clans: the number of those enrolled was forty-five thousand four hundred.

51 This was the number of the Israelites enrolled: six hundred and one thousand seven hundred thirty.

52 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 53 To these the land shall be apportioned for inheritance according to the number of names. 54 To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance; every tribe shall be given its inheritance according to its enrollment. 55 But the land shall be apportioned by lot; according to the names of their ancestral tribes they shall inherit. 56 Their inheritance shall be apportioned according to lot between the larger and the smaller.

57 This is the enrollment of the Levites by their clans: of Gershon, the clan of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the clan of the Kohathites; of Merari, the clan of the Merarites. 58 These are the clans of Levi: the clan of the Libnites, the clan of the Hebronites, the clan of the Mahlites, the clan of the Mushites, the clan of the Korahites. Now Kohath was the father of Amram. 59 The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and she bore to Amram: Aaron, Moses, and their sister Miriam. 60 To Aaron were born Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 61 But Nadab and Abihu died when they offered unholy fire before the LORD.

62 The number of those enrolled was twenty-three thousand, every male one month old and upward; for they were not enrolled among the Israelites because there was no allotment given to them among the Israelites.

63 These were those enrolled by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who enrolled the Israelites in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho. 64 Among these there was not one of those enrolled by Moses and Aaron the priest, who had enrolled the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai. 65 For the LORD had said of them, "They shall die in the wilderness." Not one of them was left, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

27 Then the daughters of Zelophehad came forward. Zelophehad was son of Hepher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph, a member of the Manassite clans. The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 2 They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and all the congregation, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and they said, 3 "Our father died in the wilderness; he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah, but died for his own sin; and he had no sons. 4 Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father's brothers."

5 Moses brought their case before the LORD. 6 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 7 The daughters of Zelophehad are

[a] Heb *clans of Naphtali*

named (see Gen 46.17; 1 Chr 7.30). **51:** Like the total of the first census (see 1.46n.), the large, precise number is difficult to interpret. **52–55:** The inheritance of each tribe is determined by two methods: the size of the tribe (vv. 52–54) and casting of lots (v. 55), which emphasizes that the result is determined by God (see Ex 28.30; Josh 19.50). **57–62**: The Levites are separated from the other tribes as in the first census (3.14–39). **61:** *Nadab and Abihu,* see 3.4; Lev 10.1–7.

27.1–11: Daughters of Zelophehad. The legal claim to inherit land by the daughters of Zelophehad from the tribe of Manasseh (see 26.28–34). The normal practice is for sons to inherit (see Deut 21.15–17), but because their father died in the wilderness leaving no sons, his clan would not have a share in the Promised Land. **3:** *Died for his own sin*, suggesting the principle of individual responsibility in which successive generations should not be punished for the sins of a single member of the family. *Korah,* see ch 16. **5:** *Brought their case before the LORD*, seeking an oracle. The absence of legal precedent for adjudicating the claim of the daughters of Zelophehad forces Moses to seek a ruling from God (see also Lev 24.10–22; Num 9.8; 15.32–36). **6–11:** God instructs Moses to transfer the inheritance of Zelophehad to his daughters; see further 36.1–13; Josh 17.3–6.

right in what they are saying; you shall indeed let them possess an inheritance among their father's brothers and pass the inheritance of their father on to them. 8 You shall also say to the Israelites, "If a man dies, and has no son, then you shall pass his inheritance on to his daughter. 9 If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. 10 If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. 11 And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the nearest kinsman of his clan, and he shall possess it. It shall be for the Israelites a statute and ordinance, as the LORD commanded Moses."

12 The LORD said to Moses, "Go up this mountain of the Abarim range, and see the land that I have given to the Israelites. 13 When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, 14 because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled with me.[a] You did not show my holiness before their eyes at the waters." (These are the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.) 15 Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 16 "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint someone over the congregation 17 who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep without a shepherd." 18 So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand upon him; 19 have him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. 20 You shall give him some of your authority, so that all the congregation of the Israelites may obey. 21 But he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the decision of the Urim before the LORD; at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the Israelites with him, the whole congregation." 22 So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation; 23 he laid his hands on him and commissioned him—as the LORD had directed through Moses.

28 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Command the Israelites, and say to them: My offering, the food for my offerings by fire, my pleasing odor, you shall take care to offer to me at its appointed time. 3 And you shall say to them, This is the offering by fire that you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs a year old without blemish, daily, as a regular offering. 4 One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight;[b] 5 also one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour for a grain offering, mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil. 6 It is a regular burnt offering, ordained at Mount Sinai for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD. 7 Its drink offering shall be one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in the sanctuary you shall pour out a drink offering of strong drink to the LORD. 8 The other

[a] Heb lacks *with me*
[b] Heb *between the two evenings*

27.12–23: Leadership of Joshua. 12–14: The divine announcement of Moses's impending death, recounted in Deut 34.1–8. **12:** *Abarim range*, located on the northeastern end of the Dead Sea (see also Deut 32.49); *because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin*, see 20.1–13. *Meribath-kadesh,* see 20.13n. **15–23:** The transfer of Moses's authority to Joshua to lead Israel in war and to fulfill the role of a shepherd. **16:** *God of the spirits of all flesh*, see 16.22n. **18–21:** The transfer of Moses's authority to Joshua is accomplished through the laying on of hands under the supervision of the high priest Eleazar. **21:** Divine direction in the future is likely limited to Eleazar. *Urim,* divining stones used by the priest to inquire judgments from God (Ex 28.30).

28.1–29.40: Prescribed sacrifices. Sacrifices to be offered by priests for "appointed times," sacred moments in the day, week, and month. A similar calendar with a focus on the role of lay Israelites appears in ch 15 and Lev 23. The calendar is arranged by the frequency of sacrifices, beginning with daily sacrifices (28.2–8) and progressing through sabbath or weekly sacrifices (28.9–10), monthly sacrifices (28.11–21), and yearly festivals (28.16–29.38). The section concludes by noting that private sacrifices must be performed separately from the public sequence of sacrifices (29.39–40). **28.2:** *Pleasing odor,* see 15.3n. **5:** *One-tenth of an ephah,* ca. 2 qts (2.3 L). **7:** *One-fourth of a*

lamb you shall offer at twilight[a] with a grain offering and a drink offering like the one in the morning; you shall offer it as an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD.

9 On the sabbath day: two male lambs a year old without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering— 10 this is the burnt offering for every sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

11 At the beginnings of your months you shall offer a burnt offering to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish; 12 also three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each bull; and two-tenths of choice flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for the one ram; 13 and one-tenth of choice flour mixed with oil as a grain offering for every lamb—a burnt offering of pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD. 14 Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, one-third of a hin for a ram, and one-fourth of a hin for a lamb. This is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year. 15 And there shall be one male goat for a sin offering to the LORD; it shall be offered in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

16 On the fourteenth day of the first month there shall be a passover offering to the LORD. 17 And on the fifteenth day of this month is a festival; seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. 18 On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall not work at your occupations. 19 You shall offer an offering by fire, a burnt offering to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old; see that they are without blemish. 20 Their grain offering shall be of choice flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah shall you offer for a bull, and two-tenths for a ram; 21 one-tenth shall you offer for each of the seven lambs; 22 also one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you. 23 You shall offer these in addition to the burnt offering of the morning, which belongs to the regular burnt offering. 24 In the same way you shall offer daily, for seven days, the food of an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD; it shall be offered in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering. 25 And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations.

26 On the day of the first fruits, when you offer a grain offering of new grain to the LORD at your festival of weeks, you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. 27 You shall offer a burnt offering, a pleasing odor to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, seven male lambs a year old. 28 Their grain offering shall be of choice flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah for each bull, two-tenths for one ram, 29 one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; 30 with one male goat, to make atonement for you. 31 In addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, you shall offer them and their drink offering. They shall be without blemish.

29 On the first day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. It is a day for you to blow the trumpets, 2 and you shall offer a burnt offering, a pleasing odor to the

[a] Heb *between the two evenings*

hin, ca. 1 qt (.95 L). **11–15:** Monthly offering takes place on the first day of the month or new moon, a festival that may have been celebrated in early Israel by clans at local sanctuaries (see 1 Sam 20.5), perhaps as a day of rest (Am 8.5), and that may also have included inquiry of a man of God (2 Kings 4.23); the festival continues into the exilic (Ezek 46.6–7) and postexilic (Ezra 3.4–5) periods. **28.16–29.38:** Yearly sacrificial festivals are concentrated in the first and seventh months; the only exception is the festival of weeks or first fruits. **28.16–25:** Festivals in the first month, in the spring, include the separate festivals of passover and unleavened bread. **16:** *Passover* is observed on Month 1, Day 14 (see Ex 12.6; Num 9.1–3). **17–25:** *Unleavened bread* is observed on Month 1, Days 15–21 (see Ex 12.18). The sacrifices are the same as for the new moon (28.11–15), although no drink offering is detailed. **26–31:** The *festival of weeks* (later Pentecost) marks the beginning ("first fruits") of the wheat harvest; it is an agricultural festival whose date is not fixed here, but see Lev 23.9–22. **29.1–21:** Festivals in the seventh month include the blowing of the horn, the day of atonement, and the feast of booths. **1–6:** The blowing of the horn is observed on Month 7, Day 1. It distinguishes the new moon of the seventh month from the other months of the year. In

LORD: one young bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish. 3 Their grain offering shall be of choice flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of one ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the ram, 4 and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; 5 with one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you. 6 These are in addition to the burnt offering of the new moon and its grain offering, and the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to the ordinance for them, a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD.

7 On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation, and deny yourselves;[a] you shall do no work. 8 You shall offer a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing odor: one young bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old. They shall be without blemish. 9 Their grain offering shall be of choice flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram, 10 one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; 11 with one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the sin offering of atonement, and the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

12 On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. You shall celebrate a festival to the LORD seven days. 13 You shall offer a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD: thirteen young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old. They shall be without blemish. 14 Their grain offering shall be of choice flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams, 15 and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs; 16 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering.

17 On the second day: twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 18 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 19 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

20 On the third day: eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 21 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 22 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering.

23 On the fourth day: ten bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 24 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 25 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering.

26 On the fifth day: nine bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 27 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 28 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering.

29 On the sixth day: eight bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 30 with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; 31 also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offerings.

32 On the seventh day: seven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish, 33 with the grain offering and the

[a] Or *and fast*

later Judaism, this day became Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, which in this calendar is celebrated in the spring, not the fall. **7–11:** The day of atonement is observed on Month 7, Day 10, as a day of rest and fasting; the name of the festival does not appear here, but see Lev 23.27. The ritual is outlined in Lev 16; its purpose is to purge the sanctuary of defilement. **7:** *Deny yourselves,* likely refers to fasting (see Isa 58.3–5; Ps 35.13). **12–38:** The feast of booths is celebrated on Month 7, Days 15–21, with an extra day of sacrifice on Day 22; the name of the festival does not appear here, but see Lev 23.34.

drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; [34] also one male goat for a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

[35] On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations. [36] You shall offer a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish, [37] and the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, as prescribed in accordance with their number; [38] also one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering.

[39] These you shall offer to the LORD at your appointed festivals, in addition to your votive offerings and your freewill offerings, as your burnt offerings, your grain offerings, your drink offerings, and your offerings of well-being.

[40] [a]So Moses told the Israelites everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

30 Then Moses said to the heads of the tribes of the Israelites: This is what the LORD has commanded. [2] When a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

[3] When a woman makes a vow to the LORD, or binds herself by a pledge, while within her father's house, in her youth, [4] and her father hears of her vow or her pledge by which she has bound herself, and says nothing to her; then all her vows shall stand, and any pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. [5] But if her father expresses disapproval to her at the time that he hears of it, no vow of hers, and no pledge by which she has bound herself, shall stand; and the LORD will forgive her, because her father had expressed to her his disapproval.

[6] If she marries, while obligated by her vows or any thoughtless utterance of her lips by which she has bound herself, [7] and her husband hears of it and says nothing to her at the time that he hears, then her vows shall stand, and her pledges by which she has bound herself shall stand. [8] But if, at the time that her husband hears of it, he expresses disapproval to her, then he shall nullify the vow by which she was obligated, or the thoughtless utterance of her lips, by which she bound herself; and the LORD will forgive her. [9] (But every vow of a widow or of a divorced woman, by which she has bound herself, shall be binding upon her.) [10] And if she made a vow in her husband's house, or bound herself by a pledge with an oath, [11] and her husband heard it and said nothing to her, and did not express disapproval to her, then all her vows shall stand, and any pledge by which she bound herself shall stand. [12] But if her husband nullifies them at the time that he hears them, then whatever proceeds out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning her pledge of herself, shall not stand. Her husband has nullified them, and the LORD will forgive her. [13] Any vow or any binding oath to deny herself,[b] her husband may allow to stand, or her husband may nullify. [14] But if her husband says nothing to her from day to day,[c] then he validates all her vows, or all her pledges, by which she is obligated; he has validated them, because he said nothing to her at the time that he heard of them. [15] But if he nullifies them some time after he has heard of them, then he shall bear her guilt.

[a] Ch 30.1 in Heb
[b] Or *to fast*
[c] Or *from that day to the next*

30.1–16: Vows. The central topic in the chapter is vows by women, in which a wife or daughter promises to do something for God in exchange for divine help. Only v. 3 deals with a man's vows; the emphasis is on female vows because of the issue of when a female is autonomous or not. A vow is different from a pledge, which involves an action of self-denial (e.g., 6.1–21). The primary concern is the financial obligations that accompany vows and the conditions under which either fathers or husbands are able to annul them. The legislation divides between 30.2–8 and 9–15; each section has three parts: binding oaths by men (30.2) and by widows and divorced women (30.9); vows by women that can be annulled either by a father (30.3–5) or by a husband (30.10–12); specific situations in which female vows may be annulled (30.6–8 and 13–15).

16 These are the statutes that the LORD
commanded Moses concerning a husband
and his wife, and a father and his daughter
while she is still young and in her father's
house.

31 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
2 "Avenge the Israelites on the Midian-
ites; afterward you shall be gathered to your
people." 3 So Moses said to the people, "Arm
some of your number for the war, so that
they may go against Midian, to execute the
LORD's vengeance on Midian. 4 You shall send
a thousand from each of the tribes of Israel to
the war." 5 So out of the thousands of Israel, a
thousand from each tribe were conscripted,
twelve thousand armed for battle. 6 Moses
sent them to the war, a thousand from each
tribe, along with Phinehas son of Eleazar
the priest,[a] with the vessels of the sanctuary
and the trumpets for sounding the alarm in
his hand. 7 They did battle against Midian, as
the LORD had commanded Moses, and killed
every male. 8 They killed the kings of Midian:
Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings
of Midian, in addition to others who were
slain by them; and they also killed Balaam
son of Beor with the sword. 9 The Israelites
took the women of Midian and their little
ones captive; and they took all their cattle,
their flocks, and all their goods as booty.
10 All their towns where they had settled, and
all their encampments, they burned, 11 but
they took all the spoil and all the booty, both
people and animals. 12 Then they brought
the captives and the booty and the spoil to
Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the con-
gregation of the Israelites, at the camp on the
plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

13 Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the
leaders of the congregation went to meet
them outside the camp. 14 Moses became
angry with the officers of the army, the com-
manders of thousands and the commanders
of hundreds, who had come from service
in the war. 15 Moses said to them, "Have
you allowed all the women to live? 16 These
women here, on Balaam's advice, made the
Israelites act treacherously against the LORD
in the affair of Peor, so that the plague came
among the congregation of the LORD. 17 Now
therefore, kill every male among the little
ones, and kill every woman who has known a
man by sleeping with him. 18 But all the young
girls who have not known a man by sleeping
with him, keep alive for yourselves. 19 Camp
outside the camp seven days; whoever of you
has killed any person or touched a corpse,
purify yourselves and your captives on the
third and on the seventh day. 20 You shall
purify every garment, every article of skin,
everything made of goats' hair, and every
article of wood."

21 Eleazar the priest said to the troops who
had gone to battle: "This is the statute of the
law that the LORD has commanded Moses:
22 gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead—
23 everything that can withstand fire, shall
be passed through fire, and it shall be clean.
Nevertheless it shall also be purified with the
water for purification; and whatever cannot
withstand fire, shall be passed through the
water. 24 You must wash your clothes on the
seventh day, and you shall be clean; after-
ward you may come into the camp."

25 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 26 "You
and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the
ancestral houses of the congregation make an
inventory of the booty captured, both human

[a] Gk: Heb adds *to the war*

31.1–54: War against Midian. A fictional account of the destruction of the entire Midianite nation by the Israelites without a single casualty. This Priestly story is a sequel to the account of the intermarriage between the Israelite man Zimri and the Midianite woman Cozbi (25.6–18). The story provides the Priestly interpretation on a range of topics associated with war, including the role of priests, the evaluation of male and female captives, spoils, and the purity of soldiers. Moses and the priests oversee the event, Eleazar the high priest determines acceptable spoils from holy war, and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, leads the troops. **6:** Because the priest Phinehas takes the vessels of the sanctuary into battle, it is a holy war. **16:** *On Balaam's advice,* not found in ch 25, although Peor is mentioned in 23.28. **18:** Only virgins are acceptable captives, meaning that the male warriors may marry them. The focus on intermarriage reinforces the close tie between this story and the account of Israel's sin at Baal-peor. **19–24**: See 19.1–22, with new distinctions between flammable and nonflammable (metal) items. **25–47:** The spoils are inventoried and distributed equally among warriors and all other Israelites.

and animal. 27 Divide the booty into two parts, between the warriors who went out to battle and all the congregation. 28 From the share of the warriors who went out to battle, set aside as tribute for the LORD, one item out of every five hundred, whether persons, oxen, donkeys, sheep, or goats. 29 Take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest as an offering to the LORD. 30 But from the Israelites' half you shall take one out of every fifty, whether persons, oxen, donkeys, sheep, or goats—all the animals—and give them to the Levites who have charge of the tabernacle of the LORD."

31 Then Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD had commanded Moses:

32 The booty remaining from the spoil that the troops had taken totaled six hundred seventy-five thousand sheep, 33 seventy-two thousand oxen, 34 sixty-one thousand donkeys, 35 and thirty-two thousand persons in all, women who had not known a man by sleeping with him.

36 The half-share, the portion of those who had gone out to war, was in number three hundred thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep and goats, 37 and the LORD's tribute of sheep and goats was six hundred seventy-five. 38 The oxen were thirty-six thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was seventy-two. 39 The donkeys were thirty thousand five hundred, of which the LORD's tribute was sixty-one. 40 The persons were sixteen thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was thirty-two persons. 41 Moses gave the tribute, the offering for the LORD, to Eleazar the priest, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

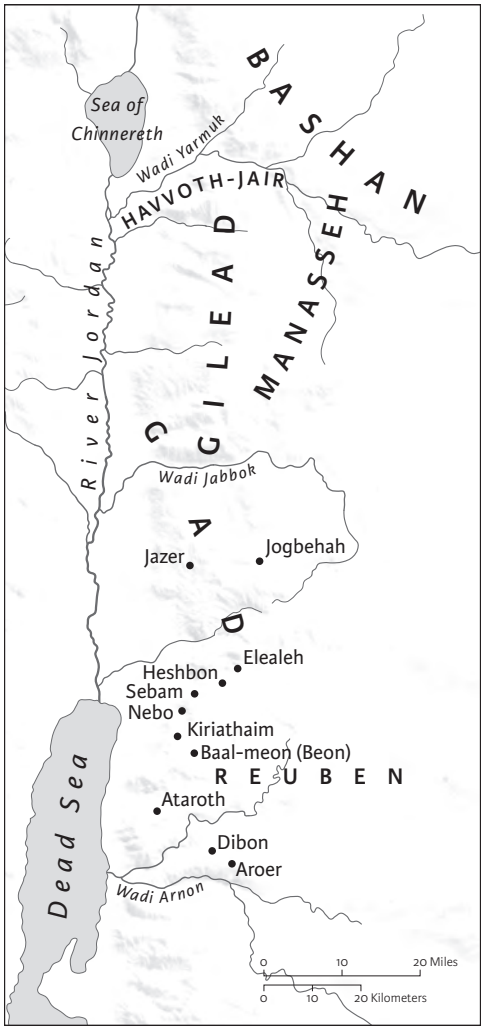
42 As for the Israelites' half, which Moses separated from that of the troops, 43 the congregation's half was three hundred thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep and goats, 44 thirty-six thousand oxen, 45 thirty thousand five hundred donkeys, 46 and sixteen thousand persons. 47 From the Israelites' half Moses took one of every fifty, both of persons and of animals, and gave them to the Levites who had charge of the tabernacle of the LORD; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

48 Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, approached Moses, 49 and said to Moses, "Your servants have counted the warriors who are under our command, and not one of us is missing. 50 And we have brought the LORD's offering, what each of us found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and pendants, to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD." 51 Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all in the form of crafted articles. 52 And all the gold of the offering that they offered to the LORD, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred fifty shekels. 53 (The troops had all taken plunder for themselves.) 54 So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tent of meeting as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD.

32 Now the Reubenites and the Gadites owned a very great number of cattle. When they saw that the land of Jazer and the

48–54: The war against Midian concludes with a census of the warriors; not a single soldier is killed in the battle with Midian. The warriors bring a gift of gold and jewelry to Moses, weighing 16,750 shekels (ca. 422 lb [191 kg]) to make atonement to God. The gift is a ransom to God in order to avoid divine wrath, perhaps associated with the census; cf. the divine anger over David's census in 2 Sam 24. The Priestly teaching on war and spoils, as well as the purification process required from participating in war, contrasts to the teaching in Deuteronomy, where the war camp is holy (Deut 23.9–14) and all the enemy must be destroyed as a sacrifice under the ban (Deut 7; 20). **54:** The gold is a ritual reminder; it may be aimed at the Israelites to recall the war against Midian (similar to the hammered plates on the altar in 16.40) or a perpetual reminder to the LORD not to punish Israel for taking a census (similar to the breastplate of Aaron in Ex 28.29).

32.1–42: Inheritance east of the Jordan. An extended exchange between the tribes of Gad and Reuben and Moses (vv. 1–32) results in the distribution of land east of the Jordan to Gad (vv. 34–36) and Reuben (vv. 37–38); land distribution to half of the tribe of Manasseh is also included (vv. 33,39–42) even though they are not involved in the exchange with Moses. **1:** *Jazer*, Amorite city east of the Jordan (21.35) occupied by Gad (32.35; Josh 13.25); *Gilead*, mountainous region east of the Jordan between the Arnon and the Yarmuk; the area south



The territory of the Transjordan tribes

land of Gilead was a good place for cattle, 2 the Gadites and the Reubenites came and spoke to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying, 3 "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon— 4 the land that the LORD subdued before the congregation of Israel—is a land for cattle; and your servants have cattle." 5 They continued, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession; do not make us cross the Jordan."

6 But Moses said to the Gadites and to the Reubenites, "Shall your brothers go to war while you sit here? 7 Why will you discourage the hearts of the Israelites from going over into the land that the LORD has given them? 8 Your fathers did this, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. 9 When they went up to the Wadi Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the hearts of the Israelites from going into the land that the LORD had given them. 10 The LORD's anger was kindled on that day and he swore, saying, 11 'Surely none of the people who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not unreservedly followed me— 12 none except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they have unreservedly followed the LORD.' 13 And the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD had disappeared. 14 And now you, a brood of sinners, have risen in place of your fathers, to increase the LORD's fierce anger against Israel! 15 If you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness; and you will destroy all this people."

16 Then they came up to him and said, "We will build sheepfolds here for our flocks, and towns for our little ones, 17 but we will take up arms as a vanguard[a] before the Israelites, until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our little ones will stay in the fortified towns because of the inhabitants of the land. 18 We will not return to our homes until

[a] Cn: Heb *hurrying*

of the Jabbok River was ruled by Sihon and the area north of it by Og (see v. 33). **3:** Many of the cities repeat as possessions of Gad (vv. 34–36) and Reuben (vv. 37–38), with some variation in the spelling of the names; see map on this page. **6–7:** Moses's initial angry response recalls the story of the scouts (chs 13–14) and accuses the two tribes of discouraging the entire nation from waging holy war and of instigating disunity; cf. other confrontations with the Transjordanian tribes in Josh 22; Judg 5.15–17. **16–27:** Reuben and Gad reply that they will first fortify cities in the Transjordan region for the security of their families and livestock and then join the

all the Israelites have obtained their inheritance. 19 We will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan to the east."

20 So Moses said to them, "If you do this—if you take up arms to go before the LORD for the war, 21 and all those of you who bear arms cross the Jordan before the LORD, until he has driven out his enemies from before him 22 and the land is subdued before the LORD—then after that you may return and be free of obligation to the LORD and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. 23 But if you do not do this, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out. 24 Build towns for your little ones, and folds for your flocks; but do what you have promised."

25 Then the Gadites and the Reubenites said to Moses, "Your servants will do as my lord commands. 26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock shall remain there in the towns of Gilead; 27 but your servants will cross over, everyone armed for war, to do battle for the LORD, just as my lord orders."

28 So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua son of Nun, and to the heads of the ancestral houses of the Israelite tribes. 29 And Moses said to them, "If the Gadites and the Reubenites, everyone armed for battle before the LORD, will cross over the Jordan with you and the land shall be subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession; 30 but if they will not cross over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan." 31 The Gadites and the Reubenites answered, "As the LORD has spoken to your servants, so we will do. 32 We will cross over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us on this side of [a] the Jordan."

33 Moses gave to them—to the Gadites and to the Reubenites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph—the kingdom of King Sihon of the Amorites and the kingdom of King Og of Bashan, the land and its towns, with the territories of the surrounding towns. 34 And the Gadites rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, 35 Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, 36 Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep. 37 And the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, 38 Nebo, and Baal-meon (some names being changed), and Sibmah; and they gave names to the towns that they rebuilt. 39 The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead, captured it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were there; 40 so Moses gave Gilead to Machir son of Manasseh, and he settled there. 41 Jair son of Manasseh went and captured their villages, and renamed them Havvoth-jair.[b] 42 And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its villages, and renamed it Nobah after himself.

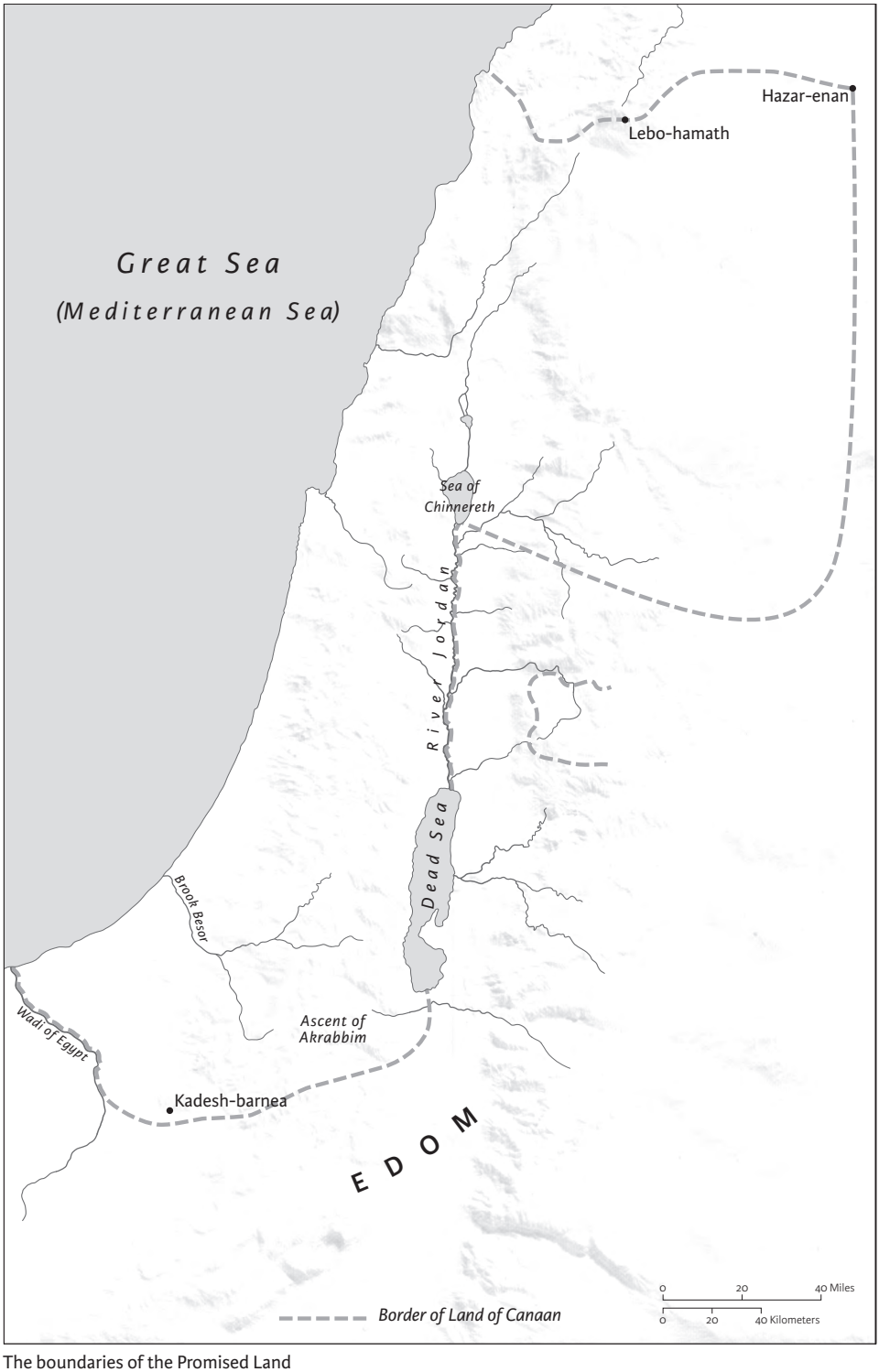
33 These are the stages by which the Israelites went out of the land of Egypt in military formation under the leadership

[a] Heb *beyond*

[b] That is *the villages of Jair*

other tribes in waging war west of the Jordan River, and Moses agrees. **28–32:** The agreement is ratified before Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the tribes, who will also be responsible for dividing the land (34.16–29). **33:** *Half-tribe of Manasseh*, likely an addition to the exchange between Moses, Gadites, and Reubenites (see Josh 13.29–31); *Sihon . . . Og*, see 21.21–35n. **34–38:** A variant and expanded list of the cities in v. 3. **39–42:** Conquest of the sons of Manasseh. **39:** *Machir*, firstborn son of Manasseh (Gen 50.23). **41:** *Jair* and *Havvoth-jair*, the villages named for him, which recur in Judg 10.3–5. A person named *Nobah* appears only here; a city called Nobah also occurs in Judg 8.11. Different sources have variant traditions about the history of Israelites in Transjordan.

33.1–49: A summary of the wilderness journey, listing Israel's stopping points on the march. Comparison with similar ancient Near Eastern texts suggests that it may be a record of military campaigns, or perhaps a list of pilgrimage sites. The summary contains many more stopping points than in the previous narratives, suggesting that the list of forty-two locations may be the source for the travel account in Exodus–Numbers. Priestly motifs such as the date (v. 3), the description of the people leaving "boldly" (v. 3; see Ex 14.8), and interpretation of the Exodus as judgment on the Egyptian gods (v. 4; Ex 12.12) suggest an expansion of an older travel document, or



The boundaries of the Promised Land

of Moses and Aaron. 2 Moses wrote down their starting points, stage by stage, by command of the LORD; and these are their stages according to their starting places. 3 They set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the passover the Israelites went out boldly in the sight of all the Egyptians, 4 while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them. The LORD executed judgments even against their gods.

5 So the Israelites set out from Rameses, and camped at Succoth. 6 They set out from Succoth, and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness. 7 They set out from Etham, and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which faces Baal-zephon; and they camped before Migdol. 8 They set out from Pi-hahiroth, passed through the sea into the wilderness, went a three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and camped at Marah. 9 They set out from Marah and came to Elim; at Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there. 10 They set out from Elim and camped by the Red Sea.[a] 11 They set out from the Red Sea[a] and camped in the wilderness of Sin. 12 They set out from the wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah. 13 They set out from Dophkah and camped at Alush. 14 They set out from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. 15 They set out from Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai. 16 They set out from the wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah. 17 They set out from Kibroth-hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth. 18 They set out from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah. 19 They set out from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez. 20 They set out from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah. 21 They set out from Libnah and camped at Rissah. 22 They set out from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah. 23 They set out from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher. 24 They set out from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah. 25 They set out from Haradah and camped at Makheloth. 26 They set out from Makheloth and camped at Tahath. 27 They set out from Tahath and camped at Terah. 28 They set out from Terah and camped at Mithkah. 29 They set out from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah. 30 They set out from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth. 31 They set out from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan. 32 They set out from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad. 33 They set out from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah. 34 They set out from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah. 35 They set out from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber. 36 They set out from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin (that is, Kadesh). 37 They set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom.

38 Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor at the command of the LORD and died there in the fortieth year after the Israelites had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. 39 Aaron was one hundred twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor.

40 The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the Israelites.

41 They set out from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. 42 They set out from

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

perhaps a later literary creation. **1:** Israel is envisioned as an army or military host under the command of Moses and Aaron. **3–8:** The summary of the Exodus follows the accounts in the book of Exodus, including the death of the Egyptian firstborn (vv. 3–4; Ex 12.29–30) and the passage through the sea (vv. 5–8; Ex 14). But it adds to the earlier accounts by stating that the departure from Egypt took place in full sight of all the Egyptians, who were still burying their firstborn dead (vv. 3–4). **9–11:** The account of the wilderness departs from the book of Exodus, since the location of the Red Sea is not associated with the crossing of water but appears instead to be a wilderness location (see Ex 13.18; 15.22), which Israel reaches only after several days of travel from Elim (see Ex 15.27). **12–37:** Twenty-four stopping places in the march from the wilderness of Sin (33.12) to the wilderness of Zin (33.36–37); only five locations occur in Exodus-Numbers: wilderness of Sin (Ex 16.1); Rephidim (Ex 17.1); wilderness of Sinai (Ex 19.1); Kibroth-hattaavah (Num 11.34–35); and Hazeroth (Num 11.35; 12.16). **38–56:** The Israelite travel from Kadesh to the plains of Moab. **38–39:** On Aaron's death, cf. 20.22–29. **40:** *The king of Arad*, see 21.1–3.

Zalmonah and camped at Punon. 43 They set out from Punon and camped at Oboth. 44 They set out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, in the territory of Moab. 45 They set out from Iyim and camped at Dibon-gad. 46 They set out from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim. 47 They set out from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. 48 They set out from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho; 49 they camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

50 In the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 51 Speak to the Israelites, and say to them: When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 52 you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their figured stones, destroy all their cast images, and demolish all their high places. 53 You shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess. 54 You shall apportion the land by lot according to your clans; to a large one you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small one you shall give a small inheritance; the inheritance shall belong to the person on whom the lot falls; according to your ancestral tribes you shall inherit. 55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides; they shall trouble you in the land where you are settling. 56 And I will do to you as I thought to do to them.

34 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Command the Israelites, and say to them: When you enter the land of Canaan (this is the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, the land of Canaan, defined by its boundaries), 3 your south sector shall extend from the wilderness of Zin along the side of Edom. Your southern boundary shall begin from the end of the Dead Sea[a] on the east; 4 your boundary shall turn south of the ascent of Akrabbim, and cross to Zin, and its outer limit shall be south of Kadesh-barnea; then it shall go on to Hazar-addar, and cross to Azmon; 5 the boundary shall turn from Azmon to the Wadi of Egypt, and its termination shall be at the Sea.

6 For the western boundary, you shall have the Great Sea and its[b] coast; this shall be your western boundary.

7 This shall be your northern boundary: from the Great Sea you shall mark out your line to Mount Hor; 8 from Mount Hor you shall mark it out to Lebo-hamath, and the outer limit of the boundary shall be at Zedad; 9 then the boundary shall extend to Ziphron, and its end shall be at Hazar-enan; this shall be your northern boundary.

10 You shall mark out your eastern boundary from Hazar-enan to Shepham; 11 and the boundary shall continue down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; and the boundary shall go down, and reach the eastern slope of the sea of Chinnereth; 12 and the boundary shall go down to the Jordan, and its end shall be at the Dead Sea.[a] This shall be your land with its boundaries all around.

13 Moses commanded the Israelites, saying: This is the land that you shall inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to give to

[a] Heb *Salt Sea*
[b] Syr: Heb lacks *its*

49: *Abel-shittim* anticipates the crossing of the Jordan River (see Josh 3.1).

33.50–56: Warning that Israel continues to engage in holy war after crossing the Jordan, deporting the indigenous population and destroying their ritual images. **52:** *Figured stones*, stones with pictorial reliefs (Lev 26.1); *cast images*, of metal (Ex 32.4; 34.17; Deut 9.12); *high places*, likely open-air sites condemned as places of worship (Lev 26.30), and the source of judgment against kings (1 Kings 13.33; 2 Kings 15.35) and the people (1 Kings 17.9).

34.1–29: Boundaries of the land west of the Jordan. 1–12: In contrast to some other descriptions of the Promised Land (e.g., Gen 15.18; Deut 1.7; 11.24; Josh 1.3–4), its boundaries in vv. 1–12 are more limited, comprising land only on the west side of the Jordan River and in northern Transjordan, thus excluding the territory on the east side of the river. The description of the land progresses in a circle that moves clockwise from south (vv. 1–5) to west (v. 6), north (vv. 7–9), and east (vv. 10–12). The circle begins and ends with the Dead Sea; the boundaries exclude Transjordan. **13–15:** Moses's summary of the land claims of the tribes west and east of the

the nine tribes and to the half-tribe; [14] for the tribe of the Reubenites by their ancestral houses and the tribe of the Gadites by their ancestral houses have taken their inheritance, and also the half-tribe of Manasseh; [15] the two tribes and the half-tribe have taken their inheritance beyond the Jordan at Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise.

[16] The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [17] These are the names of the men who shall apportion the land to you for inheritance: the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun. [18] You shall take one leader of every tribe to apportion the land for inheritance. [19] These are the names of the men: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh. [20] Of the tribe of the Simeonites, Shemuel son of Ammihud. [21] Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad son of Chislon. [22] Of the tribe of the Danites a leader, Bukki son of Jogli. [23] Of the Josephites: of the tribe of the Manassites a leader, Hanniel son of Ephod, [24] and of the tribe of the Ephraimites a leader, Kemuel son of Shiphtan. [25] Of the tribe of the Zebulunites a leader, Eli-zaphan son of Parnach. [26] Of the tribe of the Issacharites a leader, Paltiel son of Azzan. [27] And of the tribe of the Asherites a leader, Ahihud son of Shelomi. [28] Of the tribe of the Naphtalites a leader, Pedahel son of Ammihud. [29] These were the ones whom the LORD commanded to apportion the inheritance for the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

35 In the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2] Command the Israelites to give, from the inheritance that they possess, towns for the Levites to live in; you shall also give to the Levites pasture lands surrounding the towns. [3] The towns shall be theirs to live in, and their pasture lands shall be for their cattle, for their livestock, and for all their animals. [4] The pasture lands of the towns, which you shall give to the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the town outward a thousand cubits all around. [5] You shall measure, outside the town, for the east side two thousand cubits, for the south side two thousand cubits, for the west side two thousand cubits, and for the north side two thousand cubits, with the town in the middle; this shall belong to them as pasture land for their towns.

[6] The towns that you give to the Levites shall include the six cities of refuge, where you shall permit a slayer to flee, and in addition to them you shall give forty-two towns. [7] The towns that you give to the Levites shall total forty-eight, with their pasture lands. [8] And as for the towns that you shall give from the possession of the Israelites, from the larger tribes you shall take many, and from the smaller tribes you shall take few; each, in proportion to the inheritance that it obtains, shall give of its towns to the Levites.

[9] The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [10] Speak to the Israelites, and say to them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, [11] then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, so that a slayer who kills a person without intent may flee there. [12] The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, so that the slayer may not die until there is a trial before the congregation.

[13] The cities that you designate shall be six cities of refuge for you: [14] you shall designate

Jordan River. **16–29:** The ten tribal leaders who assist Eleazar and Joshua in distributing the land are named. The tribes are ordered more or less geographically, from south to north: the southern tribes of Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, and Dan; the central Joseph tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim; the northern tribes of Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali (see also Josh 15.1–12; Ezek 47.15–20).

35.1–15: Levitical cities of refuge. The Levites are separated from the other tribes in the Promised Land, as in the wilderness camp: they were counted separately (1.48–53); they camped in a separate section (2.17); they were given special tasks in caring for the tabernacle (chs 3–4); and they atoned for the Israelite firstborn by acting as substitutes for the divine claim on the firstborn (ch 8). **1–8:** Levites receive no contiguous block of land, because they are a divine possession; instead they receive forty-eight cities located throughout the land, along with their pasture lands. Deut 18.6 suggests that Levites are scattered throughout all of the cities of the Promised Land; see also Judg 17.7–8. **9–15:** *Cities of refuge*, places of asylum; see Deut 4.41–43; Josh 21.21. **12:** *Avenger* (Heb "go'el"), the next of kin who is responsible for redeeming the debt of blood that occurs with homicide. The law of asylum does not eliminate the role of the avenger, but it transfers the execution of justice surrounding homicide from the family to the state.

three cities beyond the Jordan, and three cities in the land of Canaan, to be cities of refuge. [15] These six cities shall serve as refuge for the Israelites, for the resident or transient alien among them, so that anyone who kills a person without intent may flee there.

[16] But anyone who strikes another with an iron object, and death ensues, is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. [17] Or anyone who strikes another with a stone in hand that could cause death, and death ensues, is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. [18] Or anyone who strikes another with a weapon of wood in hand that could cause death, and death ensues, is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. [19] The avenger of blood is the one who shall put the murderer to death; when they meet, the avenger of blood shall execute the sentence. [20] Likewise, if someone pushes another from hatred, or hurls something at another, lying in wait, and death ensues, [21] or in enmity strikes another with the hand, and death ensues, then the one who struck the blow shall be put to death; that person is a murderer; the avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death, when they meet.

[22] But if someone pushes another suddenly without enmity, or hurls any object without lying in wait, [23] or, while handling any stone that could cause death, unintentionally[a] drops it on another and death ensues, though they were not enemies, and no harm was intended, [24] then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with these ordinances; [25] and the congregation shall rescue the slayer from the avenger of blood. Then the congregation shall send the slayer back to the original city of refuge. The slayer shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. [26] But if the slayer shall at any time go outside the bounds of the original city of refuge, [27] and is found by the avenger of blood outside the bounds of the city of refuge, and is killed by the avenger, no bloodguilt shall be incurred. [28] For the slayer must remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest; but after the death of the high priest the slayer may return home.

[29] These things shall be a statute and ordinance for you throughout your generations wherever you live.

[30] If anyone kills another, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses; but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of a single witness. [31] Moreover you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer who is subject to the death penalty; a murderer must be put to death. [32] Nor shall you accept ransom for one who has fled to a city of refuge, enabling the fugitive to return to live in the land before the death of the high priest. [33] You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. [34] You shall not defile the land in which you live, in which I also dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the Israelites.

36 The heads of the ancestral houses of the clans of the descendants of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh,

[a] Heb *without seeing*

35.16–34: Laws of homicide. The legal distinction between intentional homicide, where the cities of refuge play no role, and unintentional. **16–21:** Intentional homicide. **16–19**: Iron, stone, or a piece of wood indicates intentional homicide since these objects are considered to be weapons. **20–21:** Hatred also indicates intention. **22–28:** Unintentional homicide. **22–23:** Accidental death through pushing or while working with stone. Absence of motive does not absolve someone from blood guilt. **24–25**: Bloodguilt and the law of the avenger require the one at fault to seek out a city of refuge. **28:** The guilt of shedding blood unintentionally can be atoned for only by the high priest; all persons guilty of unintentional homicide are allowed to leave the city of refuge upon the death of the high priest. **30–34:** Additional rules surrounding homicide. **31:** Cf. Deut 19.15–21. **33–34:** The rationale for the laws regarding homicide is that shed blood pollutes the land (Ezek 36.17–18) causing it to vomit out its inhabitants (Lev 18.28).

36.1–12: Daughters of Zelophehad. The inheritance rights of the daughters of Zelophehad frame the events surrounding the second generation of Israelites in the book of Numbers (27.1–11; 36.1–12). The original claim of the daughters of Zelophehad from the tribe of Manasseh was that they be able to inherit land, because their

of the Josephite clans, came forward and spoke in the presence of Moses and the leaders, the heads of the ancestral houses of the Israelites; 2 they said, "The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for inheritance by lot to the Israelites; and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. 3 But if they are married into another Israelite tribe, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our ancestors and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so it will be taken away from the allotted portion of our inheritance. 4 And when the jubilee of the Israelites comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they have married; and their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our ancestral tribe."

5 Then Moses commanded the Israelites according to the word of the LORD, saying, "The descendants of the tribe of Joseph are right in what they are saying. 6 This is what the LORD commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, 'Let them marry whom they think best; only it must be into a clan of their father's tribe that they are married, 7 so that no inheritance of the Israelites shall be transferred from one tribe to another; for all Israelites shall retain the inheritance of their ancestral tribes. 8 Every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the Israelites shall marry one from the clan of her father's tribe, so that all Israelites may continue to possess their ancestral inheritance. 9 No inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another; for each of the tribes of the Israelites shall retain its own inheritance.' "

10 The daughters of Zelophehad did as the LORD had commanded Moses. 11 Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, married sons of their father's brothers. 12 They were married into the clans of the descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's clan.

13 These are the commandments and the ordinances that the LORD commanded through Moses to the Israelites in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

father died without sons (27.1–11). The claim was supported by God and codified into case law by Moses. The book of Numbers turns to the topic of female inheritance at its conclusion with a revision to the earlier law that may be a later addition. **1–3:** The elders of the tribe of Manasseh present Moses with a problem in the earlier ruling arising from intertribal marriage. Under the present law, the possession of land by the daughters of Zelophehad would be transferred to their husbands upon marriage, which would lessen the inheritance of the tribe of Manasseh. **4:** The land would transfer to the husbands' tribes during the jubilee year (Lev 25). **5–12:** Moses agrees with the elders and issues an addendum to the previous ruling (see 27.8–11), maintaining the inalienable right to the possession of land by the tribes. **10–12:** The section again names the daughters of Zelophehad and states that they fulfilled the new law, since each married within the clan of Manasseh.

36.13. Conclusion. The commandments on the plains of Moab to the second generation have divine authority.

DEUTERONOMY

NAME

The standard English name of the book comes from the ancient Greek Septuagint (from *deuteronomion*, yielding Latin *Deuteronomium*), and means "Second Law." That approach to naming the book represents the Greek translation of the Hebrew phrase *Mishneh Torah* found in Deuteronomy's Law of the King, where it more properly means "a copy of the law" (see 17.18n.); indeed, the title *Mishneh Torah* is sometimes used for the book in rabbinic literature. The name Deuteronomy reflects the early Jewish perspective that the book is Moses's rehearsal of the Torah; according to Deuteronomy, Moses, shortly before he dies, revisits the earlier laws and narratives of the Tetrateuch (the first four books of the Bible) and teaches Israel about them. The main Hebrew name of the book is *Debarim* ("words"), from the book's opening, "These are the words" (1.1), following an ancient Near Eastern convention of naming books after their opening phrase.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Deuteronomy directly addresses the problem of the distance between past and present, between tradition and the needs of the contemporary generation, between revelation and interpretation. In that way, it is a remarkably modern text that instructs its audience in how to become more thoughtful readers of scripture. In narrative terms, Deuteronomy comes just as the Israelites, encamped on the plains of Moab, finally stand poised to enter the promised land. This entry into Canaan would provide the long-awaited climax of the story that had begun with the promises to the ancestors in Genesis, and whose fulfillment had been delayed by the enslavement in Egypt and the wandering in the wilderness. Now, on the eve both of his death and of the nation's entry into the land without him, Moses, as Deuteronomy's speaker, interrupts the narrative action in order to deliver a series of three speeches (1.6–4.40; 5.1–28.68; 29.2–30.20), grouped together as a long farewell address. He reviews the nation's history, expounds upon its laws, and instructs the people about the importance of loyalty to God. He also requires that the nation swear upon oath to uphold this combination of law and theological instruction as a covenant, one that supplements the prior covenant sworn at Horeb (the name for the mountain of revelation, called Sinai elsewhere; 29.1). Only after the conclusion of these discourses and a following appendix (chs 31–34) does the overall narrative line resume with the account of the nation's entry into Canaan in the books of Joshua and Judges.

Despite the attribution of the text to Moses as its speaker, from the vantage point of modern biblical scholarship, Deuteronomy arose in its present form at a later period of Israelite history. The main sections of the book fit best in the seventh century BCE as the composition of educated scribes associated with Jerusalem's royal court. The striking similarities between the distinctive religious and legal requirements of Deuteronomy and the account of the major religious reform carried out by King Josiah of Judah in 622 BCE (2 Kings 22–23) have long been recognized. That reform had been inspired by the discovery in the Temple of a "scroll of the Torah" (2 Kings 22.8; NRSV "book of the law"). Josiah's reform restricted all sacrificial worship of God to Jerusalem and removed foreign elements from the system of worship; it culminated in the celebration of a nationally centralized passover at the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23.21–23). So strongly do these royal initiatives correspond to the distinctive requirements of Deuteronomy that scholars, both traditional and critical, have long identified the "scroll of the Torah" discovered in Josiah's Temple as some form of the book of Deuteronomy.

Josiah's reform, with Deuteronomy as its catalyst, was much more a revolution than a simple return to older forms of worship, as the book of Kings suggests. Previously, it had been entirely legitimate to sacrifice to God throughout the land, a principle reflected in biblical narratives such as Abraham at Shechem and near Bethel (Gen 12.7–8); Jacob at Bethel (Gen 35.1–7); Samuel at Mizpah, Ramah, Gilgal, and Bethlehem (1 Sam 7.9,17; 9.11–14; 10.8; 16.1–5); and Elijah upon Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18.20–46). Indeed, earlier biblical law stipulated that God would grant blessing "in every place where I [God] cause my name to be remembered" (Ex 20.24). Deuteronomy challenged that older norm, prohibiting sacrifice "at any place" (lit., "in every place") and restricting it to a single site, implicitly Jerusalem (Deut 12.13–14). It is therefore striking that Deuteronomy presents itself as both an explication of the prior covenant (1.1–5) and as a supplement to it (29.1). Deuteronomy justifies itself in these two ways, yet neither description acknowledges the extent to which Deuteronomy actually challenges and revises earlier law in support of its new religious vision.

A century of Assyrian imperial domination serves as the historical background of Josiah's reforms. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had fallen to the Assyrians in 722 BCE (2 Kings 17). Continuing Assyrian incursions down the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean had all but reduced Judah to a rump-state (2 Kings 18.13). In a desperate bid to preserve the nation's autonomy, King Hezekiah of Judah made a pact with Assyria (2 Kings 18.13–18), as had his predecessor Ahaz (2 Kings 16.7–8). The resulting military allegiances may have led to religious syncretism, with foreign forms of worship introduced into the Temple (2 Kings 16.10–20; 21.1–6).

By the last quarter of the seventh century BCE, Assyria's might was in decline. In this context, Josiah's religious reforms represented an important bid for Judean cultural, political, and religious autonomy. The monarch extended his reforms into the area of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 23.15–20), territory formerly under Assyrian control. Deuteronomy, apparently written sometime during this historical crisis, likewise reflects the desire to preserve Judean cultural and religious integrity. Its authors were convinced that older conventions of worship and social organization were no longer viable. If the religion of the LORD was to survive the crisis, renewal and adaptation were necessary. The collection of laws that form the core of Deuteronomy (chs 12–26) provides a remarkably comprehensive program for cultural renewal. The laws deal with worship; the festival calendar; the major institutions of public life (justice, kingship, priesthood, prophecy); criminal, family, and civil law; and ethics. These laws are presented as the requirements of a covenant between God and the nation, which the people take an oath to uphold, upon penalty of sanctions, while maintaining unconditional loyalty to their God. That covenant structure closely corresponds to Neo-Assyrian state treaties that have been recovered from this period, the most famous of which are the *Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* (672 BCE). At a number of points, the authors of Deuteronomy seem consciously to have patterned their covenant after such treaties, treaties that had been repeatedly imposed upon Judah in the late eighth and seventh centuries BCE. From this perspective, Deuteronomy is a countertreaty: Its authors turned the weapon of Assyrian imperialism into a bid for Judean independence, shifting its oath of loyalty from the Assyrian overlord to their divine sovereign.

The authors of Deuteronomy were thus tutored in international treaty conventions and elsewhere reveal their knowledge of the literary traditions of ancient Near Eastern law (see 15.1–18n.; 17.8–13n.,14–20n.; 22.13–30n.) and wisdom literature (1.13n.; 4.2n.). The authors of Deuteronomy made use of another common ancient Near Eastern convention as well. They did not directly attach their names to their compositions or write in their own voices; instead, they attributed their composition to a prestigious figure from the past. By employing Moses as their spokesperson, they established a link with tradition at precisely the time when tradition, for the sake of survival, had to be transformed. "Pseudepigraphy," the convention of ascribing a text to an ancient personage, is particularly well known in the later literature of the Second Temple period; examples include *Jubilees*, *4 Ezra*, the *Testament of Abraham*, and (among the Dead Sea Scrolls) the *Temple Scroll*.

LITERARY HISTORY

Deuteronomy preserves several layers of tradition—the structure of three different speeches given by Moses, with an appendix, already suggests a process of literary growth. That growth is closely connected to the gradual formation of the Hebrew Bible. When Deuteronomy was first promulgated, it would not have been part of any larger whole. Instead, it would have stood by itself as a "scroll of the Torah" ("book of the law"). It would have consisted of most of the laws of chs 12–26, framed by a relatively simple introduction and conclusion. This form of Deuteronomy presented itself as a treaty concluded between the nation and its God in a formal ceremony whereby each citizen took an oath of under penalty of strict sanctions (28.1–46). This was very likely the preexilic form of Deuteronomy.

At a later stage, presumably sometime during the Exile in the mid-sixth century BCE, Deuteronomy would have been incorporated into the Deuteronomistic History (the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) to serve as its introduction. At this point, the Deuteronomistic editors would have given the book its literary frame (1.1–4.40; chs 31–34), while also adding to the collection of laws, selectively tying its promises or expectations to the later historical material. Expansions in Deuteronomy that reflect the Babylonian exile may derive from this stage (see 4.25–31; 28.47–56; 30.1–10).

At a still later point, in the exilic or postexilic period, Priestly editors appended Deuteronomy to the nascent Pentateuch to serve as its conclusion. Ironically, the decision to conclude the Pentateuch with Deuteronomy interrupted and delayed the logically expected climax of the larger narrative of Genesis through Numbers: the

conquest of the land. This narrative climax was instead deferred to the books of Joshua and Judges. The final form of Deuteronomy also contains supplemental material that seems to reflect postexilic concerns.

In the final chapters of Deuteronomy, these three viewpoints (Deuteronomic, Deuteronomistic, and Priestly) operate simultaneously, creating a complex interplay of perspectives. The legal section is brought to its conclusion with a formal ratification ceremony involving the swearing of an oath to assume the penalties for transgressing the covenant (chs 29–31). At the same time, other editors worked to embed Deuteronomy in the Deuteronomistic History. Still other editors tied the book to Genesis–Numbers and thus make the creation of Torah—no longer the occupation of the land—the climax of the newly created Pentateuch. The three perspectives operate concurrently, spinning like Ezekiel's vision of "a wheel within a wheel" (Ezek 1.16).

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

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INTERPRETATION

Deuteronomy challenges its readers actively to confront the problem of the relation between revelation and interpretation, and breaks down conventional boundaries between scripture and tradition. It makes paradox central to its structure: the book distinctively narrates the process of its own formation (31.1–12) while also anticipating its prior existence as a complete literary work (17.18; 28.58; 30.10). Interpretation is directly and indirectly a theme of Deuteronomy (see 1.5). At many points, the authors of Deuteronomy reinterpret earlier narratives (see 6.1n.) and laws (particularly from the Book of the Covenant or Covenant Code in Ex 20–23). Moreover, the process of the book's editing intentionally preserves conflicting perspectives on a full range of issues central to Israelite religion: on whether the revelation of the Decalogue at Horeb was direct or required the mediation of Moses (5.5n.); on the stature of Moses relative to other prophets (34.10n.); on the nature of

divine punishment for sin (5.9–10n.; 7.10n.); on whether God rules as head of a pantheon or is the only God who exists (4.7–8n., 15–31n., 35n.; 32.8n.); and even on Deuteronomy's own setting in time and place (1.1n.; 2.12n.; 3.11n.). These mutually exclusive positions preserve an ongoing ancient debate about fundamental religious assumptions. The editors of Deuteronomy opted against closure: they preserved these different schools of thought. Accordingly, there is in Deuteronomy no access to God in the covenant without entering into this debate. The modern reader of Deuteronomy must become, like the authors of Deuteronomy, an interpreter.

Bernard M. Levinson

1 These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan—in the wilderness, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab. [2] (By the way of Mount Seir it takes eleven days to reach Kadesh-barnea from Horeb.) [3] In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the Israelites just as the LORD had commanded him to speak to them. [4] This was after he had defeated King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and[a] in Edrei. [5] Beyond the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law as follows:

[6] The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, "You have stayed long enough at this mountain. [7] Resume your journey, and go into the hill country of the Amorites as well as into the neighboring regions—the Arabah, the hill country, the Shephelah, the Negeb, and the seacoast—the land of the Canaanites and the Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. [8] See,

[a] Gk Syr Vg Compare Josh 12.4: Heb lacks *and*

1.1–4.43: The first discourse of Moses has two subsections: a historical retrospective (1.6–3.29) and a sermon on the importance of obeying the teaching of Moses (4.1–40). An editorial heading (1.1–5) and an appendix (4.41–43) frame the discourse. **1.1–5: Editorial heading. 1:** *Beyond the Jordan,* the land east of the Jordan River (Transjordan), "the land of Moab" (v. 5), where the Israelites have stopped, awaiting entry into the land. The reference places the editor west of the Jordan, in Canaan. According to the narrative line, however, the Israelites have not yet reached the promised land, and Moses never does. From this and similar anachronisms, medieval Jewish commentators already recognized that not all of the Pentateuch could be attributed to Moses (see also 2.12; 3.11n.; 20.15; 34.5; Gen 12.6). *The plain* (lit., "the Arabah"), the Rift Valley that includes the Jordan River and stretches south from the Dead Sea through Eilat/Aqaba and the Red Sea into Africa. The places mentioned cannot be identified with certainty. **2:** *Eleven days* implies a scathing indictment of the nation. As a result of their rebellion in the desert (Num 13–14), it actually took them thirty-eight years, eight months, and twenty days to reach this point after they first broke camp (Num 10.11). *Kadesh-barnea*, see Num 13.26n. *Horeb* (Ex 3.1; 17.6; 33.6) is Deuteronomy's term for the mount of revelation. "(Mount) Sinai," in contrast, is the more standard term used by the J and P writers (see Ex 19.11; 34.29); it occurs in Deuteronomy only in 33.1, in an embedded poem, where it refers more generally to a mountainous region in the south. **4:** Num 21.21–35. **5:** *Expound, the Heb* seems intentionally ambiguous about whether Moses here proclaims new religious teachings or simply explicates material already proclaimed. *Law,* better, "teaching" (Heb "torah," 4.8,44; 27.3,8,26; 28.58,61; 29.21,29; 30.10; 31.9,11–12; 32.46). The word designates not only the combination of ritual, civil, family, and ethical law found in chs 12–26 but also the religious instruction of chs 5–11. For later editors, as here, the same word seems to refer to the entire book of Deuteronomy (cf. 2 Kings 14.6).

1.6–3.29: Historical review. Moses rehearses the Exodus, the revelation at Horeb/Sinai, and the rebellion in the desert for the generation who arose after these events, so that they may understand what brought them to the present moment. At a number of points, this narrative diverges from that of Exodus-Numbers. **1.6:** The original of the divine command quoted has not been preserved (cf. Num 10). **7:** *Amorites,* as at Gen 15.16, is used generically for the family of nations who are the original inhabitants of Canaan, rather than for one specific nation (contrast Gen 15.19–21; Ex 3.8,17). *The Shephelah* is the region of foothills between the *hill country* on the east and the *seacoast* on the west. *The Negeb* is the semiarid region south of the hill country. *Great river,* the ideal borders of the Israelite empire extended to the Euphrates (Gen 15.18), the northern limit of David's conquests according to 2 Sam 8.3. **8:** *See . . . set the land before you,* God symbolically displays the land and transfers its legal

I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land that I[a] swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants after them."

9 At that time I said to you, "I am unable by myself to bear you. 10 The LORD your God has multiplied you, so that today you are as numerous as the stars of heaven. 11 May the LORD, the God of your ancestors, increase you a thousand times more and bless you, as he has promised you! 12 But how can I bear the heavy burden of your disputes all by myself? 13 Choose for each of your tribes individuals who are wise, discerning, and reputable to be your leaders." 14 You answered me, "The plan you have proposed is a good one." 15 So I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and reputable individuals, and installed them as leaders over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officials, throughout your tribes. 16 I charged your judges at that time: "Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. 17 You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. Any case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it." 18 So I charged you at that time with all the things that you should do.

19 Then, just as the LORD our God had ordered us, we set out from Horeb and went through all that great and terrible wilderness that you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, until we reached Kadesh-barnea. 20 I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. 21 See, the LORD your God has given the land to you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you; do not fear or be dismayed."

22 All of you came to me and said, "Let us send men ahead of us to explore the land for us and bring back a report to us regarding the route by which we should go up and the cities we will come to." 23 The plan seemed good to me, and I selected twelve of you, one from each tribe. 24 They set out and went up into the hill country, and when they reached the Valley of Eshcol they spied it out 25 and gathered some of the land's produce, which they brought down to us. They brought back a report to us, and said, "It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us."

26 But you were unwilling to go up. You rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; 27 you grumbled in your tents and said, "It is because the LORD hates us that he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to hand us over to the Amorites to destroy us.

[a] Sam Gk: MT *the* LORD

title to Israel (similarly, Gen 13.14–15). **9–18:** This account combines and reinterprets two previous accounts of the creation of a military-judicial system to share the burden of leadership (compare vv. 9–12 with Num 11.14–17 and vv. 13–17 with Ex 18.13–27), placing the institutionalization of leadership after the departure from Sinai rather than before it and omitting the advisory role of Jethro, Moses's non-Israelite father-in-law (contrast Ex 18). **10:** *Stars of heaven,* fulfilling the promises made to the ancestors (Gen 15.5; 22.17; 26.4; Ex 32.13). **11:** *God of your ancestors,* Deuteronomy's normal phrase is "the LORD your/our God" (i.e., vv. 6,10). This departure from that formula ties this new generation to its past by recalling God's earlier promises (Gen 26.24; 32.9; Ex 3.6). **13:** *Wise* (contrast Ex 18.21), an attribute regularly stressed by Deuteronomy (4.6; 16.19; 32.29), suggesting the influence of wisdom literature upon its authors. *Reputable* (lit., "knowing"), continuing the emphasis upon wisdom as a criterion for leadership. **16:** *Resident alien,* the non-Israelite who lives in the community without title to land and who is therefore economically vulnerable; Deuteronomy insists upon a single law in civil and religious matters that applies to Israelite and non-Israelite residents alike (5.14; 10.18–19; 14.29; 16.11; 24.14,17,19–21). **17:** Similarly, 16.18–20.

1.19–46: From Horeb to Kadesh. A retelling, with significant variations, of the spies' reconnaissance of the land (Num 13), the people's complaining of God's inability to fulfill the promises made to Israel's ancestors (Num 14.1–38), and the abortive attempt to penetrate Canaan from the south despite the divine command not to do

28 Where are we headed? Our kindred have
made our hearts melt by reporting, 'The peo-
ple are stronger and taller than we; the cities
are large and fortified up to heaven! We actu-
ally saw there the offspring of the Anakim!' "
29 I said to you, "Have no dread or fear of
them. 30 The LORD your God, who goes before
you, is the one who will fight for you, just as
he did for you in Egypt before your very eyes,
31 and in the wilderness, where you saw how
the LORD your God carried you, just as one
carries a child, all the way that you traveled
until you reached this place. 32 But in spite of
this, you have no trust in the LORD your God,
33 who goes before you on the way to seek out
a place for you to camp, in fire by night, and
in the cloud by day, to show you the route
you should take."

34 When the LORD heard your words,
he was wrathful and swore: 35 "Not one of
these—not one of this evil generation—shall
see the good land that I swore to give to your
ancestors, 36 except Caleb son of Jephunneh.
He shall see it, and to him and to his descend-
ants I will give the land on which he set foot,
because of his complete fidelity to the LORD."
37 Even with me the LORD was angry on your
account, saying, "You also shall not enter
there. 38 Joshua son of Nun, your assistant,
shall enter there; encourage him, for he is
the one who will secure Israel's possession
of it. 39 And as for your little ones, who you
thought would become booty, your children,
who today do not yet know right from wrong,
they shall enter there; to them I will give it,
and they shall take possession of it. 40 But as
for you, journey back into the wilderness, in
the direction of the Red Sea."[a]

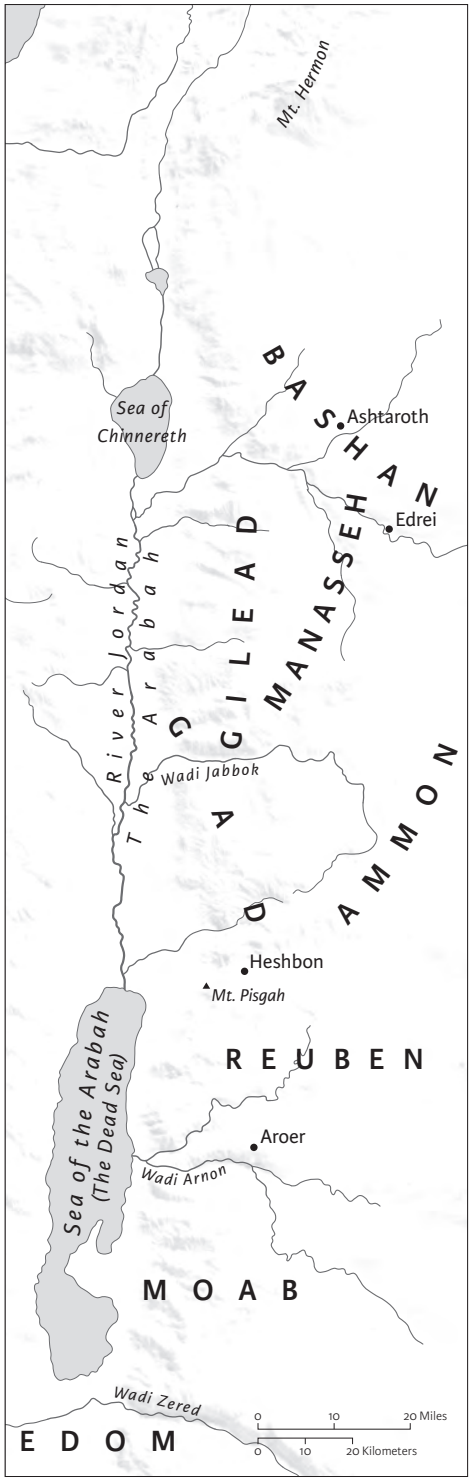
41 You answered me, "We have sinned
against the LORD! We are ready to go up and
fight, just as the LORD our God commanded
us." So all of you strapped on your battle
gear, and thought it easy to go up into the
hill country. 42 The LORD said to me, "Say to
them, 'Do not go up and do not fight, for I
am not in the midst of you; otherwise you
will be defeated by your enemies.' " 43 Al-
though I told you, you would not listen.
You rebelled against the command of the
LORD and presumptuously went up into the
hill country. 44 The Amorites who lived in
that hill country then came out against you
and chased you as bees do. They beat you
down in Seir as far as Hormah. 45 When you
returned and wept before the LORD, the LORD
would neither heed your voice nor pay you
any attention.

46 After you had stayed at Kadesh as many
2 days as you did,[1] we journeyed back
into the wilderness, in the direction of
the Red Sea,[a] as the LORD had told me and
skirted Mount Seir for many days. 2 Then the
LORD said to me: 3 "You have been skirting
this hill country long enough. Head north,
4 and charge the people as follows: You are
about to pass through the territory of your
kindred, the descendants of Esau, who live
in Seir. They will be afraid of you, so, be very
careful 5 not to engage in battle with them,
for I will not give you even so much as a
foot's length of their land, since I have given
Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. 6 You
shall purchase food from them for money,
so that you may eat; and you shall also buy
water from them for money, so that you may
drink. 7 Surely the LORD your God has blessed
you in all your undertakings; he knows your
going through this great wilderness. These
forty years the LORD your God has been
with you; you have lacked nothing." 8 So we
passed by our kin, the descendants of Esau
who live in Seir, leaving behind the route of
the Arabah, and leaving behind Elath and
Ezion-geber.

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

so (Num 14.39–45; cf. 21.1–3). **28:** *Anakim,* see Num 13.22,33n. **30:** Ex 14.14. **33:** *Fire . . . cloud,* see Ex 13.21–22n. **34–38:** See Num 14.28–30. **37:** Here Moses is not punished for his own sin (contrast 32.51; Num 20.10–13; 27.12–23), but instead vicariously bears the punishment due Israel for its sin (see 3.24–28; 4.21).

2.1–3.29: The circuit via Transjordan. 1–8a: Num 20.14–21. From Kadesh, Israel turned south through the Arabah to the Gulf of Aqaba in order to go around *Seir* (Edom; Num 21.4; cf. 33.47–49). **4:** *Descendants of Esau,* see Gen 36.1. **6:** *Money,* silver or gold that was weighed out. **8a:** *Elath,* see 1 Kings 9.26. *Ezion-geber,* see Num 33.35. **8b–25:** Num 21.4–20, significantly revised. Turning along the brook Zered (modern Wadi el-Hasa), which formed Edom's northern boundary, Israel detoured through the wilderness of Moab toward the



The circuit via Transjordan

When we had headed out along the route
of the wilderness of Moab, [9] the LORD said to
me: "Do not harass Moab or engage them in
battle, for I will not give you any of its land
as a possession, since I have given Ar as a
possession to the descendants of Lot." [10] (The
Emim—a large and numerous people, as tall
as the Anakim—had formerly inhabited it.
[11] Like the Anakim, they are usually reckoned
as Rephaim, though the Moabites call them
Emim. [12] Moreover, the Horim had formerly
inhabited Seir, but the descendants of Esau
dispossessed them, destroying them and
settling in their place, as Israel has done in
the land that the LORD gave them as a posses-
sion.) [13] "Now then, proceed to cross over the
Wadi Zered."

So we crossed over the Wadi Zered. [14] And
the length of time we had traveled from
Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the Wadi
Zered was thirty-eight years, until the entire
generation of warriors had perished from
the camp, as the LORD had sworn concern-
ing them. [15] Indeed, the LORD's own hand
was against them, to root them out from the
camp, until all had perished.

[16] Just as soon as all the warriors had died
off from among the people, [17] the LORD spoke
to me, saying, [18] "Today you are going to

Amorite kingdom of Sihon. **9:** Moab and Ammon (v. 19) were traditionally related through Lot (Gen 19.36–38). **10–12:** NRSV attempts to mitigate the anachronistic postconquest perspective by confining it to parentheses (see v. 12n.). **10–11:** *Emim . . . Rephaim* (cf. v. 20; 3.11–13), names reflecting the legendary view that the aboriginal inhabitants of the land were fearsome giants; cf. Num 13.32–33. **12:** *Horim,* see Gen 36.20–30n. *As Israel has done . . . possession,* the conquest is represented anachronistically as already having been completed (see 1.1n.; 3.11n.). **13:** *Wadi,* a streambed that had water only in the rainy winter season. **14:** Fulfilling God's angry oath (1.34–35; Num 14.28–30). Without the death of the generation of the Exodus, here marked as accomplished, there can be no entry into the promised land. **15:** *LORD's own hand,* they did not die of natural causes. The imagery reverses the standard idea of holy war: God had turned against Israel rather than fighting on its behalf (see 3.22; 7.1–5; 12.29–31; 20.1–20). **18:** *Ar,* location unknown.

cross the boundary of Moab at Ar. 19 When you approach the frontier of the Ammonites, do not harass them or engage them in battle, for I will not give the land of the Ammonites to you as a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot." 20 (It also is usually reckoned as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim formerly inhabited it, though the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, 21 a strong and numerous people, as tall as the Anakim. But the LORD destroyed them from before the Ammonites so that they could dispossess them and settle in their place. 22 He did the same for the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, by destroying the Horim before them so that they could dispossess them and settle in their place even to this day. 23 As for the Avvim, who had lived in settlements in the vicinity of Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and settled in their place.) 24 "Proceed on your journey and cross the Wadi Arnon. See, I have handed over to you King Sihon the Amorite of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to take possession by engaging him in battle. 25 This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under heaven; when they hear report of you, they will tremble and be in anguish because of you."

26 So I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to King Sihon of Heshbon with the following terms of peace: 27 "If you let me pass through your land, I will travel only along the road; I will turn aside neither to the right nor to the left. 28 You shall sell me food for money, so that I may eat, and supply me water for money, so that I may drink. Only allow me to pass through on foot— 29 just as the descendants of Esau who live in Seir have done for me and likewise the Moabites who live in Ar—until I cross the Jordan into the land that the LORD our God is giving us." 30 But King Sihon of Heshbon was not willing to let us pass through, for the LORD your God had hardened his spirit and made his heart defiant in order to hand him over to you, as he has now done.

31 The LORD said to me, "See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin now to take possession of his land." 32 So when Sihon came out against us, he and all his people for battle at Jahaz, 33 the LORD our God gave him over to us; and we struck him down, along with his offspring and all his people. 34 At that time we captured all his towns, and in each town we utterly destroyed men, women, and children. We left not a single survivor. 35 Only the livestock we kept as spoil for ourselves, as well as the plunder of the towns that we had captured. 36 From Aroer on the edge of the Wadi Arnon (including the town that is in the wadi itself) as far as Gilead, there was no citadel too high for us. The LORD our God gave everything to us. 37 You did not encroach, however, on the land of the Ammonites, avoiding the whole upper region of the Wadi Jabbok as well as the towns of the hill country, just as[a] the LORD our God had charged.

3 When we headed up the road to Bashan, King Og of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, for battle at Edrei. 2 The LORD said to me, "Do not fear him, for I have handed him over to you, along with his people and his land. Do to him as you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon." 3 So the LORD our God also handed over to us King Og of Bashan and all his people. We struck him down until not a single survivor was left. 4 At that time we captured all his towns; there was no citadel that we did not take from them—sixty towns, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. 5 All these were fortress towns with high walls, double gates, and bars, besides a great many villages. 6 And we utterly destroyed them, as we had done to King Sihon of Heshbon, in each city utterly destroying men, women, and children. 7 But all the live-

[a] Gk Tg: Heb *and all*

20: Cf. vv. 10–12n.; Gen 14.5. **23:** *Caphtor,* Crete, referring to the conquest of the coastal plain by "Sea Peoples" such as Philistines shortly after 1200 BCE (see Gen 10.2–5,14; Am 9.7). **24:** *Arnon,* see Num 21.12–13. **26–37:** The victory over Sihon, whose capital was at Heshbon. The earlier source in Num 21.21–32 is here supplemented and revised. **30:** See Ex 4.21n. **34:** *Utterly destroyed,* see 7.2n. **37:** The river *Jabbok* makes a wide bend south and thus forms the western border of Ammon (3.16); see map on p. 253. **3.1–11:** The victory over Bashan (Num

stock and the plunder of the towns we kept as spoil for ourselves.

8 So at that time we took from the two kings of the Amorites the land beyond the Jordan, from the Wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon 9 (the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, while the Amorites call it Senir), 10 all the towns of the tableland, the whole of Gilead, and all of Bashan, as far as Salecah and Edrei, towns of Og's kingdom in Bashan. 11 (Now only King Og of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. In fact his bed, an iron bed, can still be seen in Rabbah of the Ammonites. By the common cubit it is nine cubits long and four cubits wide.) 12 As for the land that we took possession of at that time, I gave to the Reubenites and Gadites the territory north of Aroer,[a] that is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, as well as half the hill country of Gilead with its towns, 13 and I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh the rest of Gilead and all of Bashan, Og's kingdom. (The whole region of Argob: all that portion of Bashan used to be called a land of Rephaim; 14 Jair the Manassite acquired the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and he named them—that is, Bashan—after himself, Havvoth-jair,[b] as it is to this day.) 15 To Machir I gave Gilead. 16 And to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the territory from Gilead as far as the Wadi Arnon, with the middle of the wadi as a boundary, and up to the Jabbok, the wadi being boundary of the Ammonites; 17 the Arabah also, with the Jordan and its banks, from Chinnereth down to the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea,[c] with the lower slopes of Pisgah on the east.

18 At that time, I charged you as follows: "Although the LORD your God has given you this land to occupy, all your troops shall cross over armed as the vanguard of your Israelite kin. 19 Only your wives, your children, and your livestock—I know that you have much livestock—shall stay behind in the towns that I have given to you. 20 When the LORD gives rest to your kindred, as to you, and they too have occupied the land that the LORD your God is giving them beyond the Jordan, then each of you may return to the property that I have given to you." 21 And I charged Joshua as well at that time, saying: "Your own eyes have seen everything that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so the LORD will do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. 22 Do not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you."

23 At that time, too, I entreated the LORD, saying: 24 "O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your might; what god in heaven or on earth can perform deeds and mighty acts like yours! 25 Let me cross over to see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon." 26 But the LORD was angry with me on your account and would not heed me. The LORD said to me, "Enough from you! Never speak to me of this matter again! 27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and look around you to the west, to the north, to the south, and to the east. Look well, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. 28 But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, because it is he who shall cross over at the head of this people and who shall secure their possession of

[a] Heb *territory from Aroer*
[b] That is *Settlement of Jair*
[c] Heb *Salt Sea*

21.33–35). **1:** *Edrei,* on the extreme south border of *Bashan*. **11:** The oversized bed of Og, one of the legendary Rephaim (2.10–11), was a "museum piece" in Rabbah, a city on the Ammonite border. The claim that this bed *can still be seen* there places the historical perspective of the narrator, and thus of Deuteronomy's composition, long after the events here recounted (1.1n.; 2.12n.). A *cubit* was approximately 18 in. (45 cm), so the bed was about 6 ft (1.8 m) wide and 13 ft (4 m) long. **12–22:** The allotment of tribal territories in Transjordan (Num 32; Josh 13). **14:** Num 32.41. **17:** The territory included the eastern part of the Jordan Valley or Arabah. **18–20:** The men of the Transjordanian tribes are to join the others in the conquest of the land west of the Jordan. **22:** The whole story of the Exodus, wilderness journey, and invasion of Canaan is governed by the convictions of holy war, whereby God is a divine warrior who engages in battle on behalf of Israel. **23–29:** Num 27.12–23. **24:** *What god . . . can perform,* the assertion of God's superior power, relative to other gods *in heaven,* assumes the existence of other gods (5.7n.; 6.4n.; 32.8n.; Ex 15.11; Ps 89.5–8). For the later perspective of monotheism, see 4.35n. **26:** See 1.37n. **27:** Mount *Pisgah,* see 34.1n.

the land that you will see." [29] So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

4 So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. [2] You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you. [3] You have seen for yourselves what the LORD did with regard to the Baal of Peor—how the LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, [4] while those of you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today.

[5] See, just as the LORD my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. [6] You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" [7] For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? [8] And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

[9] But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children— [10] how you once stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, "Assemble the people for me, and I will let them hear my words, so that they

4.1–40: Exhortation to obey the teachings of Moses. While preceding the Decalogue (5.6–21), this unit provides a later theological reflection upon it, focusing on the instructions regarding idols in 5.8–10 and broadening its significance. Admonitions to obedience (vv. 1,40) frame the unit, which systematically contrasts obedience (vv. 5–24)/disobedience (vv. 25–31); remembering/forgetting (vv. 9,23); the LORD/other gods (vv. 7,34); Israel's revealed Torah/the laws of other nations (vv. 8,28); and God/idols (vv. 12–20). The correct worship of God is aniconic: images (whether of God or of objects in nature) should play no role in Israelite religion. This becomes so strong a theme that idolatry by itself is asserted to be the cause of the nation's exile from its land (vv. 25–31). The explicit reference to exile suggests that the unit is a late theological explanation for the Babylonian exile in the early sixth century BCE. The focus on idolatry as the basis for the divine punishment diverges significantly from the perspective elsewhere in the book that views failure to heed "all his [God's] commandments and decrees" as the cause of exile (28.15; cf. 28.1,45,58–59). **1–4:** The incident at Peor (Num 25.1–9) is recalled to emphasize the importance of fidelity to God and the dire consequences of worshiping other gods. **2:** This admonition not to alter the teaching of Moses, whether by addition or subtraction (cf. 12.32), parallels similar admonitions in wisdom literature (Prov 30.6; Eccl 3.14; 12.12–13; Sir 42.21; cf. Rev 22.18–19) and in ancient Near Eastern legal traditions. **5–8:** The author here challenges the prevailing Near Eastern idea that wisdom was a royal prerogative; for example, the ancient Babylonian *Laws of Hammurabi* (ca. 1750 BCE) praised the "just decisions" of its "wise" king (cols 47.1; 4.7), while here it is the nation Israel who will be internationally renowned as "wise" for its "just" laws (vv. 6,8). See also 29.29n.; 30.11–14n. **7–8:** Israel is distinguished both by its god and by its law: The two ideas are interlocked. God is *near,* both in having entered history on behalf of Israel and in revealing his will as Torah (30.14). The laws are *just* (better, "righteous"), not only in their morality but also as embodying the will of God. **9–14:** The revelation at Horeb (Ex 19–20 [in which the location of revelation is referred to as Sinai]; Deut 5) is recalled in order to instruct this generation, who did not experience it. **9:** The paired injunctions not to *forget* the powerful experience of God's actions and to educate *your children,* so that the past becomes present also to them, represent a prominent aim of Deuteronomy: to overcome the distance of the past and maintain it as a source of identity (vv. 23,25; 6.2,7,20–25; 8.11; 9.7; 31.13; 32.18). *Your eyes have seen,* as well as the following "how you once stood" (v. 10), are highly paradoxical assertions. Neither is literally true: The actual generation of the Exodus had died off (2.14–15n.). This paradoxical structure of thought, whereby Moses addresses those who had not witnessed the events as if they had, while insisting that they inculcate the events to posterity, is central to Deuteronomy's theology of history (5.3–4,23; 11.7; 29.14–15). Because of their sharp divergence from the narrative setting, these verses may well represent a different source or literary layer in Deuteronomy. **10:** *My words,* the Decalogue ("ten commandments"; v. 13; 5.22; 9.10; 10.2,4).

may learn to fear me as long as they live on the earth, and may teach their children so";
11 you approached and stood at the foot of the mountain while the mountain was blazing up to the very heavens, shrouded in dark clouds.
12 Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. 13 He declared to you his covenant, which he charged you to observe, that is, the ten commandments;[a] and he wrote them on two stone tablets.
14 And the LORD charged me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy.

15 Since you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, 16 so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure—the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. 19 And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven. 20 But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt, to become a people of his very own possession, as you are now.

21 The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he vowed that I should not cross the Jordan and that I should not enter the good land that the LORD your God is giving for your possession. 22 For I am going to die in this land without crossing over the Jordan, but you are going to cross over to take possession of that good land. 23 So be careful not to forget the covenant that the LORD your God made with you, and not to make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. 24 For the LORD your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God.

[a] Heb *the ten words*

Elsewhere, however, the phrase refers comprehensively to the legal corpus of chs 12–26 (12.28). *Fear,* respectful reverence, not intimidation (see Job 28.28; Prov 1.7). **11:** The manifestation of a god ("theophany") was often associated with disturbances of nature in Ugaritic (Canaanite) literature. This motif was taken over by Israelite writers and applied to God (Ex 19.16–19; 20.21; Pss 18.7–15; 29.3–9). **12:** *Form* (also vv. 15–16,23,25), directly alluding to the Decalogue's prohibition against making idols in 5.8 (=Ex 20.4). **13:** A subtle reinterpretation of Sinai: The specification of that event as one where God proclaimed *ten commandments* occurs only here, at 10.4, and at Ex 34.28. There is no special number of or name for the commandments (lit., "words") in Ex 19–20 or Deut 5. The rationale for *two stone tablets* (as at 5.22) derives from ancient Near Eastern treaties, whereby both sovereign and vassal would retain a separate complete copy of the treaty. **15–31:** Reinterpretation of the commands regarding idol worship in 5.8–10. The Decalogue concedes the existence of other gods, while prohibiting Israel from worshiping them (5.7; cf. 32.8; Ex 15.11; Ps 82.1). It then separately prohibits the making of images (5.8). The distinction between those two commandments is dissolved here. The existence of other gods is no longer conceivable; the sole focus is the prohibition against idols. Here and elsewhere (see v. 19n.) key ideas in Deuteronomy are reinterpreted from a later theological perspective; such passages therefore represent a later textual layer that dates to the exilic period. **16b–19a:** This catalogue follows the order of creation in Gen 1 in reverse order, consistent with ancient scribal practice when quoting an earlier text. **18:** *Water under the earth,* seas, rivers, and lakes. Ancient cosmology conceived the earth to be a disk floating on such waters (cf. Gen 1.9). **19:** *Sun . . . host of heaven* may reflect images derived from foreign forms of worship brought into the Jerusalem Temple by Manasseh but removed by Josiah (2 Kings 21.5; 23.4–5; Jer 8.2). The idea of idols or of celestial phenomena literally being worshiped sharply distorts ancient Near Eastern religion, which regarded such phenomena as visible manifestations or emblems of a deity, not as themselves divine. This polemic, with the idea that God *allotted* the celestial phenomena to other nations while reserving Israel as "his very own possession" (v. 20; cf. 7.6n), reinterprets the earlier idea that God, as head of the pantheon, assigned other nations to the supervision of lesser gods but retained Israel as "the LORD's own portion," "his allotted share" (see 32.8–9 and 32.9n). The author deanimates those gods, reducing them to lifeless celestial objects. **21:** See 1.37n.

25 When you have had children and
children's children, and become complacent
in the land, if you act corruptly by making
an idol in the form of anything, thus doing
what is evil in the sight of the LORD your
God, and provoking him to anger, 26 I call
heaven and earth to witness against you
today that you will soon utterly perish from
the land that you are crossing the Jordan
to occupy; you will not live long on it, but
will be utterly destroyed. 27 The LORD will
scatter you among the peoples; only a few
of you will be left among the nations where
the LORD will lead you. 28 There you will
serve other gods made by human hands,
objects of wood and stone that neither see,
nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. 29 From there
you will seek the LORD your God, and you
will find him if you search after him with
all your heart and soul. 30 In your distress,
when all these things have happened to you
in time to come, you will return to the LORD
your God and heed him. 31 Because the LORD
your God is a merciful God, he will neither
abandon you nor destroy you; he will not
forget the covenant with your ancestors that
he swore to them.

32 For ask now about former ages, long
before your own, ever since the day that
God created human beings on the earth;
ask from one end of heaven to the other:
has anything so great as this ever happened
or has its like ever been heard of? 33 Has
any people ever heard the voice of a god
speaking out of a fire, as you have heard,
and lived? 34 Or has any god ever attempted
to go and take a nation for himself from the
midst of another nation, by trials, by signs
and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand
and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying
displays of power, as the LORD your God
did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?
35 To you it was shown so that you would
acknowledge that the LORD is God; there
is no other besides him. 36 From heaven he
made you hear his voice to discipline you.
On earth he showed you his great fire, while
you heard his words coming out of the fire.
37 And because he loved your ancestors,
he chose their descendants after them. He
brought you out of Egypt with his own pres-
ence, by his great power, 38 driving out be-
fore you nations greater and mightier than
yourselves, to bring you in, giving you their
land for a possession, as it is still today. 39 So
acknowledge today and take to heart that
the LORD is God in heaven above and on the
earth beneath; there is no other. 40 Keep his
statutes and his commandments, which I
am commanding you today for your own
well-being and that of your descendants
after you, so that you may long remain in
the land that the LORD your God is giving
you for all time.

41 Then Moses set apart on the east side of
the Jordan three cities 42 to which a homicide
could flee, someone who unintentionally
kills another person, the two not having been
at enmity before; the homicide could flee to
one of these cities and live: 43 Bezer in the
wilderness on the tableland belonging to the
Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead belonging to
the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan belonging
to the Manassites.

26: *Heaven . . . witness,* similarly, 30.19; 31.28; 32.1; Isa 1.2; 44.23; Pss 69.34; 96.11. **27–28:** These verses allude to the exile of conquered populations, a policy used effectively by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. **32–40:** Continuation of the double focus on the uniqueness of God's revelation to Israel and of the covenant he made with the nation. Several passages fit best in the historical context of the Babylonian exile (see v. 35n.). **33:** Alludes to the normal expectation that no human can look directly upon God and survive (Gen 16.13; 32.30; Ex 3.6; 19.21; 33.20). **34:** *Attempted,* better, "ventured" (as at 28.56). *Trials . . . wonders* refers to the signs performed by Moses and Aaron in Egypt, including the plagues, to persuade Pharaoh to release Israel (Ex 7.3; 8.23; 10.1–2; 11.9–10). **35:** *There is no other,* this affirmation of full monotheism (contrast v. 7; 5.7) corresponds to the thought of the exilic Second Isaiah (Isa 43.10–13; 44.6–8; 45.6–7,22).

4.41–43: An appendix. The cities of refuge to be established in Transjordan. Since the law concerned with these cities (ch 19) does not refer to this passage, these verses are most likely an editorial appendix composed after the completion of ch 19 (cf. Num 35.9–15; Josh 20.8). Similar disconnected appendixes often appear in the Bible at the conclusion of longer literary units (e.g., Lev 27), suggesting that Deut 1.1–4.43 as a whole was added to 4.44–49.

44 This is the law that Moses set before the
Israelites. 45 These are the decrees and the
statutes and ordinances that Moses spoke
to the Israelites when they had come out
of Egypt, 46 beyond the Jordan in the valley
opposite Beth-peor, in the land of King Sihon
of the Amorites, who reigned at Heshbon,
whom Moses and the Israelites defeated
when they came out of Egypt. 47 They oc-
cupied his land and the land of King Og of
Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites on
the eastern side of the Jordan: 48 from Aroer,
which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, as
far as Mount Sirion[a] (that is, Hermon), 49 to-
gether with all the Arabah on the east side
of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah,
under the slopes of Pisgah.

5 Moses convened all Israel, and said to
them:

Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordi-
nances that I am addressing to you today;
you shall learn them and observe them
diligently. 2 The LORD our God made a
covenant with us at Horeb. 3 Not with our
ancestors did the LORD make this covenant,
but with us, who are all of us here alive
today. 4 The LORD spoke with you face to
face at the mountain, out of the fire. 5 (At
that time I was standing between the LORD
and you to declare to you the words[b] of the
LORD; for you were afraid because of the
fire and did not go up the mountain.) And
he said:

6 I am the LORD your God, who brought
you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house
of slavery; 7 you shall have no other gods
before[c] me.

8 You shall not make for yourself an idol,
whether in the form of anything that is in
heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath,
or that is in the water under the earth. 9 You
shall not bow down to them or worship
them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous
God, punishing children for the iniquity of
parents, to the third and fourth generation of

[a] Syr: Heb *Sion*
[b] Q Mss Sam Gk Syr Vg Tg: MT *word*
[c] Or *besides*

4.44–28.68: The second discourse of Moses.

4.44–49: Introduction. Cf. 1.1–5. **49:** *Sea of the Arabah,* the Dead Sea.

5.1–33: The revelation of the Decalogue at Sinai/Horeb. Ostensibly a retelling of Ex 19–20, this version introduces significant changes in both detail and theology. The central idea is that God publicly reveals the law to the entire nation across boundaries of gender, ethnicity, and class. Near Eastern legal collections, in contrast, were attributed to a human monarch and were concerned to preserve class distinctions. Moreover, a deity disclosing himself to an entire nation was unprecedented. The Decalogue has God address each Israelite individually using a singular form of "you," rather than the expected plural form. In contrast to Near Eastern law, the prohibitions are universal and absolute: the aim of the law is to transform society by creating a moral community in which murder, theft, etc. will no longer exist. Obedience to God's will (vv. 6–16) demands active respect for the integrity of the neighbor (vv. 17–21). The editing drives home the point that there is no access to God or revelation without mediation and interpretation (vv. 5,28–32), preserving two mutually independent viewpoints about whether God spoke directly to the people (v. 4) or only through the mediation of Moses (v. 5n.). Similarly, the editing retains a debate about the terror involved in hearing directly the divine voice (vv. 24–25).

5.1–5: Making the past present. 3: *Not with our ancestors . . . but with us,* inconsistent with the earlier emphasis that the generation who experienced these events has now died off (2.14–15). The aim is to overcome the limits of historical time and place through participation in the covenant, which makes revelation "present" (see 4.9n.; 11.2; 29.14–15n.). *Our ancestors* may refer either to the Exodus generation (2.14–15n.) or to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (1.11n.). **5:** NRSV suggests that the first sentence serves to clarify v. 4. More likely, the statement presents an alternative perspective inconsistent with v. 4. *I was standing between . . . you,* contrast "face to face" (v. 4). *You . . . did not go up the mountain,* contradicting v. 4, "with you . . . at the mountain." *And he said,* in Hebrew, the original transition from the end of v. 4 directly to the Decalogue.

5.6–21: The Decalogue. This version differs at several points from that in Ex 20.2–17. **7–10:** See 4.15–31n. **9:** Punishment for sins against God extends across three generations. This principle of vicarious punishment contrasts sharply with the Israelite norm for civil and criminal law, which restricts punishment to the agent alone (24.16). Later layers of tradition challenged this theological principle of divine justice (see 7.10n.; Jer 31.29–30;

THE NUMBERING OF THE DECALOGUE (THE TEN COMMANDMENTS) IN DEUTERONOMY 5.6–21

NRSV	Most Jewish Tradition	Alternative Jewish Tradition, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Most Protestant Churches	Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches
Deut 5.6 (divine self-identification)	1	1	1
5.7 (other gods)	2	1	1
5.8–10 (idols)	2	2	1
5.11 (divine name)	3	3	2
5.12–15 (sabbath)	4	4	3
5.16 (parents)	5	5	4
5.17 (murder)	6	6	5
5.18 (adultery)	7	7	6
5.19 (theft)	8	8	7
5.20 (perjury)	9	9	8
5.21a (coveting wife)	10	10	9
5.21b (coveting property)	10	10	10

those who reject me, [10] but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation[a] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

[11] You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

[12] Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. [13] Six days you shall labor and do all your work. [14] But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. [15] Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

[16] Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

[17] You shall not murder.[b]

[18] Neither shall you commit adultery.

[a] Or *to thousands*
[b] Or *kill*

Ezek 18). **10:** *Steadfast love* or "grace" (Heb "ḥesed"), loyalty of action as an expectation of the covenant (2 Sam 7.15; Hos 6.6). *Who love me,* technical language of Near Eastern treaties, where "love" refers to the loyalty of action that the vassal owes the sovereign. **11:** The intent is to prohibit careless use of the divine name in the context of swearing an oath ("May God do X to me unless I do Y"); such oaths were viewed as legally binding (see Judg 11.29–40). **12:** *Observe,* contrast Ex 20.8 ("Remember"). **14:** The law equally benefits slaves and non-Israelites (1.16n.; 15.15; 16.11; 24.17). **15:** Contrast the rationale provided for the sabbath at Ex 20.11, where it is associated with the creation of the world. Here it is associated with the origin of Israel as a people. Here also, as elsewhere, Deuteronomy emphasizes the Exodus as a central motivation for religious and social practices. **16:** *As . . . commanded you,* the ostensible precise repetition of the Decalogue here diverges from the original (Ex 20.12) by shifting to the perspective of Moses as speaker, whose annotation is now included in the revelation. **17:** *Murder* is correct; text note *b* is an inaccurate translation ("kill," as a global prohibition). **18:** The absolute

19 Neither shall you steal.
20 Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.
21 Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife.

Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

22 These words the LORD spoke with a loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and he added no more. He wrote them on two stone tablets, and gave them to me. 23 When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you approached me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders; 24 and you said, "Look, the LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the fire. Today we have seen that God may speak to someone and the person may still live. 25 So now why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, we shall die. 26 For who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and remained alive? 27 Go near, you yourself, and hear all that the LORD our God will say. Then tell us everything that the LORD our God tells you, and we will listen and do it."

28 The LORD heard your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: "I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you; they are right in all that they have spoken. 29 If only they had such a mind as this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well with them and with their children forever! 30 Go say to them, 'Return to your tents.' 31 But you, stand here by me, and I will tell you all the commandments, the statutes and the ordinances, that you shall teach them, so that they may do them in the land that I am giving them to possess." 32 You must therefore be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn to the right or to the left. 33 You must follow exactly the path that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you are to possess.

6 Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, 2 so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go

prohibition of adultery transforms it from the breach of the contractual rights of the woman's husband into an offense against both God and the larger community. Near Eastern law normally granted the husband the sole right of deciding whether to execute or otherwise punish the wife for adultery (see *Laws of Hammurabi* §129). Biblical law here removes the wife from the disposal of the husband and grants her the status of legal person (see 22.22n.). **21:** *Wife . . . house,* contrast the sequence of Ex 20.17. **22:** *Two . . . tablets*, see 4.13n.

5.22–33: Moses as mediator. While the Decalogue was given directly to the people (v. 4; 4.10–13), the rest of the laws were mediated to the people by Moses, at their plea (v. 27; 4.14). **23–27:** 4.33; cf. Ex 20.18–21. **24–25:** An awkward juxtaposition; v. 24 may be an insertion reflecting 4.33. The people's anxiety explains the request that Moses serve as mediator. **28–31:** The idea that Moses mediates between God and the people will be used in two ways: to justify the laws that Moses subsequently propounds as revelation (chs 12–26) and to justify the institution of prophecy (18.15–22).

6.1–11.32: Preamble to the laws: the requirement of loyalty to God. A sermonic preamble to the laws of chs 12–26. **6.1–3:** An introduction to this separate literary unit, stressing the rewards of obedience to the covenant. **1:** *The commandment . . . occupy,* the Hebrew is nearly identical to 5.31. The precise repetition of terminology legitimates the entire second discourse—both *the commandment* (chs 6–11) and *the statutes and the ordinances* (the legal corpus of chs 12–26; see 12.1)—as originating in direct divine revelation from God on Horeb (5.31). The Book of the Covenant (Ex 21–23), with its "ordinances" (Ex 21.1), and the "statutes and the ordinances" of Deuteronomic law (6.1; 12.1), now in implicit tension, are independently presented as God's words to Moses on the mountain immediately following the Decalogue (Ex 20.21; 24.3,12). **2:** *Fear,* see 4.10n.

well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.[a] 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. 6 Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. 7 Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem[b] on your forehead, 9 and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

10 When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, 11 houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, 12 take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 13 The LORD your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear. 14 Do not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are all around you, 15 because the LORD your God, who is present with you, is a jealous God. The anger of the LORD your God would be kindled against you and he would destroy you from the face of the earth.

16 Do not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. 17 You must diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his decrees, and his statutes that he has commanded you. 18 Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may go in and occupy the good land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give you, 19 thrusting out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has promised.

20 When your children ask you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the decrees

[a] Or *The LORD our God is one LORD*, or *The LORD our God, the LORD is one*, or *The LORD is our God, the LORD is one*

[b] Or *as a frontlet*

4–25: A sermon on the opening verses of the Decalogue in 5.6–10, incorporating direct allusions to them: vv. 4 and 14 refer to 5.7; vv. 12,21,23 refer to 5.6; v. 15 ("jealous God") refers to 5.9; vv. 5,17 refer to 5.10. **4–9:** In Jewish tradition these verses begin the important prayer known as the Shema ("Hear!"). **4–5:** This "first" commandment (Mk 12.29–30) restates the Decalogue's prohibitions in 5.6–7 in positive form. *Hear, O Israel* (5.1; 9.1; 20.3; 27.9), an imperative modeled on a wisdom teacher's call for attention (Prov 1.8; 4.1,10; 5.7; 7.24; 23.19). *The LORD . . . alone,* as text note *a* indicates, the Hebrew is difficult; the translation selected makes most sense historically. The focus is not on God's nature in the abstract but on the quality of Israel's relationship to God. The proclamation, like 5.7, does not deny the existence of other gods but is concerned with the exclusivity of Israel's loyalty to God (as in ch 13). This perspective is universalized in later prophecy (Zech 14.9). **5:** *Love,* see 5.10n. The paradox of commanding a feeling (as in Lev 19.17–18) is resolved with the recognition that covenantal "love" is not private emotion but loyalty of action toward both deity and neighbor (see 5.1–33n.). **7:** *At home . . . away,* using paired opposites, possibly as a merism (28.3–6n.) to indicate totality: One should *talk about* the commandments at all times. **8:** *Bind them,* based on the wisdom teacher's symbolically urging his students to focus on the lesson (Prov 3.3; 6.21; 7.3). Taken literally, this law provides the basis for the Jewish practice of binding phylacteries (Heb "tefillin," an Aramaic plural form), containing selected texts from the Torah, upon the arm and forehead. **9:** *Doorposts,* important transitional spaces in which religious-legal ceremonies were performed and where divine images might be stored (see Ex 12.7,21–23; 21.6; Isa 57.8). Perhaps partially reacting against a formerly magical background, this law devotes that space to the teaching of Moses. The law provides the basis for the Jewish convention of placing a small box containing this and related texts upon the upper portion of the right doorpost (Heb "mezuzah"). **10–11:** The list, *land . . . houses . . . cisterns . . . olive groves* (cf. Josh 24.13; Neh 9.24–25), defines the elements of a society established in its land. Israel is about to both inherit its land and become an established society. **12:** The threat of forgetting and the risk of apostasy are repeatedly stressed (4.9–14n.; 8.11–20; 32.18; cf. 5.29; Hos 2.5–13). **16:** *Test . . . Massah,* for the incident and the Hebrew pun, see Ex 17.2–7; see also Mt 4.7. **20:** The Jewish Passover text ("Haggadah") includes this and similar

and the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?" 21 then you shall say to your children, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 The LORD displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. 23 He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. 24 Then the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case. 25 If we diligently observe this entire commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, we will be in the right."

7 When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you— 2 and when the LORD your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy. 3 Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, 4 for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. 5 But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles,[a]

[a] Heb *Asherim*

didactic questions (Ex 12.21–27; 13.1–10,11–16). **22:** See 4.34n.

7.1–10.11: Risks to covenantal fidelity upon entry to the land. The first risk is that Israel enters an already inhabited land, whose greater population and different religious practices it must confront (ch 7). Thereafter, successful habitation carries its own risks of complacency and loss of historical memory (ch 8).

7.1–26: The war of conquest. Two topics are treated: the command to destroy the original occupants of Canaan (vv. 1–3,6,17–24); and the command not to worship their gods (vv. 4–5,7–15,25–26). The two themes are joined at v. 16. **1:** An after-the-fact literary compilation more than a historical portrayal: The peoples included in the "table of nations" vary considerably (Gen 15.19–21; Ex 3.8,17; 13.5; 23.23; 33.2; 34.11; Deut 20.17; Josh 3.10; 9.1; 11.3; 12.8; 24.11; Judg 3.5; 1 Kings 9.20; Ezra 9.1; Neh 9.8; 2 Chr 8.7). *Hittites* (Gen 23.10; 25.9; 49.29–30; 50.13; Num 13.29; etc.), the Hittite Empire (ca. 1700–1200 BCE) in fact flourished not in Canaan but in Anatolia, in central Turkey. The *Jebusites,* according to the Bible the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem, retained control of the city until conquered by David several centuries after the conquest (2 Sam 5.6–7). The latter narrative implies the nonimplementation of this law. The ideal number *seven,* which signifies completion or totality (28.7; Gen 1; the plague list of Pss 78.44–51 and 105.28–36 in contrast to Ex 7–12), suggests that the enumeration may be artificial. **2:** This requirement for destruction is anomalous: Earlier sources contemplate only expulsion (Ex 23.23–33; cf. 34.11). The definition and requirements of the "ban" (Heb "ḥerem") vary considerably throughout the Bible: total destruction of people and property (here; 13.15–17; 20.16–17; 1 Sam 15.3); sparing of property (2.34–35; 3.6–7); sparing of women, children, and property (20.10–14). Finally, other narratives more realistically speak of the failure of conquest except in limited areas and the use of conquered populations for labor (Josh 15–17; Judg 1; 3.1–6). These factors suggest that the law of the ban is an anachronistic literary formulation. It first arose centuries after the settlement; it was never implemented because there was no population extant against whom it could be implemented. Its polemic in favor of religious purity is directed at internal issues of religious purity in postexilic Judah. Often the authors of Deuteronomy stigmatize as "Canaanite" older forms of Israelite religion that they no longer accept (see v. 5n.; 16.22n.; 18.9–14n.). *Utterly destroy,* or "place under the ban," or "devote," namely set aside for divine use and denied to humans. The war of conquest, as a holy war, should not be one where the individual profits through plunder (see 12.29–31n.; 13.15–17n.; 20.1–20n.; Josh 7). The law addresses apostasy as opposed to ethnicity; it is directed against apostate Israelites in 8.20; 13.15–17. **3:** This prohibition against intermarriage does not fit easily after v. 2, suggesting several layers of editing. It is also inconsistent with 21.10–14, which seems to reflect a more original policy. **5:** See Ex 34.13n. *Pillars,* stone monuments that marked places where God appeared and were thus originally legitimate in worship (Gen 35.14; Ex 24.4; Hos 3.4). Only subsequently were they prohibited as alien (Ex 23.24; 34.13; Lev 26.1; Deut 12.3; 16.22; 2 Kings 18.4). *Sacred poles,* or, with text note *a, Asherim.* The singular, "Asherah,"

and burn their idols with fire. 6 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

7 It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, 10 and who repays in their own person those who reject him. He does not delay but repays in their own person those who reject him. 11 Therefore, observe diligently the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that I am commanding you today.

12 If you heed these ordinances, by diligently observing them, the LORD your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; 13 he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, in the land that he swore to your ancestors to give you. 14 You shall be the most blessed of peoples, with neither sterility nor barrenness among you or your livestock. 15 The LORD will turn away from you every illness; all the dread diseases of Egypt that you experienced, he will not inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you. 16 You shall devour all the peoples that the LORD your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity; you shall not serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

17 If you say to yourself, "These nations are more numerous than I; how can I dispossess them?" 18 do not be afraid of them. Just remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, 19 the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. 20 Moreover, the LORD your God will send the pestilence[a] against them, until even the survivors and the fugitives are destroyed. 21 Have no dread of them, for the LORD your God, who is present with you, is a great and awesome God. 22 The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to make a quick end of

[a] Or *hornets*: Meaning of Heb uncertain

preserves the name of an important Canaanite goddess (1 Kings 18.19) known from Ugarit. Archaeological evidence suggests this goddess may also have been popular in Israel. Here the word designates merely a tree or wooden pole (16.21; Judg 6.25–26,28). **6–16:** The meaning of Israel's covenantal relationship to God. **6:** *For* suggests that the verse (also 14.2) originally continued v. 3, since it provides the rationale for total separation from the Canaanites, not for the destruction of their shrines. This verse summarizes Deuteronomy's view of Israel's relation to God. *Holy,* lit., "set aside as separate," as is clear here. *Chosen,* the precondition of Israel's elected status. *His treasured possession* (14.2; 26.18; Ex 19.5; Ps 135.4; Mal 3.17), designating Israel as the exclusive property of God; cf. 4.20n., where a different Heb word is used. Just as the monarch is entitled to private "treasure" not in the public domain (1 Chr 29.3), so does God single Israel out for a special relationship. **9–11:** A discourse on verses 5.9–10 in the Decalogue that radically revises their meaning. The reuse of key phrases and inversion of the order of punishment and blessing in 5.9–10 mark the citation (see 4.16b–19a n.). **9:** *Covenant loyalty,* NRSV translates the same word as "steadfast love" at 5.10 (see note). **10:** *In their own person,* individually or personally. The repetition of the phrase, bracketing the key idea that God *does not delay,* highlights the rejection of vicarious punishment (5.9n.; Ex 34.7). Instead, the sermon argues for individual retribution, as in criminal law (24.16), while deleting any reference to the transmission of punishment across generations. **12–14:** Natural fertility is here made contingent upon obedience to the covenant. **17–26:** Israel need not fear more powerful nations since, according to the idea of the holy war, God "is present with you" in battle (v. 21; 6.15; cf. 20.1–4). These verses echo Ex 23.20–33. **20:** *Pestilence,* see Ex 23.27–28; Josh 24.12. **22:** Abbreviating Ex 23.29–30; contrast 9.3.

them, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you. 23 But the LORD your God will give them over to you, and throw them into great panic, until they are destroyed. 24 He will hand their kings over to you and you shall blot out their name from under heaven; no one will be able to stand against you, until you have destroyed them. 25 The images of their gods you shall burn with fire. Do not covet the silver or the gold that is on them and take it for yourself, because you could be ensnared by it; for it is abhorrent to the LORD your God. 26 Do not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be set apart for destruction like it. You must utterly detest and abhor it, for it is set apart for destruction.

8 This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. 2 Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. 3 He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.[a] 4 The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years. 5 Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the LORD your God disciplines you. 6 Therefore keep the commandments of the LORD your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him. 7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 9 a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. 10 You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you.

11 Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. 12 When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, 14 then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, 15 who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous[b] snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, 16 and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. 17 Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth." 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today. 19 If you do forget the LORD your God and follow other gods to serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you

[a] Or *by anything that the LORD decrees*
[b] Or *fiery*; Heb *seraph*

8.1–20: The temptation to pride and self-sufficiency in the land. Moses warns the people that success in Canaan will tempt them to forget the wilderness lesson of complete dependence upon God. **1–10:** An appeal to Israel's memory: In the wilderness God sustained the people daily (Ex 12.37–17.16; Num 11–14). **3:** *Manna,* see Ex 16; Num 11.7–8. **5:** Suffering is here interpreted as discipline, as in a parent's correction of a child (Hos 11); this metaphor reflects the influence of wisdom literature (see Prov 3.11–12; cf. 1.13n.; 4.2n.; 4.5–8n.; 4.10n.; 6.4n.; 11.2).

8.11–20: The peril of prosperity. 11: A bold equation between *the LORD* and the legal corpus (*his commandments . . . ordinances . . . statutes . . . today*). Disobedience of Deuteronomy's laws becomes tantamount to forgetting God and transgressing the Decalogue's prohibitions in 5.7–9 (see v. 19n.). **15:** *Poisonous snakes,* Num 21.6–9. *Water . . . from flint rock,* Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13; Ps 114.8. **16:** *Manna,* see v. 3n. **19:** *Other gods . . . serve . . . worship,*

today that you shall surely perish. 20 Like the nations that the LORD is destroying before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.

9 Hear, O Israel! You are about to cross the Jordan today, to go in and dispossess nations larger and mightier than you, great cities, fortified to the heavens, 2 a strong and tall people, the offspring of the Anakim, whom you know. You have heard it said of them, "Who can stand up to the Anakim?" 3 Know then today that the LORD your God is the one who crosses over before you as a devouring fire; he will defeat them and subdue them before you, so that you may dispossess and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has promised you.

4 When the LORD your God thrusts them out before you, do not say to yourself, "It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to occupy this land"; it is rather because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you. 5 It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you are going in to occupy their land; but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is dispossessing them before you, in order to fulfill the promise that the LORD made on oath to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

6 Know, then, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to occupy because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people. 7 Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; you have been rebellious against the LORD from the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place.

8 Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you. 9 When I went up the mountain to receive the stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water. 10 And the LORD gave me the two stone tablets written with the finger of God; on them were all the words that the LORD had spoken to you at the mountain out of the fire on the day of the assembly. 11 At the end of forty days and forty nights the LORD gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant. 12 Then the LORD said to me, "Get up, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly. They have been quick to turn from the way that I commanded them; they have cast an image for themselves." 13 Furthermore the LORD said to me, "I have seen that this people is indeed a stubborn people. 14 Let me alone that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and more numerous than they."

15 So I turned and went down from the mountain, while the mountain was ablaze; the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. 16 Then I saw that you had indeed sinned against the LORD your God, by casting for yourselves an image of a calf; you had been quick to turn from the way that the LORD had commanded you. 17 So I took hold of the two tablets and flung them from my two hands, smashing them before your eyes. 18 Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because

citing 5.7,9. *Worship,* translated "bow down to" at 5.9. **20:** *Like the nations,* here Israel is itself placed under the ban if it commits apostasy (see 7.1–26n.). *Destroying . . . perish,* in Hebrew, the same word is repeated to underscore the precise "measure for measure" nature of the punishment. Israel's election (7.6n.) grants no exemption from upholding the law. Rightful habitation in the promised land, like its fertility (7.12–14n.), depends upon covenantal obedience, not ethnic identity (7.2n.).

9.1–10.11: The already broken and renewed covenant. God does not give the land to the people as a reward for righteousness, for in the wilderness they acted rebelliously. **9.2:** See 1.28n.; 2.10. **4–5:** Victory will be given in the holy war because Canaan has been irrevocably corrupted by the actions of its present occupants and because of God's enduring commitment to the promises made to Israel's ancestors. **6–24:** Historical traditions show that Israel has been rebellious since the Exodus (Ezek 20.5–8; contrast Hos 2.14–20; Jer 2.2–3). **8–10:** Ex 24.12–18; 31.18. **11–21:** Ex 32, revised. **17:** *Smashing them,* not in simple anger but reflecting a legal ceremony to

of all the sin you had committed, provoking the LORD by doing what was evil in his sight. 19 For I was afraid that the anger that the LORD bore against you was so fierce that he would destroy you. But the LORD listened to me that time also. 20 The LORD was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him, but I interceded also on behalf of Aaron at that same time. 21 Then I took the sinful thing you had made, the calf, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it thoroughly, until it was reduced to dust; and I threw the dust of it into the stream that runs down the mountain.

22 At Taberah also, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, you provoked the LORD to wrath. 23 And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, "Go up and occupy the land that I have given you," you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God, neither trusting him nor obeying him. 24 You have been rebellious against the LORD as long as he has[a] known you.

25 Throughout the forty days and forty nights that I lay prostrate before the LORD when the LORD intended to destroy you, 26 I prayed to the LORD and said, "Lord GOD, do not destroy the people who are your very own possession, whom you redeemed in your greatness, whom you brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 27 Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; pay no attention to the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin, 28 otherwise the land from which you have brought us might say, 'Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to let them die in the wilderness.' 29 For they are the people of your very own possession, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm."

10 At that time the LORD said to me, "Carve out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood. 2 I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets, which you smashed, and you shall put them in the ark." 3 So I made an ark of acacia wood, cut two tablets of stone like the former ones, and went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. 4 Then he wrote on the tablets the same words as before, the ten commandments[b] that the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain out of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. 5 So I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark that I had made; and there they are, as the LORD commanded me.

6 (The Israelites journeyed from Beeroth-bene-jaakan[c] to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried; his son Eleazar succeeded him as priest. 7 From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land with flowing streams. 8 At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to him, and to bless in his name, to this day. 9 Therefore Levi has no allotment or inheritance with his kindred; the LORD is his inheritance, as the LORD your God promised him.)

10 I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights, as I had done the first time. And once again the LORD listened to me. The LORD was unwilling to destroy you. 11 The LORD said to me, "Get up, go on your journey at the head of the people, that they may go in and

[a] Sam Gk: MT *I have*
[b] Heb *the ten words*
[c] Or *the wells of the Bene-jaakan*

confirm breach of treaty (Ex 32.19). **22:** Num 11.1–3; Ex 17.1–7; Num 11.31–34. **23:** Num 13–14. **25–29:** A paraphrase of Ex 32.11–14. Deuteronomy portrays Moses as the ideal prophet (34.10–12); he intercedes for the people and suffers because of them (1.37n.; cf. Isa 53).

10.1–11: The second ascent of the mountain (cf. Ex 34.1–4,27–28). **1–3:** These verses reflect a tradition that Moses made the ark and put the stone tablets in it (1 Kings 8.9); it is fundamentally different from the Priestly tradition with its gold-covered ark (Ex 25.10–12). **3:** *Acacia,* an insect-resistant hardwood found in arid regions. **6–9:** An editorial insertion concerning Levites, the Ark and other levitical matters; vv. 6–7 seem to quote a wilderness itinerary from the Priestly literature (cf. Num 33.30–38). **6:** Num 20.22–29. **8:** Ex 32.25–29. The Levites' role is to bear the ark (Num 4.4–15), to *minister,* i.e., conduct the sacrificial services (Num 18), and to *bless* the people (Num 6.22–27). **9:** See 12.12n.; 18.2n.

occupy the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them."

12 So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God[a] and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being. 14 Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the LORD your God, the earth with all that is in it, 15 yet the LORD set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today. 16 Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer. 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, 18 who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. 19 You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 20 You shall fear the LORD your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. 21 He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen. 22 Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in heaven.

11 You shall love the LORD your God, therefore, and keep his charge, his decrees, his ordinances, and his commandments always. 2 Remember today that it was not your children (who have not known or seen the discipline of the LORD your God), but it is you who must acknowledge his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm, 3 his signs and his deeds that he did in Egypt to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and to all his land; 4 what he did to the Egyptian army, to their horses and chariots, how he made the water of the Red Sea[b] flow over them as they pursued you, so that the LORD has destroyed them to this day; 5 what he did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place; 6 and what he did to Dathan and

[a] Q Ms Gk Syr: MT lacks *your God*
[b] Or *Sea of Reeds*

10.12–11.32: Obedience as the condition for prosperity in the land. This section provides the climax and conclusion of the historical review in 8.1–10.11. **10.12–13:** Earlier, breach of the Decalogue prohibitions in 5.7–9, which focus specifically on God, had been redefined and equated with "failing to keep his commandments . . . ordinances . . . and . . . statutes" (8.11n.). Now obedience to God is similarly redefined as compliance with the fixed *commandments . . . and . . . decrees* (v. 13) of Deuteronomy, i.e., the laws of chs 12–26 (see 28.15,45). For a similar catechism that does not extend the traditional focus upon God to law, see Mic 6.8. *And to keep* (lit., "by keeping") the precise antithesis of 8.11. The sequence *love . . . keep . . . commandments* cites 5.10. **16:** *Circumcise . . . the . . . heart* means to open oneself to God (Lev 26.41); no distinction is intended between mind, will, and emotion. The metaphorical formulation, which challenges any attempt to reduce Deuteronomy to narrow "legalism," corresponds to prophetic ideals (cf. Jer 4.4; 31.33). **17–18:** Integrity in the administration of court justice (v. 17; cf. 1.17; 16.19) and protection of the marginalized (v. 18) are given a theological foundation, making the remarkable argument that human social ethics amounts to imitation of God. Responsibility for ensuring justice in court and for defending the marginalized were conventional royal prerogatives (*Laws of Hammurabi* prologue; Ps 72.4). Deuteronomy contemplates no such role for the monarch (17.14–20n.). Instead, it is God who protects the rights of the marginalized, entering history to do so (cf. Ex 3.7–10; Phil 2.6–7). Love of neighbor thus originates in divine action. **18–19:** *Strangers . . . stranger,* better, the legal term "resident alien" in both cases. Just as justice must be rendered to Israelite and alien alike (see 1.16n.), so must "love" also include the resident alien (cf. Lev 19.33–34). **18:** *Loves . . . providing,* note love's concrete expression in action and service (see 5.10n.; 6.5n.). **19:** *For you were,* see Ex 22.21; 23.9. **22:** *Seventy persons* (Gen 46.27; Ex 1.5) comes first in the Hebrew, emphasizing Israel's miraculous transformation into a nation. *Stars in heaven,* see 1.10n.

11.1–32: Loyalty to the covenant provides the condition for life in Canaan. The punishments and rewards noted in this section are predominantly addressed to a plural "you," stressing communal rather than individual responsibility. **2:** The frequent word *today* in Deuteronomy emphasizes the contemporaneity of the covenant (see 5.3n.). *Discipline,* see 8.5n. **4:** See Ex 14. **6:** The address is based upon the early tradition of the revolt of

Abiram, sons of Eliab son of Reuben, how in the midst of all Israel the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, along with their households, their tents, and every living being in their company; 7 for it is your own eyes that have seen every great deed that the LORD did.

8 Keep, then, this entire commandment that I am commanding you today, so that you may have strength to go in and occupy the land that you are crossing over to occupy, 9 and so that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10 For the land that you are about to enter to occupy is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sow your seed and irrigate by foot like a vegetable garden. 11 But the land that you are crossing over to occupy is a land of hills and valleys, watered by rain from the sky, 12 a land that the LORD your God looks after. The eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

13 If you will only heed his every commandment[a] that I am commanding you today—loving the LORD your God, and serving him with all your heart and with all your soul— 14 then he[b] will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil; 15 and he[b] will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you will eat your fill. 16 Take care, or you will be seduced into turning away, serving other gods and worshiping them, 17 for then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain and the land will yield no fruit; then you will perish quickly off the good land that the LORD is giving you.

18 You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem[c] on your forehead. 19 Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 20 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, 21 so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

22 If you will diligently observe this entire commandment that I am commanding you, loving the LORD your God, walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him, 23 then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and mightier than yourselves. 24 Every place on which you set foot shall be yours; your territory shall extend from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the Western Sea. 25 No one will be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the fear and dread of you on all the land on which you set foot, as he promised you.

26 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: 27 the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today; 28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn from the way that I am commanding you today, to follow other gods that you have not known.

[a] Compare Gk: Heb *my commandments*
[b] Sam Gk Vg: MT *I*
[c] Or *as a frontlet*

Dathan and Abiram (Num 16). There is no mention of Korah's rebellion (Num 16.3–11), which was added to Num 16 by the Priestly school after this abstract was made. **10–12:** Though the Nile provided sufficient water, the Nile valley had to be irrigated through human effort, since rainfall was minimal; Canaan's crops are irrigated by seasonal rainfall. The difference is mentioned to stress Israel's dependence upon God, who gives and withholds rain (Am 4.7–8), as well as the sanctity of the land of Israel (see 21.23). **14:** The *early rain* ends the summer dry season (October-November); the *later rain* comes in the spring (March-April). **16–17:** See 7.12–14n. **18–21:** See 6.6–9. **24:** *Every place . . . yours,* a legal ritual that effected transfer of title by pacing out the perimeter of the territory (Gen 13.17). The territory is described in terms of the ideal limits noted of biblical King David's empire (see 1.7n.). *The Western Sea,* the Mediterranean. **26–32:** The two ways (see ch 28; 30.15–20). **26:** *Curse,* the sanctions

[29] When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that you are entering to occupy, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. [30] As you know, they are beyond the Jordan, some distance to the west, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oak[a] of Moreh.

[31] When you cross the Jordan to go in to occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and when you occupy it and live in it, [32] you must diligently observe all the statutes and ordinances that I am setting before you today.

12 These are the statutes and ordinances that you must diligently observe in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you to occupy all the days that you live on the earth.

[2] You must demolish completely all the places where the nations whom you are about to dispossess served their gods, on the mountain heights, on the hills, and under every leafy tree. [3] Break down their altars, smash their pillars, burn their sacred poles[b] with fire, and hew down the idols of their gods, and thus blot out their name from their places. [4] You shall not worship the LORD your God in such ways. [5] But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there. You shall go there, [6] bringing there your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, your votive gifts, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks. [7] And you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your households together, rejoicing in all the undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

[a] Gk Syr: Compare Gen 12.6; Heb *oaks* or *terebinths*
[b] Heb *Asherim*

for violating a treaty, which a vassal assumes in a sworn oath (see 28.15–68). **29–30:** These verses represent an editorial intrusion, hinting ahead to ch 27. Previously, *blessing . . . and the curse* identify the benefits of covenantal obedience and the sanctions for breach of covenant (vv. 26–28; 28.2,15). That theme is the expected climax of this chapter. Here they are restricted to a series of positive and negative sayings shouted from mounts *Gerizim and . . . Ebal,* in anticipation of ch 27. *Gerizim,* on the south, and *Ebal,* on the north, flank the pass guarded by the city of Shechem in the central hill country. This geographic restriction fits poorly in a chapter otherwise directed to the entire land (vv. 22–25,31–32). **30:** *The oak of Moreh,* at Shechem (see Gen 12.6). **31–32:** Transition to the legal corpus. **32:** *Diligently observe . . . statutes and ordinances,* cited in reverse order at 12.1 to effect the transition from the literary frame of Deuteronomy (chs 1–11) into the laws (chs 12–26).

12.1–26.15: The legal corpus: Deuteronomy's transformation of earlier Israelite religion. Just as Deuteronomy provides a significant reinterpretation of earlier narrative traditions about the nation's past (see 1.19–46n; 4.1–40n; 5.1–33n; 7.9–11n; etc.), so does it here advance a major new understanding of the nation's religious requirements and legal traditions.

12.1–32: Centralization and purification of worship. Restriction of sacrificial worship of God to a single sanctuary and removal of foreign influence represent two of the most distinctive features of Deuteronomy's idea of religion and law. Four sections of the text (vv. 2–7,8–12,13–19,20–28) command centralization; a fifth (vv. 29–31) warns against alien worship. **1:** An editorial superscription. *Earth,* more accurately, "land (of Israel)." **2–7:** Israel must reject the Canaanite precedent of multiple sanctuaries. **2:** *You,* The chapter alternates between plural (vv. 1–12) and singular (vv. 13–31), which, combined with six repetitions of the centralization command (vv. 5,11,14,18,21,26), suggests a long compositional history. *Demolish,* see Ex 23.23–24; 34.11–14; Deut 7.5. *Heights . . . leafy tree,* Canaanite sanctuaries, "high places" (1 Kings 3.2; 2 Kings 16.4), but used to worship God as well (1 Kings 3.4). **3:** See 7.5n. **5:** *The place that the LORD . . . will choose,* biblical narrative reflects a tradition in which Jerusalem played no role in Israel's history until the period of King David. Consequently the city cannot be named explicitly without undermining the literary form of Deuteronomy as an address by Moses. *As his habitation,* better, "to establish it" (the divine name), indicating possession and special relationship. *Put his name there,* Deuteronomy rejects the idea that a nation's God would inhabit the Temple (contrast 1 Kings 8.12–13). **6:** *Burnt offerings,* in which all of the flesh was burned on the altar (v. 27; cf. the Priestly sacrificial laws in Lev 1.3–17). *Sacrifices,* other offerings where portions of the animal were assigned to the priests or shared by worshipers

8 You shall not act as we are acting here today, all of us according to our own desires, 9 for you have not yet come into the rest and the possession that the LORD your God is giving you. 10 When you cross over the Jordan and live in the land that the LORD your God is allotting to you, and when he gives you rest from your enemies all around so that you live in safety, 11 then you shall bring everything that I command you to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, and all your choice votive gifts that you vow to the LORD. 12 And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you together with your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levites who reside in your towns (since they have no allotment or inheritance with you).

13 Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place you happen to see. 14 But only at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes—there you shall offer your burnt offerings and there you shall do everything I command you.

15 Yet whenever you desire you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your towns, according to the blessing that the LORD your God has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as they would of gazelle or deer. 16 The blood, however, you must not eat; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. 17 Nor may you eat within your towns the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, any of your votive gifts that you vow, your freewill offerings, or your donations; 18 these you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God at the place that the LORD your God will choose, you together with your son and your daughter, your male and female slaves, and the Levites resident in your towns, rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God in all your undertakings. 19 Take care that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land.

20 When the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he has promised you, and you say, "I am going to eat some meat," because you wish to eat meat, you may eat meat whenever you have the desire. 21 If the place where the LORD your God will choose to put his name is too far from you, and you slaughter as I have commanded you any of your

(v. 27; 18.1–3; cf. Priestly law in Lev 3; 7.29–36). **8–12:** That worship at multiple sanctuaries was to have limited temporal validity differs from Ex 20.24. **8:** *Our own desires,* a negative judgment, as in Judg 17.6; 21.25. **9–10:** *Rest and . . . possession,* territorial security (Josh 21.44) would allow centralization. In the biblical account, this was fulfilled with David's conquest of Jerusalem, which allowed the construction of the Temple (2 Sam 7.1,11; 1 Kings 8.56). **12:** Since *the Levites* were not assigned land (see Josh 13.14; cf. Ezek 44.28), they had to depend upon voluntary offerings (see 10.9; 18.1–2). **13–19:** The earliest of the chapter's five sections is concentrically arranged in a chiasm to structure diverse material in an ABC:C´B´A´ pattern.

A *Take care that* (13)
B *but only* (Heb "ki 'im") + centralization (14)
C *yet* ("raq") + secular slaughter (15)
C´ *but* ("raq") + secular slaughter (16)
B´ *rather* ("ki 'im" [untranslated in NRSV]) + centralization (18)
A´ *Take care that* (19)

13–16: Two important, revolutionary distinctions: First, between sacrificial worship at random sites, *any place,* rejected as illegitimate, and legitimate sacrifice performed at a single sanctuary, *the place that the LORD will choose.* This contrasts with previous norms, when altars were common throughout the land (Gen 12.7; 35.1–7; 1 Sam 3.1; 7.17; 1 Kings 18.20–46). Second, between ritual sacrifice and secular slaughter of domestic animals for food. According to the biblical account, prior to Deuteronomy all slaughter, even for food, was sacrificial and took place at an altar. With altars throughout the land, that rule imposed no burden upon Israelites. The prohibition of all local altars, however, created a real difficulty for those without easy access to the central sanctuary. The permission granted here for local, secular slaughter answers that need. By analogy to the rules for hunting wild game (*gazelle or deer*), domestic animals may be slaughtered throughout the land, on condition that their blood is poured out *on the ground like water* (cf. Lev 17.13). Blood symbolizes "life" (v. 23; 15.23; Gen 9.4–5; Lev 17.14; 19.26). **17:** *Tithe,* see 14.22–29n. **20–28:** Permission for secular slaughter is now justified by

herd or flock that the LORD has given you, then you may eat within your towns whenever you desire. 22 Indeed, just as gazelle or deer is eaten, so you may eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat it. 23 Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the meat. 24 Do not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. 25 Do not eat it, so that all may go well with you and your children after you, because you do what is right in the sight of the LORD. 26 But the sacred donations that are due from you, and your votive gifts, you shall bring to the place that the LORD will choose. 27 You shall present your burnt offerings, both the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; the blood of your other sacrifices shall be poured out beside[a] the altar of the LORD your God, but the meat you may eat.

28 Be careful to obey all these words that I command you today,[b] so that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, because you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

29 When the LORD your God has cut off before you the nations whom you are about to enter to dispossess them, when you have dispossessed them and live in their land, 30 take care that you are not snared into imitating them, after they have been destroyed before you: do not inquire concerning their gods, saying, "How did these nations worship their gods? I also want to do the same." 31 You must not do the same for the LORD your God, because every abhorrent thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods. They would even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. 32 [c]You must diligently observe everything that I command you; do not add to it or take anything from it.

13 [d] If prophets or those who divine by dreams appear among you and promise you omens or portents, 2 and the omens or the portents declared by them take place, and they say, "Let us follow other gods" (whom you have not known) "and let us serve them," 3 you must not heed the words of those prophets or those who divine by dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you indeed love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. 4 The LORD your God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear, his commandments you shall keep, his voice you shall obey, him you shall serve, and to him you shall hold fast. 5 But those prophets or those who divine by dreams shall

[a] Or *on*
[b] Gk Sam Syr: MT lacks *today*
[c] Ch 13.1 in Heb
[d] Ch 13.2 in Heb

the expansion of Israel's boundaries. **30:** Elsewhere, the corruption of Israelite religion is presented as resulting from the attractions of marital contract (7.1–5,25) or political treaty (Ex 23.33; 34.12). **31:** *Burn their sons and their daughters,* the Canaanites are accused of child sacrifice (see 2 Kings 3.27; 23.10; Jer 19.5–6; ch 31), elsewhere associated with the deity Molech (Lev 18.21; 20.2–5). **32:** An exhortation to preserve the law unchanged. *Diligently observe,* the same idiom found at 12.1 (also 11.32) frames the unit with an inclusio. *Do not add to it or take anything from it,* an ancient Near Eastern scribal formula often included in the epilogues of treaties, inscriptions, and law collections to protect them from being defaced, altered, or written over (see 4.2n.).

13.1–18: Unconditional loyalty to God. Various hypothetical situations involving conflict of covenant loyalty to God, treated analogously to ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties, which stipulated absolute loyalty. **1–5:** A prophet or diviner invites listeners to commit idolatry. While Deuteronomy presents Moses as the founder of Israelite prophecy, establishing both its standard (18.15–22) and its pinnacle (34.10–12), Deuteronomy nonetheless regulates prophecy, requiring the execution of the prophet who contravenes Deuteronomy's teaching (vv. 1–5; 18.19–22) and subordinating prophecy to covenantal law. No longer is the power to perform signs the test of a prophet's legitimacy (contrast v. 2 with 34.11–12; Ex 4.1–9,21; 1 Kings 18.20–40). **1:** The religious stature of prophets makes it difficult to resist their incitement to commit apostasy. *Dreams,* the two sources of religious authority correspond to the nearly contemporary Neo-Assyrian *Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* (672 BCE), which require loyalty even in the face of conspiracy from "your brothers, your sons, your daughters, or from the mouth of a prophet, an ecstatic, or an inquirer of oracles" (*VTE* §10). *Omens or portents* were used by legitimate prophets to authenticate their proclamations (34.11; Ex 4.1–9,21; 7.9; Judg 6.17). **5:** *Treason,* as betrayal of the

be put to death for having spoken treason against the LORD your God—who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery—to turn you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

6 If anyone secretly entices you—even if it is your brother, your father's son or[a] your mother's son, or your own son or daughter, or the wife you embrace, or your most intimate friend—saying, "Let us go worship other gods," whom neither you nor your ancestors have known, 7 any of the gods of the peoples that are around you, whether near you or far away from you, from one end of the earth to the other, 8 you must not yield to or heed any such persons. Show them no pity or compassion and do not shield them. 9 But you shall surely kill them; your own hand shall be first against them to execute them, and afterwards the hand of all the people. 10 Stone them to death for trying to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 11 Then all Israel shall hear and be afraid, and never again do any such wickedness.

12 If you hear it said about one of the towns that the LORD your God is giving you to live in, 13 that scoundrels from among you have gone out and led the inhabitants of the town astray, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods," whom you have not known, 14 then you shall inquire and make a thorough investigation. If the charge is established that such an abhorrent thing has been done among you, 15 you shall put the inhabitants of that town to the sword, utterly destroying it and everything in it—even putting its livestock to the sword. 16 All of its spoil you shall gather into its public square; then burn the town and all its spoil with fire, as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. It shall remain a perpetual ruin, never to be rebuilt. 17 Do not let anything devoted to destruction stick to your hand, so that the LORD may turn from his fierce anger and show you compassion, and in his compassion multiply you, as he swore to your ancestors, 18 if you obey the voice of the LORD your God by keeping all his commandments that I am commanding you today, doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

14 You are children of the LORD your God. You must not lacerate yourselves or shave your forelocks for the dead. 2 For you

[a] Sam Gk Compare Tg: MT lacks *your father's son or*

divine suzerain. *Purge the evil from your midst,* a formula emphasizing the obligation to eliminate particularly offensive religious transgressions. These are strong terms of condemnation, found only in Deuteronomy (see, e.g.. 17.7,12; 19.19; 21.21; etc.). **6–11:** Conflict between family love, marriage, or friendship, and covenantal fidelity (cf. Lk 14.26). **6:** *Secretly,* with no witnesses. *Father's son,* this addition of the half-brother (see text note *a*) provides a poor reading. The Heb deliberately selects the most intimate of human relations in this verse; thus the full brother (*mother's son*). **9:** *But you shall surely kill them,* i.e., summary execution. The absence of witnesses and a trial conflicts with Deuteronomy's requirements elsewhere (17.4,6; 19.15), but arises from the grave threat to the covenant (Ex 32.25–27; Num 25.6–9). **10:** *Stone,* the penalty carried out by the community for violations of its fundamental values or sources of authority: apostasy or treason (see 17.2–7; Lev 20.2; Josh 7.10–26; 1 Kings 21.8–14), blasphemy (Lev 24.13–23), defying parental authority (21.18–21; 22.20–21), and betraying marriage (22.23–24). Each is prohibited by the Decalogue (5.6,11,16,18). **13:** *Scoundrels,* lit., "sons of worthlessness," or "children of Belial" (KJV). **15–17:** The infidelity of the Israelite town requires that its entire population be placed under the same ban as that used for the Canaanites (7.1–6,25–26; 12.29–30; 20.16–18). **16:** Normally, new occupants would rebuild cities after destruction right on top of the *ruin* (Heb "tel").

14.1–29: The obligations of holiness. 1–22: Special status entails special obligations, one of which is dietary. The affirmation of holiness (vv. 2,21) therefore frames the list of permitted and prohibited foods. **1:** *Children of the LORD,* the first of three metaphors to emphasize the special relation between God and Israel. The divine parent has special custody for the child (Ex 4.22–23; Hos 1.10) but, equally, special indignation at wrongdoing (32.5–6,19–20; Isa 1.2). *Lacerate . . . shave . . . dead,* many scholars associate these practices with foreign religion. However, laceration and head shaving, common mourning rituals, were more likely associated with ancestor worship or cults of the dead, an aspect of Israelite family religion (Lev 19.27–28; 1 Kings 18.28; Jer 16.6–7; 41.4–5; 47.5; Am 8.10). **2:** *Holy,* Israel must distinguish itself from other nations by observing special requirements.

are a people holy to the LORD your God; it is you the LORD has chosen out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

3 You shall not eat any abhorrent thing.
4 These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, 5 the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the mountain-sheep. 6 Any animal that divides the hoof and has the hoof cleft in two, and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. 7 Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cleft you shall not eat these: the camel, the hare, and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not divide the hoof; they are unclean for you. 8 And the pig, because it divides the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. You shall not eat their meat, and you shall not touch their carcasses.

9 Of all that live in water you may eat these: whatever has fins and scales you may eat.
10 And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.

11 You may eat any clean birds. 12 But these are the ones that you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, 13 the buzzard, the kite of any kind; 14 every raven of any kind; 15 the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind; 16 the little owl and the great owl, the water hen 17 and the desert owl,[a] the carrion vulture and the cormorant, 18 the stork, the heron of any kind; the hoopoe and the bat.[b] 19 And all winged insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. 20 You may eat any clean winged creature.

21 You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to aliens residing in your towns for them to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

22 Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field.
23 In the presence of the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose as a dwelling for his name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. 24 But if, when the LORD your God has blessed you, the distance is so great that you are unable to transport it, because the place where the LORD your God will choose to set his name is too far away from you, 25 then you may turn it into money. With the money secure in hand, go to the place that the LORD your God will choose; 26 spend the money for whatever you wish—oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire. And you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your household rejoicing together. 27 As

[a] Or *pelican*
[b] Identification of several of the birds in verses 12-18 is uncertain

Treasured possession, see 7.6n. **3–21:** Deuteronomy's dietary restrictions differ from the more detailed list of permitted and prohibited foods provided by the Priestly source (Lev 11.2–23). A binary classification system, permitted vs. forbidden, is systematically applied to each of the three basic divisions of species within creation (Gen 1.20–25; 9.2–3), which are grouped according to their habitat as creatures of the land (vv. 1–8), water (vv. 9–10), and air (vv. 11–20). Animals that do not satisfy the defining characteristics for their group are not to be eaten: the pig (v. 8) and shellfish (v. 10). The terms *unclean* (v. 8) and *clean* (v. 11) do not refer to hygiene; ritually "impure" and "pure" are better translations. Not all of the species mentioned can be identified. **21:** *Anything that dies of itself,* carrion (Ex 22.31) or any animal not slaughtered so that the blood can be drained (12.16,23–25). *Boil a kid,* Deuteronomy extends an older law specifically connected to the pilgrimage festival offerings (Ex 23.19; 34.26) into a general dietary rule. Some scholars view it as directed against Canaanite religious rituals, others as concerned to prevent the abuse of animals. **22–29:** An annual *tithe* of ten percent of crops and livestock was a common tax or honorarium paid to a monarch (Gen 14.20; 28.22; 1 Sam 8.15,17). Here the rule signifies that Israel is God's steward, working but not owning the land; see Lev 25.23. **23:** The standard rules of the tithe (Lev 27.30–33; Num 18.21–32; cf. Ex 22.30) are revised to direct offerings to the single sanctuary (12.17). *You shall eat,* whereas Deuteronomy assigns the tithe to the landholder, Lev 27.30 assigns it to the sanctuary and Num 18.21 to the Levites. **24–25:** In light of centralization, the sanctified crops (designated for the sanctuary) may be converted *into money* (better "silver," see 2.6n.), to facilitate the journey. That "firstlings" (v. 23) may also be sold for silver is at variance with Lev 27.32. *Too far,* as in 12.21. **27:** *Levites,* see 12.12n.

for the Levites resident in your towns, do not neglect them, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you.

28 Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; 29 the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.

15 Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts. 2 And this is the manner of the remission: every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor, not exacting it of a neighbor who is a member of the community, because the Lord's remission has been proclaimed. 3 Of a foreigner you may exact it, but you must remit your claim on whatever any member of your community owes you. 4 There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the Lord is sure to bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession to occupy, 5 if only you will obey the Lord your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today. 6 When the Lord your God has blessed you, as he promised you, you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.

7 If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. 8 You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. 9 Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, "The seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. 10 Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. 11 Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."

12 If a member of your community, whether a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold[a] to you and works for you six years,

[a] Or *sells himself or herself*

28–29: One out of every three years the tithe law is shifted away from the central sanctuary to focus on the needs of the disadvantaged and the marginalized in the local community, to ensure they too may *eat their fill.*

15.1–18: Remission of debts (vv. 1–11) **and manumission of slaves** (vv. 12–18). On accession to the throne, ancient Near Eastern rulers would sometimes grant one-time cancellation of debts, return land confiscated by the crown, and free indentured slaves. That custom, Akkadian *duraru*, is reflected in the Heb *deror*, *jubilee*, or *release*, of Lev 25.10; Isa 61.1; Jer 34.15,17. Deuteronomy's conception of the covenant between Israel and God entails a similar fresh start as a covenantal obligation that recurs every seven years, adjusting earlier laws in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 21–23) to the innovation of centralization of worship. The sequence reflects increasingly severe stages of financial distress: from debt to indentured servitude, an ancient form of bankruptcy (see Lev 25.13–55 for a similar sequence).

15.1–6: Cancellation of debts. 1: *Seventh year,* this law presupposes Ex 23.10–11, which stipulates that agricultural land should be permitted to lie fallow each "seventh year." **2:** *Remission,* the same verb in Ex 23.11, "lie fallow," now means cancellation of debts. **3:** In not canceling debts of foreigners, the legislator makes a concession to the pragmatic concerns of the creditor (cf. Ex 22.25). **4:** *There will . . . be no one in need,* or, "no poor." This contrasts with the pragmatism of v. 7.

15.7–11: An appeal to conscience, anticipating the problem of implementing and enforcing such a law. **9:** *Cry . . . guilt,* the law has no judicial penalty or sanction (similarly, 24.15; Ex 22.23–24).

15.12–18: Manumission. This adjusts the older laws regulating male (Ex 21.2–6) and female (Ex 21.7–11) slaves in four ways: (1) A single law applies to both sexes, abrogating the older law (contrast v. 17b with Ex 21.7b); (2) the ceremony where the slave relinquishes freedom is secularized (vv. 16–17), so that it now takes place at the house rather than at a local sanctuary (Ex 21.6); (3) the master must now grant the slave a gift (vv. 13–14; contrast Ex 21.2); (4) by conjoining the Book of the Covenant's manumission (Ex 21.2–6) and land sabbatical (Ex 23.10–11)

in the seventh year you shall set that person free. 13 And when you send a male slave[a] out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. 14 Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the LORD your God has blessed you. 15 Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today. 16 But if he says to you, "I will not go out from you," because he loves you and your household, since he is well off with you, 17 then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his earlobe into the door, and he shall be your slave[b] forever.

You shall do the same with regard to your female slave.[c]

18 Do not consider it a hardship when you send them out from you free persons, because for six years they have given you services worth the wages of hired laborers; and the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.

19 Every firstling male born of your herd and flock you shall consecrate to the LORD your God; you shall not do work with your firstling ox nor shear the firstling of your flock. 20 You shall eat it, you together with your household, in the presence of the LORD your God year by year at the place that the LORD will choose. 21 But if it has any defect—any serious defect, such as lameness or blindness—you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God; 22 within your towns you may eat it, the unclean and the clean alike, as you would a gazelle or deer. 23 Its blood, however, you must not eat; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

16 Observe the month[d] of Abib by keeping the passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. 2 You

a Heb *him*
b Or *bondman*
c Or *bondwoman*
d Or *new moon*

laws, Deuteronomy creates a single year of release and transforms manumission, formerly based in the individual household, into a year of universal liberty. The delay of manumission from every seventh to every fiftieth year in Lev 25.39–44 may reflect the difficulty of implementing this idealistic law. **12:** *Hebrew,* see Ex 21.2n. *Is sold* or "sells himself" (see text note *a*); a court might require a thief, unable to repay a theft, to indenture his labor as compensation (Ex 22.1–4); or, overcome by debt, a poor person might assign his labor to repay a loan (Lev 25.39–44). **14–15:** The gift provided the manumitted slave recalls and reenacts the nation's own manumission by God from slavery in Egypt. **18: Like** vv. 8–10, an appeal to conscience that anticipates the difficulty of enforcing a law that lacks judicial sanction.

15.19–23: Sacrifice: Older convention required that each firstborn male domestic animal be offered as a sacrifice to God at one of the local sanctuaries (Ex 13.1–2,11–16; 22.29–30; 34.19–20). The author now adjusts that law to the new one stipulating a single sanctuary. **19:** *Not do work,* thereby reserving the animal for God. **20:** *In the presence of the LORD,* at the central sanctuary in Jerusalem. **21–23:** Blemished firstborn livestock may not be taken to the central sanctuary; instead they should be slaughtered locally, following the requirements for secular slaughter (12.15–16,21–25).

16.1–17: The festival calendar. Previously, each male Israelite was commanded to undertake three pilgrimages to "appear before the LORD": to make an offering at one of the multiple local sanctuaries (v. 16; cf. Ex 23.14–18). These occasions, which Deuteronomy redirects to the central sanctuary, were called "pilgrimage festivals." The three festivals were unleavened bread (Heb "matsot"), harvest, and ingathering (Ex 23.14–17; 34.18,23). Deuteronomy renames the latter two "weeks" (Heb "shavuʿot," v. 10) and "booths" (Heb "sukkot," v. 13), their current names. **1–8:** Passover, as originally described in the Exodus narrative, was a separate, family observance (Ex 12.1–13,21–23), involving a nighttime slaughter of a sheep or goat in the doorway of the house, where the blood was smeared to mark the house as Israelite. Deuteronomy's centralization of worship necessitated the redirection of the paschal slaughter to the central sanctuary (vv. 2,6–7). The older blood ritual then merges with the festival of unleavened bread, also celebrated in early spring. In contrast to Deuteronomy, the festivals of Passover and unleavened bread remain distinct in Lev 23.5–6; Num 28.16,17–25. **1:** *Abib* (lit., "new ear" of grain), in early spring, when ears of barley, the first crop, began to ripen (Ex 13.4; 23.15; 34.18). Originally the first month of the Hebrew calendar (Ex 12.2), later called "Nisan." **2:** *From the flock and the herd,* Ex 12.4–5,

shall offer the passover sacrifice to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, at the place that the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his name. 3 You must not eat with it anything leavened. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it—the bread of affliction—because you came out of the land of Egypt in great haste, so that all the days of your life you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt. 4 No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory for seven days; and none of the meat of what you slaughter on the evening of the first day shall remain until morning. 5 You are not permitted to offer the passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you. 6 But at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name, only there shall you offer the passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, the time of day when you departed from Egypt. 7 You shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose; the next morning you may go back to your tents. 8 For six days you shall continue to eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly for the LORD your God, when you shall do no work.

9 You shall count seven weeks; begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. 10 Then you shall keep the festival of weeks to the LORD your God, contributing a freewill offering in proportion to the blessing that you have received from the LORD your God. 11 Rejoice before the LORD your God—you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans, and the widows who are among you—at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. 12 Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and diligently observe these statutes.

13 You shall keep the festival of booths[a] for seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your wine press. 14 Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows resident in your towns. 15 Seven days you shall keep the festival to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose; for the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all your undertakings, and you shall surely celebrate.

16 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the festival of unleavened bread, at the festival of weeks, and at the festival of booths.[a] They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed; 17 all shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.

[a] Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*

21 restricts the offering to the flock only. **3:** *For seven days,* combining the seven-day observance of the festival of unleavened bread (Ex 12.14–20; 23.15) and the one-evening observance of Passover (vv. 1–3a,4b–7). **7:** *Cook,* more accurately, "boil," like other standard sacrifices (Ex 29.1; Lev 6.28; 8.31; Num 6.19; Zech 14.21). This provision conflicts with the stipulation that the paschal offering be "roasted over the fire," not "boiled in water" (Ex 12.8–9). The two inconsistent requirements for preparing the Passover are harmonized at 2 Chr 35.13. **9–12:** The festival of weeks (Heb "shavuʿot"; Ex 34.22; Lev 23.15–16; Num 28.26), originally a "festival of harvest" (Ex 23.16) celebrated in June. In postbiblical Judaism, the festival came to be associated with the revelation at Mount Sinai (Ex 19–20); in the New Testament it is called Pentecost because it begins on the fiftieth day after Passover (Acts 2.1; 20.16; 1 Cor 16.8). **9:** *Begin to count . . . from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain,* the seven weeks begin when the grain is ripe, delaying the celebration until the conclusion of the harvest. Lev 23.15 offers a slightly different date for this festival. **11:** *You and your sons and your daughters,* the command to rejoice specifies the inclusion of women (as v. 14; 12.12,18). *Slaves . . . widows,* the marginalized and the disadvantaged are also included. *Strangers,* better, "resident aliens"; see 1.16n. **13–15:** *The festival of booths (Heb "sukkot"),* originally the fall harvest festival, called "ingathering" (Ex 23.16; 34.22; cf. Lev 23.33–43). **16–17:** The formulaic summary reuses the conclusion of the older festival calendar in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 23.17). Two elements, however, reflect older assumptions inconsistent with the rest of this chapter: Passover (vv. 1–8) is not mentioned, and the pilgrimage requirement is directed to *all your males* (as Ex 23.17).

18 You shall appoint judges and officials throughout your tribes, in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall render just decisions for the people. 19 You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. 20 Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

21 You shall not plant any tree as a sacred pole[a] beside the altar that you make for the LORD your God; 22 nor shall you set up a stone pillar—things that the LORD your God hates.

17 You must not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep that has a defect, anything seriously wrong; for that is abhorrent to the LORD your God.

2 If there is found among you, in one of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, and transgresses his covenant 3 by going to serve other gods and worshiping them—whether the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden— 4 and if it is reported to you or you hear of it, and you make a thorough inquiry, and the charge is proved true that such an abhorrent thing has occurred in Israel, 5 then you shall bring out to your gates that man or that woman who has committed this crime and you shall stone the man or woman to death. 6 On the evidence of two or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed; a person must not be put to death on the evidence of only one witness. 7 The hands of the witnesses shall be the first raised against the person to execute the death penalty, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

8 If a judicial decision is too difficult for you to make between one kind of blood-

[a] Heb *Asherah*

16.18–18.22: Laws of public officials. The proposed government has judicial, executive, and religious branches: local and central courts (16.18–17.13), kingship (17.14–20), levitical priesthood (18.1–8), and prophecy (18.9–22). Each relates to the others and is subordinated to the authority of the word of God, the teaching of Deuteronomy. Even institutions that might claim absolute authority, such as king or prophet, are integrated into a comprehensive vision. The continual concern with centralization of worship connects this section with the preceding legislation on the sacrificial system. The ritual laws (16.21–17.1) seem to intrude between two paragraphs each concerned with justice (16.18–20; 17.2–7), but the repetition provides a transition into the new section, while establishing the underlying unity of both areas of community life: (A) worship (12.1–16.17); (B) justice (16.18–20); (A′) worship (16.21–17.1); (B′) justice (17.2–7,8–13).

16.18–17.13: The organization of justice. **16.18–20:** Deuteronomy here establishes a professionalized local judiciary. **18:** *Towns* (lit., "gates"), the local sphere (12.15,17,21; 16.5), as distinguished from the central sanctuary; also the traditional place where the village elders dispensed justice (Job 29.7; Ruth 4.1,11; Lam 5.14). By leaving the elders unmentioned, Deuteronomy contracts or eliminates their authority, though they are mentioned elsewhere (e.g., 19.12; 21.2; 22.15). **19:** *You must not distort justice,* an admonition, quoting Ex 23.6a (where the same verb is translated "pervert"). *For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise,* the older law in Ex 23.8, whose reference to "those with sight" (NRSV's "officials" is not correct) is revised in light of Deuteronomy's stress upon wisdom (see 1.13n., 34.9n.).

16.21–17.1: Prohibitions against Canaanite cultic objects (7.5; 12.3; Ex 34.13). **16.21–22:** See 7.5n. **17.1:** See 15.21, here broadened into a general law of sacrifice.

17.2–7: Local justice. This law overlaps with 13.6–11, but is placed here because it deals with the procedures and jurisdiction of the local courts. The law grants the local courts maximum autonomy (see 16.8), provided that a trial is conducted according to rational standards that assure empirical proof. **2:** *A man or woman,* the law views the woman as a legally responsible individual. The viewpoint in marriage and family law differs, however (see 22.13–29). **3:** Contravening the Decalogue (5.8–9). **5:** *Stone to death,* see 13.10n. **6:** *Two or three witnesses,* the condition for establishing proof. The prohibition against execution on the basis of testimony by *one witness* is also found at 19.15–16; Num 35.30.

17.8–13: Justice at the central sanctuary. In the pre-Deuteronomic period, legal cases in which there was an absence of physical evidence or of witnesses were remanded to the local sanctuary, where the parties to the

shed and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another—any such matters of dispute in your towns—then you shall immediately go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose, [9] where you shall consult with the levitical priests and the judge who is in office in those days; they shall announce to you the decision in the case. [10] Carry out exactly the decision that they announce to you from the place that the LORD will choose, diligently observing everything they instruct you. [11] You must carry out fully the law that they interpret for you or the ruling that they announce to you; do not turn aside from the decision that they announce to you, either to the right or to the left. [12] As for anyone who presumes to disobey the priest appointed to minister there to the LORD your God, or the judge, that person shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. [13] All the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.

[14] When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me," [15] you may indeed set over you a king whom the LORD your God will choose. One of your own community you may set as king over you; you are not permitted to put a foreigner over you, who is not of your own community. [16] Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the LORD has said to you, "You must never return that way again." [17] And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself. [18] When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. [19] It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, [20] neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he and his descendants may reign long over his kingdom in Israel.

18 The levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no allotment or inheritance within Israel. They may eat the

dispute would swear a judicial oath at the altar (19.17; Ex 22.7–11; 1 Kings 8.31–32; note also Ex 21.6). These two laws (17.2–7,8–13) thus fill the judicial void created by Deuteronomy's prohibition of the local sanctuaries (ch 12). Now, any case that requires recourse to the altar is remanded to the central sanctuary; all other cases, even capital ones, may be tried locally (vv. 2–7). **8:** These cases must be referred to the central sanctuary because, in the absence of witnesses or evidence, local officials cannot make a ruling. *Between one kind of bloodshed and another,* namely murder and manslaughter (Ex 21.12–14; Num 35.16–23). In each pair, the distinction is between premeditated and unintentional offenses. **9:** The tribunal at the sanctuary includes both priestly and lay members. The account of Jehoshaphat's setting up tribunals throughout Judah composed of lay and clerical judges reflects this law (2 Chr 19.5–11).

17.14–20: The law of the king. Deuteronomy greatly restricts royal authority. Generally, Near Eastern monarchs promulgated law; here the monarch is subject to the law and required to read it daily (v. 19). Deuteronomy even denies the king his typical judicial role as court of last appeal (cf. Ps 72.1–4; 2 Sam 12.1–14; 14.1–24; 1 Kings 3.16–28). This law emphasizes what the king cannot do rather than what he may do. **14:** *Like all the nations,* see 1 Sam 8.5,19–20. **16–18:** The offenses parallel warnings against royal autocracy outlined at the very founding of the monarchy (1 Sam 8.10–18). They likely presuppose Solomon's trade in horses (1 Kings 10.26–29) and his wealth (1 Kings 10.14–22). The Deuteronomistic Historian believed those marriages led to idolatry (1 Kings 11.9–13). *A copy of this law,* the Septuagint translates this phrase incorrectly as "this repetition of the law" (Gk "to deuteronomion touto"), the source of the book's name. Like later traditional views, it sees Deuteronomy as a reprise of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, ignoring the extent to which it revises and challenges earlier law.

18.1–8: The levitical priesthood. Centralization also affected the Israelite priesthood. A "job description" (vv. 1–5) precedes discussion of this impact (vv. 6–8). **1:** *Levitical priests,* the Deuteronomic conception differs from that of Priestly literature, which speaks of two distinct groups, "the priests" and "the Levites." The Priestly source sees a hierarchy within the tribe of Levi between direct descendants of Aaron and the rest. Only the

sacrifices that are the LORD's portion[a] [2] but they shall have no inheritance among the other members of the community; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.

[3] This shall be the priests' due from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether an ox or a sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the two jowls, and the stomach. [4] The first fruits of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. [5] For the LORD your God has chosen Levi[b] out of all your tribes, to stand and minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for all time.

[6] If a Levite leaves any of your towns, from wherever he has been residing in Israel, and comes to the place that the LORD will choose (and he may come whenever he wishes), [7] then he may minister in the name of the LORD his God, like all his fellow-Levites who stand to minister there before the LORD. [8] They shall have equal portions to eat, even though they have income from the sale of family possessions.[a]

[9] When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you must not learn to imitate the abhorrent practices of those nations. [10] No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, [11] or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead. [12] For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the LORD; it is because of such abhorrent practices that the LORD your God is driving them out before you. [13] You must remain completely loyal to the LORD your God. [14] Although these nations that you are about to dispossess do give heed to soothsayers and diviners, as for you, the LORD your God does not permit you to do so.

[15] The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet[c] like me from among your own

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *him*
[c] Or *prophets*

Aaronide priests officiate at the altar (Num 18.5,7) and receive the priestly share of the offerings (Num 18.8–20). The Levites serve the priests, and are prohibited from officiating (Num 18.3–4,6); they receive tithes and in turn tithe to the priests (Num 18.21–31). Here, in Deuteronomy, all within the tribe are levitical priests and both serve at the altar and receive sacrifices. **2:** *No inheritance,* see 12.12n. *The LORD is their inheritance,* God grants them a share of the sacrificial offerings, making them dependent upon other Israelites for support. In contrast, the priest-prophet Ezekiel allocates land to the priests and the Levites in his vision of the future restoration of Judah (Ezek 48.10–14). **5:** *Stand and minister,* officiate at the altar. **6–8:** When the local altars throughout the land are outlawed (12.8–12,13–15), the Levites serving there would be unemployed and, owning no land, would become destitute. Accordingly a Levite who *leaves any of your towns . . . and comes* to the central sanctuary in Jerusalem must be provided for (contrast 2 Kings 23.9). This emphasis underscores that the countryside altars were not entirely Canaanite sanctuaries (as 12.2–4 asserts). **8:** *Equal portions,* the choice meats, grains, and oil assigned the tribe in vv. 3–4.

18.9–22: A prophet like Moses. 9–14: Just as the legal corpus prohibits sacrificial worship it condemns as Canaanite (12.1–4,29–31; also 7.1–6,25–26; Ex 23.24; 34.11–16), it prohibits forms of divination it brands as foreign and abhorrent. In each case it requires its own alternative: here, prophecy rather than divination. However, divination is not elsewhere typified as foreign (1 Sam 28.3–25; Isa 8.19–22; 29.4). Thus, describing the practice as foreign may actually cloak a condemnation of Israelite popular religion. **10:** *Pass through fire,* child sacrifice (see 12.31n.), joined with divination for condemnation because each is "abhorrent" (v. 9). **10–11:** *Practices divination . . . seeks oracles from the dead,* the most comprehensive compilation of such activities in the Bible (Ex 22.18; Lev 19.30–31; 20.6,27; Isa 8.19; Ezek 21.21). **11:** *Who consults ghosts or spirits . . . dead,* necromancy or conjuring the dead (1 Sam 28.7–15; Isa 8.19–20; 29.4). As in many contemporary religions, family religion in antiquity devoted extensive attention to communicating with the dead, especially with ancestors. **12:** *Abhorrent,* more commonly "abomination," as at Lev 26.26–27,29. There is no claim that divination is ineffective; it is, however, illegitimate (see 1 Sam 28.7–25). **15–22:** Deuteronomy transforms prophecy, viewing the prophet as the spokesperson of Torah (see 13.1–5n.) and defining Moses as the paradigmatic prophet. **15:** *The LORD . . . will raise up,* prophecy by divine election. That God alone appoints the prophet makes the prophet independent of all institutions and

people; you shall heed such a prophet.[a] 16 This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." 17 Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet[b] like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet,[c] who shall speak to them everything that I command. 19 Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet[d] shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. 20 But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die." 21 You may say to yourself, "How can we recognize a word that the LORD has not spoken?" 22 If a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it.

19 When the LORD your God has cut off the nations whose land the LORD your God is giving you, and you have dispossessed them and settled in their towns and in their houses, 2 you shall set apart three cities in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess. 3 You shall calculate the distances[e] and divide into three regions the land that the LORD your God gives you as a possession, so that any homicide can flee to one of them.

4 Now this is the case of a homicide who might flee there and live, that is, someone who has killed another person unintentionally when the two had not been at enmity before: 5 Suppose someone goes into the forest with another to cut wood, and when one of them swings the ax to cut down a tree, the head slips from the handle and strikes the other person who then dies; the killer may flee to one of these cities and live. 6 But if the distance is too great, the avenger of blood in hot anger might pursue and overtake and put the killer to death, although a death sentence was not deserved, since the two had not been at enmity before. 7 Therefore I command you: You shall set apart three cities.

8 If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he swore to your ancestors—and

[a] Or *such prophets*
[b] Or *prophets*
[c] Or *mouths of the prophets*
[d] Heb *he*
[e] Or *prepare roads to them*

able to challenge them. Yet the laws in vv. 20–22, which emphasize various cases in which the prophets are to be executed, also curb the power of prophets, especially their ability to undo the contents of Deuteronomy's laws. More than one prophet is clearly intended. *Like me,* at Horeb (5.23–33), Moses established the model of prophecy as mediating God's word to the people. Thus the prophet, like the king (17.15), should be *from among your own people.* **16–17:** See 5.23–31; Ex 20.18–21. **18:** Cf. Jer 1.9; the prophet's oracles do not originate from other deities, from dead spirits, from skilled manipulation of objects, or from the prophet's own reflections. **20–23:** Having established an Israelite model of prophecy, the law provides two criteria to distinguish true from false prophecy. The first is that the prophet should speak exclusively on behalf of God, and report only God's words. The second makes the fulfillment of a prophet's oracle the measure of its truth (Jer 28.9). That approach attempts to solve a critical problem: If two prophets each claim to speak on behalf of God yet make mutually exclusive claims (1 Kings 22.6 versus v. 17; Jer 27.8 versus 28.2), how may one decide which speaks the truth? The solution offered is not free of difficulty. If a false prophet is distinguished by the failure of his oracle to come true, then making a decision in the present about which prophet to obey becomes impossible. Nor can this criterion easily be reconciled with 13.2, which concedes that the oracles of false prophets might come true.

19.1–14: Cities of refuge (see 4.41–43n.). Sanctuary for those who killed unintentionally shielded them from revenge killing by the kin of the dead person (vv. 6,12). In light of centralization, Deuteronomy proscribes the previous site of refuge, the local altar (Ex 21.13), and instead designates three "neutral" cities. **1:** For the formulaic introduction, see 12.29. **4:** *Who might flee there,* more literally, "where he might flee (there)," an exact citation of Ex 21.13b, the older law that requires revision in light of centralization. **5:** *May flee to one of these cities,* explicitly amended to include the city reference. **6:** *But if the distance is too great,* Deuteronomy's updating of older law; see 14.24. *In hot anger,* if the kinsman kills the slayer in hot pursuit, the law is powerless. **8:** *Enlarges your territory,* a means for updating older law to address present realities by casting the provision for change as

he will give you all the land that he promised your ancestors to give you, [9] provided you diligently observe this entire commandment that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God and walking always in his ways—then you shall add three more cities to these three, [10] so that the blood of an innocent person may not be shed in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, thereby bringing bloodguilt upon you.

[11] But if someone at enmity with another lies in wait and attacks and takes the life of that person, and flees into one of these cities, [12] then the elders of the killer's city shall send to have the culprit taken from there and handed over to the avenger of blood to be put to death. [13] Show no pity; you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, so that it may go well with you.

[14] You must not move your neighbor's boundary marker, set up by former generations, on the property that will be allotted to you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

[15] A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offense that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained. [16] If a malicious witness comes forward to accuse someone of wrongdoing, [17] then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days, [18] and the judges shall make a thorough inquiry. If the witness is a false witness, having testified falsely against another, [19] then you shall do to the false witness just as the false witness had meant to do to the other. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. [20] The rest shall hear and be afraid, and a crime such as this shall never again be committed among you. [21] Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

20 When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots, an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with

intended from the beginning (see 12.20; Ex 34.20). **10:** *The blood of an innocent person,* killing someone who has unintentionally committed homicide would constitute murder. *Bloodguilt,* the spilling of innocent blood, which defiles the land (see 21.1–9n.). **12:** Revising Ex 21.14. *Handed over to the avenger,* the law regulates but does not replace the clan-based system of justice. **14:** A transitional verse. The sacrosanct status of a *boundary marker* was a legal tradition in the ancient Near East (see 27.17; Isa 5.8; Hos 5.10; Job 24.2; Prov 22.28).

19.15–21: The integrity of the judicial system. A law that requires probity on the part of the newly established judges (16.18) and a law that demands corresponding integrity from witnesses (19.21) form an inclusio around this large unit by emphasizing the honesty required of all participants in the judicial system. **15:** *A single witness,* the same Heb phrase as "only one witness" at 17.6. *On the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained,* broadening the focus of 17.6 on capital crimes and prohibiting hearsay or spurious accusation (one person's word against another's). **17:** *Both parties,* the accuser and the accused. *Before the LORD,* testimony before the altar at the central sanctuary (12.7; 14.23; 17.8–13). **19:** *Do to the false witness . . . meant to do to the other,* reciprocal justice, called "talion," the technical term for "an eye for an eye" (from Latin "lex talionis," meaning "law of retribution"); elsewhere employed for bodily injury or homicide (Ex 21.23–25; Lev 24.17–21). It distinguishes crimes against the person (requiring talion) from property crimes (where only financial compensation is permitted). By applying it to crimes against the judicial system, the legislators here seek to ensure the integrity of the law by using the highest sanction available to them.

20.1–20: Rules for waging holy war. In contrast to other legal collections, which include only brief sections concerning military engagement (Ex 23.23–33; 34.11–16; Num 35.50–56), Deuteronomy, reflecting a literary setting of Israel about to enter the land, concerns itself extensively with the laws of holy war. God as divine warrior directly confronts the adversary on behalf of the nation, and God's presence in the camp imposes additional purity requirements on the people (23.10–14). The holy war is fought to create a covenantal community organized by divine law (Lev 18.24–29; 20.22–24), not as a war of imperial gain. Accordingly, seizing the spoils of war, including human prisoners, is prohibited; all had to be devoted exclusively to God, like the "whole burnt offering" (13.16). A contemporary inscription, the Moabite Stone (ca. 850 BCE), establishes that similar theologies of holy war were shared by some of Israel's neighbors. In Deuteronomy, the conception of the conquest of the promised land as a holy war represents a highly schematized idealization, formulated half a millennium

you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. 2 Before you engage in battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the troops, 3 and shall say to them: "Hear, O Israel! Today you are drawing near to do battle against your enemies. Do not lose heart, or be afraid, or panic, or be in dread of them; 4 for it is the LORD your God who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to give you victory." 5 Then the officials shall address the troops, saying, "Has anyone built a new house but not dedicated it? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another dedicate it. 6 Has anyone planted a vineyard but not yet enjoyed its fruit? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another be first to enjoy its fruit. 7 Has anyone become engaged to a woman but not yet married her? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another marry her." 8 The officials shall continue to address the troops, saying, "Is anyone afraid or disheartened? He should go back to his house, or he might cause the heart of his comrades to melt like his own." 9 When the officials have finished addressing the troops, then the commanders shall take charge of them.

10 When you draw near to a town to fight against it, offer it terms of peace. 11 If it accepts your terms of peace and surrenders to you, then all the people in it shall serve you at forced labor. 12 If it does not submit to you peacefully, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; 13 and when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword. 14 You may, however, take as your booty the women, the children, livestock, and everything else in the town, all its spoil. You may enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you. 15 Thus you shall treat all the towns that are very far from you, which are not towns of the nations here. 16 But as for the towns of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. 17 You shall annihilate them—the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—just as the LORD your God has commanded, 18 so that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods, and you thus sin against the LORD your God.

19 If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down. Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you? 20 You

after the settlement, at a time when ethnic Canaanites would long have assimilated into the Israelite population. **1:** The adversary is superior both in military equipment and in numbers (see Josh 11.4; Judg 4.3; cf. Judg 1.19). *Army,* lit., "people." **3–4:** See 9.1–3; 31.3–6; cf. Ex 14.14,25; 15.1–4. **5–9:** Designed to help ensure the future of the community by allowing young conscripts to finish establishing their own households before sending them to a war in which they may die. **5:** *Dedicated* (or "inaugurated"), although Solomon's dedication of the Temple is narrated (1 Kings 8), there are no specific rituals of home dedication recorded in the Bible. The parallel curse employs "live" (28.30). **6:** *Enjoyed its fruit,* to ensure healthy vine growth, new vines are pruned to prevent them from producing fruit during their first few years. **7:** *Engaged . . . married,* see 22.13–30n. **8:** *Comrades,* lit., "brothers," to which Deuteronomy frequently, and distinctively, gives the meaning, "fellow citizens" (cf. 24.7); NRSV also translates the same word as "neighbor" (15.7,9,11; 22.1–4; 24.13; 25.3) and "Israelite" (23.19–20; 24.14). **11:** The use of a defeated people for *forced labor* was widespread. According to the biblical account, Israelites so used the indigenous population of Canaan (Judg 1.27–36), and David's cabinet included an official responsible for "forced labor" (2 Sam 20.24). **15–18:** *Thus you shall treat all the towns that are very far from you,* a secondary addition retroactively restricts the preceding rules of engagement (vv. 10–14), which tolerate the taking of captives as "forced labor," so that they apply only to foreign wars. The stipulation that the indigenous population of Canaan should uniformly be exterminated is a literary fiction (see 7.2n.). **15:** *The nations,* the Canaanites. *Here,* on the anachronism, see 1.1n.; 2.12n. **16:** *But as for the towns of these peoples that the LORD . . . is giving you* refers to the inhabitants of the land (v. 17). **17:** *You shall annihilate them,* the Heb phrase is elsewhere translated as "utterly destroy" (7.2; 13.15); it refers to killing and sanctifying the dead to a deity. **19–20:** Wars often involved the kind of "scorched earth policy" prohibited here (2 Kings 3.19,25). **20:** *Siegeworks* were regularly built against walled cities (1 Sam 20.15; 2 Kings 25.1).

may destroy only the trees that you know do not produce food; you may cut them down for use in building siegeworks against the town that makes war with you, until it falls.

21 If, in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess, a body is found lying in open country, and it is not known who struck the person down, [2] then your elders and your judges shall come out to measure the distances to the towns that are near the body. [3] The elders of the town nearest the body shall take a heifer that has never been worked, one that has not pulled in the yoke; [4] the elders of that town shall bring the heifer down to a wadi with running water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the wadi. [5] Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come forward, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to him and to pronounce blessings in the name of the LORD, and by their decision all cases of dispute and assault shall be settled. [6] All the elders of that town nearest the body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the wadi, [7] and they shall declare: "Our hands did not shed this blood, nor were we witnesses to it. [8] Absolve, O LORD, your people Israel, whom you redeemed; do not let the guilt of innocent blood remain in the midst of your people Israel." Then they will be absolved of bloodguilt. [9] So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, because you must do what is right in the sight of the LORD.

[10] When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God hands them over to you and you take them captive, [11] suppose you see among the captives a beautiful woman whom you desire and want to marry, [12] and so you bring her home to your house: she shall shave her head, pare her nails, [13] discard her captive's garb, and shall remain in your house a full month, mourning for her father and mother; after that you may go in

21.1–9: Atonement for an unsolved murder. This archaic law is concerned to maintain the moral and ritual purity of the land of Israel (see 21.23). Since contact with a murder victim's blood rendered the land impure (Gen 4.10; Num 35.33–34), it was imperative to "purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel" (19.13). The established method for doing so was to restore justice by putting the murderer to death (Gen 9.5–6). However, this law, which has gone through several stages of reworking, addresses circumstances when doing so is impossible because the perpetrator of the murder cannot be identified. Similar ancient Near Eastern laws for corpses discovered outside cities emphasize financial liability rather than atoning for the spilled blood (*Laws of Hammurabi* §§23–24; *Hittite Laws* §6). The original significance of the law's rituals is difficult to recover. **1:** *Open country,* beyond the legal jurisdiction of any particular town (see 22.23,25), and where witnesses are unlikely. **2:** *Elders . . . judges,* see 16.18n. *Measure the distances* to establish legal jurisdiction, as in the similar *Hittite Laws* §6. **3:** *Never been worked . . . not pulled in the yoke,* symbolizing the human victim's innocence (similarly, Num 19.2). **4:** *Wadi with running water* (Am 5.24), lit., "with reliable water," in contrast to unreliable seasonal streams (Jer 15.18). *Break the heifer's neck,* nonsacrificial killing (see Ex 13.13; 34.20); sacrifice requires slitting the throat. **5:** *Priests,* not mentioned in v. 2, and likely a later addition. *All cases* contrasts with 17.9, where the levitical priests at the central sanctuary adjudicated only cases that could not be resolved locally. **6:** *Wash their hands over the heifer,* with no laying on of hands, and thus without symbolic transfer of culpability to the animal (contrast Lev 16.21–22). **7:** *Our hands . . . witnesses,* stronger in Heb: "As for our hands, they did not shed this blood nor did our eyes see," covering both direct action and failure to avert or report a crime (cf. Lev 5.1). **8:** *Absolve, O LORD,* the ritual of vv. 3–6 has no intrinsic efficacy; prayer in combination with the ritual is the means of absolution. *They will be absolved,* better, "that they may be absolved," since absolution ultimately depends upon divine action, not human ritual.

21.10–25.19: Miscellaneous civil and family laws. The following laws are concerned with family, civil, and ethical issues. Laws to extend legal protection to women when they would otherwise be disenfranchised concern female captives (21.10–14), property rights of the less-favored wife (21.15–17), and false charges of infidelity (22.13–19).

21.10–14: Legal obligations toward female captives. This procedure most likely originally applied to the Canaanite population (20.14,15–18n.). Female war captives routinely became concubines. This law accords such women some dignity and protection against enslavement. **12–13:** The rituals provide both captive and captor means to effect a transition from one status to another. **13:** *Full month,* symbolically, a full period of mourning, as

to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. 14 But if you are not satisfied with her, you shall let her go free and not sell her for money. You must not treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

15 If a man has two wives, one of them loved and the other disliked, and if both the loved and the disliked have borne him sons, the firstborn being the son of the one who is disliked, 16 then on the day when he wills his possessions to his sons, he is not permitted to treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the disliked, who is the firstborn. 17 He must acknowledge as firstborn the son of the one who is disliked, giving him a double portion[a] of all that he has; since he is the first issue of his virility, the right of the firstborn is his.

18 If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father and mother, who does not heed them when they discipline him, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place. 20 They shall say to the elders of his town, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard." 21 Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death. So you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel will hear, and be afraid.

22 When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile the land that the LORD your God is giving you for possession.

22 You shall not watch your neighbor's ox or sheep straying away and ignore them; you shall take them back to their owner. 2 If the owner does not reside near you or you do not know who the owner is, you shall bring

[a] Heb *two-thirds*

for Aaron and Moses (Num 20.29; Deut 34.8). Alternatively, the month's wait would prove that the woman was not pregnant. *Mourning,* it is unclear whether the parents actually died in the war or are lost to her because of her captivity. The time to grieve implies legal respect for the female captive as a person. *Go in to her,* approach her sexually; consummation provides the legal means to become *husband, and . . . wife.* **14:** Cf. Ex 21.7–8. *Money,* see 2.6n. *Dishonored,* "violated" sexually (22.24,29; Gen 34.2; Judg 19.24; 2 Sam 13.12).

21.15–17: Legal protection of the less-favored wife. The law uses the norm of primogeniture (Gen 25.29–34; *Laws of Hammurabi* §§165–70) to protect the son of the less-favored wife from disinheritance. **17:** *Double portion,* as text note *a* indicates, two-thirds (see Zech 13.8), leaving one-third for the other son. *Right of the firstborn,* the foundation narratives concerning Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph do not follow the legal norm here affirmed (Gen 17.15–22; 21.8–14; 27.1–40; 48.8–22).

21.18–21: The rebellious son. The Decalogue requirement to honor the parents (5.16; Ex 20.12) carries no explicit sanction; here flagrant and sustained disobedience is a capital offense. **19:** *Elders* were judges of family law and held court at the city *gate,* a public forum (22.15; 25.7; Job 29.7; Ruth 4.1–2,11; Lam 5.14). The professionalized judiciary established at the same site (16.18) may have had jurisdiction specifically over religious and criminal law (17.2–7). **21:** Here, mere parental testimony suffices (contrast 13.14; 17.4). *Stone him,* see 13.10n.

21.22–23: Treatment of the executed. Public exposure of the corpse of an executed criminal, which was not the norm, was a form of reproach directed against enemies of the state (Josh 8.29; 10.26; 1 Sam 31.10; Esth 9.6–14). Out of respect for the body, to prevent it from serving as carrion (2 Sam 21.10), this law sets stringent limits to that procedure. **22:** *Hang . . . on a tree,* the Heb word for "tree" is broader, covering anything made of wood; the law could also refer to suspension from "gallows" (Esth 9.13) or a "pole" (Gen 40.19), or possibly, based upon Neo-Assyrian precedent, impalement upon a stake. **23:** The concern to avoid defilement of the land by demonstrating respect for the corpse even of someone convicted of wrongdoing shows the close connection between criminal law and ritual purity in Deuteronomy.

22.1–12: Various moral and religious responsibilities of citizenship. The rationale for the sequence and selection of these laws is often unclear.

22.1–4: Moral duties toward the neighbor. Two laws (vv. 1–3,4) that develop two corresponding laws from the earlier Book of the Covenant. **1–3:** The earlier law governing the return of wandering animals (Ex 23.4–5) is here revised and extended. **1:** *Your neighbor's ox,* a revision of "your enemy's ox" (Ex 23.4). *Neighbor,* lit.,

it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until the owner claims it; then you shall return it. [3] You shall do the same with a neighbor's donkey; you shall do the same with a neighbor's garment; and you shall do the same with anything else that your neighbor loses and you find. You may not withhold your help.

[4] You shall not see your neighbor's donkey or ox fallen on the road and ignore it; you shall help to lift it up.

[5] A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the LORD your God.

[6] If you come on a bird's nest, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs, with the mother sitting on the fledglings or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young. [7] Let the mother go, taking only the young for yourself, in order that it may go well with you and you may live long.

[8] When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof; otherwise you might have bloodguilt on your house, if anyone should fall from it.

[9] You shall not sow your vineyard with a second kind of seed, or the whole yield will have to be forfeited, both the crop that you have sown and the yield of the vineyard itself.

[10] You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.

[11] You shall not wear clothes made of wool and linen woven together.

[12] You shall make tassels on the four corners of the cloak with which you cover yourself.

[13] Suppose a man marries a woman, but after going in to her, he dislikes her [14] and makes up charges against her, slandering her by saying, "I married this woman; but when I lay with her, I did not find evidence of her virginity." [15] The father of the young woman and her mother shall then submit the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. [16] The father of the young woman shall say to the elders: "I gave my daughter in marriage to this man but he dislikes her; [17] now he has made up charges against her, saying, 'I did not find evidence of your daughter's virginity.' But here is the evidence of my daughter's virginity." Then they shall spread out the cloth before the elders of the town. [18] The elders of that town shall take the man and punish him; [19] they shall fine him one hundred shekels

"brother"; see 20.8n. **3:** *Anything else,* the earlier law is universalized to apply to any lost property. **4:** Reworking Ex 23.5 to emphasize the neighbor, as in v. 1.

22.5–12: Miscellaneous laws. 5: The prohibition against cross-dressing seeks to maintain gender boundaries; a similar concern for boundaries is evident in vv. 9–11. **6–7:** Avoiding simultaneous consumption of two generations of the same creature is also evident in other laws (14.21; Ex 23.19; 34.26; Lev 22.28). **8:** The flat *roof* was used as living space (Josh 2.6; Judg 3.20–25; 2 Sam 11.2) and was where people often slept. *Bloodguilt,* criminal negligence; a capital offense (see 19.10n.). **9–11:** These laws attempt to maintain specific boundaries between categories seen as incompatible (as in v. 5; 14.3–20); see the corresponding laws in Lev 19.19. **9:** *Forfeited,* not permitted for human consumption. **12:** *Tassels,* this may reflect an application of royal garb, seen, for example, in Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs, to the nation as a whole. Num 15.37–40 gives a theological rationale.

22.13–30: Violations of marriage law. In the ancient Near East, marriage was a contractual arrangement between the woman's father and the husband. The woman remained in her father's household until a suitor paid the bridewealth (vv. 28–29; Ex 22.16–17) to compensate for the reduction of the household. At that point she became formally "engaged," although still residing with her father (v. 21). Later, at the marriage feast, the union was consummated (Gen 29.22–25), and the woman took up residence in her husband's house.

22.13–21: False accusation of breach of marital contract. 14: *Makes up charges against her,* possibly for mercenary reasons, since nonfulfillment of the marital contract would entail refund of the bridewealth and possibly a payment of a penalty for breach of contract. The *evidence,* the bloodstained cloth of v. 17. **15:** *Elders,* see 16.18n.; 21.19n. **17:** *The cloth* upon which husband and wife slept upon consummation of the relationship. It was understood that the cloth should have been bloodstained from the couple's first intercourse; there is scant medical support for this widespread assumption. No other biblical text refers to this *cloth*. Nor is it likely that such a cloth was kept by the parents, but it would have been easy for them to manufacture one. This entire case is set up to deter false accusations against the bride and her family. **19:** *They shall fine him,* the penalty for

of silver (which they shall give to the young woman's father) because he has slandered a virgin of Israel. She shall remain his wife; he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives.

20 If, however, this charge is true, that evidence of the young woman's virginity was not found, 21 then they shall bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

22 If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.

23 If there is a young woman, a virgin already engaged to be married, and a man meets her in the town and lies with her, 24 you shall bring both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death, the young woman because she did not cry for help in the town and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

25 But if the man meets the engaged woman in the open country, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. 26 You shall do nothing to the young woman; the young woman has not committed an offense punishable by death, because this case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor. 27 Since he found her in the open country, the engaged woman may have cried for help, but there was no one to rescue her.

28 If a man meets a virgin who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are caught in the act, 29 the man who lay with her shall give fifty shekels of silver to the young woman's father, and she shall become his wife. Because he violated her he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives.

his slanderous accusation is financial, although the penalty for her lack of virginity, if proven true, is capital (vv. 20–21); contrast 19.19. *One hundred shekels (of silver),* about 1.1 kg (2.5 lb), twice the fine for rape (v. 29). **21:** *Entrance of her father's house,* at the very site of the offense. *Stone her to death,* see 13.10n. *Disgraceful act in Israel,* a violation of basic community sexual and religious norms (Gen 34.7; Josh 7.15; Judg 19.23–34; 20.6,10). *Purge the evil,* see 13.5n.

22.22–30: Adultery and rape. 22: Adultery, defined in biblical law as a man having sex with a woman betrothed or married to another man, is a violation of the Decalogue (5.18) and a capital offense (Lev 18.20; 20.10). *Both of them shall die,* a contrast with ancient Near Eastern norms, which required the male's death but left the wife's fate to her husband (but cf. Prov 6.34). The law removes the wife from her husband's authority and defines her as a legal person accountable for her actions. **23–27:** Two laws to determine culpability (vv. 23–24) or nonculpability (vv. 25–27) in cases of rape or seduction. Both laws show detailed points of contact with *Middle Assyrian Laws* (*M.A.L.;* ca. 1076 BCE). **23:** *Engaged to be married,* this distinction in legal status between the betrothed and married woman permits another distinction between adultery and rape: Although the woman still resides with her father, she is contractually bound to her future husband. Therefore consensual sex with the betrothed woman by anyone other than her future husband would constitute adultery. *In the town,* where there are potential witnesses (*M.A.L.* §A 12). **25:** The assault in *open country,* where rescuers or witnesses are unlikely, suggests planned malice. **26:** *Like . . . someone who attacks and murders a neighbor,* i.e., premeditated (19.11–13). The importance of the analogy is not in the definition of the crime, however. Rather, it is in the determination of the legal status of the participants in the crime; the analogy absolves the woman of legal culpability for adultery. **28–29:** These conditions correspond to *M.A.L.* §A 55, which implies forced rape. In contrast, Ex 22.16–17 specifies intercourse with, but not forced rape of, a "virgin who is not engaged." The conflation of these two models in this law blurs the distinction between consensual and non-consensual intercourse on the woman's part. **28:** *And lies with her,* as in Ex 22.16. **29:** *Fifty shekels,* cf. Ex 22.16–17. In both cases, intercourse with an unmarried, unbetrothed woman is not adultery. Ex 22.16–17 requires payment of the bridewealth, usually a negotiated amount (Gen 34.12), and grants the father the right to refuse the marriage. In Deuteronomy's law, the father must agree to the marriage and therefore must negotiate the bridewealth with the man who had intercourse with his daughter. The fixed payment here seems to be a fine (cf. v. 19) intended to compensate the father for diminished potential earnings had he been able to negotiate a higher bridewealth with another

30 [a]A man shall not marry his father's wife, thereby violating his father's rights.[b]

23 No one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

2 Those born of an illicit union shall not be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

3 No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD, 4 because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam son of Beor, from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. 5 (Yet the LORD your God refused to heed Balaam; the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loved you.) 6 You shall never promote their welfare or their prosperity as long as you live.

7 You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin. You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an alien residing in their land. 8 The children of the third generation that are born to them may be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

9 When you are encamped against your enemies you shall guard against any impropriety.

10 If one of you becomes unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he shall go outside the camp; he must not come within the camp. 11 When evening comes, he shall wash himself with water, and when the sun has set, he may come back into the camp.

12 You shall have a designated area outside the camp to which you shall go. 13 With your utensils you shall have a trowel; when you relieve yourself outside, you shall dig a hole with it and then cover up your excrement. 14 Because the LORD your God travels along with your camp, to save you and to hand over your enemies to you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.

15 Slaves who have escaped to you from their owners shall not be given back to them. 16 They shall reside with you, in your midst,

[a] Ch 23.1 in Heb
[b] Heb *uncovering his father's skirt*

man. **30:** A transition to the next section. *Father's wife,* i.e., a widowed stepmother (see Lev 18.7–8). *Violating his father's rights,* lit., "uncovering his father's skirt" (text note *b*); i.e., even indirect sexual contact with him must be avoided (Gen 9.23–24; 49.4; Lev 18.8; 20.11).

23.1–8: Restrictions on access to Israel's assembly. 1: *Testicles . . . penis,* the same physiological qualification that Lev 21.17–23 requires of the priesthood, but in this case applied to all Israel (see 14.2n.). **2:** *Illicit union,* incestuous marriages (22.30; Lev 18.6–18). *Tenth generation,* see v. 3n. **3–8:** The restrictions do not entail denial of residence rights, and those named would retain the protection afforded by the legal status of "resident alien" (see 1.16; 5.14; Lev 19.10,33–34; 23.22). **3–6:** These laws were reused and extended in the postexilic period to prohibit intermarriage (Ezra 9–10; Neh 13.1–3). **3:** *Ammonite or Moabite,* perhaps introduced after v. 2 because of an older tradition concerning their incestuous origins (Gen 19.30–38). The book of Ruth represents a significant exception to this perspective. *Tenth generation,* "forever," as explicitly stated in the Hebrew. **4:** The rationale varies from the earlier report that Israel detoured around Ammon without requesting assistance and received food and water from Moab (2.19,29,37). *Balaam,* see Num 22–24. **7:** *Not abhor . . . Edomites,* the perspective here differs from that of biblical texts in which the Edomites are condemned for their participation in the destruction of Jerusalem (Ps 137.7; Obadiah). *Kin,* through Esau (Gen 25.24–26; 36.1). *Egyptians,* this injunction remarkably overlooks the enslavement (26.6; 28.60,68; Ex 1–15), going back to the provision of sanctuary (Gen 37–50).

23.9–14: Special rules for the military camp. The theology of holy war assumes God's direct participation in the campaign (7.17–24; 20.4), creating a demand for heightened purity, like that required of the entire people at Sinai (Ex 19.10,14). Sexual abstinence seems also to have been required (1 Sam 21.4–5; 2 Sam 11.8–11; cf. Ex 19.15). **10–11:** Cf. Lev 15.16–18. **12:** *Designated area,* a latrine. **14:** *Travels along,* see 20.4; 31.6. *Anything indecent,* see 24.1n.

23.15–25.19: The heightened moral responsibilities of the covenant community.

23.15–16: Prohibition of the return of escaped slaves. The law rejects the almost universal stipulation within ancient Near Eastern law that escaped slaves must be returned (*Laws of Hammurabi* §§16–20; *Hittite Laws* §§22–24). **16:** The extraordinary repetition emphasizes that the entire community must be open to them.

in any place they choose in any one of your towns, wherever they please; you shall not oppress them.

17 None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute. 18 You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a male prostitute[a] into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the LORD your God.

19 You shall not charge interest on loans to another Israelite, interest on money, interest on provisions, interest on anything that is lent. 20 On loans to a foreigner you may charge interest, but on loans to another Israelite you may not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings in the land that you are about to enter and possess.

21 If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not postpone fulfilling it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you would incur guilt. 22 But if you refrain from vowing, you will not incur guilt. 23 Whatever your lips utter you must diligently perform, just as you have freely vowed to the LORD your God with your own mouth.

24 If you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in a container.

25 If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.

24 Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house 2 and goes off to become another man's wife. 3 Then suppose the second man dislikes her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house (or the

[a] Heb *a dog*

23.17–18: Restrictions on prostitution. Prostitution is presupposed, but prostitution by Israelites is illegal. The regulations also seek to preserve the Temple's sanctity. **17:** *Temple prostitute* (Heb "qedeshah"), the translation reflects belief in the existence of sacred prostitution in Israel and the ancient Near East, for which there is scant evidence; more likely *qedesha* is a standard euphemism for the coarser term for prostitute (v. 18). The same alternation between the two terms appears in Gen 38.15,21. The word might better be translated as "one set aside." **18:** *Prostitute,* Heb *zonah*, closer to "whore" (Hos 1.2). *Male prostitute* (lit., "dog"), in context, a euphemism for the male counterpart to a common female prostitute. To maintain holiness, the law forbids donating income gained from prostitution to the Temple (cf. Hos 4.14; Mic 1.7).

23.19–25: Financial ethics, vows, gathering by the needy. 19–20: This law builds on Ex 22.25, which clarifies that lending served primarily as a means of social support for "the poor among you" (similarly, Lev 25.36–37). Charging interest would amount to profiteering from the misfortunes of others. *Money*, see 2.6n. **20:** *A foreigner,* as distinct from the "resident alien," who fully participated in Israel's social welfare system (see 1.16n.); for similar distinctions, see 15.3; Lev 25.44–45. **21–23:** A *vow* (v. 21) promises payment of something to God (usually a sacrifice at a temple) in exchange for receiving something (see 1 Sam 1.11). This cautious reserve about vows, understandable in light of Judg 11.29–40, closely corresponds to wisdom teachings (Eccl 5.4–6). For a more positive view, see Ps 50.14. **24–25:** These rules prohibit exploitation of Deuteronomy's extensive support system for the needy (14.28–29; 24.19–22; 25.4). **25:** *Pluck . . . hand,* to address immediate hunger (Lk 6.1; cf. Mt 12.1; Mk 2.23).

Chs 24–25: Laws promoting social harmony. 24.1–22: This section (ch 24), like the previous one (ch 23), begins with a restriction on marriage and concludes stipulating care for those in need (note 22.30 = 23.1 Heb). **1–4:** This complex law, theologically applied by two prophets (Isa 50.1; Jer 3.1,8), addresses only remarriage after divorce to a wife who subsequently married another; it does not prohibit remarriage in general. Biblical law includes no general laws of either marriage or divorce, only special cases that raise particular ethical or religious issues. **1:** Male-initiated divorce was the norm, though there is some evidence in the Near East and in the Jewish papyri from Elephantine in Egypt (fifth century BCE) of contracts permitting either party to initiate divorce proceedings. *He finds . . . about her,* formula for disloyal action or betrayal of trust (1 Sam 29.3,6,8; 2 Kings 17.4; cf. 1 Sam 12.5). *Objectionable,* "indecent" (23.14). It is unclear from the Hebrew what valid criteria

second man who married her dies); [4] her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that would be abhorrent to the LORD, and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession.

[5] When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be charged with any related duty. He shall be free at home one year, to be happy with the wife whom he has married.

[6] No one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for that would be taking a life in pledge.

[7] If someone is caught kidnaping another Israelite, enslaving or selling the Israelite, then that kidnaper shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

[8] Guard against an outbreak of a leprous[a] skin disease by being very careful; you shall carefully observe whatever the levitical priests instruct you, just as I have commanded them. [9] Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on your journey out of Egypt.

[10] When you make your neighbor a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge. [11] You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you. [12] If the person is poor, you shall not sleep in the garment given you as[b] the pledge. [13] You shall give the pledge back by sunset, so that your neighbor may sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before the LORD your God.

[14] You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. [15] You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

[16] Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.

[17] You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. [18] Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.

[19] When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien,

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

[b] Heb lacks *the garment given you as*

for divorce were. *Certificate of divorce,* legally freeing her to remarry. **4:** *After she has been defiled,* not in general, since she is permitted to remarry, but specifically as regards relations with her first husband. **5:** Another of the rules for holy war (20.1–20; 21.10–14; 23.9–14). *Newly married,* contrast the premarital deferral from service in 20.7. *Be happy with,* better, "give happiness to," including conjugal relations for the purpose of producing an heir before the man is required to risk his life in battle. **6:** The law prohibits economic oppression (like vv. 10–15). *Take . . . in pledge,* accept as collateral for a loan. *Mill or an upper millstone,* like the "garment" of v. 12, they are essential to the owner's survival, and thus may not be taken. **7:** Restricts the application of Ex 21.16 to kidnappers of fellow Israelites; perhaps also an interpretation of Deut 5.19. **8–9:** *Leprous skin disease,* not leprosy, but rather a general term for a skin disease; see Lev 13.1–14.57. *Remember . . . Miriam,* see Num 12.1–15. **10–13:** Expands upon Ex 22.26–27 (cf. Am 2.8; Prov 20.16; 22.27; 27.13; Job 22.6). The Yavneh Yam inscription (late seventh century BCE) documents a similar case. **14–15:** Deuteronomy's ethics are based upon the conviction that God identifies with and vindicates the oppressed (cf. Ex 22.21–24; Lev 19.13). **14:** The prohibition against economic exploitation is not contingent upon ethnicity or nationality; see 1.16n. **15:** See 15.9n. **16:** This law restricting punishment to the responsible individual, cited in 2 Kings 14.6, applies to both civil and criminal law. Collective responsibility applies to offenses against God (5.9–10; Ex 34.7; Num 16.31–33; Josh 7.24–25; 2 Sam 21.1–9), a theological principle subsequently brought into conformity with the law of individual liability (7.10; Jer 31.29–30; Ezek 18). **17:** *You shall not deprive . . . of justice,* in Hebrew, identical to the comprehensive "You shall not distort justice" (16.19). This law, therefore, ensures protection of the most vulnerable, the *resident alien* or the *orphan. Take . . . in pledge,* better, "seize" to force payment (see Job 24.3). This accords the *widow* special protection; see also vv. 10–13n. **18:** See 15.15. **19–22:** Lev 19.9–10; 23.22. The story of Ruth, both a widow and an alien, presupposes

the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. 20 When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. 22 Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

25 Suppose two persons have a dispute and enter into litigation, and the judges decide between them, declaring one to be in the right and the other to be in the wrong. 2 If the one in the wrong deserves to be flogged, the judge shall make that person lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of lashes proportionate to the offense. 3 Forty lashes may be given but not more; if more lashes than these are given, your neighbor will be degraded in your sight.

4 You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

5 When brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband's brother to her, 6 and the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the deceased brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. 7 But if the man has no desire to marry his brother's widow, then his brother's widow shall go up to the elders at the gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me." 8 Then the elders of his town shall summon him and speak to him. If he persists, saying, "I have no desire to marry her," 9 then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull his sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and declare, "This is what is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house." 10 Throughout Israel his family shall be known as "the house of him whose sandal was pulled off."

11 If men get into a fight with one another, and the wife of one intervenes to rescue her husband from the grip of his opponent by reaching out and seizing his genitals, 12 you shall cut off her hand; show no pity.

such laws, which assign harvest gleanings to the needy, allowing them to eat without begging for food. **20:** *Beat,* with poles, so as to harvest the olives (Isa 17.6). **25.1–3:** A double restriction upon judicial flogging, also employed for discipline in nonjudicial contexts (Ex 21.20; Prov 10.13; 26.3; 1 Kings 12.14). **2:** *In his presence,* under the judge's direct supervision, "by [his] count" (the more likely rendering of NRSV *number of lashes*). **3:** *Forty lashes,* a definitive restriction for which there is no parallel in Near Eastern law; the *Middle Assyrian Laws* stipulate floggings of five to one hundred lashes (*M.A.L.* §B 7–10). *Your neighbor,* the criminal, despite his judicial status, retains human dignity. **4:** For similar humane treatment of animals, see 22.6–7; Prov 12.10. **5–10:** Biblical, Near Eastern, and Roman inheritance law assigned special responsibilities to the "husband's brother" (vv. 5–7), for which Hebrew had a special term (cf. Latin "levir," hence "levirate marriage"). See variant versions of this law in Gen 38.8 and Ruth 4.5–6. **5:** *When brothers reside together*: in joint tenancy on patrimonial land not yet subdivided among them as heirs. The law addresses the contingency of a father who dies leaving sons who are not yet ready to set up their own independent households. In such circumstances, the patrimony would be managed jointly until the land could be properly divided. However, should one of the heirs die childless prior to this division of property, he and his line would never inherit his share; it would be subsumed into the others' shares. Thus, the purpose of the levirate law was to "build up the house" of the deceased son (v. 10), to ensure he had an heir to inherit his fair share of the jointly held property. *Her husband's brother shall go in to her,* possibly the brother's death provided an exception to the incest prohibition of marrying a sister-in-law (cf. the prohibition in the later Lev 18.16; 20.21). **6:** *Firstborn, only the first child produced by this union will be treated as the deceased brother's child for purposes* of inheritance rights; cf. Gen 38.8. **9:** The intent of the ceremony is public shaming for his dereliction of duty. **10:** *Known as,* lit., "called by the name of," thus explicitly applying a form of retributive justice (19.19n.). For refusing to build up the deceased's "name" (vv. 6–7) and "house" (v. 9), the brother's own *house* is stigmatized by its new name. **11–12:** An additional law dealing with threats to reproduction (cf. Ex 21.22–25). Physical mutilation (characteristic in the *Middle Assyrian Laws*) is nowhere else prescribed in the Bible, except in the general formula for talion (19.21; Ex 21.23–24; Lev 24.19–20). That rationale does not

13 You shall not have in your bag two kinds of
weights, large and small. 14 You shall not have
in your house two kinds of measures, large and
small. 15 You shall have only a full and honest
weight; you shall have only a full and honest
measure, so that your days may be long in the
land that the LORD your God is giving you. 16 For
all who do such things, all who act dishonestly,
are abhorrent to the LORD your God.

17 Remember what Amalek did to you on
your journey out of Egypt, 18 how he at-
tacked you on the way, when you were faint
and weary, and struck down all who lagged
behind you; he did not fear God. 19 Therefore
when the LORD your God has given you rest
from all your enemies on every hand, in the
land that the LORD your God is giving you
as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot
out the remembrance of Amalek from under
heaven; do not forget.

26 When you have come into the land
that the LORD your God is giving you
as an inheritance to possess, and you possess
it, and settle in it, 2 you shall take some of
the first of all the fruit of the ground, which
you harvest from the land that the LORD your
God is giving you, and you shall put it in a
basket and go to the place that the LORD your
God will choose as a dwelling for his name.
3 You shall go to the priest who is in office at
that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to
the LORD your God that I have come into the
land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to
give us." 4 When the priest takes the basket
from your hand and sets it down before the
altar of the LORD your God, 5 you shall make
this response before the LORD your God: "A
wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he
went down into Egypt and lived there as an
alien, few in number, and there he became a
great nation, mighty and populous. 6 When
the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted
us, by imposing hard labor on us, 7 we cried to
the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD
heard our voice and saw our affliction, our
toil, and our oppression. 8 The LORD brought
us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an
outstretched arm, with a terrifying display
of power, and with signs and wonders; 9 and
he brought us into this place and gave us this
land, a land flowing with milk and honey.
10 So now I bring the first of the fruit of the
ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You
shall set it down before the LORD your God
and bow down before the LORD your God.
11 Then you, together with the Levites and the
aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate
with all the bounty that the LORD your God
has given to you and to your house.

12 When you have finished paying all the
tithe of your produce in the third year (which
is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites,

apply here, however, since there is no symmetry between injury and punishment. The issue may rather be the perceived insult to dignity (cf. *Laws of Hammurabi* §195). **13–16:** Cf. *Laws of Hammurabi* §108; Lev 19.35–36; Am 8.5. **14:** By fraudulently using two different sets of counterweights—small ones to sell grain but large ones to purchase it—a merchant could turn a tidy profit. **17–19:** Builds upon Ex 17.8–16, in which the Amalekites, a fierce desert tribe, attacked Israel (cf. Ps 83.4–8). **18:** These details are not found in Ex 17.8–16; they may have been supplied by the Deuteronomic author in order to justify the extirpation of Amalek (v. 19; cf. Ex 17.14; 1 Sam 15.2–3). **19:** *Rest,* see 3.20; 12.9n.

26.1–15: Concluding liturgies. Two already prescribed laws (14.22–29) are given a historical and theological foundation (similarly, 16.12, for the festival of weeks). **1–11:** The context is the festival of weeks (16.9–12), when the Israelite was to make an annual pilgrimage to the central sanctuary, bringing the first fruits of the harvest, to thank God for the land's bounty. **4:** *When the priest,* contrast v. 10. Vv. 3–4 may be a later addition emphasizing the role of priests in the ceremony. Thus, v. 5 may have originally continued v. 2. **5–9:** These verses were long regarded by scholars as an ancient confession of faith, one of the oldest units of the Pentateuch. More recent scholarship regards this section as a concise summary from a later perspective. **5:** *Wandering Aramean* suggests the Jacob tradition (Gen 25.20). **6:** *Afflicted . . . hard labor,* see Ex 1.11–14. **8–9:** It is striking that the giving of the law on Horeb is missing here (cf. also Josh 24.3–13). Perhaps this ancient liturgy did not know of this event. **11:** *Celebrate,* or "rejoice" (16.11,14–15), specifically in a festive meal consumed at the central sanctuary (12.7,18), which must include *the Levites and the aliens.* The mention of these marginal groups provides a transition to the following law. **12–15:** Produce was tithed annually and consumed by the farmer and his household at the central sanctuary (14.22–27); every third year that tithe was used locally to support the poor (14.28–29). **12:** *Aliens . . .*

the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, so that they may eat their fill within your towns, [13] then you shall say before the LORD your God: "I have removed the sacred portion from the house, and I have given it to the Levites, the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows, in accordance with your entire commandment that you commanded me; I have neither transgressed nor forgotten any of your commandments: [14] I have not eaten of it while in mourning; I have not removed any of it while I was unclean; and I have not offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the LORD my God, doing just as you commanded me. [15] Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our ancestors—a land flowing with milk and honey."

[16] This very day the LORD your God is commanding you to observe these statutes and ordinances; so observe them diligently with all your heart and with all your soul. [17] Today you have obtained the LORD's agreement: to be your God; and for you to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, and his ordinances, and to obey him. [18] Today the LORD has obtained your agreement: to be his treasured people, as he promised you, and to keep his commandments; [19] for him to set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honor; and for you to be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.

27 Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged all the people as follows: Keep the entire commandment that I am

widows, see 1.16n.; 14.29; 23.3–8,20n. **14:** The formula, containing a triple confession of the donor's ritual purity, probably originated in donations of produce to God at a sanctuary, where purity would be expected. That formula has now been reused for the donation of food to the poor "within your towns" (v. 12). *Offered any of it to the dead,* the duty of the living to care for dead ancestors through food offerings at their place of burial was widely assumed in the ancient Near East (see the Ugaritic *Aqhat* epic), is confirmed archeaologically, and continued to be carried out in Second Temple times (Tob 4.17). This practice is not condemned here; it is viewed as improper only in relation to sacred donations, because of the impurity associated with death (Lev 22.2–4). **15:** *From your holy habitation, from heaven,* as in 1 Kings 8.30. The double proposition may point to the correction of an older theology in light of a newer one, following Deuteronomy's normal view that only God's name resides in the Temple (12.11; 16.11; 26.2). For the earlier idea, that God himself inhabits the Temple, see 1 Kings 8.13; cf. Deut 12.5. *Bless your people Israel and the ground,* the farmer prays for the blessing of the community and of the land, not directly for fertility or the abundance of his own crops.

26.16–19: Formal conclusion: the reciprocity of the covenant, representing the legal corpus as a mutually binding relationship between God and Israel. Having just read the law to the people, Moses presents it to them in a formal ratification ceremony (vv. 17–18; cf. 2 Kings 23.1–3). **16:** *Statutes and ordinances . . . observe . . . diligently* forms an inclusio with 12.1, providing the laws of chs 12–26 with an elegant frame to mark their conclusion. **17–18:** *Obtained,* the past tense points to an already completed ritual, not preserved in Deuteronomy, in which both Israel and God explicitly assented to the covenant and affirmed the mutuality of the obligations that each will undertake. This reciprocal model contrasts with the Sinai covenant in Exodus, which was unilaterally offered by God (Ex 19.3–6) and unilaterally agreed to by Israel (Ex 19.8; 24.3,7). Deuteronomy invokes the language of the Sinai covenant as a model while revising it significantly in the process. **18:** *His treasured people,* see 7.6n. *In praise . . . fame and . . . honor,* NRSV implies that the accolades will be given to Israel; the Hebrew also allows for the possibility that the honors will go to God because of his action on Israel's behalf (see Jer 13.11; 33.9). *As he promised you,* Ex 19.5–6. **19:** *High above all nations,* see 28.13–14n. *That he has made,* see Ex 19.5b. *A people holy to the LORD* continues the reference to Ex 19.5–6, while substituting *people* for "nation," which Deuteronomy uses for non-Israelites (12.29).

27.1–26: Ceremonies at Shechem upon entry into the land. The injunctions of 11.29–32 are here reiterated and detailed. The laws of chs 12–26 are thus framed with ceremonies that connect entry into the land with obedience to the teaching of Moses. The chapter joins four separate sections that are only loosely connected to one another and to the rest of Deuteronomy. An editor has aligned the sections with one another, while breaking up the continuity of the speech of chs 26 and 28. The resulting digression preserves several competing traditions about how and where the covenant between God and Israel was concluded: at Sinai; or on the plains of Moab; or at Gilgal immediately upon entering the land; or at the important northern shrine of Shechem (see

commanding you today. 2 On the day that you cross over the Jordan into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones and cover them with plaster. 3 You shall write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over, to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you. 4 So when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I am commanding you today, on Mount Ebal, and you shall cover them with plaster. 5 And you shall build an altar there to the LORD your God, an altar of stones on which you have not used an iron tool. 6 You must build the altar of the LORD your God of unhewn[a] stones. Then offer up burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God, 7 make sacrifices of well-being, and eat them there, rejoicing before the LORD your God. 8 You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very clearly.

9 Then Moses and the levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying: Keep silence and hear, O Israel! This very day you have become the people of the LORD your God. 10 Therefore obey the LORD your God, observing his commandments and his statutes that I am commanding you today.

11 The same day Moses charged the people as follows: 12 When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim for the blessing of the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. 13 And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. 14 Then the Levites shall declare in a loud voice to all the Israelites:

15 "Cursed be anyone who makes an idol or casts an image, anything abhorrent to the LORD, the work of an artisan, and sets it up in

[a] Heb *whole*

11.29n.). **1–8:** This section combines two separate requirements: the raising of plastered stones inscribed with the teaching (vv. 1–4,8) and the construction of a stone altar for sacrifice (vv. 5–7). **1:** Moses is referred to in the third person, interrupting his first-person address (chs 5–26; 28). *And the elders,* nowhere else in Deuteronomy do they join Moses in addressing the people; this plural subject does not easily fit the following singular *I.* **2:** *Cover them with plaster,* to serve as a surface for inscription. Archaeology attests the use of plaster-covered wall or stele inscriptions. **4:** *Mount Ebal,* at over 3,000 ft (1,000 m), the tallest mountain in the region. It lies in central Canaan, adjacent to the city of Shechem. But that site is inconsistent with v. 2 and the beginning of this verse, which each anticipate that the ceremony will take place immediately upon crossing the river. It would be impossible to reach Shechem in a day. The most logical explanation is that Josh 4 points to the original form of these verses, with Gilgal as the site where Israel complied with this command. That older tradition was replaced here by the reference to the mountains around Shechem, the chief town of the northern tribes (Josh 24.1,32). **5–7:** These verses are an insertion that reinterprets the plastered stones on which the teaching is to be inscribed as an altar of *unhewn stones,* following Ex 20.25. Such an altar, outside of Jerusalem, conflicts with the centralization requirement of ch 12, and further suggests the antiquity and the independence of this tradition from the rest of Deuteronomy. The fulfillment of this law is narrated in Josh 8.30–35. **9–10:** This is a new paragraph, independent of what precedes it. **9:** *And the levitical priests,* see v. 1n.; here too the plural subject is continued by "I" (v. 10). *This very day,* contrast statements that define the bond as previously formed, either at the time of the Exodus (Ex 6.6–7) or at Sinai (4.20; Ex 19.5–6). **11–13:** A fragment that refers to an ancient covenant ceremony at Shechem, instituted at the command of Moses (Josh 8.30–35). The antiquity of the tribal list is seen in the facts that Levi is listed as a tribe (Gen 49.5–7) and that the division of the house of Joseph into Manasseh and Ephraim has not yet occurred (Gen 49.22–26; contrast Deut 33.17). The division of the tribes into two groups of six is attested only here. **11:** *The same day,* lit., "on that day," without further specification. **12–13:** *Mount Gerizim for the blessing . . . Mount Ebal for the curse,* see 11.29n. One group of tribes, on Gerizim, proclaims a set of blessings (see 28.1–14); the other, on Ebal, a set of curses (see 28.15–68). **14–26:** Despite the paragraphing in NRSV, v. 14 more likely begins a new section, with a very different conception of the ceremony: The tribe of Levi alone proclaims a set of prohibited actions and *all the people*—acting in unison and not divided into tribes—respond, *Amen* (see Jer 11.3–5). There is no list of blessings (cf. v. 12). The "cursed be" proclamations here stigmatize a summary list of rejected actions while making no references to the consequences of the transgressions. **14:** *Levites,* contrast Deuteronomy's normal term, "levitical priests" (v. 9; 18.1). **15–26:** The twelve curses correspond to the twelve tribes, although this section makes no reference to the tribal division and the

secret." All the people shall respond, saying, "Amen!"

16 "Cursed be anyone who dishonors father or mother." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

17 "Cursed be anyone who moves a neighbor's boundary marker." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

18 "Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind person on the road." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

19 "Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

20 "Cursed be anyone who lies with his father's wife, because he has violated his father's rights."[a] All the people shall say, "Amen!"

21 "Cursed be anyone who lies with any animal." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

22 "Cursed be anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

23 "Cursed be anyone who lies with his mother-in-law." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

24 "Cursed be anyone who strikes down a neighbor in secret." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

25 "Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

26 "Cursed be anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by observing them." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

28 If you will only obey the LORD your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth; 2 all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the LORD your God:

3 Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.

4 Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your livestock, both the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock.

5 Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

6 Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

7 The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. 8 The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns, and in all that you undertake; he will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. 9 The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he has sworn to you, if you

[a] Heb *uncovered his father's skirt*

people function as a single entity (v. 14). The resulting incongruence points to the many editorial revisions that this chapter has undergone. **15:** See 4.15–31n. **16:** See 5.16. **17:** See 19.14n.

28.1–68: The consequences of obedience or disobedience: blessing or curse. The covenant specifies a series of blessings and curses that follow upon national obedience or disobedience to the law. These are modeled after ancient Near Eastern state treaties, which spell out, at their conclusion, the consequences of breaching the treaty. This chapter has several close parallels to the Neo-Assyrian *Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* (*VTE*), dating to 672 BCE. The disproportion between the sections devoted to blessing (vv. 1–14) and to curse (vv. 15–68) may be a reaction to the Babylonian conquest, deportation, and exile of Judah (597 and 586 BCE), here recast as a prophetic warning. Two appendixes, vv. 47–57 and 58–68, each seek to make theological sense of that catastrophe. The two other legal collections of the Pentateuch (Ex 21–23 and Lev 17–26) similarly end with exhortations to obedience, accompanied by blessings and curses (Ex 23.20–33; Lev 26). Here an inclusio frames and defines the blessings section: *if you . . . obey . . . by diligently observing* (vv. 1,13). **1–2:** The proem emphasizes the conditionality of the exalted status of Israel, perhaps because of the Exile. *High above all the nations* (see also v. 13), a metaphor for the nation's election, also applied to the Davidic dynasty (Ps 89.27). (Contrast 26.19, where this affirmation is unconditional, fulfilling God's past promises.) **3–6:** The six benedictions have their malediction counterpart at vv. 16–19. The two antonym pairs (vv. 3,6) provide a frame to the unit. The opposites form a merism to stress totality (like "night and day"); see 6.7n. **3:** *City* and *field,* "everywhere," urban and rural. **4:** *Fruit . . . livestock,* fecundity for humans, crops, and livestock is contingent upon obedience to the covenant; see 7.12–14n. **7:** Military success is conditional upon covenantal obedience, rather than strength of arms (9.1–3; Josh 1.6–8). **9:** *The LORD will establish . . . if you keep,* holiness is conditional upon obedience, a shift from other

keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. [10] All the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. [11] The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give you. [12] The LORD will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. [13] The LORD will make you the head, and not the tail; you shall be only at the top, and not at the bottom—if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today, by diligently observing them, [14] and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I am commanding you today, either to the right or to the left, following other gods to serve them.

[15] But if you will not obey the LORD your God by diligently observing all his commandments and decrees, which I am commanding you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you:

[16] Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field.

[17] Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

[18] Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock.

[19] Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

[20] The LORD will send upon you disaster, panic, and frustration in everything you attempt to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me. [21] The LORD will make the pestilence cling to you until it has consumed you off the land that you are entering to possess. [22] The LORD will afflict you with consumption, fever, inflammation, with fiery heat and drought, and with blight and mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. [23] The sky over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you iron. [24] The LORD will change the rain of your land into powder, and only dust shall come down upon you from the sky until you are destroyed.

[25] The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out against them one way and flee before them seven ways. You shall become an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. [26] Your corpses shall be food for every bird of the air and animal of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away. [27] The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, with

passages where Israel's holiness is not future but present, and not conditional but unconditional (7.6; 14.2; cf. 26.19). **10:** *Called by the name of the LORD,* relationship with God includes accountability and corresponding divine oversight. The formula can apply to either the nation (here; 2 Chr 7.14; Isa 63.19; Jer 14.9) or an individual (Ex 33.12; Jer 15.16). **12:** *Storehouse,* in Israelite and Near Eastern cosmology, primordial waters above the dome of the sky were released as rain (Gen 1.7; 7.11). *Lend . . . borrow,* see 15.6.

28.15–68: Consequences of disobedience. A broad range of misfortunes, from infertility to military defeat (vv. 15–46), precede a second section (vv. 47–68) on foreign invasion, siege, national defeat, and exile, a reversal of the covenantal promises and of the nation's history of salvation: By disobeying the covenant, the nation undoes its own history. **15–46:** A chiastic inclusio frames the section: the initial sequence AB (*not obey . . . observing . . . curses . . . overtake,* v. 15) is repeated in reverse at the end as B´A´ (*curses . . . overtaking . . . not obey . . . observing,* v. 45). **15: Negating** v. 1. **16–19:** Negating vv. 3–6. **20:** Corresponding to the tripartite blessing for obedience (v. 8) stands the triple threat of *disaster* (better, "curse"), *panic, and frustration.* The threats are spelled out in vv. 21–44. *Me,* the first-person reference shifts from Moses to God, as at 7.4; 17.3. **21–44:** This section echoes treaties that the Neo-Assyrian empire imposed on its vassal states, suggesting that the curse section of these state treaties, perhaps in Aramaic translation, provided a model for this chapter. Judah was a vassal to the Assyrian empire (2 Kings 18.13–18) and both Neo-Assyrian and Judean officials spoke Aramaic, the international language of diplomacy (2 Kings 18.26–27). **23:** *Bronze . . . iron,* see *VTE* §§63–64: "May [the gods] make your ground like iron . . . Just as rain does not fall from a bronze sky . . ." (D. J. Wiseman, in *ANET*, p. 5396.1 **25:** Negates v. 7. **26:** Even executed criminals must be buried by sundown, lest the corpse become carrion (21.22–23); abrogation of that law underscores the punishment's horror (Jer 7.33). **27–35:** The apparently arbitrary sequence of punishments

ulcers, scurvy, and itch, of which you cannot be healed. 28 The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind; 29 you shall grope about at noon as blind people grope in darkness, but you shall be unable to find your way; and you shall be continually abused and robbed, without anyone to help. 30 You shall become engaged to a woman, but another man shall lie with her. You shall build a house, but not live in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but not enjoy its fruit. 31 Your ox shall be butchered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it. Your donkey shall be stolen in front of you, and shall not be restored to you. Your sheep shall be given to your enemies, without anyone to help you. 32 Your sons and daughters shall be given to another people, while you look on; you will strain your eyes looking for them all day but be powerless to do anything. 33 A people whom you do not know shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors; you shall be continually abused and crushed, 34 and driven mad by the sight that your eyes shall see. 35 The LORD will strike you on the knees and on the legs with grievous boils of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head. 36 The LORD will bring you, and the king whom you set over you, to a nation that neither you nor your ancestors have known, where you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone. 37 You shall become an object of horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you.

38 You shall carry much seed into the field but shall gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. 39 You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them. 40 You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off. 41 You shall have sons and daughters, but they shall not remain yours, for they shall go into captivity. 42 All your trees and the fruit of your ground the cicada shall take over. 43 Aliens residing among you shall ascend above you higher and higher, while you shall descend lower and lower. 44 They shall lend to you but you shall not lend to them; they shall be the head and you shall be the tail.

45 All these curses shall come upon you, pursuing and overtaking you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God, by observing the commandments and the decrees that he commanded you. 46 They shall be among you and your descendants as a sign and a portent forever.

47 Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and with gladness of heart for the abundance of everything, 48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD

closely resembles *VTE* §§39–43, where each curse is associated with a particular Neo-Assyrian god: the moon god Sin with leprosy; the sun god Shamash, blindness; and Dilipat (the planet Venus), rape, dispossession, and pillage. **27:** *Boils of Egypt,* inversion of 7.15. See Ex 9.9–11. **28–29:** *Blindness,* Shamash, the god of justice, punishes disobedience by withholding light and vision; this punishment entails the breakdown of civil order and legal standards. **30:** *Woman . . . house. . . vineyard,* contrast 20.7, which provides the same conditions for exemption from conscription, in different order. Here, all hope of establishing households is dashed. Society will lack its essential structures for building family, community, and economy. **32:** The children will be taken captive by foreign conquerors. **36:** Both the Neo-Assyrian army (2 Kings 17) and the Neo-Babylonian invaders (2 Kings 24–25) practiced deportation. **37:** *Byword,* the opposite idea was central to God's covenant with Abraham, whose people were to become the paradigm of divine providence (Gen 12.3). **38–42:** Futility curses. The frustration of human labor through infertility of the harvest (caused by invasion from insects or other natural enemies) is punishment for infringement of the covenant (Lev 26.20; Am 4.7–12), reversing the blessings of vv. 7–15. **43–44:** Reversing vv. 12b–13. **46:** *A sign and a portent,* the normal phrase for miracles God performed on behalf of Israel at the time of the Exodus, "signs and wonders" (4.34; 6.22; 7.19; 29.3; 34.11; Ex 7.3; 8.23; 10.1–2; 11.9–10), in the singular here designates the divine punishment of Israel.

28.47–57: Scenario of foreign invasion. A later appendix, outside the frame provided by vv. 45–46. **47:** *Because you did not serve,* the future curse is based upon wrongdoing in the past, in contrast to the conditional, future formulation of v. 15, which presents disobedience as a future possibility. *Abundance,* prosperity in the land will cause Israel to forget its source (see 6.11–12; 8.11–20; 33.15,18). **48:** The punishment corresponds precisely to

will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lack of everything. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you. [49] The LORD will bring a nation from far away, from the end of the earth, to swoop down on you like an eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, [50] a grim-faced nation showing no respect to the old or favor to the young. [51] It shall consume the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your ground until you are destroyed, leaving you neither grain, wine, and oil, nor the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, until it has made you perish. [52] It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout your land; it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout the land that the LORD your God has given you. [53] In the desperate straits to which the enemy siege reduces you, you will eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your own sons and daughters whom the LORD your God has given you. [54] Even the most refined and gentle of men among you will begrudge food to his own brother, to the wife whom he embraces, and to the last of his remaining children, [55] giving to none of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because nothing else remains to him, in the desperate straits to which the enemy siege will reduce you in all your towns. [56] She who is the most refined and gentle among you, so gentle and refined that she does not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground, will begrudge food to the husband whom she embraces, to her own son, and to her own daughter, [57] begrudging even the afterbirth that comes out from between her thighs, and the children that she bears, because she is eating them in secret for lack of anything else, in the desperate straits to which the enemy siege will reduce you in your towns.

[58] If you do not diligently observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, fearing this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, [59] then the LORD will overwhelm both you and your offspring with severe and lasting afflictions and grievous and lasting maladies. [60] He will bring back upon you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were in dread, and they shall cling to you. [61] Every other malady and affliction, even though not recorded in the book of this

the offense: *Serve, earlier meaning* sacrificial worship of God (13.5), now means labor as a servant or slave (5.13; 13.12). *Iron yoke,* symbolizing vassal status, as in Jer 27–28. **49–57:** Systematic presentation of foreign conquest, proceeding from invasion (vv. 48–50), to the invaders' plunder and despoiling of the land (v. 51), to crippling siege (v. 52), and culminating in the horrors of starvation that arise from the siege (vv. 53–57). These descriptions of the invader and of the consequences of the siege are based upon the literary model of the *Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon.* **49–52:** Closely parallels Jer 5.15–19. **49:** *Like an eagle,* cf. Ezek 17.3,7; Hab 1.8. **51:** Contrast the idealist war laws of 20.19–20, which prohibit occupiers from despoiling the land. **52:** *It shall besiege you . . . until your . . . walls . . . come down,* the Neo-Assyrian (2 Kings 17.5) and Babylonian armies (2 Kings 24.3; 25.1–7) employed advanced engineering to mount a siege campaign involving ramparts, battering rams, and catapults. **53–57:** The starvation resulting from the siege causes a complete breakdown of the normal social order, as parents become predators of their children and family members compete for food. Cannibalism under siege conditions is a common literary trope; see Lev 26.29; 2 Kings 6.28–32; Jer 19.9; Lam 4.10; Ezek 5.10; and *VTE* §§47,69,71,75.

28.58–68: Undoing the Exodus. This seems to represent a third layer to the chapter. **58:** *This book,* how the commandments have become transformed from oral proclamation to written text is unexplained, since it is not until 31.9,24 that Moses commands that his teaching be put into writing. Moreover, previously the required obedience was to the plural "commandments" (vv. 1,9,13,15,45). Here, for the first time in the chapter, Israel must obey a codified, single *law* (Heb "torah" or "teaching"). *This . . . name,* better, "Name," standing directly for God (elsewhere in the Pentateuch only Lev 24.11; in later Judaism "the Name" (Heb "HaShem") becomes an important circumlocution for Yahweh, God's personal name). **59–68:** Consistent with the "book" perspective, the consequences for breach of the written teaching have a different focus: a systematic reversal of the national history, covenantal promises, and theology included in that teaching. The punishment amounts to an anti-Torah that will dissolve the national identity. **59–61:** After the miracle of the Exodus, God had promised, if the people obeyed, "I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians" (Ex 15.26).

law, the LORD will inflict on you until you are destroyed. 62 Although once you were as numerous as the stars in heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the LORD your God. 63 And just as the LORD took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so the LORD will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess. 64 The LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. 65 Among those nations you shall find no ease, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and a languishing spirit. 66 Your life shall hang in doubt before you; night and day you shall be in dread, with no assurance of your life. 67 In the morning you shall say, "If only it were evening!" and at evening you shall say, "If only it were morning!"—because of the dread that your heart shall feel and the sights that your eyes shall see. 68 The LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, by a route that I promised you would never see again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.

29 [a] These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb.

2 [b]Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 3 the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. 4 But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear. 5 I have led you forty years in the wilderness. The clothes on your back have not worn out, and the sandals on your feet have not worn out; 6 you have not eaten bread, and you have not

[a] Ch 28.69 in Heb
[b] Ch 29.1 in Heb

62: *Stars . . . heaven,* God will cancel the promise made to Abraham that his people shall be as numerous as the stars of heaven (Gen 15.5–6; cf. Deut 1.10; 10.22). **63:** Dispossession and exile (as in 4.26; Lev 26.33–39) rescind the covenantal promise of the land, contravening even the unconditional divine promises of Gen 12.7; 13.17. **64:** The double loss of Israel's identity: Dispersion of the population dissolves its political identity, and idol worship dissolves its religious identity. **65–67:** In the absence of the national destiny provided by the covenant, historical existence has no meaning. **68:** Forced return to Egypt, where the former taskmasters now spurn Israel's desperate bid to sell itself back into slavery and thus to undo its own history. For selling oneself into slavery under financial hardship to pay off debts or gain support ("indenture"), see Lev 25.39. *Route . . . never see again* (cf. 17.16), reverses the unconditional promise at the time of the Exodus: "the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again" (Ex 14.13).

29.1–30.20: Third discourse of Moses. The ratification ceremony for the covenant of the plains of Moab. Israel is formally adjured to enter the covenant: To swear to obey the laws of chs 12–26 under penalty of the sanctions of ch 28. **29.1–29:** A didactic review of Israel's history (vv. 2–9) precedes an imprecation to ensure loyal adherence to the covenant (vv. 10–29). **1: Editorial heading.** The laws, hitherto plural ("statutes and ordinances," 5.1; 12.1; cf. 4.45), are now a coherent, single tradition: *the covenant. In addition to,* presentation of the laws as a supplement to the Decalogue, in contrast to 4.44–45; 12.1, which mention neither the Decalogue nor the laws' supplementary status. This may be an effort to explain addition of the Decalogue to an earlier form of Deuteronomy. **2:** *You have seen,* as at 5.2–4, the present generation is in reality one generation removed from the miraculous events. **3:** *Signs . . . wonders,* see 28.46n. **4:** *But to this day,* more accurately: "The LORD has not given you . . . until today." The admonition creates a tension with the preceding two verses: The addressees who "have seen" the miraculous events (v. 2), which their own "eyes saw" (v. 3), are accused of having lacked *eyes to see.* The castigation reflects the episodes of rebellion (9.7–24). **5–6:** The speech reinterprets the wilderness wandering, full of trials and tribulations according to Numbers, and presents it positively, as a miraculous experience that led Israel to know God. **5:** *I,* see 7.4; 17.3; 28.20,68. *Clothes . . . feet,* see 8.4. **6:** *You have not eaten bread . . . not drunk wine,* you had no normal food. The manna, quails, and water that Israel consumed were instead miraculous food supplied by divine providence (8.2–5; Ex 16; Num 11.4–9,31–33). *Know,* not abstract

drunk wine or strong drink—so that you may know that I am the LORD your God. 7 When you came to this place, King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan came out against us for battle, but we defeated them. 8 We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. 9 Therefore diligently observe the words of this covenant, in order that you may succeed[a] in everything that you do.

10 You stand assembled today, all of you, before the LORD your God—the leaders of your tribes,[b] your elders, and your officials, all the men of Israel, 11 your children, your women, and the aliens who are in your camp, both those who cut your wood and those who draw your water— 12 to enter into the covenant of the LORD your God, sworn by an oath, which the LORD your God is making with you today; 13 in order that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you and as he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 14 I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath, not only with you who stand here with us today before the LORD our God, 15 but also with those who are not here with us today. 16 You know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed. 17 You have seen their detestable things, the filthy idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold, that were among them. 18 It may be that there is among you a man or woman, or a family or tribe, whose heart is already turning away from the LORD our God to serve the gods of those nations. It may be that there is among you a root sprouting poisonous and bitter growth. 19 All who hear the words of this oath and bless themselves, thinking in their hearts, "We are safe even though we go our own stubborn ways" (thus bringing disaster on moist and dry alike)[c]— 20 the LORD will be unwilling to pardon them, for the LORD's anger and passion will smoke against them. All the curses written in this book will descend on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven. 21 The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the law. 22 The next generation, your children who rise up after you, as well as the foreigner who comes from a distant country, will see the devastation of that land and the afflictions with which the LORD has

[a] Or *deal wisely*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *your leaders, your tribes*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

speculation but the recognition of God's historical actions on behalf of the nation. *I am the LORD your God,* better, "I, Yahweh, am your God" (6.4; Ex 20.2). **7–8:** See 1.4; 2.26–3.22; Num 21.21–35. **10:** *Stand assembled* in formal array for a public legal ceremony (cf. Ps 82.1). *Today,* transition from historical review (vv. 1–8) to present adjuration (similarly, *VTE* §33). **11:** *Cut your wood . . . draw your water,* see Josh 9.27. **12:** *Covenant . . . sworn by an oath,* the formula recurs at v. 14, thus framing the central idea, the binding relationship between God and Israel. *Oath,* more accurately, "its imprecation" or "its curse." Neo-Assyrian treaties were validated by means of a concluding imprecation (*VTE* §§37–56,58–106). The partner accepts the consequences of noncompliance. The laws of chs 12–26 represent the stipulations; ch 28, the sanctions; and ch 29, the imprecation. **14–15:** The covenant binds even future generations (as in *VTE* §§25,33,34,57). The author advances a powerful notion of Israel's identity and participation in the covenant that is not limited by time and space, nor historically contingent. **17–27:** A stark, two-part warning, showing how the attempt of even a single individual secretly to withdraw from the covenant (vv. 17–19) jeopardizes the entire nation (vv. 20–28). **18:** *Turning away,* transferring loyalty to other gods (13.6–11; 17.2–7). *Poisonous and bitter growth,* Hos 10.4; Am 5.7; 6.12. **19:** *Bless themselves,* rather than proclaim the imprecation, hoping to escape the sanctions of the covenant. *Moist and dry,* paired antonyms, probably a merism designating totality (see 28.3–6n.). **20:** *Passion,* God's zeal to defend the mutual exclusivity of the covenant relation (5.9; Ex 34.14). *Descend on them,* more literally, "crouch down upon them" (cf. Gen 4.7), an animate image. *Blot out,* the erasure of a tablet or scroll (Num 5.23), given a theological cast: Following Mesopotamian models, the divine decree of human fate is recorded in a heavenly book, with erasure symbolizing punishment (9.14; Gen 6.7; Ex 17.14; 32.32; 2 Kings 14.27; Ps 9.6). **22–28:** The negative instruction. As the wilderness wandering provided an instructional lesson for the nation (vv. 5–6), so will Israel, transformed into a devastation, provide an object lesson. Verses 24–28 provide a reversal of the Israelite child's inquiry about

afflicted it— 23 all its soil burned out by sulfur and salt, nothing planted, nothing sprouting, unable to support any vegetation, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD destroyed in his fierce anger— 24 they and indeed all the nations will wonder, "Why has the LORD done thus to this land? What caused this great display of anger?" 25 They will conclude, "It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. 26 They turned and served other gods, worshiping them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them; 27 so the anger of the LORD was kindled against that land, bringing on it every curse written in this book. 28 The LORD uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as is now the case." 29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to observe all the words of this law.

30 When all these things have happened to you, the blessings and the curses that I have set before you, if you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, 2 and return to the LORD your God, and you and your children obey him with all your heart and with all your soul, just as I am commanding you today, 3 then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world,[a] from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you back. 5 The LORD your God will bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.

6 Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live. 7 The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on the adversaries who took advantage of you. 8 Then you shall again obey the LORD, observing all his commandments

[a] Heb *of heaven*

God's redemptive acts (4.32–38; Ex 12.25–27; 13.8–10). **23:** *Sulfur and salt* were used in antiquity as defoliants by invading armies. *Sodom . . . Zeboiim,* proverbial wicked cities in the arid area around the Dead Sea (cf. Gen 19.24–25; Isa 1.9–10). **25:** *The covenant,* conflating the covenants of Horeb and Moab (29.1). **26:** *Gods . . . not allotted to them,* as at 32.8–9, each nation is allocated its own god, and the LORD is the God of Israel. As at 5.8–9, the existence of other deities is here conceded. Contrast 4.19, where it is rather only inanimate "stars . . . that God has allotted," which reinterprets the polytheistic image from the later perspective of monotheism. **28:** *As is now the case,* reference to the present implies that the chapter was composed subsequent to the Babylonian exile of 586 BCE. **29:** *Secret,* concealed acts that God will punish (vv. 18–19), or future events. More likely, the antithesis with *revealed* rejects religions of esoteric speculation that restrict access to truth to a learned few. This law (Heb "torah"), based upon a public revelation (ch 5) and Moses's instruction (chs 12–26), is accessible to all.

30.1–10: Reassurance of restoration. This section, with its emphasis on restoration, does not logically follow ch 29 and is most likely a later insertion that serves the religious needs of a community different from that of the book's original audience (see v. 5n.). The unit employs the Heb word *shub* seven times, in seven different ways to establish the close bond between human repentance and divine forgiveness: (v. 1) "If you *call* them to mind . . . (v. 2) and *return* . . . (v. 3) then the LORD will *restore your fortunes* . . . and gathering you *again* . . . (v. 8) Then you shall *again* obey . . . (v. 9) For the LORD will *again* take delight . . . (v. 10) because you *turn*." **1:** *Call them to mind,* lit., "take [them] to heart." **4:** Cf. Am 9.2–3. **5:** *Bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed,* the "you" explicitly refers to the Judean exiles in Babylon, rather than the desert generation whom Moses addresses on the plains of Transjordan. *More . . . numerous,* the covenantal promise (Gen 17.2; 22.17). For similar claims that the future will repeat the past while also surpassing it, see Isa 42.9; 43.6–20; 51.9–11. **6:** *The LORD . . . will circumcise your heart,* God is the agent; previously Israel itself was to "circumcise . . . the foreskin of your heart" (see 10.16n.). The change suggests skepticism about the people's ability to effect such a change of heart independently (see Jer 31.31–34; Ezek 11.19–20; 36.26–27). **7:** The curses remain in effect but are deflected from Israel

that I am commanding you today, [9] and the LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your soil. For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, just as he delighted in prospering your ancestors, [10] when you obey the LORD your God by observing his commandments and decrees that are written in this book of the law, because you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

[11] Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. [12] It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" [13] Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" [14] No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.

[15] See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. [16] If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God[a] that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. [17] But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, [18] I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. [19] I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, [20] loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

31 When Moses had finished speaking all[b] these words to all Israel, [2] he said to them: "I am now one hundred twenty years

[a] Gk: Heb lacks *If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God*

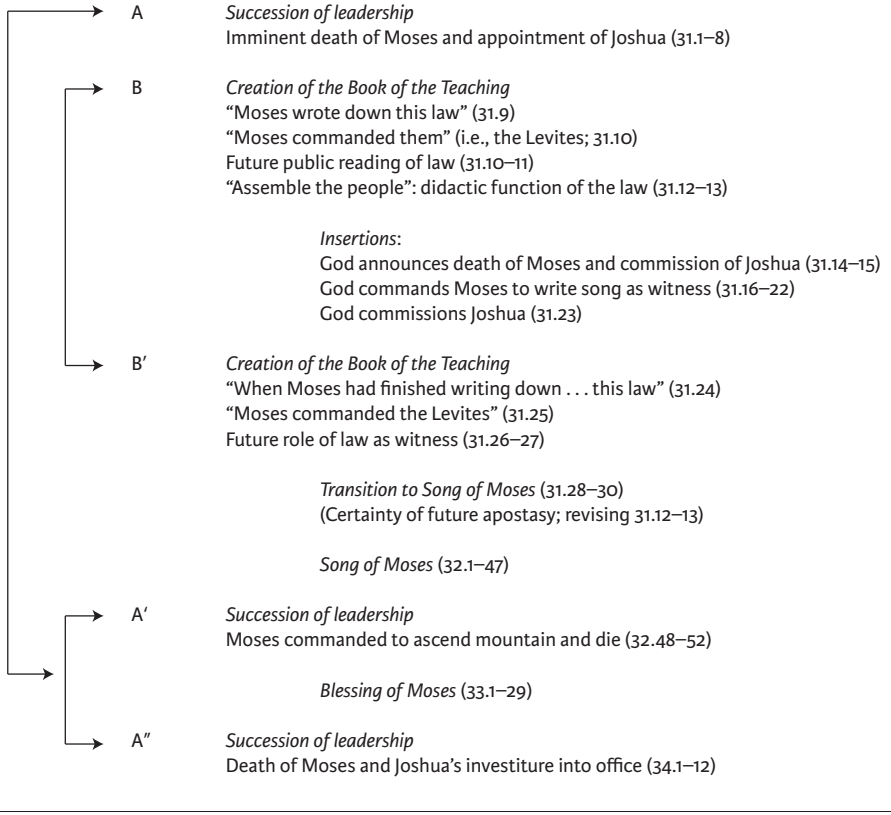
[b] Q Ms Gk: MT *Moses went and spoke*

to the adversary; contrast 28.47,49, where the foreign nation is God's agent to punish Israel. **9:** *Fruit,* blessings upon return conforming to those promised upon initial entry (28.4). **10:** *Obey the LORD . . . by observing . . . this book of the law,* or, more precisely, "this book of the teaching." The reference is to the text of Deuteronomy itself, which replaces the live speech of Moses (12.28,32) or prophetic speech (18.18–9) as revealer of God's word.

30.11–20: The original continuation of ch 29 is composed of two sections, vv. 11–14,15–20. **11–14:** Turning their own imagery against them, the passage challenges the assumptions of Near Eastern wisdom schools about the inaccessibility of divine wisdom and the limits of human knowledge (cf. Job 28). **11:** The accessibility of Moses's teaching. *Surely,* better, "because," logically continuing 29.29 and emphasizing the ready accessibility of the divinely given teaching. (The NRSV translation is an accommodation to the insertion of vv. 1–10.) *This commandment,* Deuteronomy as a whole (as at 6.1). **12:** See Prov 30.4. *That we may hear it,* lit., "so that he may proclaim it to us." **14:** *In your mouth,* in antiquity, texts were normally read, taught, and recited aloud (6.7; 31.19, 21; Josh 1.8). **15–20:** The necessity of choice. As the nation is about to enter the land, Moses presents Israel with a stark choice: its future well-being lies entirely in its own hands, depending upon whether each Israelite commits himself or herself to covenantal obedience. **16:** *Loving . . . walking in his ways,* in Near Eastern treaties, "love" means to act loyally and to honor the commitments of the treaty (6.5n.). **19:** *Heaven and earth to witness,* see 4.26n.; 32.1n. *Choose life,* the didactic use of life and death suggests the influence of wisdom teachings upon the authors (Prov 11.19; 14.27; 18.21; cf. Jer 8.3; 21.8).

31.1–34.14: The death of Moses and the formation of the Book of the Teaching. With the conclusion of the treaty between God and Israel in ch 30, Deuteronomy now returns to Moses, the mediator of the treaty. His life is ending, and the question of succession is given a two-fold answer, since Moses was both political and religious leader of Israel. Joshua will be his political and military successor (31.1–8,14–15,23; 32.44,48–52; 34.9), and "a book . . . of this law" (31.24) will instruct the nation in religion. Deuteronomy thus ends in paradox: Moses, ostensibly the book's narrator, narrates his own death (ch 34), and the Book of the Teaching, already presupposed (29.27), nevertheless provides an account of its own formation (31.9–13,24–29). The conclusion of Deuteronomy also ends the Pentateuch. As they set Deuteronomy as the conclusion of that larger work, later editors with the background

THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF DEUTERONOMY'S CONCLUSION (CHS 31–34)


A
Succession of leadership
Imminent death of Moses and appointment of Joshua (31.1–8)
B
Creation of the Book of the Teaching
"Moses wrote down this law" (31.9)
"Moses commanded them" (i.e., the Levites; 31.10)
Future public reading of law (31.10–11)
"Assemble the people": didactic function of the law (31.12–13)
Insertions:
God announces death of Moses and commission of Joshua (31.14–15)
God commands Moses to write song as witness (31.16–22)
God commissions Joshua (31.23)
B′
Creation of the Book of the Teaching
"When Moses had finished writing down . . . this law" (31.24)
"Moses commanded the Levites" (31.25)
Future role of law as witness (31.26–27)
Transition to Song of Moses (31.28–30)
(Certainty of future apostasy; revising 31.12–13)
Song of Moses (32.1–47)
A′
Succession of leadership
Moses commanded to ascend mountain and die (32.48–52)
Blessing of Moses (33.1–29)
A″
Succession of leadership
Death of Moses and Joshua's investiture into office (34.1–12)

of the Exile added perspectives on the function of the entire Torah in the people's life. Finally, the Pentateuch's literary precedent of a patriarch's deathbed bequest and blessing (Gen 27; 48–49) led to the incorporation of "The Song of Moses" (32.1–43) and of "The Blessing of Moses" (ch 33), each of which likely circulated independently. The resulting text thus blends several viewpoints. Themes like the appointment of Joshua begin, then begin again from a different perspective, and then are continued only after a digression, which marks the insertion of new material.

31.1–29: Moses makes arrangements for his death. Publicly announcing his imminent death, Moses invests Joshua with leadership and initiates the writing of the Book of the Teaching, which is to be taught regularly to the entire people. These two legacies seem independent of each other and suggest that an earlier narrative about leadership has been expanded with an account of the formation of Deuteronomy. Each tradition, furthermore, is doubled; the chapter thus contains many layers of tradition. First is a double announcement of Moses's imminent death: v. 2 (at his own initiative, citing previous divine commandment, in which he appoints Joshua directly) and vv. 14–15 (with no reference to a previous announcement, and with divine appointment of Joshua). Second is a double tradition of transfer of leadership: Although Moses begins a public ceremony in order himself to appoint the new leader (vv. 7–8), a variant tradition has God commission Joshua directly (vv. 14–15,23). Third is a double tradition of Moses's writing: one of "the book . . . of this law" (v. 24) and one of "this song" (v. 19). These traditions are harmonized, somewhat, as each is to serve as a "witness" (vv. 21,26). The first, which refers to Deuteronomy, was supplemented by the second in order to integrate the following "Song of Moses" (32.1–43). Fourth, in the "Song" tradition, Israel's future apostasy is already a foregone conclusion (vv. 16–22,28–29); in the covenant-making tradition, there is yet hope that, by taking the law to heart, Israel might avoid catastrophe (vv. 9–13,24–27). **2:** *One hundred twenty years old,* the Hebrew places the age first, thereby

old. I am no longer able to get about, and the LORD has told me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.' [3] The LORD your God himself will cross over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua also will cross over before you, as the LORD promised. [4] The LORD will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when he destroyed them. [5] The LORD will give them over to you and you shall deal with them in full accord with the command that I have given to you. [6] Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the LORD your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you."

[7] Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel: "Be strong and bold, for you are the one who will go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their ancestors to give them; and you will put them in possession of it. [8] It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

[9] Then Moses wrote down this law, and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. [10] Moses commanded them: "Every seventh year, in the scheduled year of remission, during the festival of booths,[a] [11] when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. [12] Assemble the people—men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns—so that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God and to observe diligently all the words of this law, [13] and so that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess."

[14] The LORD said to Moses, "Your time to die is near; call Joshua and present yourselves in the tent of meeting, so that I may commission him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tent of meeting, [15] and the LORD appeared at the tent in a pillar of cloud; the pillar of cloud stood at the entrance to the tent.

[16] The LORD said to Moses, "Soon you will lie down with your ancestors. Then this people will begin to prostitute themselves to the foreign gods in their midst, the gods of the land into which they are going; they will forsake me, breaking my covenant that I have made with them. [17] My anger will be kindled against them in that day. I will forsake them and hide my face from them; they will become easy prey, and many terrible troubles will come upon them. In that day they will say, 'Have not these troubles come upon us because our God is not in our midst?' [18] On that day I will surely hide my face on account of all the evil they have done by turning to other gods. [19] Now therefore write this song,

[a] Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*

forefronting the key issue: Moses has reached the maximum age for humans (Gen 6.3), making it urgent to assure continuity of leadership. *I am no longer able to get about,* lit., "to go out and come in," i.e., lead the nation in military campaigns (28.6; Num 27.17; 1 Kings 3.7; cf. 2 Sam 11.1). **2–3:** Refers back to 1.37–38; 3.27–28. The death of a major leader and the transfer of his authority mark important turning points within the larger context of the Deuteronomistic History and partially follow a common model (cf. Josh 23.2; 1 Sam 12.2; 1 Kings 2.1–2). **4:** The successful military campaigns in Transjordan provide assurance in the conquest of Canaan (1.27–28; Num 13–14). **5:** *Command,* the ban (7.1–7; 12.29–31; 20.16–18). **9–13:** The institution of a covenant ceremony to be held in the sabbatical year (15.1–11), during the *festival of booths* (16.13–15). **12:** The teaching (NRSV "law"; Heb "torah") is taught to women, minors, and aliens, rather than just to males (cf. Neh. 8.2; contrast Ex 19.15). **14:** *Tent of meeting,* in the non-Priestly tradition, the site outside camp where God speaks to Moses, with Joshua in attendance (Ex 33.7–11); contrast the Priestly literature's tabernacle, located in the center of the Israelite encampment, which houses the ark of the covenant and the altar (Ex 26–27; Num 7.1–3; 18.1–7). *So that I may commission him,* the standard tradition involves direct commission by Moses at God's command (3.27–28; 34.9; Num 27.18–23). **15:** The double reference to the *pillar of cloud,* located both *at* [or, "in"] *the tent* (cf. Ex 30.36; 40.34–35; Lev 16.2) and *at the entrance to the tent* (cf. Ex 33.9–10; Num 12.5) blends the traditions associated with each of the two tents (see v. 14n.). **17–18:** *Our God,* better, "our gods," suggesting that the people will have

and teach it to the Israelites; put it in their mouths, in order that this song may be a witness for me against the Israelites. 20 For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I promised on oath to their ancestors, and they have eaten their fill and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, despising me and breaking my covenant. 21 And when many terrible troubles come upon them, this song will confront them as a witness, because it will not be lost from the mouths of their descendants. For I know what they are inclined to do even now, before I have brought them into the land that I promised them on oath." 22 That very day Moses wrote this song and taught it to the Israelites.

23 Then the LORD commissioned Joshua son of Nun and said, "Be strong and bold, for you shall bring the Israelites into the land that I promised them; I will be with you."

24 When Moses had finished writing down in a book the words of this law to the very end, 25 Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26 "Take this book of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God; let it remain there as a witness against you. 27 For I know well how rebellious and stubborn you are. If you already have been so rebellious toward the LORD while I am still alive among you, how much more after my death! 28 Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officials, so that I may recite these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. 29 For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly, turning aside from the way that I have commanded you. In time to come trouble will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands."

30 Then Moses recited the words of this song, to the very end, in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel:

32 Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
let the earth hear the words of my mouth.
2 May my teaching drop like the rain,
my speech condense like the dew;
like gentle rain on grass,
like showers on new growth.
3 For I will proclaim the name of the LORD;
ascribe greatness to our God!

4 The Rock, his work is perfect,
and all his ways are just.
A faithful God, without deceit,
just and upright is he;
5 yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him,[a]
a perverse and crooked generation.
6 Do you thus repay the LORD,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

strayed so far from the covenant that they attribute the resulting divine punishment to other gods, leading to God's angry response. **22–23:** The sequence of *Moses wrote* (v. 22) and . . . *commissioned* (v. 23) uses the same terms as "When Moses finished writing . . . Moses commanded" (vv. 24–25). The repetition of the paired terms provided a means for editors to insert the section on the song (vv. 16–22). **23:** *The LORD commissioned,* lit., "he commanded," with no subject identified. NRSV has added the reference to the LORD, since the verse does not continue v. 22, but directly resumes vv. 14–15.

31.30–32.43: The Song of Moses. The Song is a late insertion that reflects upon Israel's history, probably presupposing the Exile. In form it is a revised and expanded prophetic lawsuit (cf. Isa 1; Jer 2; Mic 6; Ps 50) with this structure: introduction and summoning of witnesses (vv. 1–3); accusation (vv. 4–6); recital of God's loving actions (vv. 7–14); indictment (vv. 15–18); declaration of punishment (vv. 19–25). Yet God interrupts his own judicial sentence to recognize a risk to his honor: Other nations might conclude that Israel's God was weak should they see Israel destroyed (vv. 26–27). God therefore reverses himself, cancels the punishment, and decides instead to punish Israel's enemies so as to vindicate Israel (vv. 28–42). The Song concludes with a call for the divine council to praise God for his actions; the call may originate from within the divine council itself (v. 43; similarly Ps 29.1). A prose frame links the Song to Deuteronomy, identifying Moses, otherwise unmentioned, as its speaker (31.30; 32.44). **32.2:** *Teaching,* the original prophetic lawsuit has been combined with wisdom themes (Prov 1.5; 4.2; 17.21). **4:** *Rock,* better, "Mountain," a title applied to the high god of ancient Canaan (see v. 8n.) and to the biblical God (vv. 15,18,30–31,37; Isa 44.8; Ps 78.35). **6:** *Created you,* when God redeemed Israel from Egypt

O foolish and senseless people?
Is not he your father, who created you,
who made you and established you?
7 Remember the days of old,
consider the years long past;
ask your father, and he will inform you;
your elders, and they will tell you.
8 When the Most High[a] apportioned the nations,
when he divided humankind,
he fixed the boundaries of the peoples
according to the number of the gods;[b]
9 the LORD's own portion was his people,
Jacob his allotted share.

10 He sustained[c] him in a desert land,
in a howling wilderness waste;
he shielded him, cared for him,
guarded him as the apple of his eye.
11 As an eagle stirs up its nest,
and hovers over its young;
as it spreads its wings, takes them up,
and bears them aloft on its pinions,
12 the LORD alone guided him;
no foreign god was with him.
13 He set him atop the heights of the land,
and fed him with[d] produce of the field;
he nursed him with honey from the crags,
with oil from flinty rock;
14 curds from the herd, and milk from the flock,
with fat of lambs and rams;
Bashan bulls and goats,
together with the choicest wheat—
you drank fine wine from the blood of grapes.
15 Jacob ate his fill;[e]
Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked.
You grew fat, bloated, and gorged!
He abandoned God who made him,
and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.
16 They made him jealous with strange gods,
with abhorrent things they provoked him.
17 They sacrificed to demons, not God,
to deities they had never known,
to new ones recently arrived,
whom your ancestors had not feared.
18 You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you;[f]
you forgot the God who gave you birth.

19 The LORD saw it, and was jealous;[g]
he spurned[h] his sons and daughters.
20 He said: I will hide my face from them,
I will see what their end will be;
for they are a perverse generation,
children in whom there is no faithfulness.
21 They made me jealous with what is no god,
provoked me with their idols.

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Elyon*
[b] Q Ms Compare Gk Tg: MT *the Israelites*
[c] Sam Gk Compare Tg: MT *found*
[d] Sam Gk Syr Tg: MT *he ate*
[e] Q Mss Sam Gk: MT lacks *Jacob ate his fill*
[f] Or *that begot you*
[g] Q Mss Gk: MT lacks *was jealous*
[h] Cn: Heb *he spurned because of provocation*

(Ex 15.16, correcting NRSV "acquired"). **8:** *Most High,* or *Elyon* (text note *b*), is a title of El, the senior god who sat at the head of the divine council in the Ugaritic literature of ancient Canaan. The Bible applies El's title to Israel's God (Gen 14.18–22; Num 24.16; Pss 46.4; 47.2; esp. 78.35, where it is parallel to Rock). *Gods,* the lesser gods who make up the divine council (Pss 82.1; 89.6–7), to each of whom Elyon here assigns a foreign nation. **9:** *The LORD's own portion,* NRSV has added *own* in order to identify Yahweh with Elyon and avoid the impression that Yahweh is merely a member of the pantheon; see also 4.19n. **10:** *Sustained,* more likely "found" (Hos 9.10). The Song here traces the beginnings of Israel to the wilderness period, romanticizing its ideal purity (similarly Hos 2.14–15; Jer 2.2–3; contrast Deut 9.6–7,22–27; Ezek 20). *Apple of his eye,* i.e., the aperture or pupil of the eye. **11:** Israel as God's fledgling; see Ex 19.4. **13:** *Heights,* see Ex 15.17. **14:** *Curds,* symbolic of extravagant hospitality offered to special guests (Gen 18.8; Judg 5.25). *Bashan,* in northern Transjordan, was famous for its cattle. **15:** *Jeshurun,* probably meaning "upright," is a poetic term for Israel (33.5,26; Isa 44.2). **17:** *Demons,* better, "protective spirits" (also Ps 106.37). *Not God,* the language is sarcastic: "a non-god" (see v. 21). **18:** God is depicted as a woman; *gave you birth* refers specifically to labor pain (Isa 51.2; cf. Isa 42.14). **21:** *Jealous* refers to the covenant's demand for exclusive loyalty to God (5.8; 6.15; Num 25.11). Accordingly, the punishment for breach of the covenant metes out precise retributive justice (see 19.19n.). The Hebrew emphasizes the sarcasm: thus, *with what is no god* and

So I will make them jealous with what is no people,
provoke them with a foolish nation.
22 For a fire is kindled by my anger,
and burns to the depths of Sheol;
it devours the earth and its increase,
and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.
23 I will heap disasters upon them,
spend my arrows against them:
24 wasting hunger,
burning consumption,
bitter pestilence.
The teeth of beasts I will send against them,
with venom of things crawling in the dust.
25 In the street the sword shall bereave,
and in the chambers terror,
for young man and woman alike,
nursing child and old gray head.
26 I thought to scatter them[a]
and blot out the memory of them from humankind;
27 but I feared provocation by the enemy,
for their adversaries might misunderstand
and say, "Our hand is triumphant;
it was not the LORD who did all this."

28 They are a nation void of sense;
there is no understanding in them.
29 If they were wise, they would understand this;
they would discern what the end would be.
30 How could one have routed a thousand,
and two put a myriad to flight,
unless their Rock had sold them,
the LORD had given them up?
31 Indeed their rock is not like our Rock;
our enemies are fools.[a]
32 Their vine comes from the vinestock of Sodom,
from the vineyards of Gomorrah;
their grapes are grapes of poison,
their clusters are bitter;
33 their wine is the poison of serpents,
the cruel venom of asps.

34 Is not this laid up in store with me,
sealed up in my treasuries?
35 Vengeance is mine, and recompense,
for the time when their foot shall slip;
because the day of their calamity is at hand,
their doom comes swiftly.

36 Indeed the LORD will vindicate his people,
have compassion on his servants,
when he sees that their power is gone,
neither bond nor free remaining.
37 Then he will say: Where are their gods,
the rock in which they took refuge,
38 who ate the fat of their sacrifices,

[a] Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

what is no people, lit., "with a non-god," "with a non-people." *Their idols,* lit., "their vapors" or "their vanities," even "their vapidities" (Jer 8.19; 10.15; 16.19; Eccl 1.2). **22:** *Sheol,* the underworld (Gen 37.35; 1 Sam 2.6; Ps 139.8); the abode of all the dead, not a place of damnation like the later idea of hell. **23:** *Arrows,* divine punishments (v. 42; Ezek 5.16; Pss 7.13; 18.14; 38.2). **24:** *Burning consumption,* the name of the Ugaritic god of pestilence; thus better, "devoured by Plague." **25:** *Woman,* better, "young woman," to emphasize the double merism (28.3–6n.), which symbolizes the totality of the slaughter. **26–27:** The Song here pivots from judgment of Israel to her vindication at the expense of the foreign invaders. **27:** *I feared,* God has feelings and vulnerabilities (as at Gen 6.6). **28–33:** God's soliloquy is interrupted by another voice, who refers to God in the third person and speaks on behalf of Israel (vv. 30–31). **28–29:** The foreign nation, like Israel, has failed in wisdom, justifying God's judgment (see v. 6). **30:** Ironically inverts the holy war idea (3.22; 20.1): The enemy is reproached for failing to understand that it owes its triumph over Israel to God rather than force of arms. God will thus punish Israel's conquerors to preserve his own honor (see 9.25–29; Num 14.13–16). **32:** *Sodom . . . Gomorrah,* here symbolizing moral corruption more than ruinous devastation (cf. 29.23n.). **34:** *This,* the punishment of the foreign nation, which is about to be announced (vv. 35–42). *Laid up . . . sealed up,* the formal legal procedures for rolling and then sealing a witnessed deed or contract with wax, so that the unaltered document can subsequently be introduced into court as evidence (Isa 8.16; Jer 32.9–15). **35:** *Vengeance,* better, "vindication," since the idea is not revenge but justice. **36:** *Their power is gone, neither bond nor free,* God will act when no one survives who can take charge or provide

and drank the wine of their libations?
Let them rise up and help you,
let them be your protection!

39 See now that I, even I, am he;
there is no god besides me.
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
and no one can deliver from my hand.
40 For I lift up my hand to heaven,
and swear: As I live forever,
41 when I whet my flashing sword,
and my hand takes hold on judgment;
I will take vengeance on my adversaries,
and will repay those who hate me.
42 I will make my arrows drunk with blood,
and my sword shall devour flesh—
with the blood of the slain and the captives,
from the long-haired enemy.

43 Praise, O heavens,[a] his people,
worship him, all you gods![b]
For he will avenge the blood of his children,[c]
and take vengeance on his adversaries;
he will repay those who hate him,[b]
and cleanse the land for his people.[d]

44 Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua[e] son of Nun. 45 When Moses had finished reciting all these words to all Israel, 46 he said to them: "Take to heart all the words that I am giving in witness against you today; give them as a command to your children, so that they may diligently observe all the words of this law. 47 This is no trifling matter for you, but rather your very life; through it you may live long in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess."

48 On that very day the LORD addressed Moses as follows: 49 "Ascend this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites for a possession; 50 you shall die there on the mountain that you ascend

[a] Q Ms Gk: MT *nations*
[b] Q Ms Gk: MT lacks this line
[c] Q Ms Gk: MT *his servants*
[d] Q Ms Sam Gk Vg: MT *his land his people*
[e] Sam Gk Syr Vg: MT *Hoshea*

assistance (2 Kings 14.26; cf. 1 Kings 14.10; 21.21; 2 Kings 9.8). **39:** Similar to exilic Second Isaiah (Isa 41.4; 43.10,13; 44.6; 45.6–7,22; 48.12). **41:** *Takes,* lit., "returns," in retributive justice. Thus, *vengeance* gives the wrong idea (see v. 35n.). *Those who hate me,* treaty language that refers to disloyal action that violates the covenant; thus better translated, "those who reject me" (5.9). **43:** The second, fourth, and fifth lines have been reconstructed by NRSV in light of a Dead Sea Scrolls manuscript (4QDeutq) and the LXX, both of which seem to reflect an earlier version of the text than the one preserved by the Heb text (MT). With *heavens* and *land,* the verse forms an inclusio to "heavens . . . earth" (v. 1), thus framing the poem and returning the focus to Israel's impending entry into the promised land. *Praise . . . his people,* better "O heavens, rejoice with him!" *All you gods,* the divine council (v. 8n.; Ps 29.1), probably removed from the MT because of the conflict with monotheism (see vv. 8–9n.). *Avenge the blood,* God as divine blood avenger (cf. 19.6), who removes the stain of Israel's blood from the land by requiting the aggressor for having spilled it (19.11–13). *Cleanse,* since the moral stain on the land can only be "wiped clean" (the word's literal meaning) with the blood of the murderer (Num 35.33–34; cf. Deut 21.8): here, the foreign nation. God's position is nonetheless morally ambiguous, since it was he who had sanctioned the foreign invasion as punishment for Israel's wrongdoing (vv. 19–26).

32.44–47: Double conclusion to the Song. Two originally separate conclusions joined by Deuteronomy's editors. **44:** *All the words . . . ,* an inclusio (see 31.30). **45–47:** A separate section, the original continuation of 31.29 prior to the insertion of the Song. **46:** *All the words,* the laws of Deuteronomy (31.24); now, following the insertion of the Song, referring to both.

32.48–52: Moses commanded to die. This section contains a second version of the Priestly announcement of Moses's death (Num 27.12–14). The original Priestly announcement was interrupted by Deuteronomy's insertion into the Pentateuch. The restatement of that announcement here thus reminds the reader where the account left off in Numbers, at which point the narrative continues with the account of Moses's death (Deut 34). **49:** *This mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo,* as in the Priestly narrative (Num 27.12; 33.47); but, according to the Deuteronomistic tradition, Pisgah (3.27). The two traditions are joined at 34.1. **50:** *You shall die,* a command, "Die . . . !" This unusual imperative establishes that Moses both lives and dies at God's command (34.5n.). *Gathered*

and shall be gathered to your kin, as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his kin; 51 because both of you broke faith with me among the Israelites at the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, by failing to maintain my holiness among the Israelites. 52 Although you may view the land from a distance, you shall not enter it—the land that I am giving to the Israelites."

33 This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the Israelites before his death. 2 He said:

The LORD came from Sinai,
  and dawned from Seir upon us;[a]
  he shone forth from Mount Paran.
With him were myriads of holy ones;[b]
  at his right, a host of his own.[c]
3 Indeed, O favorite among[d] peoples,
  all his holy ones were in your charge;
they marched at your heels,
  accepted direction from you.
4 Moses charged us with the law,
  as a possession for the assembly of
    Jacob.
5 There arose a king in Jeshurun,
  when the leaders of the people
    assembled—
  the united tribes of Israel.

[a] Gk Syr Vg Compare Tg: Heb *upon them*
[b] Cn Compare Gk Sam Syr Vg: MT *He came from Ribeboth-kodesh,*
[c] Cn Compare Gk: meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Or *O lover of the*

to your kin, buried in a family tomb, where the bones of the generations would be gathered together (2 Kings 8.24; 22.20; cf. 1 Kings 13.31); here used metaphorically, since Moses's burial place is unknown (34.6). *Mount Hor,* consistent with the Priestly tradition (Num 20.22–29; 33.37–39); but, in the Deuteronomistic tradition, "Moserah" (10.6). **51:** *You broke faith,* see Num 20.1–13; cf. 1.37n.; 4.21.

33.1–29: The Blessing of Moses. In form a father's blessing of his progeny when death is imminent (Gen 27.27–29; 48.15–16; 49.1–28; cf. 1 Kings 2.1–4), Moses's address to the tribes arrayed before him (29.2,10; 31.7,30) treats all Israel as his own progeny, gathered before the deathbed (Gen 48.2; 49.33). Following the model of other blessings, the speaker addresses the tribes in the singular, as if they were individual sons (contrast v. 19). (Of the 12 sons of Jacob, only Simeon, his second born, is entirely missing.) This poem is an insertion, intruding between God's command to Moses to ascend Nebo to prepare for his death (32.49–50) and Moses's compliance (34.1–5). The literary model of the patriarchal blessing of the twelve tribes (vv. 6–25) has been consciously embedded in a framing poem addressed to a united Israel (vv. 1–5,26–29) that imitates victory hymns to the divine warrior (Judg 5; Ps 18.7–15; Hab 3; cf. Ex 15). That older model has been significantly transformed, however. In vv. 1–4, the expected climax of the divine theophany in the military defeat of the enemy has been totally eclipsed (cf. vv. 26–29), although it is the logical precondition for the proclamation of God as king (v. 5). The new climax is instead Moses's proclamation of Torah (v. 4n.). The reference here to Sinai instead of Deuteronomy's usual Horeb (see 1.2n.) is an attempt to integrate Deuteronomy with the other literary sources of the Pentateuch (Ex 19–20; Lev 25.1; Num 10.12). The editors have used an inclusio pattern to embed the blessing (with its focus upon the individual tribes) into the framing hymn to the divine warrior (where united Israel is the focus). Thus the word symmetry LORD:Jacob:Jeshurun::Jeshurun´:Jacob´:LORD´ (A:B:C::C´:B´:A´; vv. 2,4,5,26,28,29) brackets the inserted blessing. Older hymns to the divine warrior sometimes list the tribes' contributions to the battle (Judg 5.14–18), which facilitates the combination of the two models. Although it draws upon older textual traditions, the poem in its present form is almost certainly exilic or postexilic. The combination of two separate literary models and the emphasis on divinely revealed Torah rather than the divine warrior's manifestation in battle suggest the later literary setting. **1:** *Man of God,* a type of prophet (Josh 14.6; 1 Sam 9.6; 1 Kings 13.1–32; 17.18,24; 2 Kings 4.7–41); this term is not used elsewhere of Moses in Deuteronomy. **2:** *The LORD . . . dawned,* God's departure from his distant mountain stronghold, dramatically coming to the rescue of his people, closely follows the model of Judg 5.4; Hab 3.3. *Myriads of holy ones,* the divine council who accompany God into battle (32.8n.; Pss 68.17; 89.7). *Sinai . . . Seir,* the parallelism locates *Sinai* near *Seir,* associated with Edom (Judg 5.4), in southern Transjordan. **3:** *His holy ones,* originally, the divine council of v. 2, reinterpreted to refer to Israel (7.6; 14.2,21; 26.19; 28.9; Lev 19.2; Num 16.3) to provide a transition to v. 4. **4:** *Moses charged us,* since Moses is himself the speaker (v. 1), this verse is an insertion that presents the promulgation of the Torah (NRSV "law") as the climax of the divine warrior's theophany. **5:** *A king,* almost certainly God as divine king of Israel (Ex 15.18; Num 23.21; Judg 8.22–23; 1 Sam 8.7; Isa 33.22; Ps

6 May Reuben live, and not die out,
even though his numbers are few.

7 And this he said of Judah:
O LORD, give heed to Judah,
and bring him to his people;
strengthen his hands for him,[a]
and be a help against his adversaries.

8 And of Levi he said:
Give to Levi[b] your Thummim,
and your Urim to your loyal one,
whom you tested at Massah,
with whom you contended at the waters of Meribah;
9 who said of his father and mother,
"I regard them not";
he ignored his kin,
and did not acknowledge his children.
For they observed your word,
and kept your covenant.
10 They teach Jacob your ordinances,
and Israel your law;
they place incense before you,
and whole burnt offerings on your altar.
11 Bless, O LORD, his substance,
and accept the work of his hands;
crush the loins of his adversaries,
of those that hate him, so that they do not rise again.

12 Of Benjamin he said:
The beloved of the LORD rests in safety—
the High God[c] surrounds him all day long—
the beloved[d] rests between his shoulders.

13 And of Joseph he said:
Blessed by the LORD be his land,
with the choice gifts of heaven above,
and of the deep that lies beneath;
14 with the choice fruits of the sun,
and the rich yield of the months;
15 with the finest produce of the ancient mountains,
and the abundance of the everlasting hills;
16 with the choice gifts of the earth and its fullness,
and the favor of the one who dwells on Sinai.[e]
Let these come on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of the prince among his brothers.
17 A firstborn[f] bull—majesty is his!
His horns are the horns of a wild ox;
with them he gores the peoples,
driving them to[g] the ends of the earth;
such are the myriads of Ephraim,
such the thousands of Manasseh.

18 And of Zebulun he said:
Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out;
and Issachar, in your tents.
19 They call peoples to the mountain;
there they offer the right sacrifices;
for they suck the affluence of the seas
and the hidden treasures of the sand.

20 And of Gad he said:
Blessed be the enlargement of Gad!

a Cn: Heb *with his hands he contended*
b Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *Give to Levi*
c Heb *above him*
d Heb *he*
e Cn: Heb *in the bush*
f Q Ms Gk Syr Vg: MT *His firstborn*
g Cn: Heb *the peoples, together*

29.10). *Jeshurun,* see 32.15n. **6:** *Reuben,* who once had the leadership of the firstborn (see Gen 49.3–4), is apparently threatened with extinction. **7:** *Judah,* in sore trouble because of an unnamed adversary, should be helped by other tribes. **8–11:** *Levi*, once a warlike tribe (Gen 49.5–7), is to receive the prerogatives of the priesthood: to teach *law,* or Torah (v. 10), and to officiate at the altar. **8:** *Thummim* and *Urim,* the priestly divination devices (see Ex 28.30n.; Ezra 2.63). *Massah* and *Meribah,* see Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13. **9:** On Levi's zealous loyalty to the covenant, at the expense of *father and mother . . . kin, and . . . his children,* thus complying with 13.7, see Ex 32.25–29. **13–17:** See Gen 49.25–26. **16–17:** By ascribing primacy of rule and the status of *firstborn* to Joseph, this blessing conflicts with the law affirming the norm of primogeniture (21.15–17). **16:** *Who dwells on Sinai* refers to Ex 3.1–6 (see text note *e*). *Prince,* Joseph (the Northern Kingdom, destroyed in 722 BCE) enjoyed greater prestige than Judah (v. 7). **17:** *Ephraim* and *Manasseh,* the two tribes making up "the house of Joseph" (Gen 48.13–14). **18–19:** *Zebulun* and *Issachar* will enjoy great influence owing to the resources of the Mediterranean and Lake Chinnereth, later known as the Sea of Galilee (Gen 49.13). **20–21:** *Gad* occupied the *best* tableland in Transjordan but aided the other tribes

Gad lives like a lion;
he tears at arm and scalp.
21 He chose the best for himself,
for there a commander's allotment was reserved;
he came at the head of the people,
he executed the justice of the LORD,
and his ordinances for Israel.

22 And of Dan he said:
Dan is a lion's whelp
that leaps forth from Bashan.

23 And of Naphtali he said:
O Naphtali, sated with favor,
full of the blessing of the LORD,
possess the west and the south.

24 And of Asher he said:
Most blessed of sons be Asher;
may he be the favorite of his brothers,
and may he dip his foot in oil.
25 Your bars are iron and bronze;
and as your days, so is your strength.

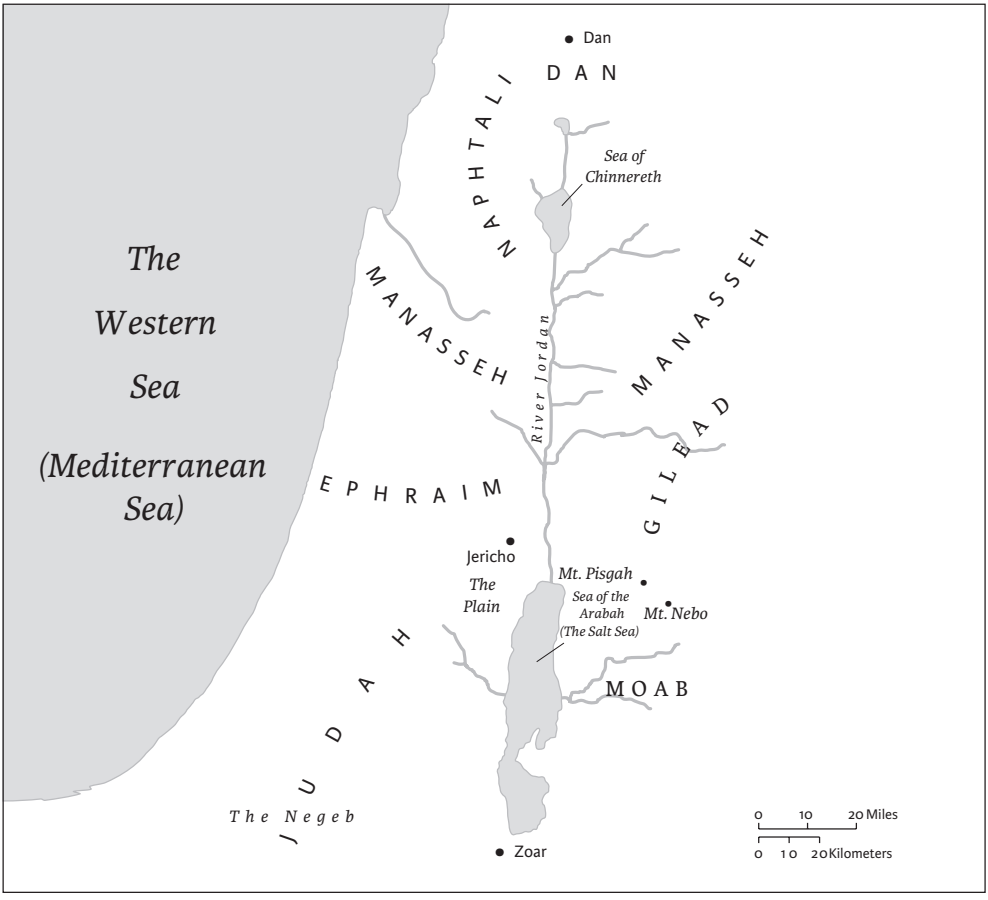
26 There is none like God, O Jeshurun,
who rides through the heavens to your help,
majestic through the skies.
27 He subdues the ancient gods,[a]
shatters[b] the forces of old;[c]
he drove out the enemy before you,
and said, "Destroy!"
28 So Israel lives in safety,
untroubled is Jacob's abode[d]
in a land of grain and wine,
where the heavens drop down dew.
29 Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you,
a people saved by the LORD,
the shield of your help,
and the sword of your triumph!
Your enemies shall come fawning to you,
and you shall tread on their backs.

34 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, 2 all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, 3 the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. 4 The LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over

[a] Or *The eternal God is a dwelling place*
[b] Cn: Heb *from underneath*
[c] Or *the everlasting arms*
[d] Or *fountain*

in the occupation of Canaan (Num 32). **22:** *Dan,* vigorous as a *lion's whelp,* must here already have migrated from its original tribal allotment on the southern coastal plain to the far north at the base of Mount Hermon (Judg 18). *Bashan,* see 32.14n. **23:** *Naphtali,* located in the region of the Sea of Galilee *west* and *south* of Dan. **24–25:** *Asher,* located below Phoenicia, is to be strong and prosperous. **26–29:** The resumption of the hymn to the divine warrior (vv. 2–5), and a return to the focus upon *Jeshurun* (v. 26), meaning all *Israel* (v. 28). **26:** Much like the Canaanite storm god Baal, Israel's divine warrior rides upon the clouds (Pss 18.10–12; 68.4,33; Isa 19.1). **27:** NRSV justifiably reinterprets the Hebrew (see text notes *a, b*) in order to continue the mythic imagery of v. 26. **28:** As in Ugaritic myth, the theophany of the divine warrior and his proclamation as king results in the fertility of the land. **29:** *Tread on their backs,* a standard symbol of military triumph (Josh 10.24; Ps 110.1).

34.1–12: The death of Moses. This chapter directly continues the narrative concerning the death of Moses and the transfer of leadership to Joshua, his successor (ch 31 and 32.48–52). At another level, however, it also continues Num 27, where God had commanded Moses to "go up this mountain" to survey the promised land before his death, and to "lay your hand" upon Joshua, to transfer the mantle of authority to him (vv. 12,18), bracketing Deuteronomy and suggesting that editors interrupted an earlier form of the narrative in order to include Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch. **1:** *Went up,* responding to the command of 32.49; Num 27.12. The verse joins two different traditions about the site of Moses's death: *Mount Nebo,* in Transjordan, east of Jericho; and *Mount Pisgah,* which is slightly to its northwest, and unmentioned in 32.49. To preserve both traditions, the editor presents them as if they were the same. **2–3:** The lofty vantage point allows Moses to look northward to the Sea of Galilee (area of the tribal allotment of Dan and *Naphtali*), to the *Western Sea* (the Mediterranean), south to the *Negeb* desert and along the Jordan rift valley as far south as *Zoar* (once located at the southern end



What Moses saw from Mt. Nebo.

there." [5] Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the LORD's command. [6] He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. [7] Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. [8] The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

[9] Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the LORD had commanded Moses.

of the Dead Sea as one of the "cities of the Plain"; Gen 14.2,8; 19.29). **5:** *At the LORD's command,* see 32.50n. The unusual formulation greatly honors Moses, who, despite advanced age, does not die of old age nor succumb to physical or intellectual infirmity. **6:** *He was buried,* lit., "He buried him," a clear indication that God buried Moses, as God sealed Noah into the ark (Gen 7.16). Instead of Moses's progeny assuming the responsibility of caring for the dead, God undertook it personally. *Beth-peor,* 3.29; 4.46; Josh 13.20. *No one knows his burial place,* thus precluding pilgrimages to the site as a shrine. **7:** *One hundred twenty,* see 31.2n. **8:** *Thirty days,* so also for Aaron (Num 20.29). **9:** *Full of the spirit of wisdom,* as at 1.13 and 16.18–20, Deuteronomy revises earlier traditions to stress wisdom as the essential qualification of office, and thus what Joshua receives from Moses. Num 27.18 depicts Joshua as already possessing an undefined "spirit" (often associated with prophecy or possession), while Moses was to transfer his "authority" to him. *Laid his hands on him,* as at Num 27.22–23, a means of trans-

10 Never since has there arisen a prophet
in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew
face to face. 11 He was unequaled for all the
signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to
perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh
and all his servants and his entire land, 12 and
for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying
displays of power that Moses performed in
the sight of all Israel.

fer of attributes (Lev 16.21; Num 8.10–13), here used for investiture into office. **10–12:** Moses as the greatest exemplar of prophecy both in direct access to divine revelation and in power to work miracles. The double elevation, which differs from his more human representation elsewhere in the book, suggests an editor's later, idealizing retrospective, with Deuteronomy now worked into the Pentateuch as a whole. **10:** *Never since,* more correctly, "But there never again arose in Israel a prophet like Moses." NRSV obscures the tension between the perspective of this verse and the divine promise to Moses that the line of prophetic succession will continue in the future: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you" (18.18). *Face to face,* rather than through dreams or visions (13.1); similarly, Ex 33.11; Num 12.8–10. Other traditions reject the concept that Moses had such direct access to God (Ex 33.20–23).

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Christian bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, in the fourth century CE, first used the term "histories" for this section of the Bible, which comprises the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. It is a misleading title, since these books include many genres and often are not historical in modern senses of the word; they recount *a* past, but do not necessarily recount *the* past accurately. Furthermore, the Bible contains several books that are similar to some of these "historical books," yet they are found in different sections of the Bible.

Large sections of the preceding books of Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers, and much of the opening section of Deuteronomy, contain narratives that recount a past. Similarly, several psalms survey past "events" (e.g., Pss 78, 105, 106, 107). Yet, this material is not incorporated into the Historical Books. Thus, this section does not represent the collection of all works of the same genre, and its emergence as a canonical division is best understood in relation to the broader development of the Christian biblical canon. In the traditional Jewish arrangement of the books of the Bible, the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are called the Former Prophets, thus beginning the second major division of the Hebrew Bible, the Prophets, which follows the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. (This designation suggests that these books should be viewed as prophecy, and not as history.) The books of Ruth, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, however, are found in the third, final, major division, the Writings.

Given the somewhat artificial nature of the canonical section of the Historical Books, this introduction examines the nature of biblical historical texts, broadly construed, with a focus on the books Joshua through Esther, which now comprise the section of the Bible called Historical Books.

The idea that historical writing should capture the events "as they really were," that historians should attempt to write an objective account of the events of the past, is a notion that developed in European universities in modern times. Before that, history was typically didactic in nature, teaching readers how to be good citizens or how to lead proper religious lives. Sometimes histories produced in royal courts were apologetic, showing that the king fulfilled his royal duties; elsewhere they were written by religious officials who aimed to show that their particular religious practices were correct by recounting their ancient, sacred origin. Surviving historical documents from the ancient Near East show similar religious and ideological goals. Thus, it should not be surprising that the biblical writers are not necessarily interested in the accurate recording of events; rather, they use narratives set in the past to illustrate issues of significance to their audience, the ancient Israelite community, over a period encompassing nearly a millennium, and in different places. Such issues of significance would change over time and place.

It is easiest to understand the biblical notion of history by first focusing on works that are outside this canonical division. Exodus 13.3 begins: "Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.'" Looking at this alone would suggest the importance of history for its own sake. However, this unit continues with a set of commandments directly associated with this event: "No leavened bread shall be eaten" (v. 3); "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival to the LORD" (v. 6); "No leavened bread shall be seen in your possession, and no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory" (v. 7); "You shall tell your child on that day" (v. 8); "It shall serve for you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead" (v. 9); "You shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your livestock that are males shall be the LORD's" (v. 12). These laws suggest the Exodus is to be remembered not as a disembodied historical event, as the beginning of v. 3 might suggest; rather, the Exodus is key because it serves as the basis for the observance of a central set of laws or practices.

The use of historical material in Psalms is even more instructive, since in them traditions about the past are typically found in a context that explicitly highlights their theological significance or purpose. For example, in Psalm 78 a particular set of traditions is chosen and shaped so

"that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and rise up and tell them to their children,
so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;
and that they should not be like their ancestors,
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,
whose spirit was not faithful to God" (vv. 6–8).

Psalm 106 uses "history" quite differently. It tells how God saved Israel time after time, despite their covenant violations, forming an argument to God that they should be rescued again:

"Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise" (v. 47).

Unfortunately, the Historical Books are usually not as explicit about their purposes as these psalms or Exodus 13; only through careful internal analysis is it possible to surmise the motivations and interests that shaped these books.

ORGANIZATION INTO BOOKS AND LARGER UNITS

In pursuing this task, we must remember that the division of some biblical writings into separate books is just as arbitrary as the designation of a particular set of books as a single canonical unit, such as Historical Books. The division of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles into two separate books each is not original and was first done in the Greek Bible (the Septuagint [LXX]) so that the books would be of more reasonable length. In the formation of the canon, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally considered a single work, and it is possible that the books of Joshua and Judges, which blend together well (see especially the overlapping Josh 24.29–31 and Judg 2.8–10), were also treated as a single work at an earlier period. Even the divisions between these larger works are not always certain; the first two chapters of Kings, for example, which narrate events at the end of David's life, fit the book of Samuel better than their current place.

In fact, it has been proposed that since the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, along with the preceding book of Deuteronomy, fit so well together, these five books were edited together as a single work. This work is typically called the Deuteronomistic History, meaning the history written under the influence of ideas found in the book of Deuteronomy. Although often challenged recently, especially in relation to the book of Samuel, this theory still has much to commend it: These five books do read as a unified whole from a chronological perspective, narrating a continuous history from the end of the life of Moses through the Babylonian exile in the early sixth century BCE, and they share many phrases and ideological notions, such as an insistence on exclusive worship of God and the tragic consequences of idolatry, a concern with the centrality of Jerusalem, and a belief in the eternal supremacy of the dynasty founded by King David. If this theory is correct, the size of the Deuteronomistic History, and the long period that it covers, is remarkable, even for an edited work, especially for an ancient historical work.

Many details of this theory are debated; some scholars suggest that these books are not unified enough to be the product of a single movement. For example, the book of Samuel shows remarkably few contacts with the language of Deuteronomy, and the book of Kings, in its final form, contains narratives in which the great prophets Elijah and Elisha are legitimately active outside the Jerusalem Temple (see, e.g., 1 Kings 18, concerning Elijah on Mount Carmel). Thus, various theories have suggested successive editions of the Deuteronomistic History, which many theorize was begun in the seventh century under the Judean King Josiah (640–609 BCE), but completed only in the Babylonian exile (586–538 BCE) or later. Some suggest that the lack of unity is due to non-Deuteronomistic material that has been added at a late stage to an earlier Deuteronomistic History. Schol-

ars have also attempted to isolate narratives that might have preceded the Deuteronomistic History and other sources used by the Deuteronomistic Historians, and to discern their original purposes before these narratives and sources became integrated into the larger literary work; by being incorporated into the larger History, a unit's function or meaning may have been changed or modified.

Some scholars have felt that the many differences between the books Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings outweigh the similarities, and some have discarded the hypothesis of a Deuteronomistic History. All agree that these books have a long and complicated history, and at most, the Deuteronomistic History is a collection, so it is impossible to speak of a unified purpose or interest in the compilation of the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. They reflect at the minimum different interests at the stages of their development, pre-Deuteronomic, Deuteronomistic (exilic), and perhaps postexilic. The interests of each individual book of the Deuteronomistic History are discussed in the Introductions to those particular books.

Scholars have also found many similarities between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah and have posited that these works belong to a single large history that parallels the Deuteronomistic History. The author of these books is often called "the Chronicler." A closer look at Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, however, shows that they differ from each other in outlook and vocabulary, and that the general similarities between them are best attributed not to common authorship but to the shared era in which they were written, most likely the fourth century BCE.

Chronicles is a retelling with significant variations of the books of Genesis through Kings. It is likely that its author used a form of the Torah/Pentateuch and Samuel-Kings, as well as several other books now in our Bible, that was very close to the form we now know them; he also had some access to external sources not found in our canonical Bibles. The main feature of Chronicles is the remarkable way in which its author reworks his sources to fit a particular notion of historical probability, namely, presenting what really could have happened based on notions of how the world worked. For example, in the book of Kings, which does not have a clear retribution theory (a theory concerning divine punishment and reward), the Judean King Manasseh (698/687–642 BCE) is depicted as the most evil king of Judah, who was ultimately responsible for the destruction of the Temple in 586 (e.g., 2 Kings 24.3). The same source, however, indicates that Manasseh reigned for fifty-five years, longer than any other king. For many biblical writers, a long life was a sign of divine favor. The contradiction between the behavior of Manasseh and his long reign did not bother the Deuteronomistic Historians, who did not believe that each individual king needed to be punished or rewarded for his behavior. The Chronicler, however, did believe in this retribution theology, and the Deuteronomistic Historians' depiction of Manasseh in Kings was clearly troublesome. For this reason, the Chronicler rewrote the life of Manasseh, adding 2 Chronicles 33.10–13:

> The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they gave no heed. Therefore the LORD brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh captive in manacles, bound him with fetters, and brought him to Babylon. While he was in distress he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. He prayed to him, and God received his entreaty, heard his plea, and restored him again to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD indeed was God.

Thus, the author of Chronicles "adjusted" Manasseh's life to fit the paradigms that he believed to be true: All people need to be warned before they are punished; repentance is extremely effective; and individuals may succeed only if their behavior is meritorious. Other examples of this type of revisionism are found throughout Chronicles and are discussed in the Introductions to 1 and 2 Chronicles; they are especially easy to isolate since we have much of the material that this author revised—it is preserved in our Bible. We no longer have the sources on which Samuel and Kings are based, so it is difficult to know if they revise their sources, or are as distant from the historical events that they depict, as the Chronicler. For some contemporary biblical scholars, who doubt the historicity of King Saul, King David, and King Solomon, and suggest that the United Monarchy under David and Solomon never existed, the earlier historical books of Joshua-Kings are just as problematic in describing the history of Israel as is the later book of Chronicles.

SMALLER WORKS

The books of Ruth and Esther are both short stories, historical fictions, which are different in nature from the works discussed earlier but are very similar to the books of Tobit and Judith in the Apocrypha. They are more

literary or rhetorical than the larger works of the Deuteronomistic Historians and the Chronicler; that is, their authors self-consciously manipulated their prose for esthetic as well as ideological purposes. For example, part of the structuring of Ruth involves symmetry: an *'eshet ḥayil* ("a powerful woman" [3.11]) meets and marries a *'ish gibbor ḥayil* ("a powerful man"; NRSV "a prominent rich man" [2.1]), and they live happily ever after. The book also opens with an ironic statement that is apparent only in Hebrew: A famine befalls "the house of bread" (Bethlehem). Esther as well is tightly structured, for example, using dinner parties as a major plot device for the book's progress. Despite the literary artistry of these books—found to a lesser extent in other biblical historical writings, they are also history in the sense outlined earlier—they narrate a past in order to convey lessons relevant to a particular community. The characteristics of Ruth and Esther, each set in a distinct country and time, and each reflecting remarkably different ideologies, may be found in the Introduction to each.

The book of Ezra differs from these other Historical Books in its use of extensive quotations of official Persian documents (e.g., 7.12–26), which some scholars consider authentic. The book of Nehemiah lacks these documents but is unusual in its own way: It narrates history extensively from a first-person perspective, as a type of memoir, as in 13.15: "In those days I saw in Judah people treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys; and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day; and I warned them at that time against selling food." (Sections of Ezra 7–9 sometimes take the perspective of Ezra in the first person and are considered to be part of an "Ezra Memoir," parallel to the "Nehemiah Memoir" noted earlier.) Ezra-Nehemiah is closer to the events that it narrates than most other biblical books, but this does not mean that it reflects the events it narrates with greater accuracy than other biblical works, which are typically removed by centuries from the events being described; ideology may motivate the speedy reshaping of the past. Ezra-Nehemiah is highly ideological, interested in fostering the importance of the Torah as the central document for the postexilic community (see especially Neh 8–9), and in emphasizing the grave dangers of intermarriage (Ezra 9–10; Neh 13). Thus, even Ezra-Nehemiah, which purports to contain archival material and first-person accounts, and is among the latest of the books in this canonical division, should not be seen as straightforward, representative, and accurate history.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS AND HISTORICITY

The problematic nature of all of these texts as historical documents does not mean that we have no idea of the historical periods that they cover, or that they are entirely useless as historical sources. Each text, that is each unit that is incorporated into each book, needs to be weighed individually in terms of its date of composition and its likely goals. For example, it is likely that an author of the book of Kings had access to archives that detailed transactions of the royal and Temple accounts, and thus such dry accounts as 1 Kings 15.18 should be seen as (largely) reliable: "So Asa took all the silver and gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and gave them into the hands of his servants. King Asa sent them to King Ben-hadad son of Tabrimmon son of Hezion of Aram, who resided in Damascus." In contrast, there are good reasons to be suspicious of the historicity of the long, detailed, and embellished story of David slaying Goliath in 1 Sam 17. This story uses late biblical Hebrew language, comes from a different source than the surrounding material in Samuel, and is structured like a fairy tale, in that the poor, short, unexpected hero gets to marry the tall king's daughter by killing the giant who had vilified God. Additionally, 2 Sam 21.19 reads: "Then there was another battle with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam." It is much more likely that a short tradition in which Goliath is killed by a relatively unknown figure (Elhanan) would be the source for the long, elaborate tale attributing the same event to the well-known David, rather than vice versa. Thus, the modern historian must subject each text in these Historical Books to the type of internal analysis used on nonbiblical historical texts.

In a small number of cases we have external, ancient Near Eastern written evidence that deals with events depicted in these Historical Books. For example, the events surrounding the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian King Sennacherib in 701 BCE are narrated in several Assyrian written sources and are also depicted in the palace reliefs of that king. These sources suggest that the terse account in 2 Kings 18.13–16 is by and large accurate, while the highly developed continuation of the story in chs 19 and 20, especially the note in 19.35, that the angel of the LORD killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in a single night, is invented. Similarly, from Mesopotamian sources, we know of a "house of Omri," and Omri's name is also mentioned on the Moabite Mesha Stele. This

confirms the existence of the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel mentioned in 1 Kings 16.23–28. However, Kings tells little of Omri's achievements during his twelve years as monarch, other than his building of Samaria and this notice: "Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did more evil than all who were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and in the sins that he caused Israel to commit, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols" (vv. 25–26). The nonbiblical sources, however, suggest that Omri was a powerful king who established a significant name for himself through his military activities, information that the Bible ignores. This highlights the extreme selectivity of the biblical sources. It is also noteworthy that all of the Judean and Israelite kings mentioned in nonbiblical sources are mentioned in the Bible— but this does not confirm the details of the entire biblical account of each of these kings, or the general historical veracity of the Deuteronomic History.

Archaeological evidence confirms the picture suggested earlier, that there may be some truth (or kernel of truth) to some of the biblical stories, but in their current form they lack historical veracity, because that is not their prime concern. The past decades, for example, have seen a remarkable reevaluation of the evidence concerning the conquest of the land of Canaan by Joshua. As more sites have been excavated, it has become clear that the main story of Joshua, that of a speedy and complete conquest (e.g., Josh 11.23: "So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses"), is contradicted by the archaeological record, which suggests that only some cities (e.g., Hazor) were destroyed and conquered at the time-period claimed in Joshua. The book of Joshua is thus comprised of traditions that have been reworked very substantially over time in order to convey a particular picture of God and to justify the territorial claims and aspirations in ancient Israel.

In sum, the term Historical Books must not frame the way we read the following texts; if we read them as we read modern historical accounts, we will misunderstand these texts in the most fundamental way. Many of these texts do contain raw material for a modern historian researching the history of ancient Israel from the late second millennium through the fourth century BCE, but this "real" history may only be teased out using sophisticated and complex tools—and even then, reconstructions are often extremely tentative. This is because the biblical historians wrote their accounts, sometimes using sources, to illustrate particular perspectives concerning the relationship between God and Israel. It is these religious and religio-political perspectives that these books highlight.

Marc Z. Brettler

JOSHUA

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

The book is named after Joshua, depicted as the apprentice and successor to Moses; according to it, Joshua was the military commander in the conquest of Canaan and the administrator of the allotment of that land to the Israelite tribes. In Num 13.16, Moses renames Hoshea (Heb *hoshe'a,* "salvation") Joshua (Heb *yehoshu'a,* "the LORD is salvation/help"), adding the divine name Yahweh to his name.

The book of Joshua is the sixth book in both the Jewish and Christian canons, the first book of the Former Prophets or the first book of the so-called Historical Books, respectively (see "Introduction to the Historical Books", pp. 315-19.)

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE OF COMPOSITION

The authorship of the book of Joshua is unknown. Some types of sources for the book's composition are identifiable (for example, the border descriptions and city lists in chs 14–19), though their origin and date are disputed. The historiographic materials used in the book of Joshua correspond to those found in the ancient Near East as a whole. These include traditional stories, etiologies, boundary and town lists, summary accounts and lists, accounts patterned after redundant annalistic documents, poetry (from the Book of Jashar, 10.12–13) and burial reports. These have been woven together with ritual and covenantal materials and other matters of priestly interest to communicate the book's message.

Connections between the book of Joshua and the preceding books led many scholars, through the mid-twentieth century, to posit a "Hexateuch" (six books), with the book of Joshua completing the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch—the Hexateuch having as its main theme the promise of the land and its eventual conquest. These scholars generally understood Joshua to be comprised of Pentateuchal sources: a prophetic historical narrative (JE) constituting most of (1–12); a priestly version (P), recounting the conquest and division of the land (13–22); and a group of Deuteronomistic additions and editing. From the period following the World War II, many scholars viewed Joshua as part of a large historical work, the Deuteronomistic History, extending from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings; this work is viewed as separate from the first four books (Genesis through Numbers), which were called the Tetrateuch (four books). This view downplayed connections with the Pentateuchal sources and stressed the book's connections in vocabulary and theology with Deuteronomy and the following books of the Former Prophets. More recently, a few scholars have treated Joshua as a middle book in a still larger composition from Genesis through 2 Kings (an Enneateuch, nine books). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, an erosion of the Deuteronomistic History hypothesis has led some scholars to propose that Joshua was an independent book written during the postexilic period. While the final edition may date from the postexilic period, one major early edition may date to the late seventh century BCE.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The book of Joshua describes a conquest of Canaan and its allotment to the Israelite tribes. Through well-known traditional stories (e.g., Rahab and the scouts, the crossing of the Jordan River, the capture of Jericho) as well as nonnarrative lists and ritual texts, the book portrays the fulfillment of God's covenantal promise to Israel's ancestors that their descendants would possess the land. Moreover, these stories challenge the book's readers to live in obedience to the Deuteronomic covenant so that they also will receive God's blessings in the land.

The book is somewhat symmetrical, as the following outline illustrates:

I. The conquest	1.1–12.24
A. Preparation for the conquest	1.1–5.12
The commission of Joshua	1.1–18
Story of the scouts and Rahab	2.1–24
The crossing of the Jordan	3.1–5.1

Final preparatory events at Gilgal	5.2–12
B. Conquest of the land	5.13–12.24
Central campaign	5.13–8.35
Jericho	5.13–6.27
Achan and Ai	7.1–8.29
Covenant renewal as land grant: Shechem	8.30–35
The southern and northern campaigns	9.1–11.15
Introductory statement	9.1–2
Southern campaign	9.3–10.43
Northern campaign	11.1–15
Summary of total conquest	11.16–23
A selective list of defeated cities' kings	12.1–24
II. The allotment of the land	13.1–24.33
B.´ Division of the land	13.1–21.45
Land remaining	13.1–7
Transjordanian tribal allotment	13.8–33
Cisjordanian tribal allotment	14.1–19.51
Introduction to the process of allotment	14.1–5
Judah and Joseph allotments	14.6–17.18
Seven other tribal allotments	18.1–19.51
Summary of the process of allotment	19.51
Allotments to persons of marginal status	20.1–21.42
Cities of refuge	20.1–9
Levitical cities	21.1–42
Ironic conclusion	21.43–45
A.´ Epilogue to the conquest and allotment	22.1–24.33
Misunderstanding with the Transjordanian tribes	22.1–34
Concluding charges	23.1–24.28
Appendixes	24.29–33

INTERPRETATION

The book should not be read as straightforward history—it telescopes and simplifies what was a long and complex process of occupation of the land by the Israelite tribes. Some details are lacking (e.g., how the Israelites came into possession of Shechem, 8.30–35), while the other events narrated in the book are selectively arranged to heighten the book's message. Thus the book's presentation of reality does not necessarily reflect the course of events. For example, a main theme of the book is a swift and complete conquest of the land, while most archaeological evidence suggests its gradual settlement (see also 15.63; 16.10; 17.12–13; Judg 1). Consequently, archaeological excavations, together with sociological and anthropological analyses, must be used alongside the book to understand the early history of Israel in the land.

Several literary devices and themes characterize the book. First, the structure of the book (see outline) has two main divisions: the conquest (1.1–12.24) and the allotment of the land (13.1–24.33). Each main division contains two subdivisions: A: preparations for the conquest (1.1–5.12) and B: the conquest's campaigns (5.13–12.24); B´: the allotment of the conquered land (13.1–21.45) and A´; epilogue to the conquest and allotment (22.1–24.33). The body of the book (5.13–21.45) is bracketed by introductory and concluding materials (1.1–5.12; 22.1–24.33). Each subdivision contains a number of units that contribute to the development of the plot and message of the book.

Second, the book follows a logical geographic arrangement. An east-to-west crossing into Canaan (chs 2–5) is followed by military campaigns directed at the center (chs 6–8), south (chs 9–10), and north (ch 11), concluded by a summary list (ch 12). The division of the land first covers the Transjordanian tribes (ch 13), then the south and central tribes (chs 14–17), then the northern and peripheral tribes (chs 18–19), and finally entities of marginal status (chs 20–21). At times, however, the story backtracks or repeats previously narrated details in

a type of flashback. This is especially noticeable in chs 3–4 (the crossing of the Jordan) and ch 10 (the conquest of the south).

Third, typology, representing one character or event as an echo or foreshadowing of another, is utilized to portray Joshua as parallel to Moses. For example, Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt, Joshua leads the Israelites into Canaan; Moses leads Israel in a miraculous crossing of the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds), Joshua leads Israel in a miraculous crossing of the Jordan River; Moses sends out scouts, Joshua sends out scouts; Moses allots land to the tribes east of the Jordan, Joshua allots land to the tribes west of the Jordan. This particular typology depicts Joshua as the legitimate successor of Moses.

Fourth, the law or teaching (Heb *torah*) of Moses plays a normative role in strategic parts of the book, and Israel's obedience or disobedience to the law determines success or failure. This law, especially prominent in chs 1 and 23, is further specified as "the law of Moses" and refers to some form of the law or teaching attributed to Moses extant at the time that the book of Joshua was written, especially as found in Deuteronomy.

Fifth, ritual concerns dictate some of the narration, especially in the earlier chapters. For example, the crossing of the Jordan River (chs 3–4), circumcision and passover (ch 5), the conquest of Jericho (ch 6), and the implementations of the *ḥerem* (chs 6–8) all reflect ritual concerns that undergird the book's land claims.

A subset of these ritual concerns is the concept of the *ḥerem*, which plays a significant role in the book (see 5.13–6.27; 7.6–26; 8.1–29; 10.28–39). This noun is usually translated "devoted thing" (7.1) and the related verb "utterly destroy" (10.28). The term is used primarily in contexts of warfare and destruction where the "ḥerem" stories are connected with the notion of obedience or disobedience to the Lord (cf. Deut 7; 20). Its purpose was to "drive out" or "dispossess" the Canaanites in order to carry out divine judgment on them, to protect the Israelites from Canaanite religious influence, and to fulfill the promises concerning the land. This kind of warfare is part of the political ideology that Israel shared with other nations in the ancient Near East, in which wars were dedicated to the glorification of the deity and the extension of the deity's land and reign. In fact, the word *ḥerem* occurs in other Semitic languages and cultures. While it was considered a ritual category (similar to a concept of interdict or taboo), its use appears to have been linked to the administration of the distribution of war spoils. Understanding the *ḥerem* has posed a significant problem throughout the history of interpretation.

Finally, the book utilizes a number of different land ideologies. Some of these may be anchored in historical geography, others are purely idealistic, and some are a mixture of the two. In the book's final form, these produce an abstract, idealized concept of the land, create tensions, and set the stage for irony. The dominant land ideology is the territory of the twelve tribes (both west and east of the Jordan) who completely fill up the land (chs 15–19; cf. Deut 4.45–49). In this view, the two-and-a-half Transjordanian tribes (those settled east of the Jordan) are an integral and vital part of "all Israel." A second, contrasting ideology restricts the true land of inheritance to the territory west of the Jordan (Cisjordan, the land of Canaan) (cf. Deut 12.10). It is this image of the land that lies behind the belief that crossing the Jordan was a step of outstanding significance (chs 3–4). This view also creates ironic tensions in 22.10–34, where the two-and-a-half tribes set up an altar in Transjordan. A third ideology presents the land as claimed but not fully conquered, noting "the land that still remains to be possessed" (13.1–6); and a fourth ideology is an expansionistic, utopian Israel, which claims the distant Euphrates as the northern boundary of Israel's inheritance (1.4; cf. Gen 15.18; Deut 1.7; 11.24). These last two notions instill the book with the flavor of unredeemed promise. The text develops two understandings of Israel's unfulfilled expectations. On the one hand, the incomplete conquest is judged to be the result of Israel's disobedience or military inability (15.63; 16.10; 17.12–13; 19.47); this serves as the basis for future threats to Israel's well-being (7.12; 23.12–13). On the other hand, the last two land ideologies function as optimistic indications of greater land blessings to Israel in the future (13.6b; 17.18; 23.5).

Thus the book of Joshua plays an important role not only in the story of the early history of Israel in the land but also in the development of the theology of the Hebrew Bible. It serves as the prologue for the remainder of the Deuteronomistic Historians' account, which focuses on Israel's life in the land.

K. Lawson Younger, Jr.

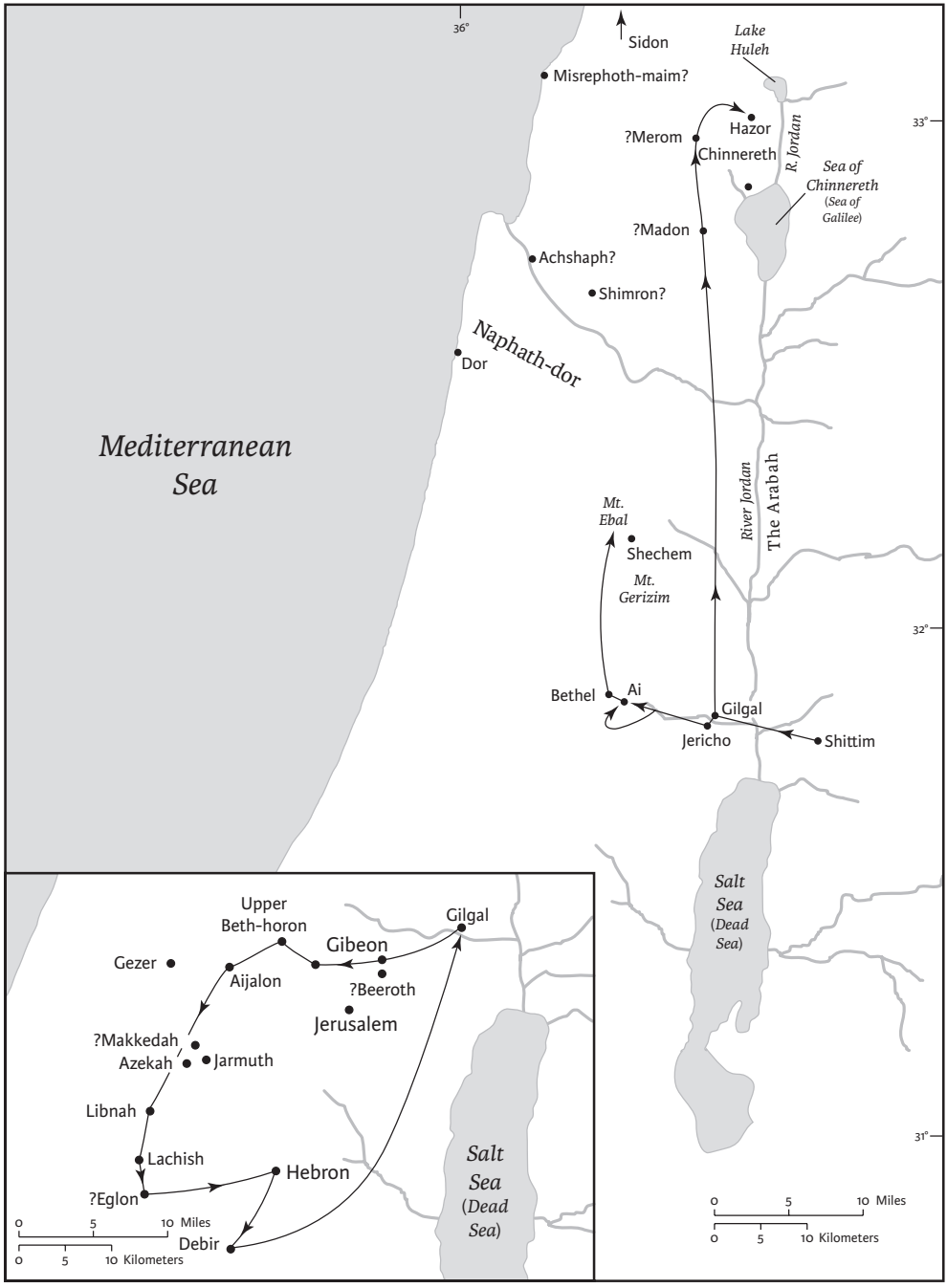
1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, 2 "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. 5 No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. 9 I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, 11 "Pass through the camp, and command the people: 'Prepare your provisions; for in three days you are to cross over the Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God gives you to possess.'"

12 To the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said, 13 "Remember the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest, and will give you this land.' 14 Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan. But all the warriors among you shall cross over armed before your kindred and shall help them, 15 until the LORD gives rest to your kindred as well as to you, and they too take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land and take possession of it, the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan to the east."

16 They answered Joshua: "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses! 18 Whoever rebels against your orders and disobeys your words, whatever you command, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous."

1.1–12.24: The conquest. 1.1–5.12: Preparation for the conquest. 1.1–18: The commission of Joshua. 1: Moses's death (Deut 34) provides the setting for the commission. God did not allow Moses to enter the land (Deut 13.37n.; 32.48–52). **2–18:** The commission contains four speeches (vv. 2–9; 10–11; 12–15; 16–18). **2–9:** The LORD's speech outlines the means of success for Joshua and the Israelites: obedience to the book of the law (Heb "torah"), likely referring to an early form of Deuteronomy. The LORD's speech also anticipates the main themes of the book: the crossing of the Jordan (1.1–5.12), the conquest (5.13–12.24), the division of the land (13.1–22.34), and obedience to the law of Moses (23.1–24.33). **2–5:** The idealized boundaries of the land, given with the assurance of God's presence, were the *Jordan* River to the east, *the wilderness* or semidesert to the south and east, the *Lebanon* mountain range to the northwest, the *river Euphrates* in the far north, and the *Great Sea,* the Mediterranean Sea, to the west (cf. Deut 11.24–25; Num 34.1–12). **4:** *All the land of the Hittites* is likely a later gloss, probably referring to northern Syria. The Hittite empire was no longer in existence at this time. **5:** An explicit recognition that Joshua is the new Moses; cf. Ex 3.12. **6–9:** As currently formulated, the text emphasizes that military success comes from the law's internalization, spoken of in 1.8 in terms of meditation with consequent obedience (cf. Deut 31.7–8; Ps 1.2–3). **11:** *In three days* reflects ritual concerns (cf. Ex 3.18; 19.11). **12–15:** Joshua's speech to the Transjordanian tribes is suffused with vocabulary that typifies Deuteronomy. Since the other tribes had helped Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh conquer their land, they were to help the other Israelites acquire their land west of the Jordan. *The half-tribe of Manasseh,* according to territorial lists (see 13.29–31; 17) part of Manasseh occupied land east of the Jordan and part west. **13:** See Deut 3.12–20. **16–18:** The reply of the Transjordanian tribes rounds out the chapter by echoing the LORD's assurances of 1.1–9 (cf. Deut 9–10).



The conquest of Canaan according to the Book of Joshua, chs 3-11

2 Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there. [2] The king of Jericho was told, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land." [3] Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land." [4] But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. [5] And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them." [6] She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof. [7] So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

[8] Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof [9] and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you. [10] For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea[a] before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. [11] As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The LORD your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. [12] Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the LORD that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith [13] that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." [14] The men said to her, "Our life for yours! If you do not tell this business of ours, then we will deal kindly and faithfully with you when the LORD gives us the land."

[15] Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself. [16] She said to them, "Go toward the hill country, so that the pursuers may not come upon you. Hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way." [17] The men said to her, "We will be released from this oath that you have made us swear to you [18] if we invade the land and you do not tie this crimson cord in the window through which you let us down, and you do not gather

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

2.1–24: The story of the scouts and Rahab. Interrupting the narrative (3.12 continues 1.11), ch 2 functions as a type of parenthesis introducing important items that will form the background to the stories of the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of Jericho. **1:** Joshua commissions two unnamed scouts (NRSV *spies*) to go and investigate the land (cf. Num 13; Deut 1.21–23; Josh 7.2–3). The scouts go to Jericho, west of the Jordan River, but surprisingly enter the house of a prostitute. While the text does not explicitly state that there was a sexual liaison between the scouts and their hostess, it provides an undercurrent of ambiguous sexual innuendo, especially since *Shittim*, the site of the Israelite camp, was also the infamous place where the men of Israel had sexual relations with the women of Moab (Num 25.1). **2–13:** *Rahab* is at the center of the narrative. She is the only named character, and without her the scouts would have had no success. She protects and delivers the scouts and provides them with the information they seek. In Mt 1.5 Rahab is reckoned among the ancestors of Jesus, and in Heb 11.31 Rahab is counted as one of the heroes of faith. Rahab's confession in vv. 9–11 anticipates the "hearing and fearing" expressed in 5.1; 6.1; 9.1–3; 10.1–2; 11.1–5. **6:** *To the roof,* the just harvested (see 3.15n.) flax had been laid on the flat roof to dry. **10:** *Dried up . . . the Red Sea,* language used only here and in 4.23; cf. Ex 14.21–29. *Sihon and Og,* see Num 21.21–35; Deut 2.26–3.11. *Utterly destroyed,* the first use of the "ḥerem" terminology (see Introduction). **11:** The acknowledgment of the LORD as the God of *heaven* and *earth* is relatively unusual in the Hebrew Bible, but here anticipates the Divine Warrior's mighty actions once at the Jordan (chs 3–4), once at Jericho (ch 6), and twice in the skies over Gibeon (ch 10). **12:** *Family,* lit., "father's house." **14–21:** Ironically, Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute, shows unconditional loyalty toward the scouts, risking everything; but they show conditional loyalty to her, minimizing their risks. **16:** *Toward the hill country,* to the west. **18:** *Crimson cord,* cf. Ex 12.7–13.

into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your family. 19 If any of you go out of the doors of your house into the street, they shall be responsible for their own death, and we shall be innocent; but if a hand is laid upon any who are with you in the house, we shall bear the responsibility for their death. 20 But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be released from this oath that you made us swear to you." 21 She said, "According to your words, so be it." She sent them away and they departed. Then she tied the crimson cord in the window.

22 They departed and went into the hill country and stayed there three days, until the pursuers returned. The pursuers had searched all along the way and found nothing. 23 Then the two men came down again from the hill country. They crossed over, came to Joshua son of Nun, and told him all that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before us."

3 Early in the morning Joshua rose and set out from Shittim with all the Israelites, and they came to the Jordan. They camped there before crossing over. 2 At the end of three days the officers went through the camp 3 and commanded the people, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place. Follow it, 4 so that you may know the way you should go, for you have not passed this way before. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, a distance of about two thousand cubits; do not come any nearer to it." 5 Then Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." 6 To the priests Joshua said, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass on in front of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went in front of the people.

7 The LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they may know that I will be with you as I was with Moses. 8 You are the one who shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.' " 9 Joshua then said to the Israelites, "Draw near and hear the words of the LORD your God." 10 Joshua said, "By this you shall know that among you is the living God who without fail will drive out from before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites:

22–24: The report of the scouts to Joshua is based on Rahab's words. In contrast to the scouts of Num 13, they did not "view the land" as they were told (v. 1). Without Rahab these men would not have returned to give a report on the Canaanite disposition.

3.1–5.1: The crossing of the Jordan. The crossing of the Jordan is narrated in five units (3.1–17; 4.1–10; 4.11–14; 4.15–18; 4.19–5.1) that backtrack and overlap so that some events are recounted more than once. The use of anticipatory statements and resumptive repetitions provides a means of linking the units together (e.g., the anticipatory statement in 3.12 is tied to the resumptive repetition in 4.2). In this way a redactor has attempted to meld together different sources.

3.1–17: The initial story of the crossing. This unit notes that the Jordan is in flood (v. 15), after the later winter rains, because otherwise it is a relatively narrow river. The Jordan functions primarily as a ritual and ideological symbol representing the boundary between landlessness and settled peoplehood. It anticipates the importance of all boundaries in the book, particularly those of the allotments (chs 13–21) and the tribal dispute of ch 22. The fact that the procession begins and ends at early Israelite religious centers ([Abel]-Shittim and Gilgal) reinforces its ritual significance. **2:** Resumptive of 1.11. **3:** *The ark of the covenant* was the container for the text of the law; see Deut 31.26. It also symbolized God's presence among the tribes; it could be carried only by priests. It could be brought into battle, assuring the deity's presence among the nation (see 1 Sam 4.6–7). **4:** The people were to keep their distance because of the presence of God. *Two thousand cubits,* about 2,900 ft (885 m). **5:** *Sanctify yourselves* reflects the ritual background of the story. The Israelites were to purify themselves in preparation for the divine presence (cf. Ex 19.10–15). **7:** See 1.5n. **10:** A stereotypical listing of the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan; it is difficult to identify the individual groups specifically. *Hittites,* apparently a group in the land of Canaan (see Gen 23; Judg 3.5; contrast 1.4n.). The *Jebusites* are associated with Jerusalem (see 15.63). If the chronological setting for these events is approximately the thirteenth century BCE, the Canaan that the

11 the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all
the earth is going to pass before you into the
Jordan. 12 So now select twelve men from the
tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. 13 When
the soles of the feet of the priests who bear
the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth,
rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of
the Jordan flowing from above shall be cut
off; they shall stand in a single heap."

14 When the people set out from their tents
to cross over the Jordan, the priests bearing
the ark of the covenant were in front of the
people. 15 Now the Jordan overflows all its
banks throughout the time of harvest. So
when those who bore the ark had come to
the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing
the ark were dipped in the edge of the water,
16 the waters flowing from above stood still,
rising up in a single heap far off at Adam, the
city that is beside Zarethan, while those flow-
ing toward the sea of the Arabah, the Dead
Sea,[a] were wholly cut off. Then the people
crossed over opposite Jericho. 17 While all
Israel were crossing over on dry ground, the
priests who bore the ark of the covenant of
the LORD stood on dry ground in the middle
of the Jordan, until the entire nation finished
crossing over the Jordan.

4 When the entire nation had finished
crossing over the Jordan, the LORD said to
Joshua: 2 "Select twelve men from the people,
one from each tribe, 3 and command them,
'Take twelve stones from here out of the mid-
dle of the Jordan, from the place where the
priests' feet stood, carry them over with you,
and lay them down in the place where you
camp tonight.'" 4 Then Joshua summoned the
twelve men from the Israelites, whom he had
appointed, one from each tribe. 5 Joshua said
to them, "Pass on before the ark of the LORD
your God into the middle of the Jordan, and
each of you take up a stone on his shoulder,
one for each of the tribes of the Israelites, 6 so
that this may be a sign among you. When your
children ask in time to come, 'What do those
stones mean to you?' 7 then you shall tell them
that the waters of the Jordan were cut off in
front of the ark of the covenant of the LORD.
When it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of
the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall
be to the Israelites a memorial forever."

8 The Israelites did as Joshua commanded.
They took up twelve stones out of the middle
of the Jordan, according to the number of
the tribes of the Israelites, as the LORD told
Joshua, carried them over with them to the
place where they camped, and laid them
down there. 9 (Joshua set up twelve stones in
the middle of the Jordan, in the place where
the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the
covenant had stood; and they are there to
this day.)

10 The priests who bore the ark remained
standing in the middle of the Jordan, until
everything was finished that the LORD com-
manded Joshua to tell the people, according
to all that Moses had commanded Joshua.
The people crossed over in haste. 11 As soon
as all the people had finished crossing over,
the ark of the LORD, and the priests, crossed
over in front of the people. 12 The Reubenites,
the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh
crossed over armed before the Israelites, as
Moses had ordered them. 13 About forty thou-
sand armed for war crossed over before the
LORD to the plains of Jericho for battle.

[a] Heb *Salt Sea*

Israelite tribes entered was in a state of economic, social, and political turmoil, due in large measure to the collapse of the Egyptian empire and many Canaanite city-state structures. **12:** Anticipates 4.2. **13:** *Stand,* cf. 10.13, where the moon is commanded to "stand still." *Heap,* a rare word used elsewhere only of the splitting of the Red Sea (Ex 15.8; Ps 78.13). **15:** *Harvest*, the spring harvest (March-April). **16:** *Adam,* 12 mi (18 km) north of Jericho, is probably Tell ed-Damiyeh. *Zarethan* is farther north. **17:** The continued presence of the priests with the ark in the midst of the dry riverbed anticipates 4.10.

4.1–10: The erecting of the twelve-stone memorial. This unit is repetitive (e.g., cf. vv. 6 and 21) and preserves different traditions. **9:** Another, perhaps later, tradition that locates a memorial of twelve stones in the bed of the Jordan itself; v. 8 narrates the removal of stones from the river bed to the shore, where they are part of the sanctuary of Gilgal (see v. 20). **10:** *In haste,* cf. Ex 12.33–34. **11–14:** This unit backtracks and again narrates the crossing, emphasizing the role of the Transjordanian tribes and the exaltation of Joshua. **12–13:** A flashback reports that the eastern tribes have done what Moses commanded and Joshua reiterated (1.14; Deut 3.18).

14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in
the sight of all Israel; and they stood in awe
of him, as they had stood in awe of Moses, all
the days of his life.

15 The LORD said to Joshua, 16 "Command
the priests who bear the ark of the covenant,[a]
to come up out of the Jordan." 17 Joshua there-
fore commanded the priests, "Come up out of
the Jordan." 18 When the priests bearing the
ark of the covenant of the LORD came up from
the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of the
priests' feet touched dry ground, the waters
of the Jordan returned to their place and
overflowed all its banks, as before.

19 The people came up out of the Jordan
on the tenth day of the first month, and
they camped in Gilgal on the east border of
Jericho. 20 Those twelve stones, which they
had taken out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in
Gilgal, 21 saying to the Israelites, "When your
children ask their parents in time to come,
'What do these stones mean?' 22 then you
shall let your children know, 'Israel crossed
over the Jordan here on dry ground.' 23 For
the LORD your God dried up the waters of the
Jordan for you until you crossed over, as the
LORD your God did to the Red Sea,[b] which he
dried up for us until we crossed over, 24 so
that all the peoples of the earth may know
that the hand of the LORD is mighty, and so
that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

5 When all the kings of the Amorites
beyond the Jordan to the west, and all
the kings of the Canaanites by the sea, heard
that the LORD had dried up the waters of
the Jordan for the Israelites until they had
crossed over, their hearts melted, and there
was no longer any spirit in them, because of
the Israelites.

2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua,
"Make flint knives and circumcise the
Israelites a second time." 3 So Joshua made
flint knives, and circumcised the Israelites
at Gibeath-haaraloth.[c] 4 This is the reason
why Joshua circumcised them: all the males
of the people who came out of Egypt, all
the warriors, had died during the journey
through the wilderness after they had come
out of Egypt. 5 Although all the people who
came out had been circumcised, yet all the
people born on the journey through the
wilderness after they had come out of Egypt
had not been circumcised. 6 For the Israelites
traveled forty years in the wilderness, until
all the nation, the warriors who came out of
Egypt, perished, not having listened to the
voice of the LORD. To them the LORD swore

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[b] Or *Sea of Reeds*
[c] That is *the Hill of the Foreskins*

14: Resumptive repetition stresses again the fulfillment of the LORD's exaltation of Joshua as with Moses. **15–18:** This unit backtracks and retells the ark's crossing and the unstopping of the river. **18:** An item-by-item reversal of what happened in 3.15–16. In fact, the verse backtracks to *the middle of the Jordan* before reporting that the priests actually leave the water.

4.19–5.1: The final unit emphasizes the instructional value of the memorial through comparison with the Red Sea crossing and contributes to the typology: Joshua parallels Moses. **19:** The focus turns from the priests to the people. *The first month* was Abib (new buds; March–April), later called Nisan. The preparations for the first passover began on the tenth day of the first month (Ex 12.3). *Gilgal,* whose precise location is disputed, was an important Israelite shrine. Its name means "circle," perhaps referring to the stone configuration; several locations have this name in the Bible. **23:** The connection of this event to the Exodus from Egypt is made explicit. **24:** As with the Exodus, both foreigner and Israelite (v. 22) must learn from this event (Ex 10.1–2). **5.1:** Resuming 2.9–11 and anticipating 9.1; 10.1; 11.1.

5.2–12: Final preparatory events at Gilgal. Three connected rituals are recounted: circumcision (vv. 2–9), passover (v. 10), and the first consumption of the produce of the land at Gilgal (vv. 11–12). **2–9:** The disobedience of the older generation (those of the first circumcision who came out of Egypt and died in the wilderness) is contrasted to the obedience of the new generation (those participating in this circumcision). Circumcision was required of all males who were to celebrate the passover (Ex 12.48). **2:** Circumcision was a fairly common practice among some peoples of the ancient Near East (e.g., Egypt); it became a sign of Israel's covenant with God (Gen 17.13). *A second time,* probably a later addition to mitigate the failure (see v. 5) to observe the obligation of Gen 17.9–14. **6:** To *give us,* an unusual authorial inclusion. The formula *a land flowing with milk and honey* (see

that he would not let them see the land that he had sworn to their ancestors to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. 7 So it was their children, whom he raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.

8 When the circumcising of all the nation was done, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. 9 The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal[a] to this day.

10 While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. 11 On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. 12 The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

13 Once when Joshua was by Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?" 14 He replied, "Neither; but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and he said to him, "What do you command your servant, my lord?" 15 The commander of the army of the LORD said to Joshua, "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so.

6 Now Jericho was shut up inside and out because of the Israelites; no one came out and no one went in. 2 The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers. 3 You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. Thus you shall do for six days, 4 with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. 5 When they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and all the people shall charge straight ahead." 6 So Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said to

[a] Related to Heb *galal* to roll

Ex 3.8; Deut 6.3; etc.) anticipates the consumption of the land's produce (vv. 10–12). **9:** This is a folk-etymology of *Gilgal,* "the circle" (see textual note *a*; 4.19n.). The precise nature of the *disgrace* is unclear; it may refer to Deut 9.28, demonstrating that the crossing and the circumcision are God's graciousness toward Israel despite Israel's lack of faithfulness in the wilderness. **10:** The celebration of the passover reinforces the portrayal of Joshua as parallel to Moses (cf. Ex 12). **11–12:** Land claims are usually presented as a matter of conquests (chs 6–12) and geographic lists (chs 13–21), but here they are set forth in terms of ritual events and diet. The change from manna to the produce of the land signifies Israel's relocation from wilderness to land. *Unleavened bread* and roasted *grain* are used in rituals connected to passover and first fruits (Lev 23.9–14).

5.13–12.24: Conquest of the land. The conquest of the land is recounted as three major campaigns: central (5.13–8.35), southern (9.1–10.43), and northern (11.1–15).

5.13–8.35: Central campaign. The central campaign, which is described in the greatest detail, has three sections: 5.13–6.27; 7.1–8.29; and 8.30–35.

5.13–6.27: Jericho: first application of "ḥerem" (see Introduction). Jericho's capture is important because it is the first implementation of the "ḥerem" by the Israelites in the conquest. The interpretation of the archaeological evidence from Tell es-Sultan (ancient Jericho) is disputed, but in the thirteenth century BCE there was at best a small unfortified village on the site. Like Moses (see Ex 3.1–4.17), Joshua receives a theophany followed by detailed instructions; 6.2–5 thus continues the scene of 5.13–15, with 6.1 being a parenthetical aside. **5.13–15:** The appearance of the *commander of the army of the LORD* is probably a fragment of a fuller tradition; cf. Ex 23.27–28. He is not mentioned in the rest of the book. **14:** The commander is not part of a human army, but rather the commander of the heavenly forces (see Deut 33.2; Judg 5.20; Zech 9.14); like most of God's messengers (angels), he is unnamed. **15:** A direct quotation from Ex 3.5, again showing Joshua parallel to Moses.

6.6–27: Jericho is captured by following the LORD's instructions. Ritual ceremony plays an important symbolic function, overcoming the walls of Jericho, with the symbolic number seven playing an especially signifi-

them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and have seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark of the LORD." [7] To the people he said, "Go forward and march around the city; have the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD."

[8] As Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them. [9] And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets; the rear guard came after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. [10] To the people Joshua gave this command: "You shall not shout or let your voice be heard, nor shall you utter a word, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout." [11] So the ark of the LORD went around the city, circling it once; and they came into the camp, and spent the night in the camp.

[12] Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. [13] The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD passed on, blowing the trumpets continually. The armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually. [14] On the second day they marched around the city once and then returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

[15] On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. [16] And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. [17] The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent. [18] As for you, keep away from the things devoted to destruction, so as not to covet[a] and take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction, bringing trouble upon it. [19] But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." [20] So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. [21] Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.

[22] Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." [23] So the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her—they brought all her kindred out—and set them outside the camp of Israel. [24] They burned down the city, and everything in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. [25] But Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, Joshua spared. Her family[b] has lived in Israel ever since. For she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

[26] Joshua then pronounced this oath, saying,

"Cursed before the LORD be anyone who tries
to build this city—this Jericho!

[a] Gk: Heb *devote to destruction* Compare 7.21
[b] Heb *She*

cant role: seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, seven encirclements on the seventh day, and a seventh-day climactic victory. This is the first implementation of the "ḥerem," a ritual act. The Canaanite prostitute Rahab and her family are exempted from the "ḥerem" (v. 17; see ch 2). The account of the fall of Jericho is more ritually symbolic than military in its significance; though as a first victory, it prefigures the successes of the campaigns that follow. **18:** *Bringing trouble upon it* anticipates the next story (7.25). **19–24:** Israel's faithfulness in the implementation of the "ḥerem" is emphasized and Achan's unfaithfulness is anticipated. Jericho represents a paradigm for the entire enterprise of conquest (8.2; 10.1; 24.11). **25:** *Ever since* indicates that the descendants of Rahab (i.e., Canaanites) survived and lived among the Israelites. **26:** The fulfillment of this enigmatic poetic

At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation,
and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!"

27 So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was in all the land.

7 But the Israelites broke faith in regard to the devoted things: Achan son of Carmi son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things; and the anger of the LORD burned against the Israelites.

2 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." And the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 Then they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Not all the people need go up; about two or three thousand men should go up and attack Ai. Since they are so few, do not make the whole people toil up there." 4 So about three thousand of the people went up there; and they fled before the men of Ai. 5 The men of Ai killed about thirty-six of them, chasing them from outside the gate as far as Shebarim and killing them on the slope. The hearts of the people melted and turned to water.

6 Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the ground on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7 Joshua said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Why have you brought this people across the Jordan at all, to hand us over to the Amorites so as to destroy us? Would that we had been content to settle beyond the Jordan! 8 O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has turned their backs to their enemies! 9 The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will you do for your great name?"

10 The LORD said to Joshua, "Stand up! Why have you fallen upon your face? 11 Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I imposed on them. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have acted deceitfully, and they have put them among their own belongings. 12 Therefore the Israelites are unable to stand before their enemies; they turn their backs to their enemies, because they have become a thing devoted for destruction themselves. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. 13 Proceed to sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "There are devoted things among you, O Israel; you will be unable to stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." 14 In the morning therefore you shall come forward tribe by tribe. The tribe that the LORD takes shall come near by clans, the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households, and the household that the LORD takes shall come near one by one. 15 And the one who is taken as having the devoted things shall be burned with fire, together with all

curse is recorded in 1 Kings 16.34. **27:** The climactic conclusion: The LORD was with Joshua (see 1.5) and his fame was in all the land.

7.1–8.29: Achan and Ai. 7.1–5: First battle of Ai and Achan's sin. In contrast to the climactic conclusion in which Joshua is exalted (6.27), Achan's sin is described. Although only one person was unfaithful, all Israel was liable because the state of being devoted ("ḥerem") is contagious, and the spoil that was improperly obtained would contaminate Israel's camp and put it into a state of devotion ("ḥerem"). **2:** The name *Ai* (modern et-Tell) means "the ruin." The site, 2 mi (3 km) east of Bethel, was uninhabited during the Late Bronze Age, suggesting an etiological component to the story. **3–5:** The scouts believe that Israel is too strong to worry about such a small fortress (contrast Num 13–14). Overconfidence is a result of lack of both consultation of and dependence on the LORD. The men of Ai thoroughly repulsed the Israelite contingent (cf. Num 14.42–45).

7.6–26: Second application of "ḥerem": Achan's execution. 6–9: Joshua's prayer of intercession recalls prayers of Moses (e.g., Ex 32.11–13; Num 11.11–15; 14.13–19; Deut 9.26–29). **6:** *Tore his clothes . . . dust on their heads*, traditional expressions of grief. **7:** *Amorites*, here a generic designation of the inhabitants of the land (see 24.15), elsewhere called Canaanites. **10–15:** God's answer to Joshua is a rebuke. **11–13:** There has been a covenant violation: a theft of God's property, the *devoted things* ("ḥerem") from Jericho. Only sanctifying themselves and removing the *devoted things* can prevent Israel from being a *devoted thing, and thus subject to destruction.* **14:** *The LORD takes,* by the casting of lots (a device that when thrown yields the proper yes-or-no answer through divine

that he has, for having transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and for having done an outrageous thing in Israel.' "

16 So Joshua rose early in the morning, and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17 He brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken; and he brought near the clan of the Zerahites, family by family,[a] and Zabdi was taken. 18 And he brought near his household one by one, and Achan son of Carmi son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and make confession to him. Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." 20 And Achan answered Joshua, "It is true; I am the one who sinned against the LORD God of Israel. This is what I did: 21 when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, then I coveted them and took them. They now lie hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. 23 They took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites; and they spread them out before the LORD. 24 Then Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan son of Zerah, with the silver, the mantle, and the bar of gold, with his sons and daughters, with his oxen, donkeys, and sheep, and his tent and all that he had; and they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. 25 Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD is bringing trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him to death; they burned them with fire, cast stones on them, 26 and raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore that place to this day is called the Valley of Achor.[b]

8 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear or be dismayed; take all the fighting men with you, and go up now to Ai. See, I have handed over to you the king of Ai with his people, his city, and his land. 2 You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king; only its spoil and its livestock you may take as booty for yourselves. Set an ambush against the city, behind it."

3 So Joshua and all the fighting men set out to go up against Ai. Joshua chose thirty thousand warriors and sent them out by night 4 with the command, "You shall lie in ambush against the city, behind it; do not go very far from the city, but all of you stay alert. 5 I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. When they come out against us, as before, we shall flee from them. 6 They will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city; for they will say, 'They are fleeing from us, as before.' While we flee from them, 7 you shall rise up from the ambush and seize the city; for the LORD your God will give it into your hand. 8 And when you have taken the city, you shall set the city on fire, doing as the LORD has ordered; see, I have commanded you." 9 So Joshua sent them out; and they went to the

[a] Mss Syr: MT *man by man*
[b] That is *Trouble*

assistance). **16–21:** The process of selection successfully narrows down the guilty group, finding the guilty party. It also reinforces Achan's guilt. **20–21:** The actual "ḥerem" objects are listed in Achan's admission: a beautiful mantle from Shinar (Babylon), two hundred shekels of silver (about 5 lbs [2.3 kg]), and a fifty-shekel bar of gold (about 1.24 lbs [570 gm]). **22–26:** The resolution of the problem is found in the "ḥerem" of Achan, his family, and even his tent. **25:** This refers to 6.18. *Trouble* (Heb "'akar") is removed from Israel and ritually placed on Achan. **26:** *Valley of Achor ("'akor"),* a name derived from a wordplay on Achan's final state of "trouble." The valley is probably the Buqeiah, just west of the northern end of the Dead Sea; in 15.7 it is on the border between Benjamin and Judah. The outcome for Achan and his family is an ironic reversal of that for Rahab and her family (6.25).

8.1–29: Third application of "ḥerem": second battle of Ai and Ai's destruction. 1–2: The LORD gives assurance and instructions, making clear that Achan's sin has been removed so that God can once again give Israel the land. **3–8:** Joshua relates the LORD's instructions to the Israelites. The repetitions build suspense. **9–29:** Ai is captured and put under the "ḥerem." **9:** *Bethel,* the modern village of Beitin, is 11 mi (17 km) north of Jerusa-

place of ambush, and lay between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai; but Joshua spent that night in the camp.[a]

10 In the morning Joshua rose early and mustered the people, and went up, with the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. 11 All the fighting men who were with him went up, and drew near before the city, and camped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai. 12 Taking about five thousand men, he set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. 13 So they stationed the forces, the main encampment that was north of the city and its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua spent that night in the valley. 14 When the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the inhabitants of the city, hurried out early in the morning to the meeting place facing the Arabah to meet Israel in battle; but he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. 15 And Joshua and all Israel made a pretense of being beaten before them, and fled in the direction of the wilderness. 16 So all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and as they pursued Joshua they were drawn away from the city. 17 There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel; they left the city open, and pursued Israel.

18 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Stretch out the sword that is in your hand toward Ai; for I will give it into your hand." And Joshua stretched out the sword that was in his hand toward the city. 19 As soon as he stretched out his hand, the troops in ambush rose quickly out of their place and rushed forward. They entered the city, took it, and at once set the city on fire. 20 So when the men of Ai looked back, the smoke of the city was rising to the sky. They had no power to flee this way or that, for the people who fled to the wilderness turned back against the pursuers. 21 When Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city was rising, then they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. 22 And the others came out from the city against them; so they were surrounded by Israelites, some on one side, and some on the other; and Israel struck them down until no one was left who survived or escaped. 23 But the king of Ai was taken alive and brought to Joshua.

24 When Israel had finished slaughtering all the inhabitants of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them, and when all of them to the very last had fallen by the edge of the sword, all Israel returned to Ai, and attacked it with the edge of the sword. 25 The total of those who fell that day, both men and women, was twelve thousand—all the people of Ai. 26 For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the sword, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27 Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as their booty, according to the word of the Lord that he had issued to Joshua. 28 So Joshua burned Ai, and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day. 29 And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening; and at sunset Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree, threw it down at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stands there to this day.

[a] Heb *among the people*

lem and 2 mi (3 km) west of Ai. Later it became one of the principal shrines of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12.28–30; Gen 12.8; 28.11–22). **14–15:** *Facing the Arabah . . . in the direction of the wilderness,* toward the Rift Valley, to the east. **18–29:** Joshua's stretching out his sword is similar to Moses's actions in Ex 14.15–21,26–27; 17.9–12, again suggesting the continuity between these two leaders, and Joshua's legitimacy. The third implementation of the "ḥerem" is the Canaanite city of Ai. Ironically, God allowed the Israelites to take some of the plunder from Ai that was under the "ḥerem" (v. 27). **28:** *Forever a heap of ruins,* lit., "an eternal tell, a devastation," cf. 11.13n.; Deut 13.16. **29:** The hanging of the king of Ai and his stone memorial in the gate of the city are common actions in ancient Near Eastern warfare. This also anticipates the execution of the five kings in 10.26–27 and follows the Deuteronomic injunction (Deut 21.22–23). It also foreshadows 1 Sam 15, where Saul does not put Agag, the Amalekite king, to death, thereby disqualifying himself from leadership.

30 Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, 31 just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, "an altar of unhewn[a] stones, on which no iron tool has been used"; and they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed offerings of well-being. 32 And there, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua[b] wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. 33 All Israel, alien as well as citizen, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark in front of the levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, that they should bless the people of Israel. 34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, blessings and curses, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the aliens who resided among them.

9 Now when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the lowland all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon—the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—heard of this, 2 they gathered together with one accord to fight Joshua and Israel.

3 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, 4 they on their part acted with cunning: they went and prepared provisions,[c] and took worn-out sacks for their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended, 5 with worn-out, patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes; and all their

[a] Heb *whole*
[b] Heb *he*
[c] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

8.30–35: Covenant renewal as land grant: Shechem. The events narrated in ch 9 are the natural sequel to the story about the fall of Ai (note that 8.29 flows into 9.3). Hence this account of covenant renewal is parenthetical to the main action and is connected by many scholars with 24.1–28. Traveling to Ebal would have required the tribes to make a trip of about 30 mi (50 km) by road from Ai to Ebal and then to retrace their steps to encamp at Gilgal (9.6). This narrative serves to portray Joshua as carrying out the command given to Moses in Deut 27.4–7 (cf. Deut 11.29–30). Joshua, who obeyed, is the foil to Achan, who did not (cf. 6.27 and 7.1). The connections between this section and Deuteronomy are especially strong. **30:** *Mount Ebal* is one of the two mountains (Gerizim being the other) that flank the pass of Shechem in central Canaan. **31:** Quoting Deut 27.5. **32:** *On the stones,* not the stones of the altar, but those Moses had commanded to be used; see Deut 27.2–3; cf. Josh 24.26–27. *A copy of the law,* see Deut 17.18. **34:** *Blessings and curses,* see Deut 27.11–13; 28. **35:** Fulfilling the ritual of Deut 31.9–13.

9.1–11.15: The southern and northern campaigns. The conquests of southern and northern Canaan share the same geographic pattern: center to periphery. However, the account of the southern campaign is much more developed than that of the northern campaign, which can be observed in a comparison of the basic components of 9.3–10.43 and 11.1–15. Thus the region that became Judah's tribal allotment receives the greater emphasis (a pattern also found in chs 13–19 and Judg 1). This suggests a strong Judahite redactional perspective.

9.1–2: Introductory statement. The section recalls the motif of the inhabitants hearing and fearing (2.10 and 5.1; see also 10.1; 11.1), but in this case the reaction is not fear, but aggressive hostility. The exception is Gibeon, narrated first since its peace with Israel sets in motion the subsequent actions.

9.3–10.43: Southern campaign. 9.3–27: Gibeon. Ironically, Israel has just defeated Ai by means of a ruse; now Israel is the victim of a ruse. The Israelites do not turn to God to understand why they have lost; as in the case of the first battle of Ai, the Israelites' overconfidence in their ability to discern the situation leads to a lack of dependence on the LORD. **3–15:** The Gibeonites are apparently Hivites, a people not known outside the Bible. Fearing Israel, they pretend to be *from a far country* to take advantage of the more lenient treatment afforded to such people (Deut 20.15). **3:** *Gibeon* is modern el-Jib, about 7 mi (11 km) southwest of Ai (see map on p. 325).

provisions were dry and moldy. [6] They went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the Israelites, "We have come from a far country; so now make a treaty with us." [7] But the Israelites said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you live among us; then how can we make a treaty with you?" [8] They said to Joshua, "We are your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who are you? And where do you come from?" [9] They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very far country, because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard a report of him, of all that he did in Egypt, [10] and of all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, King Sihon of Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth. [11] So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country said to us, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey; go to meet them, and say to them, "We are your servants; come now, make a treaty with us." ' [12] Here is our bread; it was still warm when we took it from our houses as our food for the journey, on the day we set out to come to you, but now, see, it is dry and moldy; [13] these wineskins were new when we filled them, and see, they are burst; and these garments and sandals of ours are worn out from the very long journey." [14] So the leaders[a] partook of their provisions, and did not ask direction from the LORD. [15] And Joshua made peace with them, guaranteeing their lives by a treaty; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them.

[16] But when three days had passed after they had made a treaty with them, they heard that they were their neighbors and were living among them. [17] So the Israelites set out and reached their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. [18] But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel. Then all the congregation murmured against the leaders. [19] But all the leaders said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we must not touch them. [20] This is what we will do to them: We will let them live, so that wrath may not come upon us, because of the oath that we swore to them." [21] The leaders said to them, "Let them live." So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for all the congregation, as the leaders had decided concerning them.

[22] Joshua summoned them, and said to them, "Why did you deceive us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' while in fact you are living among us? [23] Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall always be slaves, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God." [24] They answered Joshua, "Because it was told to your servants for a certainty that the LORD your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; so we were in great fear for our lives because of you, and did this thing. [25] And now we are in your hand: do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us." [26] This is what he did for them: he saved them from the Israelites; and they did not kill them. [27] But on that day Joshua made them hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to continue to this day, in the place that he should choose.

[a] Gk: Heb *men*

6: *Treaty,* Heb "berit," also translated "covenant." **10:** See 2.10n. **14:** Although *the leaders* (lit., "the men") of Israel are specifically blamed for not consulting the LORD, Joshua is apparently included. None of Israel's leadership was exempt from blame. **16–27:** Discovery of the ruse and reaction. The Israelites discover the ruse of the Gibeonites, who readily admit their deception (vv. 24–25) because they know that Israel has to honor the pact between them (v. 20). The subservience of the Gibeonites is narrated twice in parallel: The leaders of the people save them and conclude their slave status, and so does Joshua (vv. 18–21 and vv. 22–27). **21:** *Hewers of wood and drawers of water,* according to Deut 29.10–13, the covenant was to erase distinctions between such lower-class occupations and others. This designation thus suggests that the Gibeonites are outside the covenantal community. **24:** See Deut 20.16–18. Tensions with the Gibeonites persist into the monarchy (2 Sam 21.1–14). **27:** *The place that he should choose* is Deuteronomy's term for the central place of worship, later identified as Jerusalem (e.g., Deut 12.5–18).

10 When King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, 2 he[a] became greatly frightened, because Gibeon was a large city, like one of the royal cities, and was larger than Ai, and all its men were warriors. 3 So King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent a message to King Hoham of Hebron, to King Piram of Jarmuth, to King Japhia of Lachish, and to King Debir of Eglon, saying, 4 "Come up and help me, and let us attack Gibeon; for it has made peace with Joshua and with the Israelites." 5 Then the five kings of the Amorites—the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon—gathered their forces, and went up with all their armies and camped against Gibeon, and made war against it.

6 And the Gibeonites sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, "Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites who live in the hill country are gathered against us." 7 So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the fighting force with him, all the mighty warriors. 8 The Lord said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have handed them over to you; not one of them shall stand before you." 9 So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. 10 And the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel, who inflicted a great slaughter on them at Gibeon, chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11 As they fled before Israel, while they were going down the slope of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down huge stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died because of the hailstones than the Israelites killed with the sword.

12 On the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the Lord; and he said in the sight of Israel,

"Sun, stand still at Gibeon,
and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon."
13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,
until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.

Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in midheaven, and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. 14 There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded a human voice; for the Lord fought for Israel.

[a] Heb *they*

10.1–43: The defeat of the Amorite alliance. This passage contains two scenes (vv. 1–15; 16–43), both of which end with identical statements (vv. 15,43). Both scenes utilize temporal panels that backtrack and overlap: Each subsequent panel takes a part of the previous panel and further develops it.

10.1–15: Scene one contains three panels (vv. 1–10,11,12–15). **1–10: The initial circumstances of the battle.** This panel is composed of two parts: the formation of the Amorite alliance headed by Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem (vv. 1–5), and the initial open-field battle between the Israelites and the Amorite alliance with the slaughter and pursuit to Azekah (vv. 6–10). **1–2:** The treaty between Gibeon and Israel incited the kings of five Amorite city-states to attack Gibeon. Jerusalem, an important Bronze Age city-state, and later the capital of Judah, is the driving force in the alliance. **3:** See inset in map on p. 325. **10:** The reference to *Azekah* and *Makkedah* anticipates the second panel of scene one as well as the first panel of scene two. *Azekah* is identified with Tell Zakariya; *Makkedah* is perhaps Khirbet el-Qom.

10.11: Divine intervention with hailstones. The second panel of scene one backtracks and overlaps the first panel, describing the enemy flight again to Azekah with the further development of the divine intervention with deadly *hailstones*. Divine interventions are common motifs in ancient war accounts.

10.12–15: Joshua's request to the Lord and the divine intervention. The third panel of scene one also backtracks and overlaps, describing Joshua's request to the Lord at the beginning of the battle with the further development of the divine intervention concerning the sun and moon (cf. Heb 3.11; Judg 5.20). The exact meaning of the divine intervention, described only in poetry, is difficult to ascertain. **13:** *The Book of Jashar,* no longer extant, appears to have been a collection of poetry that extolled Israel's military victories and heroes (see 2 Sam

15 Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with
him, to the camp at Gilgal.
16 Meanwhile, these five kings fled and hid
themselves in the cave at Makkedah. 17 And
it was told Joshua, "The five kings have been
found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah."
18 Joshua said, "Roll large stones against the
mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard
them; 19 but do not stay there yourselves;
pursue your enemies, and attack them from
the rear. Do not let them enter their towns,
for the LORD your God has given them into
your hand." 20 When Joshua and the Isra-
elites had finished inflicting a very great
slaughter on them, until they were wiped
out, and when the survivors had entered into
the fortified towns, 21 all the people returned
safe to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah;
no one dared to speak[a] against any of the
Israelites.
22 Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of
the cave, and bring those five kings out to me
from the cave." 23 They did so, and brought
the five kings out to him from the cave, the
king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the
king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and
the king of Eglon. 24 When they brought the
kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the
Israelites, and said to the chiefs of the warri-
ors who had gone with him, "Come near, put
your feet on the necks of these kings." Then
they came near and put their feet on their
necks. 25 And Joshua said to them, "Do not
be afraid or dismayed; be strong and coura-
geous; for thus the LORD will do to all the
enemies against whom you fight." 26 After-
ward Joshua struck them down and put them
to death, and he hung them on five trees.
And they hung on the trees until evening.
27 At sunset Joshua commanded, and they
took them down from the trees and threw
them into the cave where they had hidden
themselves; they set large stones against the
mouth of the cave, which remain to this very
day.
28 Joshua took Makkedah on that day, and
struck it and its king with the edge of the
sword; he utterly destroyed every person in
it; he left no one remaining. And he did to the
king of Makkedah as he had done to the king
of Jericho.
29 Then Joshua passed on from Makkedah,
and all Israel with him, to Libnah, and fought
against Libnah. 30 The LORD gave it also and
its king into the hand of Israel; and he struck
it with the edge of the sword, and every per-
son in it; he left no one remaining in it; and
he did to its king as he had done to the king
of Jericho.
31 Next Joshua passed on from Libnah,
and all Israel with him, to Lachish, and laid
siege to it, and assaulted it. 32 The LORD gave
Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he took it
on the second day, and struck it with the edge
of the sword, and every person in it, as he had
done to Libnah.
33 Then King Horam of Gezer came up to
help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his
people, leaving him no survivors.

[a] Heb *moved his tongue*

1.18). **15:** Scene one concludes with Joshua and Israel's return to Gilgal, which is repeated at the chapter's conclusion (v. 43) and need not be taken literally.

10.16–43: Scene two contains two panels (vv. 16–27; 28–39) and a summary (vv. 40–43). **16–27: The capture and execution of the kings.** The first panel backtracks and overlaps the pursuit, developing the capture and execution of the Amorite kings. The mention of *Makkedah* in v. 16 is resumptive (see v. 10). Ironically, the cave that the kings choose as their hiding place becomes first their prison, then their tomb. **24:** *Feet on their necks,* symbolizing subjugation, as in 1 Kings 5.3; Ps 110.1. **26–27:** In the ancient world, corpses of vanquished enemies were displayed for psychological effect; see 8.29n.

10.28–39: The capture and "ḥerem" of the cities. The second panel backtracks to the pursuit and develops the capture and "ḥerem" of the cities in a stereotyped and redundant manner. (A verbal form of "ḥerem" is translated "utterly destroyed" in vv. 28,35,37,39,40). This typical ancient Near Eastern war account uses hyperbole to emphasize the success of Israel and its God. The king of Gezer, at the center of the seven short episodes, emphasizes that city's importance. While the city is not captured, the defeat of its king and army in open battle crowns the southern campaign. **31–32:** *Lachish* (Tell ed-Duweir) was one of the more important southern cities. **33: According to 1 Kings 9.16,** *Gezer* becomes an Israelite city only in the time of Solomon. The Ephraimites had

34 From Lachish Joshua passed on with
all Israel to Eglon; and they laid siege to it,
and assaulted it; 35 and they took it that day,
and struck it with the edge of the sword; and
every person in it he utterly destroyed that
day, as he had done to Lachish.

36 Then Joshua went up with all Israel from
Eglon to Hebron; they assaulted it, 37 and took
it, and struck it with the edge of the sword,
and its king and its towns, and every person
in it; he left no one remaining, just as he had
done to Eglon, and utterly destroyed it with
every person in it.

38 Then Joshua, with all Israel, turned back
to Debir and assaulted it, 39 and he took it
with its king and all its towns; they struck
them with the edge of the sword, and utterly
destroyed every person in it; he left no one
remaining; just as he had done to Hebron,
and, as he had done to Libnah and its king, so
he did to Debir and its king.

40 So Joshua defeated the whole land, the
hill country and the Negeb and the lowland
and the slopes, and all their kings; he left no
one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that
breathed, as the Lord God of Israel com-
manded. 41 And Joshua defeated them from
Kadesh-barnea to Gaza, and all the country
of Goshen, as far as Gibeon. 42 Joshua took
all these kings and their land at one time, be-
cause the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.
43 Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with
him, to the camp at Gilgal.

11 When King Jabin of Hazor heard of this,
he sent to King Jobab of Madon, to the
king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph,
2 and to the kings who were in the northern
hill country, and in the Arabah south of Chin-
neroth, and in the lowland, and in Naphoth-
dor on the west, 3 to the Canaanites in the
east and the west, the Amorites, the Hittites,
the Perizzites, and the Jebusites in the hill
country, and the Hivites under Hermon in
the land of Mizpah. 4 They came out, with all
their troops, a great army, in number like the
sand on the seashore, with very many horses
and chariots. 5 All these kings joined their
forces, and came and camped together at the
waters of Merom, to fight with Israel.

6 And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be
afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I
will hand over all of them, slain, to Israel; you
shall hamstring their horses, and burn their
chariots with fire." 7 So Joshua came sud-
denly upon them with all his fighting force,
by the waters of Merom, and fell upon them.
8 And the Lord handed them over to Israel,
who attacked them and chased them as far
as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and
eastward as far as the valley of Mizpeh. They
struck them down, until they had left no one
remaining. 9 And Joshua did to them as the

failed to capture it (16.10; Judg 1.29). **34–35:** *Eglon* may be identified with Tell Aitun. **36–39:** *Hebron* and *Debir* (probably Khirbet Rabud) fall to "all" Israel. In 14.6–15 Caleb is credited with victory at Hebron (see 15.13–14), but Judah in general gets credit in Judg 1.10. In 15.15–17 and Judg 1.11–13 Othniel is credited with the capture of Debir. These accounts highlight various different emphases in the book of Joshua regarding credit for the conquest.

10.40–43: Summary of the southern campaign. Overstatement emphasizes the greatness of the Israelite victory. Scene two concludes (like scene one) with Joshua and Israel returning to Gilgal (10.43). **40:** *Negeb,* the semidesert region in the south. **41:** *Kadesh-barnea,* Num 13.1–14.45n. and map p. 241; see Deut 1.19; 9.23. *Goshen,* a designation of the region north of the Negeb (see also 11.16); not the region with the same name in the Nile Delta (Gen 45.10; etc.).

11.1–15: Northern campaign. A literary mirror of 10.1–43 both in general structure and vocabulary, though less developed.

11.1–11: Defeat of the Canaanite coalition. A large and powerful Canaanite coalition is organized and headed by Jabin, the king of Hazor. The name *Jabin* occurs here and in Judg 4 and Ps 83.10. Scholars suggest that our author has modified the story in Judg 4–5. **1:** The final occurrence of the "hearing" motif, see 5.1n. The locations of *Madon, Shimron,* and *Achshaph* are not certain. **2:** The *Arabah* is the Jordan Valley; *Chinneroth,* a town on the western side of the Sea of Galilee (Chinnereth). **3–5:** This enemy is superior to the Israelite army, both numerically and technologically (they have dreaded horses and chariots). This coalition presents the most significant threat to Israel's success in conquering the land. *Hermon,* the high mountain in the extreme north of Israel. *Merom* is a city in Galilee known from extrabiblical sources; its precise location is not certain. **6:** The Lord's oracle of assurance precedes the victory (cf. 8.1; 10.8). *Hamstring their horses* means cutting a tendon of a rear

LORD commanded him; he hamstrung their horses, and burned their chariots with fire.

10 Joshua turned back at that time, and took Hazor, and struck its king down with the sword. Before that time Hazor was the head of all those kingdoms. 11 And they put to the sword all who were in it, utterly destroying them; there was no one left who breathed, and he burned Hazor with fire. 12 And all the towns of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua took, and struck them with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. 13 But Israel burned none of the towns that stood on mounds except Hazor, which Joshua did burn. 14 All the spoil of these towns, and the livestock, the Israelites took for their booty; but all the people they struck down with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, and they did not leave any who breathed. 15 As the LORD had commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

16 So Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland and the Arabah and the hill country of Israel and its lowland, 17 from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He took all their kings, struck them down, and put them to death. 18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. 19 There was not a town that made peace with the Israelites, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all were taken in battle. 20 For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts so that they would come against Israel in battle, in order that they might be utterly destroyed, and might receive no mercy, but be exterminated, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

21 At that time Joshua came and wiped out the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their towns. 22 None of the Anakim was left in the land of the Israelites; some remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod. 23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.

12 Now these are the kings of the land, whom the Israelites defeated, whose land they occupied beyond the Jordan toward the east, from the Wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon, with all the Arabah eastward: 2 King Sihon of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon, and ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, and from the middle of the valley as far as the river Jabbok, the boundary of the Ammonites, that is, half of Gilead, 3 and the Arabah to the Sea of Chinneroth eastward, and in the direction of Beth-jeshimoth, to the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea,[a] southward to the foot of the slopes of

[a] Heb *Salt Sea*

leg to make them useless (see 2 Sam 8.4). **10–11:** Hazor, the most important northern city, is totally destroyed by burning just like Jericho and Ai (cf. 6.24; 8.8,19). Jericho and Hazor frame the "conquest" of the land of Canaan.

11.12–15: Summary of northern campaign. The Israelite conquest in the north is summarized by noting several times that "all" was conquered by Joshua, the worthy successor to Moses, who fulfilled the requirements of Deut 20.16–17. **13:** *Mounds,* translating the Hebrew word for "tells," cf. 8.28n.

11.16–23: Summary of total conquest. 16–19: The word *all* characterizes these verses, emphasizing the totality of the conquest. **18–20:** The depiction here conflicts with the earlier accounts, suggesting that a protracted war was necessary. **20:** *Harden their hearts,* this phrase is elsewhere used of Pharaoh in Egypt (Ex 4.21; etc.), and suggests that, for the LORD and for the author, the inhabitants of the land were enemies comparable to the Egyptians. **21:** *The Anakim,* a term for pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan renowned for their size and strength (Deut 9.2). **23:** *And the land had rest from war,* a conclusion formula, moving toward a transition from the conquest to the division of land. This declaration recurs in 14.15, forming a literary link between the defeat of the Anakim by Joshua (ch 11) and their defeat by Caleb (ch 14).

12.1–24: A selective list of defeated cities' kings. An additional conclusion to the first section of the book. **1–6: Moses's exploits in Transjordan.** This summary draws from Deut 2–3; (see map on p. 253). **2:** The story of

Pisgah; [4] and King Og[a] of Bashan, one of the last of the Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei [5] and ruled over Mount Hermon and Salecah and all Bashan to the boundary of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and over half of Gilead to the boundary of King Sihon of Heshbon. [6] Moses, the servant of the LORD, and the Israelites defeated them; and Moses the servant of the LORD gave their land for a possession to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

[7] The following are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the Israelites defeated on the west side of the Jordan, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon to Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir (and Joshua gave their land to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their allotments, [8] in the hill country, in the lowland, in the Arabah, in the slopes, in the wilderness, and in the Negeb, the land of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites):

[9] the king of Jericho	one
the king of Ai, which is next to Bethel	one
[10] the king of Jerusalem	one
the king of Hebron	one
[11] the king of Jarmuth	one
the king of Lachish	one
[12] the king of Eglon	one
the king of Gezer	one
[13] the king of Debir	one
the king of Geder	one
[14] the king of Hormah	one
the king of Arad	one
[15] the king of Libnah	one
the king of Adullam	one
[16] the king of Makkedah	one
the king of Bethel	one
[17] the king of Tappuah	one
the king of Hepher	one
[18] the king of Aphek	one
the king of Lasharon	one
[19] the king of Madon	one
the king of Hazor	one
[20] the king of Shimron-meron	one
the king of Achshaph	one
[21] the king of Taanach	one
the king of Megiddo	one
[22] the king of Kedesh	one
the king of Jokneam in Carmel	one
[23] the king of Dor in Naphath-dor	one
the king of Goiim in Galilee,[b]	one
[24] the king of Tirzah	one

thirty-one kings in all.

13 Now Joshua was old and advanced in years; and the LORD said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and very much of the land still remains to be possessed.

[a] Gk: Heb *the boundary of King Og*

[b] Gk: Heb *Gilgal*

King Sihon is narrated in Num 21.21–31 and Deut 2.26–37. **4:** The defeat of *Og* is narrated in Num 21.33–35 and Deut 3.1–17. *Bashan,* northern Transjordan. *Rephaim,* here, another term for pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan; elsewhere sometimes used for inhabitants of the underworld.

12.7–24: Joshua's victories west of the Jordan. Previous narratives mention fewer than half of these cities. Vv. 9–13a follow the order of chs 6–10, but after that no clear pattern is evident. This section thus seems to be adapted from a different source than the previous chapters. Moreover, the length of this list shows that previous narratives are selective, highlighting particular stories for ideological and theological purposes. For the location of the places, see map 4 at the end of this volume.

13.1–24.33: The allotment of the land. Having completed his first task, the conquest (1.2–5), Joshua turns his attention to his second task (1.6): "Put this people in possession of the land" (cf. Deut 4.21; 15.4; 19.10). The concern over allotment or inheritance (Heb "naḥalah") unifies this section (13.6; 14.3,13; 17.4,6,14; 19.49). The section emphasizes that the division follows the divine will, as mediated by Joshua and Eleazar the priest. It utilizes four types of sources: boundary descriptions; town lists integrated into boundary descriptions; town lists; and short narratives that relate incidents of importance within the allotments, providing didactic significance to the division of the land. The cities of refuge and Levitical cities are attached at the end of the section since it is necessary for the tribes to receive their inheritance before they can allocate parts of it to others. For this entire section, see map on p. 351.

13.1–7: Land remaining. The land remaining is defined by those towns and regions inside the borders of Canaan (cf. Num 34.1–12) that are not under Israelite control. This foreshadows other passages in chs 13–21 that contrast with the first half of the book, by documenting Israel's failure to capture all of the land, or by noting that foreigners live among the Israelites. These contrast with the idealistic reports given in the text (cf. 15.63;

2 This is the land that still remains: all the
regions of the Philistines, and all those of
the Geshurites 3 (from the Shihor, which is
east of Egypt, northward to the boundary
of Ekron, it is reckoned as Canaanite; there
are five rulers of the Philistines, those of
Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron),
and those of the Avvim 4 in the south; all
the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that
belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, to the
boundary of the Amorites, 5 and the land of
the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the
east, from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon to
Lebo-hamath, 6 all the inhabitants of the hill
country from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maim,
even all the Sidonians. I will myself drive
them out from before the Israelites; only allot
the land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have
commanded you. 7 Now therefore divide this
land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and
the half-tribe of Manasseh."

8 With the other half-tribe of Manasseh[a]
the Reubenites and the Gadites received their
inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond
the Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of
the LORD gave them: 9 from Aroer, which is
on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, and the town
that is in the middle of the valley, and all
the tableland from[b] Medeba as far as Dibon;
10 and all the cities of King Sihon of the Amo-
rites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the
boundary of the Ammonites; 11 and Gilead,
and the region of the Geshurites and Maaca-
thites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan
to Salecah; 12 all the kingdom of Og in Bashan,
who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (he
alone was left of the survivors of the Reph-
aim); these Moses had defeated and driven
out. 13 Yet the Israelites did not drive out the
Geshurites or the Maacathites; but Geshur
and Maacath live within Israel to this day.

14 To the tribe of Levi alone Moses gave no
inheritance; the offerings by fire to the LORD
God of Israel are their inheritance, as he said
to them.

15 Moses gave an inheritance to the tribe
of the Reubenites according to their clans.
16 Their territory was from Aroer, which is on
the edge of the Wadi Arnon, and the town
that is in the middle of the valley, and all the
tableland by Medeba; 17 with Heshbon, and
all its towns that are in the tableland; Dibon,
and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon, 18 and
Jahaz, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath, 19 and
Kiriathaim, and Sibmah, and Zereth-shahar
on the hill of the valley, 20 and Beth-peor, and
the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth,
21 that is, all the towns of the tableland, and
all the kingdom of King Sihon of the Amo-
rites, who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses
defeated with the leaders of Midian, Evi and
Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, as princes
of Sihon, who lived in the land. 22 Along
with the rest of those they put to death, the
Israelites also put to the sword Balaam son
of Beor, who practiced divination. 23 And the
border of the Reubenites was the Jordan and
its banks. This was the inheritance of the
Reubenites according to their families with
their towns and villages.

24 Moses gave an inheritance also to the
tribe of the Gadites, according to their fami-

[a] Cn: Heb *With it*
[b] Compare Gk: Heb lacks *from*

16.10; 17.11–13; 18.2; 19.47). The particular areas designated as outside Israelite possession are *the regions of the Philistines* (the southwestern coastal area), *and all those of the Geshurites* (east of the Sea of Galilee) (cf. 13.13), and the land of Phoenicia (northern coastal areas). According to 2 Sam 8.1–2 and 3.3, Philistia and Geshur came under Israelite control or influence only during the period of David).

13.8–33: Transjordanian tribal allotment. Before the allotments west of the Jordan can be described, the Transjordanian allotments that Moses made are recounted: a general description of the extent of the Transjordanian lands (13.8–13), a declaration that the Levites received no inheritance (13.14), a specific description of the Transjordanian territories (13.15–32), and again a declaration that the Levites received no inheritance (13.33). Israel had great difficulties controlling this territory throughout its history, though Deuteronomy considered it part of Israel (see Deut 3.12–17). See map 2 at the end of this volume. **12:** *Rephaim,* see 12.4n. **13:** The first of many qualifications about Israelite success in possessing the land. **14:** *Offerings by fire,* as the priestly tribe, the Levites were in charge of worship and shared the offerings; cf. Lev 7.29–36; etc. See also v. 33n. **21:** *Midian,* see Num 31.1–12. **22:** *Balaam,* in contrast to the narrative about him in Num 22–24, here this non-Israelite prophet is

lies. 25 Their territory was Jazer, and all the towns of Gilead, and half the land of the Ammonites, to Aroer, which is east of Rabbah, 26 and from Heshbon to Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim to the territory of Debir,[a] 27 and in the valley Beth-haram, Beth-nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of King Sihon of Heshbon, the Jordan and its banks, as far as the lower end of the Sea of Chinnereth, eastward beyond the Jordan. 28 This is the inheritance of the Gadites according to their clans, with their towns and villages.

29 Moses gave an inheritance to the half-tribe of Manasseh; it was allotted to the half-tribe of the Manassites according to their families. 30 Their territory extended from Mahanaim, through all Bashan, the whole kingdom of King Og of Bashan, and all the settlements of Jair, which are in Bashan, sixty towns, 31 and half of Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei, the towns of the kingdom of Og in Bashan; these were allotted to the people of Machir son of Manasseh according to their clans—for half the Machirites.

32 These are the inheritances that Moses distributed in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan east of Jericho. 33 But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance; the Lord God of Israel is their inheritance, as he said to them.

14 These are the inheritances that the Israelites received in the land of Canaan, which the priest Eleazar, and Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the families of the tribes of the Israelites distributed to them. 2 Their inheritance was by lot, as the Lord had commanded Moses for the nine and one-half tribes. 3 For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan; but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them. 4 For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim; and no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only towns to live in, with their pasture lands for their flocks and herds. 5 The Israelites did as the Lord commanded Moses; they allotted the land.

6 Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal; and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh-barnea concerning you and me. 7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him an honest report. 8 But my companions who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God. 9 And Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God.'

[a] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *Lidebir*

presented in a negative light. The tradition that the Israelites said to have killed him is also found in Num 31.8.
33: A somewhat different formulation from v. 14; cf. Deut 10.9; 18.2; 18.7.

14.1–19.51: Cisjordanian tribal allotment. The story of the allotments to the tribes west of the Jordan is framed by an introduction (14.1–5) and a summary (19.51). The main text is divided into two major sections: the allotments to Judah and Joseph, the two most powerful tribes (14.6–17.18), and allotments to the seven other tribes (18.1–19.51). **14.1–5: Introduction to the process of allotment.** Eleazar (the chief priest, son of Aaron), Joshua, and the heads of the tribal families oversaw this allotment, which was performed by lot (see 7.14n.).
4–5: See Num 34.13–15; 35.3. In an artificial way, in order to maintain the conventional number of twelve tribes, the *people of Joseph* were counted as two tribes, *Manasseh and Ephraim,* to make up for Levi's lack of inheritance (see 13.14,33n.).

14.6–17.18: Judah and Joseph allotments. Parallel structures are used to describe the allotments to these tribes: narrative frames, boundary descriptions, and town lists, with vignettes in the center.

14.6–15.63: Judah. The tribe to which King David belonged is first.

14.6–15: Caleb's conquest. The success of Judah is specifically illustrated in the narrative frame story of Caleb's conquest of Hebron. *Caleb* was one of the original twelve scouts sent into the land of Canaan (Num 13.30; 14.24). Caleb and his clan conquer Hebron, the home of the Anakim. The repetition in v. 15 of the statement *and the land had rest from war* connects this story to 11.21–23. Ironically, it was the fear of these very Anakim that caused Israel's disobedience and failure at Kadesh-barnea, according to Num 13.28 and Deut 1.28.

10 And now, as you see, the LORD has kept me
alive, as he said, these forty-five years since
the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel was journeying through the
wilderness; and here I am today, eighty-five
years old. 11 I am still as strong today as I was
on the day that Moses sent me; my strength
now is as my strength was then, for war,
and for going and coming. 12 So now give me
this hill country of which the LORD spoke on
that day; for you heard on that day how the
Anakim were there, with great fortified cities;
it may be that the LORD will be with me, and I
shall drive them out, as the LORD said."

13 Then Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. 14 So Hebron became the inheritance
of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to
this day, because he wholeheartedly followed the LORD, the God of Israel. 15 Now the
name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba;[a]
this Arba was[b] the greatest man among the
Anakim. And the land had rest from war.

15 The lot for the tribe of the people of Judah according to their families reached
southward to the boundary of Edom, to the
wilderness of Zin at the farthest south. 2 And
their south boundary ran from the end of the
Dead Sea,[c] from the bay that faces southward;
3 it goes out southward of the ascent of Akrabbim, passes along to Zin, and goes up south
of Kadesh-barnea, along by Hezron, up to
Addar, makes a turn to Karka, 4 passes along
to Azmon, goes out by the Wadi of Egypt, and
comes to its end at the sea. This shall be your
south boundary. 5 And the east boundary is
the Dead Sea,[c] to the mouth of the Jordan. And
the boundary on the north side runs from
the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan;
6 and the boundary goes up to Beth-hoglah,
and passes along north of Beth-arabah; and
the boundary goes up to the Stone of Bohan,
Reuben's son; 7 and the boundary goes up to
Debir from the Valley of Achor, and so northward, turning toward Gilgal, which is opposite
the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south
side of the valley; and the boundary passes
along to the waters of En-shemesh, and ends
at En-rogel; 8 then the boundary goes up by the
valley of the son of Hinnom at the southern
slope of the Jebusites (that is, Jerusalem);
and the boundary goes up to the top of the
mountain that lies over against the valley of
Hinnom, on the west, at the northern end of
the valley of Rephaim; 9 then the boundary
extends from the top of the mountain to the
spring of the Waters of Nephtoah, and from
there to the towns of Mount Ephron; then
the boundary bends around to Baalah (that
is, Kiriath-jearim); 10 and the boundary circles
west of Baalah to Mount Seir, passes along to
the northern slope of Mount Jearim (that is,
Chesalon), and goes down to Beth-shemesh,
and passes along by Timnah; 11 the boundary
goes out to the slope of the hill north of Ekron,
then the boundary bends around to Shikkeron, and passes along to Mount Baalah, and
goes out to Jabneel; then the boundary comes
to an end at the sea. 12 And the west boundary
was the Mediterranean with its coast. This is
the boundary surrounding the people of Judah
according to their families.

[a] That is *the city of Arba*
[b] Heb lacks *this Arba was*
[c] Heb *Salt Sea*

10: According to Deut 2.14, thirty-eight years elapsed from the events at Kadesh to the entry into the land; the events of the preceding chapters thus took seven years, perhaps an ideal number. **13:** *Hebron* (Tell Rumeideh) is 19 mi (31 km) south of Jerusalem. **14:** This prime example of Judahite success is accomplished by a non-Israelite: Caleb is a Kenizzite (14.6,14) who is, however, ultimately incorporated into Judah's genealogy (1 Chr 2.9,18). **15:** See 15.13; Gen 23.2. In the ancient Near East, tribal groups were socially constructed units, not always based on actual biological lineage.

15.1–12: Judah's boundary description is given in a counterclockwise arrangement: south (vv. 2–4), east (v. 5), north (vv. 6–11), west (v. 12a; cf. 11.21–22; Judg 1.18–19; Josh 15.63), with a concluding boundary description (v. 12b). See map on p. 241 and map 4 at the end of this volume. **1:** *Wilderness of Zin,* the locale of Kadesh-barnea, in the southern Negeb (see 10.41n.; Num 20.1; Deut 32.51). **4:** *Wadi of Egypt,* either the Wadi Besor or the Wadi el-Arish, both south of Gaza. **6:** *Bohan* means "thumb"; *Reuben's son,* named only here and in 18.17. No son of Reuben with this name is mentioned elsewhere, and the location of part of the tribe of Reuben west of the Jordan is unusual. **7–8:** For the geography of Jerusalem, see map 1 at the end of this volume.

13 According to the commandment of
the LORD to Joshua, he gave to Caleb son of
Jephunneh a portion among the people of Judah, Kiriath-arba,[a] that is, Hebron (Arba was
the father of Anak). 14 And Caleb drove out
from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai,
Ahiman, and Talmai, the descendants of
Anak. 15 From there he went up against
the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of
Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher. 16 And
Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher
and takes it, to him I will give my daughter
Achsah as wife." 17 Othniel son of Kenaz, the
brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him his
daughter Achsah as wife. 18 When she came
to him, she urged him to ask her father for a
field. As she dismounted from her donkey,
Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" 19 She
said to him, "Give me a present; since you
have set me in the land of the Negeb, give me
springs of water as well." So Caleb gave her
the upper springs and the lower springs.

20 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the
people of Judah according to their families.
21 The towns belonging to the tribe of the
people of Judah in the extreme south, toward
the boundary of Edom, were Kabzeel, Eder,
Jagur, 22 Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, 23 Kedesh,
Hazor, Ithnan, 24 Ziph, Telem, Bealoth,
25 Hazor-hadattah, Kerioth-hezron (that is,
Hazor), 26 Amam, Shema, Moladah, 27 Hazar-
gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-pelet, 28 Hazar-shual,
Beer-sheba, Biziothiah, 29 Baalah, Iim, Ezem,
30 Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, 31 Ziklag, Mad-
mannah, Sansannah, 32 Lebaoth, Shilhim,
Ain, and Rimmon: in all, twenty-nine towns,
with their villages.

33 And in the lowland, Eshtaol, Zorah,
Ashnah, 34 Zanoah, En-gannim, Tappu-
ah, Enam, 35 Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh,
Azekah, 36 Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah,
Gederothaim: fourteen towns with their vil-
lages.

37 Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal-gad, 38 Dilan,
Mizpeh, Jokthe-el, 39 Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon,
40 Cabbon, Lahmam, Chitlish, 41 Gederoth,
Beth-dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen
towns with their villages.

42 Libnah, Ether, Ashan, 43 Iphtah, Ashnah,
Nezib, 44 Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine
towns with their villages.

45 Ekron, with its dependencies and its
villages; 46 from Ekron to the sea, all that were
near Ashdod, with their villages.

47 Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza,
its towns and its villages; to the Wadi of
Egypt, and the Great Sea with its coast.

48 And in the hill country, Shamir, Jattir, So-
coh, 49 Dannah, Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir),
50 Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, 51 Goshen, Holon,
and Giloh: eleven towns with their villages.

52 Arab, Dumah, Eshan, 53 Janim, Beth-
tappuah, Aphekah, 54 Humtah, Kiriath-arba
(that is, Hebron), and Zior: nine towns with
their villages.

55 Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, 56 Jezreel,
Jokdeam, Zanoah, 57 Kain, Gibeah, and Tim-
nah: ten towns with their villages.

58 Halhul, Beth-zur, Gedor, 59 Maarath,
Beth-anoth, and Eltekon: six towns with their
villages.

60 Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim) and
Rabbah: two towns with their villages.

61 In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin,
Secacah, 62 Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En-
gedi: six towns with their villages.

63 But the people of Judah could not
drive out the Jebusites, the inhabitants of

[a] That is *the city of Arba*

15.13–19: Vignettes about Judah's heroes (cf. 10.36–39; Judg 1.9–15): male, Caleb and Othniel (15.13–17), and female, Achsah (15.18–19). In the first vignette, Caleb conquers Hebron (see 14.6–15) and attacks the city of Debir. After recording Caleb's challenge and offer of his daughter in marriage (cf. 1 Sam 17.25), Othniel steps forward as the conquering hero of Debir. In the second, Achsah takes the initiative, urging her husband to ask for a field and then requesting her father to give her springs or pools since land without water is land without life.

15.20–62: A list of Judah's towns according to districts that is generally considered to have originated in the monarchic period. A similar list is found in 1 Kings 4.7–19.

15.63: A narrative postscript noting Judah's failure to conquer Jerusalem. This failure contrasts with Caleb's success in the initial narrative of Judah's allotment (14.6–15). Judg 1.21 attributes this failure to the Benjaminites. According to 2 Sam 5.6–9, David captures this city. *Jebusites,* Jebus, the name by which Jerusalem was known before its conquest by David.

Jerusalem; so the Jebusites live with the people of Judah in Jerusalem to this day.

16 The allotment of the Josephites went from the Jordan by Jericho, east of the waters of Jericho, into the wilderness, going up from Jericho into the hill country to Bethel; [2] then going from Bethel to Luz, it passes along to Ataroth, the territory of the Archites; [3] then it goes down westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the territory of Lower Beth-horon, then to Gezer, and it ends at the sea.

[4] The Josephites—Manasseh and Ephraim—received their inheritance.

[5] The territory of the Ephraimites by their families was as follows: the boundary of their inheritance on the east was Ataroth-addar as far as Upper Beth-horon, [6] and the boundary goes from there to the sea; on the north is Michmethath; then on the east the boundary makes a turn toward Taanath-shiloh, and passes along beyond it on the east to Janoah, [7] then it goes down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, and touches Jericho, ending at the Jordan. [8] From Tappuah the boundary goes westward to the Wadi Kanah, and ends at the sea. Such is the inheritance of the tribe of the Ephraimites by their families, [9] together with the towns that were set apart for the Ephraimites within the inheritance of the Manassites, all those towns with their villages. [10] They did not, however, drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer: so the Canaanites have lived within Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labor.

17 Then allotment was made to the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. To Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, were allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a warrior. [2] And allotments were made to the rest of the tribe of Manasseh, by their families, Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher, and Shemida; these were the male descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, by their families.

[3] Now Zelophehad son of Hepher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh had no sons, but only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. [4] They came before the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun and the leaders, and said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with our male kin." So according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the kinsmen of their father. [5] Thus there fell to Manasseh ten portions, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is on the other side of the Jordan, [6] because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance along with his sons. The land of Gilead was allotted to the rest of the Manassites.

[7] The territory of Manasseh reached from Asher to Michmethath, which is east

16.1–17.18: Joseph (Ephraim and Half-Manasseh). As the primary power in the Northern Kingdom, Joseph is mentioned next. See map on p. 351. The order here of Ephraim then Manasseh follows Jacob's blessings in Gen 48.12–22, not their birth order narrated in Gen 41.51–52.

16.1–4: A narrative frame that gives the general outline of the southern borders of the Joseph tribes (i.e., the southern boundary of Ephraim). The people of Joseph receive one allotment (16.1), as if they constitute one tribe, yet they are recognized as two distinct tribal units (Ephraim and Manasseh; 14.4a). In addition, one of the tribes, Manasseh, is further divided: part of the tribe has already received an allotment in Transjordan, while the remainder receives its allotment in Cisjordan.

16.5–10: Ephraim's boundary description is delineated. The fragmentary description here contrasts with that devoted to Judah (15.1–12). **10:** The Ephraimites failed to dispossess the Canaanites, though subjecting them to forced labor; cf. 15.63; Judg 1.29.

17.1–6: Ephraim's heroes. This somewhat disjointed section corresponds to Judah's vignettes of heroes. **1–2:** The mighty *warrior* (parallel to Caleb and Othniel in 15.13–17) is Machir, Manasseh's firstborn (cf. Num 32.39–40), who is given Gilead and Bashan, in Transjordan (see map on p. 351). Yet the allotment for *the rest of the tribe of Manasseh* west of the Jordan is given in the form of a town list without any connection to the ancestral hero. **3–6:** The tribes' heroic women (corresponding to Achsah in 15.18–19) are the daughters of Zelophehad (see Num 27.1–11; 36.1–12).

17.7–13: Manasseh's boundary description is given. It includes a list of towns that the tribe had within the tribal allotments of Issachar and Asher (v. 11). As in the case of Ephraim, the Canaanites were not driven out,

of Shechem; then the boundary goes along southward to the inhabitants of En-tappuah. 8 The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but the town of Tappuah on the boundary of Manasseh belonged to the Ephraimites. 9 Then the boundary went down to the Wadi Kanah. The towns here, to the south of the wadi, among the towns of Manasseh, belong to Ephraim. Then the boundary of Manasseh goes along the north side of the wadi and ends at the sea. 10 The land to the south is Ephraim's and that to the north is Manasseh's, with the sea forming its boundary; on the north Asher is reached, and on the east Issachar. 11 Within Issachar and Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and its villages, Ibleam and its villages, the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, the inhabitants of En-dor and its villages, the inhabitants of Taanach and its villages, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages (the third is Naphath).[a] 12 Yet the Manassites could not take possession of those towns; but the Canaanites continued to live in that land. 13 But when the Israelites grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

14 The tribe of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given me but one lot and one portion as an inheritance, since we are a numerous people, whom all along the LORD has blessed?" 15 And Joshua said to them, "If you are a numerous people, go up to the forest, and clear ground there for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you." 16 The tribe of Joseph said, "The hill country is not enough for us; yet all the Canaanites who live in the plain have chariots of iron, both those in Beth-shean and its villages and those in the Valley of Jezreel." 17 Then Joshua said to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh, "You are indeed a numerous people, and have great power; you shall not have one lot only, 18 but the hill country shall be yours, for though it is a forest, you shall clear it and possess it to its farthest borders; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong."

18 Then the whole congregation of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there. The land lay subdued before them.

2 There remained among the Israelites seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been apportioned. 3 So Joshua said to the Israelites, "How long will you be slack about going in and taking possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you? 4 Provide three men from each tribe, and I will send them out that they may begin to go throughout the land, writing a description of it with a view to their inheritances. Then come back to me. 5 They shall divide it into seven portions, Judah continuing in its territory on the south, and the house of Joseph in their territory on the north. 6 You shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me; and I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. 7 The Levites have no portion among you, for the priesthood of the LORD is their heritage; and Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

but were put to forced labor (vv. 12–13; cf. Judg 1.27–28). While the description of Judah's borders is related with precision and detail, those of Ephraim and Manasseh are fragmentary, take up much less textual space, and present numerous topographical difficulties. The integrity of Judah's territory is thus contrasted with the broken borders of the Joseph tribes.

17.14–18: Joseph's portion. This narrative frame describes the demand of the people of Joseph and the double portion that they receive. This story is an ironic counterbalance to the quest for land by Caleb (14.6–15), and perhaps also by Achsah (15.18–19). The Josephites convey trepidation, contentiousness, and failure.

18.1–19.51: Seven other tribal allotments. The narration of the allotments to the remaining seven tribes. See map on p. 351 and map 4 at the end of this volume.

18.1–10: Assembly of Shiloh. General introduction to the allotments. The boundaries of the tribes in the land are asserted to be the result of the LORD's will and of Israel's obedience, not human will or historical contingency. **1:** *Shiloh,* an important Israelite sanctuary in the period before the monarchy (Judg 18.31; 1 Sam 4.3–4). It is 19 mi (31 km) north of Jerusalem. **6:** *Lots*, see 7.14n. **7:** *The Levites*, see 13.14n., 33n.

Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan eastward, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them."

8 So the men started on their way; and Joshua charged those who went to write the description of the land, saying, "Go throughout the land and write a description of it, and come back to me; and I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh." 9 So the men went and traversed the land and set down in a book a description of it by towns in seven divisions; then they came back to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh, 10 and Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD; and there Joshua apportioned the land to the Israelites, to each a portion.

11 The lot of the tribe of Benjamin according to its families came up, and the territory allotted to it fell between the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Joseph. 12 On the north side their boundary began at the Jordan; then the boundary goes up to the slope of Jericho on the north, then up through the hill country westward; and it ends at the wilderness of Beth-aven. 13 From there the boundary passes along southward in the direction of Luz, to the slope of Luz (that is, Bethel), then the boundary goes down to Ataroth-addar, on the mountain that lies south of Lower Beth-horon. 14 Then the boundary goes in another direction, turning on the western side southward from the mountain that lies to the south, opposite Beth-horon, and it ends at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a town belonging to the tribe of Judah. This forms the western side. 15 The southern side begins at the outskirts of Kiriath-jearim; and the boundary goes from there to Ephron,[a] to the spring of the Waters of Nephtoah; 16 then the boundary goes down to the border of the mountain that overlooks the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is at the north end of the valley of Rephaim; and it then goes down the valley of Hinnom, south of the slope of the Jebusites, and downward to En-rogel; 17 then it bends in a northerly direction going on to En-shemesh, and from there goes to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim; then it goes down to the Stone of Bohan, Reuben's son; 18 and passing on to the north of the slope of Beth-arabah[b] it goes down to the Arabah; 19 then the boundary passes on to the north of the slope of Beth-hoglah; and the boundary ends at the northern bay of the Dead Sea,[c] at the south end of the Jordan: this is the southern border. 20 The Jordan forms its boundary on the eastern side. This is the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin, according to its families, boundary by boundary all around.

21 Now the towns of the tribe of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz, 22 Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, 23 Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, 24 Chephar-ammoni, Ophni, and Geba—twelve towns with their villages: 25 Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, 26 Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, 27 Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, 28 Zela, Haeleph, Jebus[d] (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah[e] and Kiriath-jearim[f]—fourteen towns with their villages. This is the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin according to its families.

19 The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of Simeon, according to its families; its inheritance lay within the inheritance of the tribe of Judah. 2 It had for its inheritance Beer-sheba, Sheba, Moladah, 3 Hazar-shual, Balah, Ezem, 4 Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, 5 Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah, 6 Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhen—thirteen towns with their villages; 7 Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan—four towns with their villages; 8 together with all the villages all around these towns as far as Baalath-beer, Ramah of the Negeb. This was the inheritance of the tribe of Simeon according to its families. 9 The inheritance of the tribe of

[a] Cn See 15.9. Heb *westward*
[b] Gk: Heb *to the slope over against the Arabah*
[c] Heb *Salt Sea*
[d] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *the Jebusite*
[e] Heb *Gibeath*
[f] Gk: Heb *Kiriath*

18.11–28: Benjamin. The territory of Benjamin is immediately north of Judah. **12–20:** A counterclockwise boundary description is given. **17:** *Bohan,* see 15.6n. **21–28:** Benjamin's town list follows. Two districts of towns (vv. 21–24 and vv. 25–28) are presented in the same format as those for Judah (many scholars assume from the same source). **28:** *Jerusalem,* assigned to Judah in 15.63.

19.1–9: Simeon. The allotment is described only in terms of a town list (cf. 1 Chr 4.28–33). **9:** A gloss ex-

Simeon formed part of the territory of Judah; because the portion of the tribe of Judah was too large for them, the tribe of Simeon obtained an inheritance within their inheritance.

10 The third lot came up for the tribe of Zebulun, according to its families. The boundary of its inheritance reached as far as Sarid; 11 then its boundary goes up westward, and on to Maralah, and touches Dabbesheth, then the wadi that is east of Jokneam; 12 from Sarid it goes in the other direction eastward toward the sunrise to the boundary of Chisloth-tabor; from there it goes to Daberath, then up to Japhia; 13 from there it passes along on the east toward the sunrise to Gath-hepher, to Eth-kazin, and going on to Rimmon it bends toward Neah; 14 then on the north the boundary makes a turn to Hannathon, and it ends at the valley of Iphtah-el; 15 and Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem—twelve towns with their villages. 16 This is the inheritance of the tribe of Zebulun, according to its families—these towns with their villages.

17 The fourth lot came out for Issachar, for the tribe of Issachar, according to its families. 18 Its territory included Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem, 19 Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, 20 Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, 21 Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah, Beth-pazzez; 22 the boundary also touches Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth-shemesh, and its boundary ends at the Jordan—sixteen towns with their villages. 23 This is the inheritance of the tribe of Issachar, according to its families—the towns with their villages.

24 The fifth lot came out for the tribe of Asher according to its families. 25 Its boundary included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, 26 Allammelech, Amad, and Mishal; on the west it touches Carmel and Shihor-libnath, 27 then it turns eastward, goes to Beth-dagon, and touches Zebulun and the valley of Iphtah-el northward to Beth-emek and Neiel; then it continues in the north to Cabul, 28 Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, Kanah, as far as Great Sidon; 29 then the boundary turns to Ramah, reaching to the fortified city of Tyre; then the boundary turns to Hosah, and it ends at the sea; Mahalab,[a] Achzib, 30 Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob—twenty-two towns with their villages. 31 This is the inheritance of the tribe of Asher according to its families—these towns with their villages.

32 The sixth lot came out for the tribe of Naphtali, for the tribe of Naphtali, according to its families. 33 And its boundary ran from Heleph, from the oak in Zaanannim, and Adami-nekeb, and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum; and it ended at the Jordan; 34 then the boundary turns westward to Aznoth-tabor, and goes from there to Hukkok, touching Zebulun at the south, and Asher on the west, and Judah on the east at the Jordan. 35 The fortified towns are Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, 36 Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, 37 Kedesh, Edrei, En-hazor, 38 Iron, Migdal-el, Horem, Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh—nineteen towns with their villages. 39 This is the inheritance of the tribe of Naphtali according to its families—the towns with their villages.

[a] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *Mehebel*

plaining why these do not follow a boundary description. A conjoining of Judah and Simeon is also found in Judg 1.3.

19.10–16: Zebulun. 10–14: Zebulun's boundary description is given. **15:** A town list integrated into a boundary description follows.

19.17–23: Issachar. 18–21: Issachar's town list. **22:** A boundary fragment with v. 17 providing a formulaic introduction. Issachar's boundaries correspond to Solomon's tenth district (1 Kings 4.17). Consequently, there may be some relationship between this unit and the administrative unit in that list. Issachar is missing in the summary in of Judg 1.

19.24–31: Asher. Asher's allotment is fragmentary, with a boundary description (vv. 26–30) and a town list integrated into a boundary description (vv. 25–26,28,30). The list includes some Phoenician cities such as Tyre (v. 29) that were never under Israelite control, suggesting that idealized elements are found in these lists.

19.32–39: Naphtali. Naphtali's allotment has a boundary description (vv. 33–34) and a town list (vv. 35–38). Vv. 32 and 39 provide the framework. The allotment is missing a northern border.

40 The seventh lot came out for the tribe of Dan, according to its families. 41 The territory of its inheritance included Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh, 42 Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, 43 Elon, Timnah, Ekron, 44 Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, 45 Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon, 46 Me-jarkon, and Rakkon at the border opposite Joppa. 47 When the territory of the Danites was lost to them, the Danites went up and fought against Leshem, and after capturing it and putting it to the sword, they took possession of it and settled in it, calling Leshem, Dan, after their ancestor Dan. 48 This is the inheritance of the tribe of Dan, according to their families—these towns with their villages.

49 When they had finished distributing the several territories of the land as inheritances, the Israelites gave an inheritance among them to Joshua son of Nun. 50 By command of the LORD they gave him the town that he asked for, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim; he rebuilt the town, and settled in it.

51 These are the inheritances that the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun and the heads of the families of the tribes of the Israelites distributed by lot at Shiloh before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. So they finished dividing the land.

20 Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 2 "Say to the Israelites, 'Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, 3 so that anyone who kills a person without intent or by mistake may flee there; they shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood. 4 The slayer shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city, and explain the case to the elders of that city; then the fugitive shall be taken into the city, and given a place, and shall remain with them. 5 And if the avenger of blood is in pursuit, they shall not give up the slayer, because the neighbor was killed by mistake, there having been no enmity between them before. 6 The slayer shall remain in that city until there is a trial before the congregation, until the death of the one who is high priest at the time: then the slayer may return home, to the town in which the deed was done.'"

7 So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, and Shechem in the

19.40–48: Dan. Like Simeon (vv. 1–9), the allotment is given only in the form of a town list (vv. 41–47), with vv. 40 and 48 providing a formulaic framework. Ancient tradition located Dan in the south (cf. Judg 1.34). **47:** According to Judges, sometime before the time of the monarchy the Danites migrated to the north (see Judg 18.1–31). Judg 18.27 refers to *Leshem* as Laish.

19.49–50: Final allotment. The allotments of two former scouts (Num 13.6,8) frame the larger unit: Joshua's individual allotment concludes the division of the land, just as Caleb's individual allotment began it (14.6–15). Caleb's success and vigor in capturing Hebron is contrasted to Joshua, who requests a city in the Ephraimite hill country that he (re)builds for himself. The city's name, *Timnath-serah* ("portion of excess") (cf. 24.30), is preserved as Timnath-ḥeres ("portion of the sun") in Judg 2.9. Joshua appears to prefer the sparsely settled hills to fortified cities.

19.51: Summary of the process of allotment. The verse serves as a closing bracket for the structural segments of both 14.1–19.51 (nine-and-one-half tribes) and 18.1–19.51 (seven tribes).

20.1–21.42: Allotments to persons of marginal status. This section delineates secondary allotments that form a transition to the practical concerns of how life is to be lived in the land. Neither group is bounded by the tribal borders just enumerated in chs 13–19. The establishment of both the cities of refuge and the Levitical cities was based on instructions given by Moses. Both are supplemental land grants.

20.1–9: Cities of refuge. The towns of asylum provided the right of asylum for someone who committed involuntary manslaughter until the case was adjudicated. The passage shows how Joshua fulfilled what God had commanded Moses (Num 35.9–34) and Moses commanded Israel (Deut 19.1–13). The right of asylum helped to limit the social damage of unrestrained blood vengeance or feuding, especially important in a tribal context (see Judg 12.1–5; 19.1–21.25). Three towns were allotted on each side of the Jordan. All six were also Levitical cities (21.1,11,27,32,36,38). **3:** *The avenger* (Heb "go'el") *of blood* was the deceased's nearest relative (cf. 2 Sam 14.2–17). **4:** *The gate of the city* was where *the elders* of the city met to adjudicate disputes (cf. Ruth 4.1–12). **6:** Probably a later addition, incorporating the priestly perspective of Num 35.25, with trial by the *congregation* (rather than the elders of v. 4), and implying that *the death of the . . . high priest* expiated the victim's death. **7–10:** See map on p. 351.

The Levitical cities (21.1-42). Cities of (ch 20) refuge are highlighted with a star.

hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah. [8] And beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they appointed Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland, from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. [9] These were the cities designated for all the Israelites, and for the aliens residing among them, that anyone who killed a person without intent could flee there, so as not to die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until there was a trial before the congregation.

21 Then the heads of the families of the Levites came to the priest Eleazar and to Joshua son of Nun and to the heads of the families of the tribes of the Israelites; [2] they said to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, "The LORD commanded through Moses that we be given towns to live in, along with their pasture lands for our livestock." [3] So by command of the LORD the Israelites gave to the Levites the following towns and pasture lands out of their inheritance.

[4] The lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. So those Levites who were descendants of Aaron the priest received by lot thirteen towns from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

[5] The rest of the Kohathites received by lot ten towns from the families of the tribe of Ephraim, from the tribe of Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

[6] The Gershonites received by lot thirteen towns from the families of the tribe of Issachar, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali, and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan.

[7] The Merarites according to their families received twelve towns from the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and the tribe of Zebulun.

[8] These towns and their pasture lands the Israelites gave by lot to the Levites, as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

[9] Out of the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Simeon they gave the following towns mentioned by name, [10] which went to the descendants of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites who belonged to the Levites, since the lot fell to them first. [11] They gave them Kiriath-arba (Arba being the father of Anak), that is Hebron, in the hill country of Judah, along with the pasture lands around it. [12] But the fields of the town and its villages had been given to Caleb son of Jephunneh as his holding.

[13] To the descendants of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge for the slayer, with its pasture lands, Libnah with its pasture lands, [14] Jattir with its pasture lands, Eshtemoa with its pasture lands, [15] Holon with its pasture lands, Debir with its pasture lands, [16] Ain with its pasture lands, Juttah with its pasture lands, and Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands—nine towns out of these two tribes. [17] Out of the tribe of Benjamin: Gibeon with its pasture lands, Geba with its pasture lands, [18] Anathoth with its pasture lands, and Almon with its pasture lands—four towns. [19] The towns of the descendants of Aaron—the priests—were thirteen in all, with their pasture lands.

[20] As to the rest of the Kohathites belonging to the Kohathite families of the Levites, the towns allotted to them were out of the tribe of Ephraim. [21] To them were given Shechem, the city of refuge for the slayer, with its pasture lands in the hill country of Ephraim, Gezer with its pasture lands, [22] Kibzaim with its pasture lands, and Beth-horon with its pasture lands—four towns. [23] Out of the tribe of Dan: Elteke with its pasture lands, Gibbethon with its pasture lands, [24] Aijalon with its pasture lands, Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands—four towns. [25] Out of the half-tribe of Manasseh: Taanach with its pasture lands, and Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands—two towns. [26] The towns of the families of the rest of the Kohathites were ten in all, with their pasture lands.

21.1–42: Levitical cities. Elsewhere the Levites have no inheritance (13.14,33; 18.7; Deut 10.8–9); nevertheless, they are integrated into the unity of Israel. As in the delineation of the tribal boundaries, there is some idealization. The total number of Levitical cities (forty-eight) as a multiple of twelve is symbolic, but the towns are not equally divided among the tribes. They are allotted to the three clans of the Levites: the Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites. **11–12:** See 14.13–15n.; 15.13–19n. **13–40:** See map on p. 351.

[27] To the Gershonites, one of the families of the Levites, were given out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan with its pasture lands, the city of refuge for the slayer, and Beeshterah with its pasture lands—two towns. [28] Out of the tribe of Issachar: Kishion with its pasture lands, Daberath with its pasture lands, [29] Jarmuth with its pasture lands, En-gannim with its pasture lands—four towns. [30] Out of the tribe of Asher: Mishal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture lands, [31] Helkath with its pasture lands, and Rehob with its pasture lands—four towns. [32] Out of the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee with its pasture lands, the city of refuge for the slayer, Hammoth-dor with its pasture lands, and Kartan with its pasture lands—three towns. [33] The towns of the several families of the Gershonites were in all thirteen, with their pasture lands.

[34] To the rest of the Levites—the Merarite families—were given out of the tribe of Zebulun: Jokneam with its pasture lands, Kartah with its pasture lands, [35] Dimnah with its pasture lands, Nahalal with its pasture lands—four towns. [36] Out of the tribe of Reuben: Bezer with its pasture lands, Jahzah with its pasture lands, [37] Kedemoth with its pasture lands, and Mephaath with its pasture lands—four towns. [38] Out of the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead with its pasture lands, the city of refuge for the slayer, Mahanaim with its pasture lands, [39] Heshbon with its pasture lands, Jazer with its pasture lands—four towns in all. [40] As for the towns of the several Merarite families, that is, the remainder of the families of the Levites, those allotted to them were twelve in all.

[41] The towns of the Levites within the holdings of the Israelites were in all forty-eight towns with their pasture lands. [42] Each of these towns had its pasture lands around it; so it was with all these towns.

[43] Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to their ancestors that he would give them; and having taken possession of it, they settled there. [44] And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their ancestors; not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. [45] Not one of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

22 Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, [2] and said to them, "You have observed all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, and have obeyed me in all that I have commanded you; [3] you have not forsaken your kindred these many days, down to this day, but have been careful to keep the charge of the Lord your God. [4] And now the Lord your God has given rest to your kindred, as he promised them; therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan. [5] Take good care to observe the commandment and instruction that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments, and to hold fast to

21.43–45: Ironic conclusion. This is an ironic conclusion to the conquest and allotment sections of the book. The overstated claims of unmitigated success (note the use of Heb "kol" ["all" or "every"] six times) in these verses seem incongruent with the statements given throughout 13.1–21.42 that there were failures among the tribes—some quite significant—as each attempted to secure its allotment. Nevertheless, the stress on the Lord's faithfulness contrasts with the squabbling over the Transjordanian altar in the next section (22.10–34).

22.1–24.33: Epilogue to the conquest and allotment. Three concluding sections are used to foster Israel's fidelity in the land. These take the form of a warning narrative (22.1–34) and a pair of exhorting addresses (23.1–16; 24.1–28) in which commitments to the covenant are renewed. Originally disparate materials have been selected and arranged to frame the book. In particular, participants and motifs from 1.1–18 recur in this section, providing a frame to the book's core.

22.1–34: Misunderstanding with the Transjordanian tribes. The ties binding the tribes together were not firm, and conflicts were a continuing problem. The issue here is the place of legitimate worship, a central concern of Deuteronomy. **1–9: The Transjordanian tribes return to their homes on the east bank. 1–5:** Joshua's farewell to the Transjordanian tribes structurally balances the introduction to them in 1.12–18. **5:** To *love the Lord*

him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." [6] So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

[7] Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan; but to the other half Joshua had given a possession beside their fellow Israelites in the land west of the Jordan. And when Joshua sent them away to their tents and blessed them, [8] he said to them, "Go back to your tents with much wealth, and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and with a great quantity of clothing; divide the spoil of your enemies with your kindred." [9] So the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home, parting from the Israelites at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, their own land of which they had taken possession by command of the LORD through Moses.

[10] When they came to the region[a] near the Jordan that lies in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan, an altar of great size. [11] The Israelites heard that the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region[b] near the Jordan, on the side that belongs to the Israelites. [12] And when the people of Israel heard of it, the whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh, to make war against them.

[13] Then the Israelites sent the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, [14] and with him ten chiefs, one from each of the tribal families of Israel, every one of them the head of a family among the clans of Israel. [15] They came to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, and they said to them, [16] "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this treachery that you have committed against the God of Israel in turning away today from following the LORD, by building yourselves an altar today in rebellion against the LORD? [17] Have we not had enough of the sin at Peor from which even yet we have not cleansed ourselves, and for which a plague came upon the congregation of the LORD, [18] that you must turn away today from following the LORD! If you rebel against the LORD today, he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel tomorrow. [19] But now, if your land is unclean, cross over into the LORD's land where the LORD's tabernacle now stands, and take for yourselves a possession among us; only do not rebel against the LORD, or rebel against us[c] by building yourselves an altar other than the altar of the LORD our God. [20] Did not Achan son of Zerah break faith in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity!' "

[21] Then the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh said in answer to the heads of the families of Israel, [22] "The LORD, God of gods! The LORD, God of gods! He knows; and let Israel itself know! If it was in rebellion or in breach of faith toward the LORD, do not spare us today [23] for building an altar to turn away from following the LORD; or if we did so to offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or offerings of well-being on it, may the LORD himself take vengeance. [24] No! We did it from fear that in time to

[a] Or *to Geliloth*
[b] Or *at Geliloth*
[c] Or *make rebels of us*

anticipates 23.11; the language is Deuteronomic (see Deut 6.5; 10.12–13; 30.16; etc.). **7:** See Deut 3.13; Josh 17.

22.10–34: The debate over the altar built by the Transjordanian tribes. The central role of *Phinehas* (see Ex 6.25; Num 25) in dealing with this conflict leads some scholars to conclude that priestly circles edited this story. **12:** Holding strictly to the Deuteronomic law that forbade the offering of sacrifice anywhere except in the one central sanctuary (Deut 12.13–14), the other tribes apparently interpret the building of the altar as an act of disloyalty to Israel and to its God, and therefore prepare *to make war against them* (Deut 13.13–19). The extent to which the tribal settlement east of the Jordan is or is not part of Israel also stands behind this narrative. **17:** *The sin at Peor,* Num 25.3–5. **19:** Highly charged theological language suggests the superiority of the Cisjordanian tribes. **20:** *Achan,* see ch 7. **24–25:** The motive of the Transjordanian tribes was honorable; they built the altar as

come your children might say to our children, 'What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel? 25 For the LORD has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you, you Reubenites and Gadites; you have no portion in the LORD.' So your children might make our children cease to worship the LORD. 26 Therefore we said, 'Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, 27 but to be a witness between us and you, and between the generations after us, that we do perform the service of the LORD in his presence with our burnt offerings and sacrifices and offerings of well-being; so that your children may never say to our children in time to come, "You have no portion in the LORD." ' 28 And we thought, If this should be said to us or to our descendants in time to come, we could say, 'Look at this copy of the altar of the LORD, which our ancestors made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifice, but to be a witness between us and you.' 29 Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn away this day from following the LORD by building an altar for burnt offering, grain offering, or sacrifice, other than the altar of the LORD our God that stands before his tabernacle!"

30 When the priest Phinehas and the chiefs of the congregation, the heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the Reubenites and the Gadites and the Manassites spoke, they were satisfied. 31 The priest Phinehas son of Eleazar said to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the Manassites, "Today we know that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD; now you have saved the Israelites from the hand of the LORD."

32 Then the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar and the chiefs returned from the Reubenites and the Gadites in the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the Israelites, and brought back word to them. 33 The report pleased the Israelites; and the Israelites blessed God and spoke no more of making war against them, to destroy the land where the Reubenites and the Gadites were settled. 34 The Reubenites and the Gadites called the altar Witness;[a] "For," said they, "it is a witness between us that the LORD is God."

23 A long time afterward, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies all around, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, 2 Joshua summoned all Israel, their elders and heads, their judges and officers, and said to them, "I am now old and well advanced in years; 3 and you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you. 4 I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. 5 The LORD your God will push them back before you, and drive them out of your sight; and you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you. 6 Therefore be very steadfast to observe and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right nor to the left, 7 so that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you, or make mention of the names of their gods, or swear by them, or serve them, or bow yourselves down to them, 8 but hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. 9 For the LORD has driven out before you great and strong nations; and as for you, no one has

[a] Cn Compare Syr: Heb lacks *Witness*

a witness to their loyalty to the LORD, not to worship foreign deities. They feared that in the future the Israelites west of the Jordan might discriminate against them—a well-founded fear in light of this story (see Judg 12.1–5). **26–27:** It was not a real sacrificial altar, they claimed, but merely a memorial, *a witness* (cf. Gen 31.47–48; Josh 24.27).

23.1–24.28: Concluding charges. Joshua's speech to the leaders (23.1–16) is similar to his charge to the people (24.1–28). Both resemble the testaments of prior Israelite leaders: Jacob (Gen 48–49), Joseph (Gen 50.22–26), and especially Moses (Deut 32–33). Additionally, both have framing links with 1.2–9.

23.1–16: Covenantal charge to the leaders. Joshua's address to the leaders consists almost entirely of Deuteronomistic reflections. **1–5:** God's mighty acts of conquest. **4:** *The Great Sea,* the Mediterranean. **6–11:** An exhortation to remain faithful to the LORD and his covenant so that the remaining land can be conquered.

been able to withstand you to this day. 10 One of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, as he promised you. 11 Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God. 12 For if you turn back, and join the survivors of these nations left here among you, and intermarry with them, so that you marry their women and they yours, 13 know assuredly that the LORD your God will not continue to drive out these nations before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land that the LORD your God has given you.

14 "And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one thing has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you; all have come to pass for you, not one of them has failed. 15 But just as all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the bad things, until he has destroyed you from this good land that the LORD your God has given you. 16 If you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which he enjoined on you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land that he has given to you."

24 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac; 4 and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. 5 Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in its midst; and afterwards I brought you out. 6 When I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your ancestors with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.[a] 7 When they cried out to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did to Egypt. Afterwards you lived in the wilderness a long time. 8 Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived on the other side of the Jordan; they fought with you, and I handed them over to you, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. 9 Then King Balak son of Zippor of Moab, set out to fight against Israel. He sent and invited Balaam son of Beor to curse you, 10 but I would not listen to Balaam; therefore he blessed you; so I rescued you out of his hand. 11 When you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I handed them over to you. 12 I sent the hornet[b] ahead of you, which drove out before you the two kings of the Amorites; it was not

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

12–16: Warnings of judgments if Israel is unfaithful to the covenant, worshiping foreign gods. **14:** *To go the way of all the earth,* i.e., to die; see 1 Kings 2.2.

24.1–28: Covenant renewal of the people. Joshua fulfills the commands of Moses in Deut 11; 27; 31. All Israel unites under Joshua's leadership in the service of the LORD. Joshua's final meeting with the people takes place at Shechem (cf. 8.30–35). **1:** *Shechem* (Tell Balata) became an important Israelite religious and political center, and was already important in Genesis. Some scholars view the setting of Shechem (see already Gen 12.6) as a framing device of the Hexateuch. **2–13:** A historical summary analogous to the prologues of ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties has three subdivisions: the ancestral period (vv. 2–4), the Egyptian period (vv. 5–7), and the conquest period (vv. 8–13). **2–4:** A summary of Gen 11.26–46.27. **5–10:** A summary of Exodus and Numbers, omitting any reference to the events at Mount Sinai. **9:** *Balak* and *Balaam,* see Num 22–24; Josh 13.22n. **11:** Perhaps a different tradition about Jericho from that found in ch 6. **12:** *The hornet,* a vivid image; see Ex 23.28; Deut 7.20.

by your sword or by your bow. 13 I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and towns that you had not built, and you live in them; you eat the fruit of vineyards and oliveyards that you did not plant.

14 "Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17 for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed; 18 and the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. 20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good." 21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the LORD!" 22 Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." 23 He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." 24 The people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and him we will obey." 25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. 26 Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the LORD. 27 Joshua said to all the people, "See, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you, if you deal falsely with your God." 28 So Joshua sent the people away to their inheritances.

29 After these things Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred ten years old. 30 They buried him in his own inheritance at Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel.

32 The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem, in the portion of ground that Jacob had bought from the children of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for one hundred pieces of money;[a] it became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.

33 Eleazar son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah, the town of his son Phinehas, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

[a] Heb *one hundred qesitah*

13: See Deut 6.10–11. **14–24:** A dialogue between Joshua and the people in which the issue of serving the LORD, not other gods, is weighed. The Israelites' commitment to the covenant with the LORD is formalized. **14:** *The River,* the Euphrates. *In Egypt,* cf. Ezek 20.5–8; 23.3,8. **23:** See Gen 35.2–4. **26:** *A large stone,* cf. 8.32. *The oak,* see Gen 12.6; 35.4; Deut 11.30; Judg 9.6.

24.29–33: Appendixes. Appendixes are found in several biblical books; here three short notices are given. **29–31:** The death and burial of Joshua, with a comment concerning Israel's faithfulness to the LORD; cf. Judg 2.6–9. **32:** The reburial of the bones of Joseph in Shechem in the patriarchal plot (see Gen 50.25; Ex 13.19). Here again our attention is returned to Genesis. **33:** The death and burial of the priest Eleazar (see 13.1). This is a surprising ending, but it indicates the strength of the priestly interests in the book.

JUDGES

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

The book of Judges gets its name from the term used for Israel's leaders in the transitional period between the conquest of the land in the book of Joshua and the establishment of the monarchy in the book of 1 Samuel. "Judges" (Heb *shophetim*) is related to the word for "justice" (*mishpat*); the term is used in nonbiblical sources for rulers and administrators. In the book of Judges, it is used of protagonists whose feats, often larger-than-life, rescued Israel from oppression by rival Iron Age peoples and who settled scores more often than legal matters.

AUTHORSHIP AND LITERARY HISTORY

Jewish tradition ascribed the book to Samuel. Modern scholars suggest that Judges is comprised of traditions that were transmitted orally and once written were copied, amplified, and edited for centuries, making the definition of "author" complicated. Its uneven texture is evidence that Judges was not composed in a single moment. Its primary fabric is prose narrative, though it contains a long poem, the Song of Deborah (ch 5). Different sections of the book have distinct editorial formulas and refrains: ch 1 contains conquest notices; chs 2–16 are dominated by a formula describing Israel's sin, God punishment, and then God sending a judge to relieve them of their misery; the refrain "In those days there was no king in Israel" unifies chs 17–22.

Though the Song of Deborah may stem from near the end of the second millennium BCE, the reference to the Assyrian invasion of Samaria in 18.30 makes it clear that Judges was not completed before 722 BCE when that event occurred. Correspondences between Judges and Joshua, Samuel, and Kings have led scholars to posit the existence of a "Deuteronomistic History," a continuous narrative that traced Israel's history in the Promised Land from the entry into Canaan to the Babylonian exile, making the final form of Judges part of a work that describes events as late as ca. 560 BCE (2 Kings 24.27), though likely revised and reworked for several more centuries.

The core of the book of Judges contains narratives about northern heroes (roughly chs 3–8). When these stories were incorporated into the Deuteronomistic History in the late seventh/early sixth century BCE, Judges became part of a narrative that ended in Kings with cultural devastation attributed to religious infidelity. In order to adapt the heroic stories to its new setting, historians prefaced chs 3–8 with an editorial in the Deuteronomistic style (2.6–3.6; see also 10.6–9), added a narrative about a southern hero (Othniel, 3.7–11), and appended a downbeat coda to the Gideon narrative (8.27,33). The Deuteronomist also added stories about morally deficient or ambivalent protagonists (Abimelech, Jephthah, and Samson), and the list of "minor judges" (10.1–5; 12.8–15). Like the Deuteronomistic History of which it was a part, the negative tone of this edition of Judges contained both hopes for and prophetic critique of kingship (ch 9).

The extant book emerged when this Deuteronomistic work (roughly, chs 2–16) was framed with a beginning (1.1–2.5) and ending (chs 17–21). These final exterior strata have a clear regional bias. The initial chapters portray the southern tribe of Judah as uniquely successful and the other, northern, tribes as faithless and hapless. The final chapters focus on the misdeeds of the tribe of Dan (in the far north) and Benjamin (just north of Judah), the very sites of shrines that rivaled Judah's own Temple in Jerusalem, and give special attention to the misdeeds of Saul's hometown Gibeah and his tribe Benjamin. Thus, though neither is mentioned, the shadows of David and Saul, heroes of southern and northern culture respectively, loom over the concluding section.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

Judges has three sections. "The days after Joshua" (1.1–2.5) sketches a picture of the various tribes' fortunes in securing their territories against indigenous Canaanites. Compared with parallel accounts in Joshua, this introduction has a bias toward Judah (compare 1.9–13 with Josh 10.36–40; 1.21 with Josh 15.63). The introductory section ends with the account of a theophany in which the angel of the LORD explains that the failures of the non-Judahite tribes were the result of syncretism with Canaanite religion (Judg 2.1–5).

The main section, "the days of the judges" (2.6–16.31), consists of narratives governed by a coherent editorial formula: the Israelites "do evil" and as punishment God allows a rival group to oppress them; the Israelites

cry to the LORD; the LORD hears their cry and sends a "deliverer"; the enemy is defeated; and "the land has rest." The stories of these deliverers, also called judges, grow in length and complexity from Othniel (3.7–11), an account spare in details and long on formula, to those in chs 3–5 about Ehud, Deborah, and Barak that focus on a single feat or battle. The next sections, about Gideon (chs 6–9) and Jephthah (chs 10–12), contain multiple stories about each hero. The final narrative, about Samson (chs 13–16), is a kind of biography, presenting the protagonist's feats in a story from birth to death.

The plots in the central section follow this formula. In the final section, chs 17–21, the pattern dissolves: the tribes are fractious, the judges themselves flawed, and without centralized religious and political leadership Israel's sense of identity as a people in covenant with the LORD was endangered by gradual assimilation to local cultures. The final section consists of two long stories about illicit shrines, horrific violence, and internecine warfare.

INTERPRETATION

As Genesis through Kings depicts Israel walking through history with God, the plot is punctuated with ups and downs, rises and falls, covenants made and broken. Judges is one of those places where things fall apart. In its earliest version, Judges was an anthology of frontier legends about the time "when locks were long in Israel" (5.2). This hypothetical stage in the development of the book must certainly be preexilic and possibly dates prior to the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE.

Once these tales were bound within the introductory and closing frames of the book, the trajectory changed. The cyclical pattern began to spiral downward toward the chaotic lawlessness of the final section. Decentralized tribal leaders could not take Israel forward. Kings, not judges, were the leaders who would assume the mantle of Moses and Joshua, and not just any kings, but Davidic kings whose shrine was the Jerusalem Temple. "There was no king" is the final refrain of Judges, suggesting the necessity of centralized political and religious authority.

Judges ends without closure, demanding that readers turn the page, as it were, to the next installment of Israel's story. In Christian Bibles, the next book is Ruth with its genial portrait of village life during the days of the Judges, its charming and quietly powerful female characters, and the birth of King David's grandfather. In Jewish Bibles, the next installment of the story comes in 1 Samuel with the emergence of David and his dynasty in Jerusalem.

In modern biblical scholarship, Judges has become increasingly central in several different areas of inquiry. In biblical archaeology, Judges is at the center of the contentious debates about the origins and early history of Israel. In feminist biblical interpretation, Judges with its vivid women characters and graphic depictions of violence by and against women has become a central text. And with the growing interest in literary approaches to biblical study, Judges has been rediscovered as a neglected masterpiece of Hebrew literature.

Gregory Mobley

1 After the death of Joshua, the Israelites inquired of the LORD, "Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?" **2** The LORD said, "Judah shall go up. I hereby give the land into his hand." **3** Judah said to his brother Simeon, "Come up with me into the territory allotted to me, that we may fight against the Canaanites;

1.1–2.5: The days after Joshua. The opening section sketches the uneven success of the Israelites, tribe by tribe, in securing the land to which Joshua brought them. The prominence and singular success of Judah (vv. 1–20) gestures toward David without mentioning him. The accounts here are often at odds with passages in Joshua.

1.1–20: The success of the Judahites: Judah, accompanied by Simeon, enters Canaan near Jericho (1.16), ascends the southern highlands, and advances to the south. **1:** *After the death of Joshua*: the initial phrase informs readers that this continues the story from the book of Joshua, Moses's hand-picked successor (Num 27.18; Deut 34.9); his death creates a leadership vacuum that the book details. *Inquired* through oracular means (18.5; Num 27.21; 1 Sam 10.22; 28.6). *Who shall go first*, draw first blood in warfare, with high risk and reward. *Canaanites,* the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land. **3:** *His brother Simeon,* the patriarchs Judah and Simeon were both sons

Tribal conquest in ch 1. Cities marked by square bullets are locales where Canaanites continued to live.

then I too will go with you into the territory allotted to you." So Simeon went with him.
4 Then Judah went up and the LORD gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they defeated ten thousand of them at Bezek. 5 They came upon Adoni-bezek at Bezek, and fought against him, and defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites.
6 Adoni-bezek fled; but they pursued him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and big toes. 7 Adoni-bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to pick up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has paid me back." They brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there.

8 Then the people of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it. They put it to the sword and set the city on fire. 9 Afterward the people of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, in the Negeb, and in the lowland. 10 Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba); and they defeated Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai.

11 From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir (the name of Debir was formerly Kiriath-sepher). 12 Then Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and takes it, I will give him my daughter Achsah as wife."
13 And Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; and he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. 14 When she came to him, she urged him to ask her father for a field. As she dismounted from her donkey, Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" 15 She said to him, "Give me a present; since you have set me in the land of the Negeb, give me also Gulloth-mayim."[a] So Caleb gave her Upper Gulloth and Lower Gulloth.

16 The descendants of Hobab[b] the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negeb near Arad. Then they went and settled with the Amalekites.[c] 17 Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they defeated the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and devoted it to destruction. So the city was called Hormah. 18 Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with

[a] That is *Basins of Water*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *Hobab*
[c] See 1 Sam 15.6: Heb *people*

of Leah (Gen 29.33,35). **4:** *Perizzites,* one of the traditional seven nations of Canaan (Deut 7.1). *Ten thousand,* the number could be exaggerated or reflect a use of the word for "thousand" (Heb "ʾelep") meaning "militia-unit." *Bezek,* probably Khirbet Izbiq, ca. 15 mi (24 km) northeast of Shechem. **5:** *Adoni-bezek,* cf. Adoni-zedek, a king of Jerusalem according to Josh 10.1. **7:** *Seventy kings,* the number of his victims suggests a warlord as fierce as the primeval strongman Lamech (Gen 4.24) and anticipates other accounts of royal cruelty, by Abimelech (9.5) and Jehu (2 Kings 10.1–11). **8:** *Judah took Jerusalem*, contradicted by v. 21 and 19.10–12. **10:** An individual, Caleb, not the tribe of *Judah,* is credited with the attack on *Hebron* in v. 20 and Josh 15.34. *Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai*, a trio of legendary giants among the people known as the Anakites/Anakim ("the sons of Anak") mentioned in v. 20 (Num 13.22; Deut 2.10; Josh 15.14). **11–15:** This anecdote establishes the claim of villagers from Debir, probably Khirbet Rabud, 10 mi (16 km) south of Hebron, to springs actually closer to and coveted by Hebronites; cf. Josh 15.15–19. **12:** *Caleb*, the hero of the Israelite spies from the days of Moses (Num 13.30; 14.24; 26.65; Deut 1.36). Saul also offers his daughters as a prize (1 Sam 17.25;18.17,27). **13:** *Othniel* is mentioned in Josh 15.17 and is the first of the judges (3.7–11). **14:** *As she dismounted*, out of respect, before making a request (see Gen 24.64; 1 Sam 25.23). **16:** *Hobab,* a local guide for the Israelites in the wilderness. Though named as *Moses' father-in-law* here and in 4.11, he is identified as Moses's brother-in-law in Num 10.29, which knows Moses's father-in-law as Reuel (see also Ex 2.18); elsewhere in Exodus he is known as Jethro. *City of palms,* probably Jericho (3.13; Deut 34.3; 2 Chr 28.15). *Arad,* ca. 22 mi (36 km) south of Hebron. *The Amalekites* were a nomadic people who conflicted with Israel after the Exodus (Ex 17.8–16; Deut 25.17–18) and who reappear in Jewish tradition as archetypal enemies (see Judg 6.3; 1 Sam 15.1–7). By contrast, *Kenites* (4.11,17; 5.24), though related to the Amalekites, were seen as friendly. **17:** *Devoted to destruction*, the "ḥerem" (the "ban"), a practice of ancient warfare in which conquered peoples, livestock, and artifacts were annihilated and offered to the deity; see Deut 13.15–19; Josh 6.21. **18:** *Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron,* in 14.19; 16.21; 1 Sam 6.17, these cities are still under Philistine control, but here their conquest

its territory. 19 The LORD was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain, because they had chariots of iron. 20 Hebron was given to Caleb, as Moses had said; and he drove out from it the three sons of Anak. 21 But the Benjaminites did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived in Jerusalem among the Benjaminites to this day.

22 The house of Joseph also went up against Bethel; and the LORD was with them. 23 The house of Joseph sent out spies to Bethel (the name of the city was formerly Luz). 24 When the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, "Show us the way into the city, and we will deal kindly with you." 25 So he showed them the way into the city; and they put the city to the sword, but they let the man and all his family go. 26 So the man went to the land of the Hittites and built a city, and named it Luz; that is its name to this day.

27 Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; but the Canaanites continued to live in that land. 28 When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not in fact drive them out.

29 And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer; but the Canaanites lived among them in Gezer.

30 Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites lived among them, and became subject to forced labor.

31 Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob; 32 but the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.

33 Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became subject to forced labor for them.

34 The Amorites pressed the Danites back into the hill country; they did not allow them to come down to the plain. 35 The Amorites continued to live in Har-heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim, but the hand of the house of Joseph rested heavily on them, and they became subject to forced labor. 36 The border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela and upward.

2 Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, "I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you into the land that I had promised to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you. 2 For your part, do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my command. See what you have done! 3 So now I say, I will not drive them out before you; but

is attributed to Judah. **19:** *Chariots of iron* had wooden frames with iron hardware and fittings; cf. Josh 17.16. **20:** *Anak,* see v. 10n.

1.21–36: The failures of the northern tribes. The tribes that later comprised the northern kingdom of Israel fail to uproot the Canaanites in their areas, leading to religious syncretism for which an angel in 2.1–3 condemns them. For cities in the section that can be identified, see the map on p. 365. **21:** In Josh 15.63 Judah, not Benjamin, failed to drive the Jebusites from Jerusalem. **22:** *House of Joseph,* the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen 46.20). **24–25:** Cf. Josh 2.12–14; 6.25. **26:** *The land of the Hittites,* here meaning northern Syria (cf. Josh 1.4) rather than Anatolia, as in earlier periods. **27–33:** Cf. parallel passages in Joshua; for Manasseh (v. 27), Josh 17.1–13; for Ephraim (v. 29), Josh 16.10; for Zebulun (v. 30), Josh 19.10–16; for Asher (vv. 31–32), Josh 19.24–31; for Naphtali (v. 33), Josh 19.32–39. **34:** *Amorites*, another term for the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan. *Danites*, see chs 14–16; 18.

2.1–5: An angel delivers a mixed message. An angel or divine messenger speaks like a prophet and denounces Israel for religious impurity. **2.1:** *Gilgal*, where the Israelites crossed the Jordan and erected a shrine with twelve standing stones (Josh 4.19–20; 5.10); thus, a suitable portal for an *angel*. *Bochim* (lit., "Weepers," see vv.4–5), probably Bethel, where Jacob once saw angels (Gen 28.12). **2:** Ex 34.10–16; Deut 7.5. **3:** Num 33.55; Josh 23.13.

they shall become adversaries[a] to you, and their gods shall be a snare to you." [4] When the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the Israelites, the people lifted up their voices and wept. [5] So they named that place Bochim,[b] and there they sacrificed to the LORD.

[6] When Joshua dismissed the people, the Israelites all went to their own inheritances to take possession of the land. [7] The people worshiped the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. [8] Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred ten years. [9] So they buried him within the bounds of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. [10] Moreover, that whole generation was gathered to their ancestors, and another generation grew up after them, who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.

[11] Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and worshiped the Baals; [12] and they abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. [13] They abandoned the LORD, and worshiped Baal and the Astartes. [14] So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the power of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. [15] Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them to bring misfortune, as the LORD had warned them and sworn to them; and they were in great distress.

[16] Then the LORD raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them. [17] Yet they did not listen even to their judges; for they lusted after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their ancestors had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD; they did not follow their example. [18] Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD would be moved to pity by their groaning because of those who persecuted and oppressed them. [19] But whenever the judge died, they would

[a] OL Vg Compare Gk: Heb *sides*
[b] That is *Weepers*

4: *Lifted up their voices and wept,* Bethel was the site of a "weeping tree" (Gen 35.8).

2.6–16.31: The days of the judges. The core of the book is comprised of tales about the era's leaders.

2.6–3.6: Introduction to the days of the judges. A summary contains the cyclical formula (2.11–19) that shapes the subsequent episodes and traces the era's trajectory of gradual decline. This is followed by a series of supplements.

2.6–10: Recap of the ending of Joshua. Resumption of the narrative from Josh 24.28–31; at one point, this may have joined Judges to Joshua, suggesting that 1.1–2.5 are a later addition. **7:** *The great work,* Deut 11.2–7. **8:** *Servant of the LORD,* showing continuity with Moses (Deut 34.5). *One hundred ten years,* the age at which Joseph, the Ephraimite patriarch, died (Gen 50.22,26). **9:** *Timnath-heres,* Timnath-serah in Josh 24.30.

2.11-23: The formula of the test of Israel's faith. The first appearance of the formula (vv. 11–19) that frames the central section (3.7–11; 3.12,15,30; 4.1–3,23; 5.31; 6.1,6; 8.28; 10.6–7,10; 11.33; 13.1): Israel sins, angering the LORD who allows a foreign people to dominate them, they pray for mercy, the LORD raises up a "judge" to deliver them, and the land has rest. **11:** *Baals,* the plural does not refer to specifically to the male Canaanite storm-god, but to foreign gods in general. **13:** *Astartes,* Astarte, Mesopotamian Ishtar, was a goddess of fertility and warfare different from Canaanite Asherah (see 3.7), a distinction irrelevant to the Israelite narrator; here the term is generic for female deities. **14:** *Plunderers,* Heb "shosim"; Egyptian records from the Late Bronze Age refer to roving gangs of highwaymen known as the "Shasu." **16:** *Judges,* individuals who brought "justice," that is, rectified a societal imbalance through the settlement of disputes (Deborah, 4.4–5), military leadership (Gideon, chs 6–8), assassination (Ehud, 3.18–30), or general destructive mayhem (Samson, chs 14–16); see further Introduction. **19:** *Relapse and behave worse*: the book has a plunging arc; with each repetition of the cyclical formula Israel is worse off.

The geography of the book of Judges. Square boxes indicate Philistine cities.

relapse and behave worse than their ancestors, following other gods, worshiping them and bowing down to them. They would not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. 20 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel; and he said, "Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their ancestors, and have not obeyed my voice, 21 I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died." 22 In order to test Israel, whether or not they would take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their ancestors did, 23 the LORD had left those nations, not driving them out at once, and had not handed them over to Joshua.

3 Now these are the nations that the LORD left to test all those in Israel who had no experience of any war in Canaan 2 (it was only that successive generations of Israelites might know war, to teach those who had no experience of it before): 3 the five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. 4 They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their ancestors by Moses. 5 So the Israelites lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; 6 and they took their daughters as wives for themselves, and their own daughters they gave to their sons; and they worshiped their gods.

7 The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, forgetting the LORD their God, and worshiping the Baals and the Asherahs. 8 Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram-naharaim; and the Israelites served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. 9 But when the Israelites cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the Israelites, who delivered them, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10 The spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel; he went out to war, and the LORD gave King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. 11 So the land had rest forty years. Then Othniel son of Kenaz died.

12 The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD strengthened King Eglon of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the LORD. 13 In alliance with the Ammonites and the Amalekites, he went and defeated Israel; and they took possession of the city of palms. 14 So the Israelites served King Eglon of Moab eighteen years.

15 But when the Israelites cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up for them a deliverer,

3.1–6: List of the peoples who will test Israel. A late addition, justifying Israel's incomplete conquest of Canaan. **3:** *Five lords of the Philistines,* 16.5; etc. *Sidonians,* from coastal Lebanon. *Hivvites,* probably Hittites; see 1.26n. **5:** For an identical list of six non-Israelite groups, see Ex 3.8; Deut 20.17. Other contexts have lists of varying lengths, including seven nations (adding Girgashites) in Deut 7.1 and elsewhere.

3.7–8.28: The deliverers. The tales about judges, also called "deliverers" (2.18; 3.9,15,31; 6.14; 8.22) begin triumphantly with stories about Othniel (3.7–11), Ehud (3.12–30), Deborah/Barak (4.1–5.31), and Gideon (6.1–8.28), held together by a common formula (2.11–23n.).

3.7–11: Othniel. This first story, favoring a Judean judge, closely adheres to the paradigm in 2.11–19. **7:** *Baals and Asherahs,* see 2.13n. **8:** *Cushan-rishathaim,* lit., the "Double-trouble Nubian." *Aram-naharaim,* in northern Syria, rhymes with Cushan-rishathaim. **9:** *Othniel, son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother,* 1.13–15. **10:** *The spirit* (lit., "wind, breath") *of the LORD* also inspires Gideon (6.34), Jephthah (11.29), Samson (13.25; 14.6,19; 15.14), Saul (1 Sam 10.10; 11.6), and David (1 Sam 16.13).

3.12–30: Ehud. A left-handed Benjaminite warrior undertakes a solo mission to the fortress of the Moabite king occupying Jericho, assassinates him, and escapes to safety. Ehud crosses threshold after threshold—the sculptured stones outside Jericho (vv. 19,26), the royal apartment ("cool roof chamber," vv. 20,23–25), in and out of locked doors (v. 23,25)—and in the central chamber of this labyrinth slays Eglon ("Baby Bull"). **12:** *The Israelites again did what was evil,* the initial element of the formula (2.11–23n.); the other features follow in vv. 15,30. *Moab,* Israel's neighbor east of the Jordan (see v. 28). **13:** *Ammonites,* from east of the Jordan north of Moab. *Amalekites,* 1.16n. *City of palms,* 1.16n. **15:** *Ehud* means "Where Is the Power (other than with God)?" praising the deity through

Ehud son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The Israelites sent tribute by him to King Eglon of Moab. 16 Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length; and he fastened it on his right thigh under his clothes. 17 Then he presented the tribute to King Eglon of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. 18 When Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent the people who carried the tribute on their way. 19 But he himself turned back at the sculptured stones near Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." So the king said,[a] "Silence!" and all his attendants went out from his presence. 20 Ehud came to him, while he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber, and said, "I have a message from God for you." So he rose from his seat. 21 Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into Eglon's[b] belly; 22 the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the sword out of his belly; and the dirt came out.[c] 23 Then Ehud went out into the vestibule,[d] and closed the doors of the roof chamber on him, and locked them.

24 After he had gone, the servants came. When they saw that the doors of the roof chamber were locked, they thought, "He must be relieving himself[e] in the cool chamber." 25 So they waited until they were embarrassed. When he still did not open the doors of the roof chamber, they took the key and opened them. There was their lord lying dead on the floor.

26 Ehud escaped while they delayed, and passed beyond the sculptured stones, and escaped to Seirah. 27 When he arrived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites went down with him from the hill country, having him at their head. 28 He said to them, "Follow after me; for the LORD has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand." So they went down after him, and seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites, and allowed no one to cross over. 29 At that time they killed about ten thousand of the Moabites, all strong, able-bodied men; no one escaped. 30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest eighty years.

31 After him came Shamgar son of Anath, who killed six hundred of the Philistines with an oxgoad. He too delivered Israel.

4 The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. 2 So the LORD sold them into the hand of King

[a] Heb *he said*
[b] Heb *his*
[c] With Tg Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Heb *covering his feet*

a rhetorical question. *Benjaminite, a left-handed man,* a playful phrase; Benjamin means "Son of the Right Hand (the South)"; *left-handed,* lit., "disabled in the right hand"; see also 20.16n. *Tribute,* Ehud delivers the tax-like tribute to the occupiers; the Heb also means "offering" or "sacrifice," hinting at Eglon's fate. **16:** *Cubit* (Heb "gomed"), an imprecise translation. An "ammah" or "cubit" marks the distance from elbow to fingertips, a "gomed" from elbow to wrist. Thus Ehud's sword, shorter than normal, was more easily concealed. *On his right thigh,* Ehud will draw, unexpectedly, with his left hand (v. 21). **17:** *A very fat man,* robustly stout, as in Gen 41.4; Dan 1.15. **19:** *Sculptured stones near Gilgal,* likely referring to the stones erected according to Josh 4.8–9,20 after Israel crossed the Jordan. *A secret message,* for King Eglon's ears only, causing the others to leave so Ehud can be alone to kill Eglon. **20:** *Cool roof chamber,* the innermost area of the palace. *A message from God . . . so he rose from his seat,* Eglon's reverent gesture makes him an easy target. **22:** *Dirt*, excrement (see vv. 24–25). **23:** *Vestibule,* meaning uncertain; perhaps "privy hole." **24:** *Relieving himself,* lit., "covering his feet," referring to one's robe fanning out when squatting to defecate. **26:** *Seirah,* location unknown. **28:** *The fords of the Jordan,* 7.24; 12.5. **29:** *Ten thousand,* see 1.4n.

3.31: Shamgar. A foreign mercenary who aided Israel, also mentioned in 5.6. *Shamgar* is a Hurrian name; *Anath* is the name of a Canaanite warrior goddess. *Oxgoad,* a wooden pole with a nail on the end, a cattle prod (see 4.21n.).

4.1–5.31: Deborah and Barak. The story featuring Deborah, the only female judge in the book, about a miraculous victory of Israelite forces under the command of Barak (see 1 Sam 12.11; Heb 11.32) over the Canaanites led by Sisera is recounted in prose (4.1–24) and poetry (5.1–31). For a similar juxtaposition of prose and poetic accounts of the same event, see Ex 14–15. Here, female characters play the major roles in both the prose and poetic accounts.

Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. 3 Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years.

4 At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. 5 She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. 6 She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. 7 I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'" 8 Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." 9 And she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors went up behind him; and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites,[a] that is, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had encamped as far away as Elon-bezaanannim, which is near Kedesh.

12 When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, 13 Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the troops who were with him, from Harosheth-ha-goiim to the Wadi Kishon. 14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day on which the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. The LORD is indeed going out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand warriors following him. 15 And the LORD threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic[b] before Barak; Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot, 16 while Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-ha-goiim. All the army of Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left.

17 Now Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite. 18 Jael came out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear." So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. 20 He said to her, "Stand at the entrance of the tent, and if anybody comes

[a] Heb *from the Kain*

[b] Heb adds *to the sword*; compare verse 16

4.1–24: Barak and the two women. Commissioned by Deborah, the warrior Barak wins the battle over the Canaanites, but because of his initial reluctance (v. 8), is denied the supreme martial honor, killing the enemy leader. Deborah told Barak that Sisera would fall to a woman (v. 9), whom we assume will be Deborah herself. As it turns out, a second woman, Jael, ends up besting both men "she comes out to meet" (vv. 18,22), stealing life from Sisera and "glory" (v. 9) from Barak. **4.1–3:** Elements of the formula (see 2.11–23n.) frame the beginning and end (5.31) of the section; see 2.11–23n. **2:** *The LORD sold them,* as if they were slaves. *Jabin,* Josh 11.1–11. *Hazor*, a major town in northern Galilee. *Harosheth-ha-goiim,* location unknown. **5:** *Deborah, a prophetess*: For other female prophets, see Ex 15.20; 2 Kings 22.14; Neh 6.14; perhaps Isa 8.3. Deborah means "Bee" or "Wasp." *The palm of Deborah,* for other sacred trees, see 6.11,19; 9.6; Gen 12.6; 35.4; Josh 24.26. *Came up to her for judgment,* Deborah is the only leader in Judges actually depicted as functioning as a "judge" to settle disputes (see Ex 18.13–16). **6:** *Barak* means "Lightning Bolt." *Kedesh,* ca. 8 mi (13 km) north of Hazor. *Mount Tabor,* north of the Jezreel Valley. *Ten thousand,* see 1.4n. **7:** *Wadi Kishon,* a valley not far from Taanach and Megiddo (see 5.19). **10:** *Naphtali* and *Zebulun,* in the poetic account, additional tribes are named as participants (see 5.14–15), though there too Zebulun and Naphtali are singled out (5.18). **11:** *Kenite, Hobab,* see 1.16n. **15:** *Panic,* see 7.21–22n. **17:** *Jael* means "Ibex." *Peace between Jabin and the clan of Heber,* Sisera assumed he was safe in a Kenite encampment because of a prior treaty. Jael breaks this treaty in service of another, the ancient association between Israel and the Kenites (see 1.16). **19:** Sisera asks for *water,* Jael gives him *milk* and the *cover* of a blanket, like a mother.

and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.'" [21] But Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, until it went down into the ground—he was lying fast asleep from weariness—and he died. [22] Then, as Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went into her tent; and there was Sisera lying dead, with the tent peg in his temple.

[23] So on that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. [24] Then the hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on King Jabin of Canaan, until they destroyed King Jabin of Canaan.

5 Then Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:

[2] "When locks are long in Israel,
when the people offer themselves willingly—
bless[a] the LORD!

[3] "Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes;
to the LORD I will sing,
I will make melody to the LORD, the God of Israel.

[4] "LORD, when you went out from Seir,
when you marched from the region of Edom,
the earth trembled,
and the heavens poured,
the clouds indeed poured water.
[5] The mountains quaked before the LORD,
the One of Sinai,
before the LORD, the God of Israel.

[6] "In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,
in the days of Jael, caravans ceased
and travelers kept to the byways.
[7] The peasantry prospered in Israel,
they grew fat on plunder,
because you arose, Deborah,
arose as a mother in Israel.
[8] When new gods were chosen,
then war was in the gates.
Was shield or spear to be seen
among forty thousand in Israel?
[9] My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel
who offered themselves willingly among the people.
Bless the LORD.

[10] "Tell of it, you who ride on white donkeys,
you who sit on rich carpets[b]
and you who walk by the way.
[11] To the sound of musicians[b] at the watering places,

[a] Or *You who offer yourselves willingly among the people, bless*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

21: *Tent peg, hammer,* Jael uses the tools of seminomads to kill the charioteer. For other unconventional or inferior weapons, see 3.31; 7.16; 15.15; 1 Sam 17.38–51; 2 Sam 23.21; and for the theme, see Judg 5.8. *Went softly,* hints of seduction, as in 5.27; cf. Ruth 3.7. **23:** The victory is ultimately attributed not to humans, but to *God.*

5.1–31: The Song of Deborah. This ballad is one of the oldest extant pieces of Hebrew writing; it is difficult in many places. As a literary specimen it has more in common with the Late Bronze Age Syrian mythic poetry than with Hebrew poetry from the Iron Age. With arresting imagery, it narrates a battle between the Israelite militia led by Barak and the Canaanite forces under the command of Sisera (unlike 4.2, Jabin, king of Hazor, is not mentioned). According to the poem, it was a cloudburst (vv. 4–5,20–21) that providentially mired the Canaanite chariotry (see 1.19n.; 4.3) in a suddenly sodden Wadi Kishon. The ballad includes a third female character, Sisera's mother, in addition to Deborah and Jael.

5.2–9: The first section is framed by a refrain ("Bless the LORD," vv. 2,9) and emphasizes Israel's vulnerability and the power of its God. **2:** *When locks were long,* nazirite warriors such as Samson (see 13.4–5n.) had uncut hair. **4-5:** A thunderstorm approaching from the south is interpreted as the marching forth of the LORD from Sinai to defend Israel (Ex 15.6–8; Deut 33.2,26–27; 2 Sam 22.8–16; Ps 68.7–9). **6:** *Shamgar,* see 3.31n. **7:** Text and meaning uncertain; read, "The peasantry had ceased . . . until you arose, O Deborah." **8:** *New gods were chosen,* see 2.11–13; Deut 32.17. *Was shield or spear to be seen,* see 1 Sam 13.22. *Then* is repeated five times (vv. 8,11,13,19,22), each time charting the next stage of the battle.

5.10–13: The second section arranges the combatants for a battle between the underdog "people of the LORD . . . against the mighty" Canaanites. **10:** *Donkeys,* a status symbol (10.4).

there they repeat the triumphs of the LORD,
the triumphs of his peasantry in Israel.

"Then down to the gates marched the
people of the LORD.

12 "Awake, awake, Deborah!
Awake, awake, utter a song!
Arise, Barak, lead away your captives,
O son of Abinoam.
13 Then down marched the remnant of the
noble;
the people of the LORD marched down
for him[a] against the mighty.
14 From Ephraim they set out[b] into the valley,[c]
following you, Benjamin, with your kin;
from Machir marched down the
commanders,
and from Zebulun those who bear the
marshal's staff;
15 the chiefs of Issachar came with
Deborah,
and Issachar faithful to Barak;
into the valley they rushed out at his heels.
Among the clans of Reuben
there were great searchings of heart.
16 Why did you tarry among the sheepfolds,
to hear the piping for the flocks?
Among the clans of Reuben
there were great searchings of heart.
17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan;
and Dan, why did he abide with the ships?
Asher sat still at the coast of the sea,
settling down by his landings.
18 Zebulun is a people that scorned death;
Naphtali too, on the heights of the field.

19 "The kings came, they fought;
then fought the kings of Canaan,
at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
they got no spoils of silver.
20 The stars fought from heaven,
from their courses they fought against
Sisera.
21 The torrent Kishon swept them away,
the onrushing torrent, the torrent
Kishon.
March on, my soul, with might!

22 "Then loud beat the horses' hoofs
with the galloping, galloping of his
steeds.

23 "Curse Meroz, says the angel of the LORD,
curse bitterly its inhabitants,
because they did not come to the help of
the LORD,
to the help of the LORD against the
mighty.

24 "Most blessed of women be Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite,
of tent-dwelling women most blessed.
25 He asked water and she gave him milk,
she brought him curds in a lordly bowl.
26 She put her hand to the tent peg
and her right hand to the workmen's
mallet;
she struck Sisera a blow,
she crushed his head,
she shattered and pierced his temple.
27 He sank, he fell,
he lay still at her feet;
at her feet he sank, he fell;
where he sank, there he fell dead.

[a] Gk: Heb *me*
[b] Cn: Heb *From Ephraim their root*
[c] Gk: Heb *in Amalek*

5.14–18: The tribes from and bordering the Samarian highlands join the battle. Reuben and Gilead (in Transjordan), Asher and Dan (on the coast) do not. Judah is not mentioned. For other poetic lists of tribes, see Gen 49.2–27; Deut 33.2–29. **14:** *Machir*, firstborn son of Manasseh (Josh 17.1). **17:** *Dan, why did he abide in ships,* unclear. The tribe of Dan was located in the Judean lowlands (1.34; 13.2,25; 18.2) before migrating to northeast (18.27–29); neither location is on the Mediterranean coast.

5.19–22: The battle itself, impressionistically depicted.

5.23–27: A section with cursing and blessing the non-Israelites involved features folk artistry in its terse, urgent description of Jael's killing of Sisera. **23:** *Meroz,* appearing only here; location unknown. **24–27:** Sisera's death is described in slow motion and, possibly, in sexual terms ("feet" is a frequent euphemism for genitals).

5.28–31: Though Canaanite women are depicted as callous about the rape and looting by their men, the image of Sisera's mother's anguished waiting for a son who will never return is so finely drawn that she is human-

28 "Out of the window she peered,
the mother of Sisera gazed[a] through the lattice:
'Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the hoofbeats of his chariots?'
29 Her wisest ladies make answer,
indeed, she answers the question herself:
30 'Are they not finding and dividing the spoil?—
A girl or two for every man;
spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera,
spoil of dyed stuffs embroidered,
two pieces of dyed work embroidered for my neck as spoil?'

31 "So perish all your enemies, O LORD!
But may your friends be like the sun as it rises in its might."

And the land had rest forty years.

6 The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2 The hand of Midian prevailed over Israel; and because of Midian the Israelites provided for themselves hiding places in the mountains, caves and strongholds. 3 For whenever the Israelites put in seed, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east would come up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the land, as far as the neighborhood of Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel, and no sheep or ox or donkey. 5 For they and their livestock would come up, and they would even bring their tents, as thick as locusts; neither they nor their camels could be counted; so they wasted the land as they came in. 6 Thus Israel was greatly impoverished because of Midian; and the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.

7 When the Israelites cried to the LORD on account of the Midianites, 8 the LORD sent a prophet to the Israelites; and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt, and brought you out of the house of slavery; 9 and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you, and gave you their land; 10 and I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; you shall not pay reverence to the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not given heed to my voice."

11 Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was

[a] Gk Compare Tg: Heb *exclaimed*

ized. **30:** For a similar projection of an army's desire for plunder, see Ex 15.9; Ps 68.12; Isa 9.3. *Girl,* lit., "uterus," an objectifying use of an anatomical term. *A girl or two,* women taken as sexual slaves (see Deut 21.10–11; cf. Judg 21.12–14,20–23).

6.1–8.28: Gideon. Gideon and his warriors rescue Israel from seasonal attacks by Midianites and their allies. Gideon purifies Israel territory from the internal threat of assimilation to Canaanite religion before removing an external threat by driving out invaders from the east (6.1–8.3), and then leads a war party across the Jordan on a reprisal raid (8.4–21); traditions about two different heroes may be combined here (see 6.32n.). A final section about Gideon's legacy (8.22–28) blurs his image: although he made an ephod that became an occasion for idolatry (8.27), he also delivered "rest" to the land (8.28).

6.1–8.3: Gideon and the wine presses. The longest story about Gideon is bracketed by two wine presses. The first (6.11), where Gideon is hiding wheat from invaders, symbolizes Israel's marginality; the second (7.25) is the site where the Midianite leaders are executed, symbolizing the reversal of fortunes.

6.1–10: Midianite raids. Raids by seminomadic Midianites from east of the Jordan at the time of the grain harvests drive Israelite farmers into hiding. **1–6:** Note the elements of the formula (2.11–23n.). **2:** *Hiding places,* cf. 1 Sam 13.5–7. **3:** *Amalekites,* see 1.16n. *People of the east*, Isa 11.14; Ezek 25.4. **7–10:** These verses, missing in a Dead Sea Scroll manuscript of this chapter (4Q49), may be a later addition. **7:** *Cried to the LORD,* usually a deliverer emerges following this element of the formula, but that is delayed here and for the only time in Judges a prophet appears. **8–9:** These verses may be copied from 1 Sam 10.18.

6.11–24: Gideon's commissioning. As with Moses's call narrative in Ex 3–4, there is the charge (v. 14), the recipient's reluctance (v. 15) followed by divine reassurance (v. 16), a theophany (v. 22), and the establishment of a shrine (v. 24). **11:** *Angel of the LORD,* for other angels, see 2.1–4; 5.23; 13.3–21. This angel appears at the portal of a sacred tree (see 2.4n.; 4.5n.). *Ophrah,* location unknown, but not Ophrah in Benjamin, farther to the

beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. 12 The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty warrior." 13 Gideon answered him, "But sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian." 14 Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you." 15 He responded, "But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." 16 The LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them." 17 Then he said to him, "If now I have found favor with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. 18 Do not depart from here until I come to you, and bring out my present, and set it before you." And he said, "I will stay until you return."

19 So Gideon went into his house and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the oak and presented them. 20 The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. 21 Then the angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. 22 Then Gideon perceived that it was the angel of the LORD; and Gideon said, "Help me, Lord GOD! For I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." 23 But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die." 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it, The LORD is peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

25 That night the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull, the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that belongs to your father, and cut down the sacred pole[a] that is beside it; 26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of the stronghold here, in proper order; then take the second bull, and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the sacred pole[a] that you

[a] Heb *Asherah*

south. *Abiezrites,* a subdivision of the tribe of Manasseh (Num 26.30; Josh 17.2). *Belonged to Joash,* the sacred tree belonged to Gideon's father, and family members functioned as priests (see also 6.25). For another family-operated shrine, see 17.1–5. *Gideon* means "Hacker," a suitable name for a hero who demolishes a Canaanite shrine (vv. 25,30). **12:** *Mighty warrior,* a warlord with weapons and access to a militia; also used of Jephthah (11.1), and Kish, Saul's father (1 Sam 9.1). **15:** As in other call narratives, Gideon protests that he is inadequate, like Moses (Ex 3.11) and Jeremiah (Jer 1.6). *My clan is weakest,* could mean numerically smallest, but Gideon's protest of inadequacy could also be rhetorical posturing, for Gideon was hardly without resources (6.25,27); cf. Saul's resistance to Samuel's call in 1 Sam 9.21. *Least in my family,* youngest. For Gideon's brothers, see 8.18–19; 9.2. **16:** *I will be with you,* perhaps borrowed from Ex 3.12, where it functions as an etymology for the name Yahweh. **17:** *Show me a sign,* Gideon, an insecure warrior who requires oracular reassurance (6.36–40), eventually acquires his own divinatory device (8.24–27). **19–23:** Gideon assumes the visitor is human and prepares a meal; for a similar scene, see 13.15–23. **19:** *Ephah,* ca. 21 qts (23 L). **20-21:** The angel transforms the meal into a sacrifice. **21:** *The angel vanished* without eating; angels do not customarily eat (13.16), but there are exceptions (Gen 18.8; 19.3). **22:** *Help me,* the Heb word indicates a terrified cry ("Alas," 11.35); Gideon is afraid that this direct encounter will kill him. *Face to face,* 13.22; Gen 16.13; 32.30; Ex 20.19; 33.20; Isa 6.5. **24:** The *altar at Ophrah,* the foundation story for a shrine at Ophrah associated with Gideon's legend.

6.25–32: Gideon's ritual preparations for warfare. Before Gideon can proceed into battle with the help of the LORD, a God jealous of competing worship (Ex 20.3–5), he must destroy the shrine to Baal. **25:** The *altar of Baal* and *the sacred pole* were symbols, respectively, of the chief Canaanite male and female deities, Baal and Asherah, both associated with fertility. Baal received his offerings in a palacelike stone temple, symbolic of his mythological home on a mountain. The focal points for devotion to Asherah were sacred wooden poles,

shall cut down." [27] So Gideon took ten of his servants, and did as the LORD had told him; but because he was too afraid of his family and the townspeople to do it by day, he did it by night.

[28] When the townspeople rose early in the morning, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the sacred pole[a] beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. [29] So they said to one another, "Who has done this?" After searching and inquiring, they were told, "Gideon son of Joash did it." [30] Then the townspeople said to Joash, "Bring out your son, so that he may die, for he has pulled down the altar of Baal and cut down the sacred pole[a] beside it." [31] But Joash said to all who were arrayed against him, "Will you contend for Baal? Or will you defend his cause? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been pulled down." [32] Therefore on that day Gideon[b] was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he pulled down his altar.

[33] Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east came together, and crossing the Jordan they encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. [34] But the spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon; and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. [35] He sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they went up to meet them.

[36] Then Gideon said to God, "In order to see whether you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said, [37] I am going to lay a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said." [38] And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. [39] Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let your anger burn against me, let me speak one more time; let me, please, make trial with the fleece just once more; let it be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew." [40] And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

7 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the troops that were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was north of them, below[c] the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

[2] The LORD said to Gideon, "The troops with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand. Israel would only take the credit away from me, saying, 'My

[a] Heb *Asherah*
[b] Heb *he*
[c] Heb *from*

symbolic of trees. **27:** Gideon had reason to be *afraid of his family*; they benefited economically and socially from stewardship of the shrine he was hacking to pieces. **32:** *Gideon was called Jerubbaal*: the explanation for Gideon's new name is confusing. "Jerubbaal" means "May Baal contend for (protect) him," the opposite of the explanation given here. Furthermore, the final clause, "because he pulled down his altar," alludes to Gideon's name; see 6.11n., where the same verb refers to the destruction of non-Israelite shrines. Possibly stories about two separate characters, Gideon and Jerubbaal, have been blended together. Both names, Jerubbaal (1 Sam 12.11) and Gideon (Heb 11.32), are used elsewhere.

6.33–35: Gideon musters his troops. Gideon sounds his trumpet and summons warriors from the militias of the Samarian highlands and Jezreel Valley, but omits Ephraim from the initial muster (see 8.1). **34:** *Spirit of the LORD took possession,* lit., "clothed itself with," an image reused in Lk 24.49; see also 3.10n. *Trumpet*, a ram's horn (Heb "shofar"), employed again in 7.16–23.

6.36–40: Gideon tests God twice with the fleece. Gideon asks for two additional signs of divine support. Throughout 6.36–40, "God" (Heb "'Elohim") is used for the deity rather than "the LORD" (YHWH), typically found in the rest of the story; this suggests that this version of the episode combined earlier stories.

7.1-8: The LORD tests Gideon twice with reduction of troops. Just as Gideon had tested God twice, the deity now makes Gideon's men submit to two tests. In the end, an army of 30,000 (7.3) is reduced to 300 (7.6), showing that it is ultimately God, not a large army, that provides victory. **1:** *Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon),* see 6.32n.

own hand has delivered me.' [3] Now therefore proclaim this in the hearing of the troops, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home.' " Thus Gideon sifted them out;[a] twenty-two thousand returned, and ten thousand remained.

[4] Then the LORD said to Gideon, "The troops are still too many; take them down to the water and I will sift them out for you there. When I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; and when I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go." [5] So he brought the troops down to the water; and the LORD said to Gideon, "All those who lap the water with their tongues, as a dog laps, you shall put to one side; all those who kneel down to drink, putting their hands to their mouths,[b] you shall put to the other side." [6] The number of those that lapped was three hundred; but all the rest of the troops knelt down to drink water. [7] Then the LORD said to Gideon, "With the three hundred that lapped I will deliver you, and give the Midianites into your hand. Let all the others go to their homes." [8] So he took the jars of the troops from their hands,[c] and their trumpets; and he sent all the rest of Israel back to their own tents, but retained the three hundred. The camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

[9] That same night the LORD said to him, "Get up, attack the camp; for I have given it into your hand. [10] But if you fear to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah; [11] and you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to attack the camp." Then he went down with his servant Purah to the outposts of the armed men that were in the camp.

[12] The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the east lay along the valley as thick as locusts; and their camels were without number, countless as the sand on the seashore. [13] When Gideon arrived, there was a man telling a dream to his comrade; and he said, "I had a dream, and in it a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to the tent, and struck it so that it fell; it turned upside down, and the tent collapsed." [14] And his comrade answered, "This is no other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel; into his hand God has given Midian and all the army."

[15] When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped; and he returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Get up; for the LORD has given the army of Midian into your hand." [16] After he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and put trumpets into the hands of all of them, and empty jars, with torches inside the jars, [17] he said to them, "Look at me, and do the same; when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. [18] When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets around the whole camp, and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!' "

[19] So Gideon and the hundred who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. [20] So the three companies blew

[a] Cn: Heb *home, and depart from Mount Gilead'"*
[b] Heb places the words *putting their hands to their mouths* after the word *lapped* in verse 6
[c] Cn: Heb *So the people took provisions in their hands*

3: *Fearful,* a word frequently used of Gideon and his men (6.22,27; 7.10). *Thousand,* see 1.4n. **5–7:** *Those who lap,* the men who alertly crouched, lapping water with cupped hands rather than those who bent to their knees, were deemed more suitable.

7.9–14: Gideon's nighttime revelations. 10: *Purah*, probably Gideon's weapon bearer (see 9.54; 1 Sam 14.1; 31.4). **13:** Dreams in antiquity were often thought to be a form of prophecy. A barley cake, symbol of settled agriculturalists, crushes the Midianite tents, symbolic of nomadic transhumanists. **14:** *God*, the Midianite uses the general word for deity (Heb "'Elohim").

7.15–23: The midnight raid on the Midianite camp. Gideon and his outnumbered underdogs wielding trumpets and torches inside jars triumph over the enemy, using sound and light to panic Midian. This near-impossible juggling feat is further evidence of the blending of two sources. The use of these ritual objects makes the account all the more miraculous: Gideon and his men defeat Midian without raising conventional weapons (for Israel's inferior weapons, see 5.8; 15.16; 1 Sam 13.12). **19:** *Middle watch*, near midnight, just as the

the trumpets and broke the jars, holding in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow; and they cried, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" 21 Every man stood in his place all around the camp, and all the men in camp ran; they cried out and fled. 22 When they blew the three hundred trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow and against all the army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah,[a] as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. 23 And the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manasseh, and they pursued after the Midianites.

24 Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters against them, as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan." So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they seized the waters as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan. 25 They captured the two captains of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the wine press of Zeeb, as they pursued the Midianites. They brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon beyond the Jordan.

8 Then the Ephraimites said to him, "What have you done to us, not to call us when you went to fight against the Midianites?" And they upbraided him violently. 2 So he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3 God has given into your hands the captains of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; what have I been able to do in comparison with you?" When he said this, their anger against him subsided.

4 Then Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the three hundred who were with him, exhausted and famished.[b] 5 So he said to the people of Succoth, "Please give some loaves of bread to my followers, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian." 6 But the officials of Succoth said, "Do you already have in your possession the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna, that we should give bread to your army?" 7 Gideon replied, "Well then, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will trample your flesh on the thorns of the wilderness and on briers." 8 From there he went up to Penuel, and made the same request of them; and the people of Penuel answered him as the people of Succoth had answered. 9 So he said to the people of Penuel, "When I come back victorious, I will break down this tower."

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their army, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of all the army of the people of the east; for one hundred twenty thousand men bearing arms had fallen. 11 So Gideon went up by the caravan route east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked

[a] Another reading is *Zeredah*
[b] Gk: Heb *pursuing*

sentry shift occurred. **21-22:** *Every man stood in his place*, initially Gideon's men did not fight at all; the confused Midianites, *every man's sword against his fellow*, kill each other (1 Sam 14.20).

7.24–8.3: The execution of enemy leaders. The Ephraimites are finally mustered to secure the fords and capture Midianites attempting to cross the Jordan. The Ephraimites are upset because they missed an opportunity to loot the Midianite camp. **24:** *The fords of the Jordan,* 3.28; 12.5. **25:** *Oreb* means "Raven" and *Zeeb* means "Wolf." *The wine press* (see 6.1–8.3n.) provides a fitting location for the end of the episode. This scene at the *rock of Oreb* lived on in Israelite tradition (Ps 83.9–12; Isa 9.4; 10.26). **25:** Execution, often involving decapitation, of enemy leaders following warfare was common (8.21; Josh 8.29; 10.22–26; 1 Sam 17.51). **8.1:** *The Ephraimites* also objected when Jephthah did not include them in a battle, depriving them of plunder and honors (12.1–6). **2-3:** Gideon is able to avoid violence through the skillful use of language, just as his father had in Ophrah (6.31).

8.4–21: Gideon and the three towns. Gideon fights on, crossing the Jordan to redeem his family honor by hunting down the men who had killed his blood-brothers. Gideon acquires and settles new scores along the way with towns that refuse to feed his three hundred men. **4:** *Three hundred,* see 7.8,16. **5:** *Succoth,* probably Tell Deir Alla in the eastern Jordan valley. *Zebah* means "(Sacrificial) Victim"; *Zalmunna* means "No-Shelter." **6:** *The hands,* as battlefield trophies; for other body parts taken by warriors, see 1.6–7;1 Sam 18.27; 31.8–9. **8:** *Penuel,* east of Succoth. **10:** *Karkor,* location unknown. *One hundred twenty thousand,* see 1.4n. **10–11:** The numbers are

the army; for the army was off its guard.
12 Zebah and Zalmunna fled; and he pursued
them and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and threw all the army
into a panic.

13 When Gideon son of Joash returned
from the battle by the ascent of Heres, 14 he
caught a young man, one of the people of
Succoth, and questioned him; and he listed
for him the officials and elders of Succoth,
seventy-seven people. 15 Then he came to the
people of Succoth, and said, "Here are Zebah
and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me,
saying, 'Do you already have in your possession the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna, that
we should give bread to your troops who are
exhausted?' " 16 So he took the elders of the
city and he took thorns of the wilderness
and briers and with them he trampled[a] the
people of Succoth. 17 He also broke down the
tower of Penuel, and killed the men of the
city.

18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna,
"What about the men whom you killed at
Tabor?" They answered, "As you are, so were
they, every one of them; they resembled
the sons of a king." 19 And he replied, "They
were my brothers, the sons of my mother; as
the LORD lives, if you had saved them alive, I
would not kill you." 20 So he said to Jether his
firstborn, "Go kill them!" But the boy did not
draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he
was still a boy. 21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna
said, "You come and kill us; for as the man
is, so is his strength." So Gideon proceeded
to kill Zebah and Zalmunna; and he took
the crescents that were on the necks of their
camels.

22 Then the Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule
over us, you and your son and your grandson
also; for you have delivered us out of the
hand of Midian." 23 Gideon said to them, "I
will not rule over you, and my son will not
rule over you; the LORD will rule over you."
24 Then Gideon said to them, "Let me make
a request of you; each of you give me an earring he has taken as booty." (For the enemy[b]
had golden earrings, because they were
Ishmaelites.) 25 "We will willingly give them,"
they answered. So they spread a garment,
and each threw into it an earring he had
taken as booty. 26 The weight of the golden
earrings that he requested was one thousand
seven hundred shekels of gold (apart from
the crescents and the pendants and the
purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and the collars that were on the necks
of their camels). 27 Gideon made an ephod
of it and put it in his town, in Ophrah; and
all Israel prostituted themselves to it there,
and it became a snare to Gideon and to his
family. 28 So Midian was subdued before the
Israelites, and they lifted up their heads no
more. So the land had rest forty years in the
days of Gideon.

[a] With verse 7, Compare Gk: Heb *he taught*
[b] Heb *they*

exaggerated. **12:** *Panic,* 4.15; 7.21–22n. **16:** *Trampled,* another reversal of fortune. The Midianite invasion forced Gideon to thresh wheat in a wine press (6.11), now he pays them back by threshing the elders of Succoth. **17:** *Broke down,* the same Heb word translated "pull down" in 6.30. **18:** *Tabor,* if this is the same as in 4.6, no battle with Midianites there is mentioned elsewhere. **21:** 7.25n. *Crescents* were probably chains of amulets and bangles.

8.22–28: Gideon and the ephod. The Gideon narrative ends where it began in Ophrah (6.11), as Gideon refuses the offer of kingship and furnishes his family shrine with a divinatory device. The story of Gideon/Jerubbaal ends ambiguously: he delivered Israel from the Midianites and piously refused kingship, but his legacy is tainted by the stain of idolatry. His refusal of kingship hints ahead to the following episode, where his son Abimelech makes himself king. **23:** *The LORD will rule over you*, cf. 1 Sam 8.7; 10.19; 12.12. **24–27:** Gideon, who often sought and relied on divinatory guidance (6.36–40; 7.9–15), makes an *ephod* for his shrine. **24:** *Ishmaelites* are also identified as Midianites in Gen 37.25–36. **27:** *Ephod*, elsewhere a gilded vest worn by priests containing divinatory objects (Ex 28.6–30; 39.2–7; 1 Sam 2.18), here functioning as a ritual object; for another *ephod* in Judges, see 17.5. The narrator does not explain how this particular ephod became the object of inappropriate devotion. **28:** *The land had rest*, for the final time in Judges.

29 Jerubbaal son of Joash went to live in his
own house. 30 Now Gideon had seventy sons,
his own offspring, for he had many wives.
31 His concubine who was in Shechem also
bore him a son, and he named him Abime-
lech. 32 Then Gideon son of Joash died at a
good old age, and was buried in the tomb of
his father Joash at Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

33 As soon as Gideon died, the Israelites
relapsed and prostituted themselves with the
Baals, making Baal-berith their god. 34 The
Israelites did not remember the LORD their
God, who had rescued them from the hand
of all their enemies on every side; 35 and they
did not exhibit loyalty to the house of Jerub-
baal (that is, Gideon) in return for all the good
that he had done to Israel.

9 Now Abimelech son of Jerubbaal went to
Shechem to his mother's kinsfolk and said
to them and to the whole clan of his mother's
family, 2 "Say in the hearing of all the lords
of Shechem, 'Which is better for you, that
all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal rule over
you, or that one rule over you?' Remember
also that I am your bone and your flesh." 3 So
his mother's kinsfolk spoke all these words
on his behalf in the hearing of all the lords of
Shechem; and their hearts inclined to follow
Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother."
4 They gave him seventy pieces of silver out of
the temple of Baal-berith with which Abime-
lech hired worthless and reckless fellows, who
followed him. 5 He went to his father's house
at Ophrah, and killed his brothers the sons
of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone; but
Jotham, the youngest son of Jerubbaal, sur-
vived, for he hid himself. 6 Then all the lords
of Shechem and all Beth-millo came together,
and they went and made Abimelech king, by
the oak of the pillar[a] at Shechem.

7 When it was told to Jotham, he went and
stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and cried

[a] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

8.29–16.31: The "empty men." The accounts of several of the judges portray morally ambiguous (Gideon, Jephthah, Samson) or corrupt (Abimelech) protagonists. The term "empty men" is used in the narratives of Abimelech (NRSV "worthless fellows," 9.4) and Jephthah ("outlaws," 11.3) to describe bandits and gangsters alienated from their clans. The narrator in 2.19 had traced a descending moral trajectory for the period, and beginning with Gideon at the end of his life, the judges themselves are portrayed as successively worse. Though some elements of the formula (see 2.11–23n.) remain (8.33; 10.6–7,10; 11.33; 13.1) to editorially connect these characters with the heroes of chs 3-8 and the paradigm in 2.11–19, the land never again has rest.

8.29–9.57: Abimelech. Through militarism and marriage, Gideon had extended his power base from Ophrah to neighboring Shechem, the major town in the region. Gideon's son Abimelech seeks the kingship his father refused by conspiring with his maternal kin in Shechem to kill his brothers and inherit his father's regional chieftainship. Gaal, a warlord with ties to neither Shechem nor Ophrah, persuades the Shechemites to turn against Abimelech who is, finally, not one of them. In this power grab, Abimelech's fratricide sets in motion a chain reaction of treachery among a host of the mutually faithless and ruthless. The justice-making ("judging") function in this story is triggered by Jotham's curse that unleashes "an evil spirit" from God (9.23) which plays each side off against the other. The story begins and ends with events featuring two stones (see 9.5,53).

8.29–35: Gideon's death and its aftermath. 29: *Jerubbaal,* see 6.32n. **31:** *Concubine,* a secondary wife in a polygamous family. *Abimelech* means "My (divine) father is king." *Shechem,* a major town in Israelite history (Gen 34; Josh 24; 1 Kings 12.25). **32:** *Died at a good old age,* said also of Abraham (Gen 15.15; 25.8) and David (1 Chr 29.28). *Baal-berith* means "lord of the covenant"; his temple in Shechem (9.4,46) was a place where pacts were solemnized. Ironically, in this story every party will prove unfaithful to its alliances. **35:** *Loyalty,* Heb "ḥesed," faithfulness to covenants.

9.1–6: Abimelech becomes king. 1: *Abimelech went to Shechem,* the home of his mother, because in Ophrah among the other sons of Jerubbaal/Gideon, he had secondary status. **4:** A *temple* could function as a treasury; see 1 Kings 7.51; 15.18; 2 Kings 18.15; 20.17. **4:** *Worthless and reckless fellows,* see 8.29–16.31n. **5:** *Seventy men . . . but one survived,* cf. 2 Kings 10.1–7. in which Jehu kills Ahab's seventy sons. Abimelech kills on a butchering *stone* in order to dispose of the blood before it soaks into the ground (see Gen 4.10), seeking to avoid divine retribution. **6:** *Beth-millo,* a district in Shechem. *The oak of the pillar at Shechem,* 9.6; Gen 12.6; 35.4; Josh 24.26.

9.7–21: Jotham's fable and curse. At safe remove from Abimelech's coronation in neighboring Shechem, the surviving brother Jotham stands on overlooking Mount Gerizim to offer a fable, utter a curse, and begin to restore order to the social chaos unleashed by Abimelech's killing his other brothers. **7:** *Mount Gerizim,* one of

aloud and said to them, "Listen to me, you
lords of Shechem, so that God may listen to
you.
[8] The trees once went out
to anoint a king over themselves.
So they said to the olive tree,
'Reign over us.'
[9] The olive tree answered them,
'Shall I stop producing my rich oil
by which gods and mortals are
honored,
and go to sway over the trees?'
[10] Then the trees said to the fig tree,
'You come and reign over us.'
[11] But the fig tree answered them,
'Shall I stop producing my sweetness
and my delicious fruit,
and go to sway over the trees?'
[12] Then the trees said to the vine,
'You come and reign over us.'
[13] But the vine said to them,
'Shall I stop producing my wine
that cheers gods and mortals,
and go to sway over the trees?'
[14] So all the trees said to the bramble,
'You come and reign over us.'
[15] And the bramble said to the trees,
'If in good faith you are anointing me
king over you,
then come and take refuge in my
shade;
but if not, let fire come out of the
bramble
and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'
[16] "Now therefore, if you acted in good
faith and honor when you made Abimelech
king, and if you have dealt well with Jerub-
baal and his house, and have done to him as
his actions deserved— [17] for my father fought
for you, and risked his life, and rescued you
from the hand of Midian; [18] but you have
risen up against my father's house this day,
and have killed his sons, seventy men on one
stone, and have made Abimelech, the son
of his slave woman, king over the lords of
Shechem, because he is your kinsman— [19] if,
I say, you have acted in good faith and honor
with Jerubbaal and with his house this day,
then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also
rejoice in you; [20] but if not, let fire come out
from Abimelech, and devour the lords of
Shechem, and Beth-millo; and let fire come
out from the lords of Shechem, and from
Beth-millo, and devour Abimelech." [21] Then
Jotham ran away and fled, going to Beer,
where he remained for fear of his brother
Abimelech.
[22] Abimelech ruled over Israel three years.
[23] But God sent an evil spirit between Abime-
lech and the lords of Shechem; and the lords
of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abime-
lech. [24] This happened so that the violence
done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might
be avenged[a] and their blood be laid on their
brother Abimelech, who killed them, and
on the lords of Shechem, who strengthened
his hands to kill his brothers. [25] So, out of
hostility to him, the lords of Shechem set am-
bushes on the mountain tops. They robbed
all who passed by them along that way; and it
was reported to Abimelech.
[26] When Gaal son of Ebed moved into
Shechem with his kinsfolk, the lords of
Shechem put confidence in him. [27] They
went out into the field and gathered the
grapes from their vineyards, trod them, and
celebrated. Then they went into the temple
of their god, ate and drank, and ridiculed
Abimelech. [28] Gaal son of Ebed said, "Who
is Abimelech, and who are we of Shechem,
that we should serve him? Did not the son
of Jerubbaal and Zebul his officer serve the

[a] Heb *might come*

two sacred mountains flanking Shechem; the other is Mount Ebal. **10:** *Fig trees* offered shade and protection; see 1 Kings 4.25; Mic 4.4. **14:** *The bramble* offered no fruit, shade, or timber. For a similar plant fable, see 2 Kings 14.8–10. **21:** *Beer* ("well"), location unknown.

9.22–57: The end of Abimelech's rule. Jotham's curse of Abimelech and the Shechemites comes to pass as these parties to a murderous conspiracy take turns mutually incinerating (note the fire imagery of the curse) each other. **22:** *Ruled over,* a different Heb word than that meaning "reigned," implying that Abimelech was not a legitimate king. **23:** *God sent an evil spirit,* 1 Sam 16.14; 18.10; 19.9; 1 Kings 22.19–23. **25:** For bandits near Shechem, see Hos 6.9. **27:** For another vintage festival, see 21.19–21. **28:** *Who is Abimelech and who are we of Shechem?* To Shechemites, Abimelech was a half-breed outsider. *Zebul* was a powerful Shechemite (see v. 30)

men of Hamor father of Shechem? Why then should we serve him? 29 If only this people were under my command! Then I would remove Abimelech; I would say[a] to him, 'Increase your army, and come out.' "

30 When Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. 31 He sent messengers to Abimelech at Arumah,[b] saying, "Look, Gaal son of Ebed and his kinsfolk have come to Shechem, and they are stirring up[c] the city against you. 32 Now therefore, go by night, you and the troops that are with you, and lie in wait in the fields. 33 Then early in the morning, as soon as the sun rises, get up and rush on the city; and when he and the troops that are with him come out against you, you may deal with them as best you can."

34 So Abimelech and all the troops with him got up by night and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies. 35 When Gaal son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city, Abimelech and the troops with him rose from the ambush. 36 And when Gaal saw them, he said to Zebul, "Look, people are coming down from the mountain tops!" And Zebul said to him, "The shadows on the mountains look like people to you." 37 Gaal spoke again and said, "Look, people are coming down from Tabbur-erez, and one company is coming from the direction of Elon-meonenim."[d] 38 Then Zebul said to him, "Where is your boast[e] now, you who said, 'Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?' Are not these the troops you made light of? Go out now and fight with them." 39 So Gaal went out at the head of the lords of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. 40 Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him. Many fell wounded, up to the entrance of the gate. 41 So Abimelech resided at Arumah; and Zebul drove out Gaal and his kinsfolk, so that they could not live on at Shechem.

42 On the following day the people went out into the fields. When Abimelech was told, 43 he took his troops and divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the fields. When he looked and saw the people coming out of the city, he rose against them and killed them. 44 Abimelech and the company that was[f] with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city, while the two companies rushed on all who were in the fields and killed them. 45 Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city, and killed the people that were in it; and he razed the city and sowed it with salt.

46 When all the lords of the Tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the stronghold of the temple of El-berith. 47 Abimelech was told that all the lords of the Tower of Shechem were gathered together. 48 So Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the troops that were with him. Abimelech took an ax in his hand, cut down a bundle of brushwood, and took it up and laid it on his shoulder. Then he said to the troops with him, "What you have seen me do, do quickly, as I have done." 49 So every one of the troops cut down a bundle and following Abimelech put it against the stronghold, and they set the stronghold on fire over them, so that all the people of the Tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women.

50 Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. 51 But there was a strong tower within the city, and all the men and women and all the lords of the city fled to it and shut themselves in; and they went to the roof of the tower.

[a] Gk: Heb *and he said*
[b] Cn See 9.41. Heb *Tormah*
[c] Cn: Heb *are besieging*
[d] That is *Diviners' Oak*
[e] Heb *mouth*
[f] Vg and some Gk Mss: Heb *companies that were*

who had allied himself with Abimelech. *The men of Hamor* were the traditional Shechemite ruling class (Gen 33.19; 34.20). **37:** *Tabbur-erez,* lit., "navel of the earth." From the Shechemite (and later Samaritan) perspective, Shechem was the symbolic center of the world; for Judahites, it was Jerusalem (Ezek 5.5; 38.12). *Elon-meonenim,* lit., "the oak of the diviners"; see v. 6n. **42–45:** For a similar ambush, see Josh 8.3–23. **45:** *Razed the city,* like Gideon at Penuel (8.9,17). *Sowed with salt*, so that it could no longer produce agriculture; see Deut 29.23; Ps 107.34; Jer 17.6. **46:** *The Tower of Shechem,* either a fortified section of the city or a separate town. **48:** *Zalmon,* perhaps another name for Ebal (see v. 7n.) **50:** *Thebez,* ca. 9 mi (15 km) north-northeast of Shechem.

52 Abimelech came to the tower, and fought against it, and came near to the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire. 53 But a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, and crushed his skull. 54 Immediately he called to the young man who carried his armor and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, so people will not say about me, 'A woman killed him.'" So the young man thrust him through, and he died. 55 When the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they all went home. 56 Thus God repaid Abimelech for the crime he committed against his father in killing his seventy brothers; 57 and God also made all the wickedness of the people of Shechem fall back on their heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal.

10 After Abimelech, Tola son of Puah son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, who lived at Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim, rose to deliver Israel. 2 He judged Israel twenty-three years. Then he died, and was buried at Shamir.

3 After him came Jair the Gileadite, who judged Israel twenty-two years. 4 He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; and they had thirty towns, which are in the land of Gilead, and are called Havvoth-jair to this day. 5 Jair died, and was buried in Kamon.

6 The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, worshiping the Baals and the Astartes, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. Thus they abandoned the LORD, and did not worship him. 7 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the Ammonites, 8 and they crushed and oppressed the Israelites that year. For eighteen years they oppressed all the Israelites that were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. 9 The Ammonites also crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah and against Benjamin and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was greatly distressed.

10 So the Israelites cried to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against you, because we have abandoned our God and have worshiped the Baals." 11 And the LORD said to the Israelites, "Did I not deliver you[a] from the Egyptians and from the Amorites, from the Ammonites and from the Philistines? 12 The Sidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, oppressed you; and you cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. 13 Yet you have abandoned me and worshiped other gods; therefore I will deliver you no more. 14 Go and cry to the gods whom you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress." 15 And the Israelites said to the LORD, "We have sinned; do to us whatever

[a] Heb lacks *Did I not deliver you*

54: *Young man who carried his armor,* cf. 7.11; 1 Sam 14.6; 16.21; and 31.4–6, where Saul makes a similar request of his attendant. *So people will not say . . ., "A woman killed him,"* a sign of great humiliation; but they did (2 Sam 11.21).

10.1–5: The "minor judges." This list continues in 12.8-15 following the Jephthah narrative (10.6–12.7). Scholars call these figures "minor judges" since only brief details—their hometown, length of judgeship, and burial place (perhaps so they could be honored by pilgrims)—are noted. The addition of these sections allows the book to have a total of twelve judges (Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson). **3–4:** For alternative traditions about *Jair,* see Num 32.41; Deut 3.14. **4:** *Donkeys,* see 5.10n.

10.6–12.7: Jephthah. Jephthah, rejected by his society, is called back to rescue Gilead when they need his desperado skills against the Ammonites. The account of Jephthah includes elements of the formula (see 2.11–23n.; 10.6–10; 11.29), but lacks its resolution: the land does not have rest.

10.6–18: Introduction to the Jephthah cycle. **7:** Mention of *the Philistines,* who appear in the subsequent Samson story, suggests that this section introduces not only the Jephthah story but all of chs 10–16. **8:** *Gilead,* Israelite settlement, including the tribe of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, located in northwest Transjordan. **11:** *The Egyptians,* events from Exodus. *Amorites,* see Num 21. Conflicts with the *Sidonians* from Phoenicia and *Maonites* (perhaps an alternate term for Midianites) are not attested in the previous biblical books. *Amalekites,* see 1.16n. **14:** *Gods you have chosen,* cf. Josh 24.14–15. **15:** The only mention of Israel repenting in the entire

seems good to you; but deliver us this day!" 16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and worshiped the LORD; and he could no longer bear to see Israel suffer.

17 Then the Ammonites were called to arms, and they encamped in Gilead; and the Israelites came together, and they encamped at Mizpah. 18 The commanders of the people of Gilead said to one another, "Who will begin the fight against the Ammonites? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

11 Now Jephthah the Gileadite, the son of a prostitute, was a mighty warrior. Gilead was the father of Jephthah. 2 Gilead's wife also bore him sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah away, saying to him, "You shall not inherit anything in our father's house; for you are the son of another woman." 3 Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob. Outlaws collected around Jephthah and went raiding with him.

4 After a time the Ammonites made war against Israel. 5 And when the Ammonites made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah from the land of Tob. 6 They said to Jephthah, "Come and be our commander, so that we may fight with the Ammonites." 7 But Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Are you not the very ones who rejected me and drove me out of my father's house? So why do you come to me now when you are in trouble?" 8 The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "Nevertheless, we have now turned back to you, so that you may go with us and fight with the Ammonites, and become head over us, over all the inhabitants of Gilead." 9 Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you bring me home again to fight with the Ammonites, and the LORD gives them over to me, I will be your head." 10 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD will be witness between us; we will surely do as you say." 11 So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD at Mizpah.

12 Then Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites and said, "What is there between you and me, that you have come to me to fight against my land?" 13 The king of the Ammonites answered the messengers of Jephthah, "Because Israel, on coming from Egypt, took away my land from the Arnon to the Jabbok and to the Jordan; now therefore restore it peaceably." 14 Once again Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites 15 and said to him: "Thus says Jephthah: Israel did not take away the land of Moab or the land of the Ammonites, 16 but when they came up from Egypt, Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea[a] and came to Kadesh. 17 Israel then sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, 'Let us pass through your land'; but the king of Edom would not listen. They also sent to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel remained at Kadesh. 18 Then they journeyed through the wilderness, went around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, arrived on the east side of the land of Moab, and camped on the other side of the Arnon. They did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the boundary of Moab. 19 Israel then sent messengers to King Sihon of the

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

book. **16:** *He could no longer bear,* became choked-up; "his throat tightened." **17:** *Mizpah,* a frequent place-name, which means "observation post" and which will become Jephthah's headquarters (11.11); this "Mizpah" is in Transjordan.

11.1–11: Jephthah and the elders of Gilead. 1: *Jephthah,* a name meaning "he opens," referring to "God opening the womb" (Gen 29.31; 30.22). For later affirmations of Jephthah, see 1 Sam 12.11; Heb 11.32–34. *A mighty warrior,* see 6.12n. **3:** *Tob,* in northeast Gilead. The name's meaning ("good") contrasts with the bands that affiliate with Jephthah. *Outlaws,* see 8.29–16.31n. **4–11:** The elders of Gilead offer Jephthah provisional leadership as "commander," but he insists on being "head," chief (though not king), even after the warfare ends; cf. 10.18. **11:** *Before the LORD,* at a temple or altar.

11.12–28: Jephthah's negotiation with the Ammonites is a defense of the Israelite claim to its territory in Transjordan and serves as a justification for hostilities. His speech refers to an earlier Israelite conquest of the Ammonite king Sihon and his capital Heshbon recounted in Num 21.21–31; Deut 2.26–35. **17:** *Kadesh* (-barnea),

Amorites, king of Heshbon; and Israel said to him, 'Let us pass through your land to our country.' [20] But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory; so Sihon gathered all his people together, and encamped at Jahaz, and fought with Israel. [21] Then the LORD, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them; so Israel occupied all the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country. [22] They occupied all the territory of the Amorites from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. [23] So now the LORD, the God of Israel, has conquered the Amorites for the benefit of his people Israel. Do you intend to take their place? [24] Should you not possess what your god Chemosh gives you to possess? And should we not be the ones to possess everything that the LORD our God has conquered for our benefit? [25] Now are you any better than King Balak son of Zippor of Moab? Did he ever enter into conflict with Israel, or did he ever go to war with them? [26] While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the towns that are along the Arnon, three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time? [27] It is not I who have sinned against you, but you are the one who does me wrong by making war on me. Let the LORD, who is judge, decide today for the Israelites or for the Ammonites." [28] But the king of the Ammonites did not heed the message that Jephthah sent him.

[29] Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh. He passed on to Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites. [30] And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, [31] then whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the LORD's, to be offered up by me as a burnt offering." [32] So Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight against them; and the LORD gave them into his hand. [33] He inflicted a massive defeat on them from Aroer to the neighborhood of Minnith, twenty towns, and as far as Abel-keramim. So the Ammonites were subdued before the people of Israel.

[34] Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah; and there was his daughter coming out to meet him with timbrels and with dancing. She was his only child; he had no son or daughter except her. [35] When he saw her, he tore his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low; you have become the cause of great trouble to me. For I have opened my mouth to the LORD, and I cannot take back my vow." [36] She said to him, "My father, if you have opened your mouth to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, now that the LORD has given you vengeance against your enemies, the Ammonites." [37] And she said to her father, "Let this thing be done for me: Grant me two months, so that I may go and wander[a] on the mountains, and bewail my virginity, my companions and I." [38] "Go," he said and sent her away for two months. So she departed, she and her companions, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains. [39] At the end of two months, she returned to her father, who did with her according to the vow he had made. She had never slept with a man. So there arose an Israelite custom that [40] for four days every year the daughters of Israel would go out to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

[a] Cn: Heb *go down*

a desert oasis in northern Sinai (Num 13.25; 20.1). **24:** *Chemosh,* the high god of the Moabites, not of the Ammonites, whose god was Milkom (1 Kings 11.33). **25:** *Balak,* king of Moab (Num 22–25). **27:** *Let the LORD . . . decide,* cf. 1 Sam 24.15; 2 Sam 10.12.

11.29–40: Jephthah's vow. 29: *The spirit of the LORD,* see 3.10n. **31:** *Whoever* could refer either to an animal or a person; for human sacrifice in time of war, see 2 Kings 3.26–27. **34:** *Timbrels* (castanets) *and dancing,* part of the homecoming rite in which women met returning warriors (see, e.g., 1 Sam 18.6–7). *His only child,* cf. Gen 22.2. **35:** *Tore his clothes,* a gesture of extreme grief (Gen 37.29; 2 Sam 13.19,31; Job 1.20). *Alas,* see 6.25n. *I cannot take back my vow,* cf. Deut 23.21–23; Eccl 5.4–5. **36:** *My father,* cf. Gen 22.7. **37:** *Bewail my virginity,* because of the deprivation of potential motherhood. **39–40:** *An Israelite custom,* an etiology of a young women's rite of passage among the Israelite tribes east of the Jordan.

12 The men of Ephraim were called to arms, and they crossed to Zaphon and said to Jephthah, "Why did you cross over to fight against the Ammonites, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down over you!" [2] Jephthah said to them, "My people and I were engaged in conflict with the Ammonites who oppressed us[a] severely. But when I called you, you did not deliver me from their hand. [3] When I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hand, and crossed over against the Ammonites, and the LORD gave them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day, to fight against me?" [4] Then Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim; and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, "You are fugitives from Ephraim, you Gileadites—in the heart of Ephraim and Manasseh."[b] [5] Then the Gileadites took the fords of the Jordan against the Ephraimites. Whenever one of the fugitives of Ephraim said, "Let me go over," the men of Gilead would say to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" When he said, "No," [6] they said to him, "Then say Shibboleth," and he said, "Sibboleth," for he could not pronounce it right. Then they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand of the Ephraimites fell at that time.

[7] Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died, and was buried in his town in Gilead.[c]

[8] After him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. [9] He had thirty sons. He gave his thirty daughters in marriage outside his clan and brought in thirty young women from outside for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. [10] Then Ibzan died, and was buried at Bethlehem.

[11] After him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years. [12] Then Elon the Zebulunite died, and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

[13] After him Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. [14] He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys; he judged Israel eight years. [15] Then Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

13 The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

[2] There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren, having borne no children. [3] And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Although you

[a] Gk OL, Syr H: Heb lacks *who oppressed us*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain: Gk omits *because . . . Manasseh*
[c] Gk: Heb *in the towns of Gilead*

12.1–7: Jephthah and the shibboleth. 1: *The men of Ephraim* are again disgruntled with their secondary role in a battle (8.1–3), though this time, reflecting the devolution within the book of Judges, their complaint has fatal consequences. *Zaphon,* a village in Transjordan (Josh 13.27). *Burn your house,* for burning people alive in houses, see 9.49; 14.15. **4–5:** *You are fugitives,* this insult leveled by the Ephraimites against the Gileadites who resided across the Jordan from the Israelite is ironically reversed in the next verse. **5–6:** Physically indistinguishable from each other, the Gileadites used a dialectal difference in the pronunciation of sibilants (*s*-sounds) to identify Ephraimites. *Shibboleth,* either "stalk of grain" or "stream." *The fords of the Jordan,* see 3.28; 7.24. *Forty-two thousand,* see 1.4n.

12.8–15: The "minor judges," continuing the list of 10.1–5. **8:** *Bethlehem* in Zebulun (Josh 19.15), not Bethlehem in Judah. **13:** *Pirathon,* ca. 8 mi (13 km) east of Shechem. **14:** *Donkeys*, 5.10n.

13.1–16.31: Samson. The solitary fighter Samson, enlisted from birth and filled with the LORD's spirit, begins to deliver Israel from the Philistines who control the coastal plain. After an introduction centered on Samson's mother, the account is structured around three affairs with foreign women; behind the scenes the LORD has his purposes (14.4).

13.1–25: Samson's birth. This is similar to other birth accounts in which a spouse in a childless marriage is visited by an angel (Gen 18.10; Mt 1.20; Lk 1.13,26–31), priest (1 Sam 1.17), or prophet (2 Kings 4.16) who announces that the woman will conceive a child with a special mission (1 Sam 1.11; Mt 1.21; Lk 1.14–17,32–33). **1:** Elements of the formula (see 2.11–23n.) recur for the last time. **2:** *Zorah,* ca. 16 mi (25 km) west of Jerusalem. *His wife* is

are barren, having borne no children, you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Now be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, or to eat anything unclean, 5 for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head, for the boy shall be a nazirite[a] to God from birth. It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines." 6 Then the woman came and told her husband, "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like that of an angel[b] of God, most awe-inspiring; I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name; 7 but he said to me, 'You shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a nazirite[a] to God from birth to the day of his death.' "

8 Then Manoah entreated the LORD, and said, "O LORD, I pray, let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we are to do concerning the boy who will be born." 9 God listened to Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her. 10 So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, "The man who came to me the other day has appeared to me." 11 Manoah got up and followed his wife, and came to the man and said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to this woman?" And he said, "I am." 12 Then Manoah said, "Now when your words come true, what is to be the boy's rule of life; what is he to do?" 13 The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Let the woman give heed to all that I said to her. 14 She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine. She is not to drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. She is to observe everything that I commanded her."

15 Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Allow us to detain you, and prepare a kid for you." 16 The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "If you detain me, I will not eat your food; but if you want to prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.) 17 Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that we may honor you when your words come true?" 18 But the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name? It is too wonderful."

19 So Manoah took the kid with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to him who works[c] wonders.[d] 20 When the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar while Manoah and his wife looked on; and they fell on their faces to the ground. 21 The angel of the LORD did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD. 22 And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." 23 But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these."

24 The woman bore a son, and named him Samson. The boy grew, and the LORD blessed him. 25 The spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

[a] That is *one separated* or *one consecrated*
[b] Or *the angel*
[c] Gk Vg: Heb *and working*
[d] Heb *wonders, while Manoah and his wife looked on*

unnamed, usually a marker of marginality, but not here (see vv. 13–14). **4–5:** *Nazirite* means "consecrated" and involved a temporary vow to abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages, cutting one's hair, and having contact with the dead (Num 6.1–21). Its origins may have been among warrior groups (see 5.2n.). The combination of a special birth to a barren mother and the nazirite motif is also found in the story of Samuel (1 Sam 1.9–22). **4:** *Strong drink,* fortified wine or beer. **5:** *Begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines,* Samson will begin a conflict that will later involve Saul and David. **9:** Though Manoah prays that the *man of God* visit again so he can hear the instructions, the angel once again comes to her. **15–22:** As in the Gideon story (6.19–22), Manoah offers a meal to the mysterious guest, only to see the banquet transformed into a sacrifice, and the visitor revealed as divine. **16:** *I will not eat,* 6.21n. **18–19:** Note the wordplay between *wonderful* (v. 18) and *works wonders* (v. 19). **22:** *We shall surely die . . .,* 6.22–23; Gen 32.30; Ex 33.20–23. **24:** *Samson*'s name (Heb "Shimshon") is derived from the word for "sun" ("shemesh"); it may be a mythological allusion, or simply mean "sunny." *The boy grew, and the LORD blessed him,* cf. 1 Sam 2.26; Lk 1.80; 2.40,52. **25:** *The Spirit of the LORD,* also 14.6,19; 15.14; see 3.10n. *Stir,* lit., "trouble," also

14 Once Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw a Philistine woman. [2] Then he came up, and told his father and mother, "I saw a Philistine woman at Timnah; now get her for me as my wife." [3] But his father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman among your kin, or among all our[a] people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, because she pleases me." [4] His father and mother did not know that this was from the LORD; for he was seeking a pretext to act against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

[5] Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah. When he came to the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion roared at him. [6] The spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and he tore the lion apart barehanded as one might tear apart a kid. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. [7] Then he went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson. [8] After a while he returned to marry her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. [9] He scraped it out into his hands, and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.

[10] His father went down to the woman, and Samson made a feast there as the young men were accustomed to do. [11] When the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. [12] Samson said to them, "Let me now put a riddle to you. If you can explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty festal garments. [13] But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty festal garments." So they said to him, "Ask your riddle; let us hear it." [14] He said to them,

"Out of the eater came something to eat.
Out of the strong came something sweet."

But for three days they could not explain the riddle.

[15] On the fourth[b] day they said to Samson's wife, "Coax your husband to explain the riddle to us, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us

[a] Cn: Heb *my*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *seventh*

used to describe insomnia (Gen 41.8; Ps 77.4; Dan 2.1,3); the spirit makes Samson restless. *Mahaneh-dan* and *Eshtaol,* unknown locations.

14.1–16.31: Samson and the three women. The account of Samson's attacks on Philistia is structured around encounters with three women, the Timnite (14.1–15.20), the prostitute (16.1–3), and Delilah (16.4–31).

14.1–15.20: Samson and the woman from Timnah. 14.1–2: *Went down . . . came up,* verbs describing descent and ascent are common throughout the story as Samson crisscrosses the boundary between Dan in the hills and Philistia on the coast. **1:** *Timnah,* ca. 18 mi (30 km) west of Jerusalem. *He saw*: sight is a key motif in the story. Samson sees foreign women (14.1; 16.1), and the Timnite "pleases" him (lit., "is right in his eyes," vv.3,7; cf. 17.6; 21.25). Samson is figuratively blinded by love with Delilah (16.4), and ultimately, literally, by his Philistine captors (16.21). **3:** *Uncircumcised,* unlike the Israelites and most of their neighbors, the Philistines did not practice circumcision. **4:** The subject of this sentence, *he,* could refer either to Samson or to the LORD (see 13.5) **6:** *Spirit . . . rushed on him,* see 3.10n. *He tore the lion apart . . .* (that is, as a lion) *might tear apart a kid,* the lion gets a taste of its own medicine. For other fights with lions, see 1 Sam 17.34–37; 2 Sam 23.20. Though other Israelite heroes wield inferior weapons (see 4.21n.), Samson, the fiercest, fights *barehanded*. **8–9:** Samson eats wild *honey*, enlists foxes to fight with him (15.4–5), and retreats to a cave (15.8), traits of wild men of folklore.

14.10–15.8: The riddle contest and its aftermath. Following Philistine custom, Samson hosts a wedding feast, during which he engages in (and loses) a riddle contest, and reveals a secret under pressure from a woman (cf. also 16.4–17), all serving as occasions for Samson's mayhem (v. 19; 15.4–5,8). **14:** Samson's riddle, which could be interpreted as sexual innuendo, is actually based on the accident of the bees hiving in the lion carcass; only an eyewitness could solve it. **15:** Since cleverness is of no help, the Philistines use coercion to solve

here to impoverish us?" [16] So Samson's wife wept before him, saying, "You hate me; you do not really love me. You have asked a riddle of my people, but you have not explained it to me." He said to her, "Look, I have not told my father or my mother. Why should I tell you?" [17] She wept before him the seven days that their feast lasted; and because she nagged him, on the seventh day he told her. Then she explained the riddle to her people. [18] The men of the town said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down,

"What is sweeter than honey?
What is stronger than a lion?"
And he said to them,
"If you had not plowed with my heifer,
you would not have found out my riddle."

[19] Then the spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and he went down to Ashkelon. He killed thirty men of the town, took their spoil, and gave the festal garments to those who had explained the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house. [20] And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.

15 After a while, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife, bringing along a kid. He said, "I want to go into my wife's room." But her father would not allow him to go in. [2] Her father said, "I was sure that you had rejected her; so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister prettier than she? Why not take her instead?" [3] Samson said to them, "This time, when I do mischief to the Philistines, I will be without blame." [4] So Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took some torches; and he turned the foxes[a] tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. [5] When he had set fire to the torches, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and[b] olive groves. [6] Then the Philistines asked, "Who has done this?" And they said, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken Samson's wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up, and burned her and her father. [7] Samson said to them, "If this is what you do, I swear I will not stop until I have taken revenge on you." [8] He struck them down hip and thigh with great slaughter; and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

[9] Then the Philistines came up and encamped in Judah, and made a raid on Lehi. [10] The men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" They said, "We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he did to us." [11] Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and they said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then have you done to us?" He replied, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." [12] They said to him, "We have come down to bind you, so that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines." Samson answered them, "Swear to me that you yourselves will not attack me." [13] They said to him, "No, we will only bind you and give you into their hands; we will not kill you." So they bound him with two new ropes, and brought him up from the rock.

[14] When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him; and the spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. [15] Then he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached down and took it, and with it he killed a thousand men. [16] And Samson said,

[a] Heb *them*
[b] Gk Tg Vg: Heb lacks *and*

Samson's riddle. **16:** *Love,* mentioned for the first time; see also 16.4,15. **18:** The Philistines answer Samson's riddle with their own, which Samson does not answer. Its solution is implied in the Delilah story: love is sweeter than honey and stronger than our lion-slayer. *Plowed with my heifer,* sexual innuendo. **19:** *Ashkelon,* a Philistine city ca. 25 mi (40 km) west-southwest of Timnah. **15.4–5:** *Foxes,* or jackals, were associated with agricultural and architectural ruin (Neh 4.3; Song 2.15; Lam 5.18; Ezek 13.4). **8:** *Cleft of a rock,* a cave; 14.8–9n.

15.9–20: Samson at Lehi. The Philistines again coerce a party, here the Judahites, to betray Samson to them (see 14.15). Samson allows himself to be bound with ropes, which he bursts before wreaking more destruction in Philistia. **9:** *Lehi,* meaning "jawbone, cheek" (see v. 15), location unknown. **13:** *Two new ropes,* cf. 16.11–12.

"With the jawbone of a donkey,
heaps upon heaps,
with the jawbone of a donkey
I have slain a thousand men."
17 When he had finished speaking, he threw
away the jawbone; and that place was called
Ramath-lehi.[a]

18 By then he was very thirsty, and he called
on the LORD, saying, "You have granted this
great victory by the hand of your servant.
Am I now to die of thirst, and fall into the
hands of the uncircumcised?" 19 So God split
open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and
water came from it. When he drank, his spirit
returned, and he revived. Therefore it was
named En-hakkore,[b] which is at Lehi to this
day. 20 And he judged Israel in the days of the
Philistines twenty years.

16 Once Samson went to Gaza, where he
saw a prostitute and went in to her.
2 The Gazites were told,[c] "Samson has come
here." So they circled around and lay in wait
for him all night at the city gate. They kept
quiet all night, thinking, "Let us wait until
the light of the morning; then we will kill
him." 3 But Samson lay only until midnight.
Then at midnight he rose up, took hold of
the doors of the city gate and the two posts,
pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his
shoulders, and carried them to the top of the
hill that is in front of Hebron.

4 After this he fell in love with a woman in
the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.
5 The lords of the Philistines came to her and
said to her, "Coax him, and find out what
makes his strength so great, and how we may
overpower him, so that we may bind him in
order to subdue him; and we will each give
you eleven hundred pieces of silver." 6 So
Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me what
makes your strength so great, and how you
could be bound, so that one could subdue
you." 7 Samson said to her, "If they bind me
with seven fresh bowstrings that are not
dried out, then I shall become weak, and be
like anyone else." 8 Then the lords of the Phil-
istines brought her seven fresh bowstrings
that had not dried out, and she bound him
with them. 9 While men were lying in wait
in an inner chamber, she said to him, "The
Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he
snapped the bowstrings, as a strand of fiber
snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret
of his strength was not known.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "You have
mocked me and told me lies; please tell me
how you could be bound." 11 He said to her, "If
they bind me with new ropes that have not
been used, then I shall become weak, and be
like anyone else." 12 So Delilah took new ropes
and bound him with them, and said to him,
"The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" (The
men lying in wait were in an inner chamber.)
But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a
thread.

13 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until
now you have mocked me and told me lies;
tell me how you could be bound." He said to
her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head
with the web and make it tight with the pin,
then I shall become weak, and be like anyone
else." 14 So while he slept, Delilah took the
seven locks of his head and wove them into
the web,[d] and made them tight with the pin.
Then she said to him, "The Philistines are
upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his

[a] That is *The Hill of the Jawbone*
[b] That is *The Spring of the One who Called*
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *were told*
[d] Compare Gk: in verses 13-14, Heb lacks *and make it tight . . . into the web*

19: *En-hakkore,* "Spring of Calling," because there Samson *called on the LORD* (v. 18). **20:** A closing formula (cf. 12.7,9,11,14) at this point in the story (cf. 16.31) suggests that the Samson cycle may have originally ended here.

16.1–3: Samson and the prostitute of Gaza. In this unusually short episode, once again (15.1) Samson "sees" a woman. **1:** *Gaza*, the southernmost of the Philistine cities, on the Mediterranean coast. *He went into her,* sexual intercourse (Gen 6.4; 16.4; Ezek 23.44). **3:** *Hebron,* ca. 35 mi (56 km) from Gaza.

16.4–31: Samson and Delilah. Delilah solves the riddle of Samson's strength. The narrative has a three-four pattern, in which the fourth episode is climactic. **4:** *Fell in love,* 14.1n.,18n. *Sorek,* a valley near Zorah and Timnah. *Delilah* means "(Flowing) locks." **11:** *New ropes,* see 15.13. **13–14:** *Weave . . . web . . . pin . . . loom,* these details suggest that Delilah had a cottage textile industry, like Rahab (Josh 2.6,18) and the "capable woman" in Prov 31.18–19,22,24. **13:** *Seven locks,* Samson wore his hair in dreadlocks, a style for warriors known from ancient Near

sleep, and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me three times now and have not told me what makes your strength so great." 16 Finally, after she had nagged him with her words day after day, and pestered him, he was tired to death. 17 So he told her his whole secret, and said to her, "A razor has never come upon my head; for I have been a nazirite[a] to God from my mother's womb. If my head were shaved, then my strength would leave me; I would become weak, and be like anyone else."

18 When Delilah realized that he had told her his whole secret, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "This time come up, for he has told his whole secret to me." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her, and brought the money in their hands. 19 She let him fall asleep on her lap; and she called a man, and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. He began to weaken,[b] and his strength left him. 20 Then she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" When he awoke from his sleep, he thought, "I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him. 21 So the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles; and he ground at the mill in the prison. 22 But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon, and to rejoice; for they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand." 24 When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, "Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us." 25 And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call Samson, and let him entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. They made him stand between the pillars; 26 and Samson said to the attendant who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, so that I may lean against them." 27 Now the house was full of men and women; all the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about three thousand men and women, who looked on while Samson performed.

28 Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "Lord GOD, remember me and strengthen me only this once, O God, so that with this one act of revenge I may pay back the Philistines for my two eyes."[c] 29 And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. 30 Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." He strained with all his might; and the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So those he killed at his death were more than those he had killed during his life. 31 Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.

17 There was a man in the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. 2 He said to his mother, "The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and even spoke it in my hearing,—that silver is in my

[a] That is *one separated* or *one consecrated*
[b] Gk: Heb *She began to torment him*
[c] Or *so that I may be avenged upon the Philistines for one of my two eyes*

Eastern art. **15:** Delilah's mention of *love* prefigures Samson's capitulation. **17:** *Nazirite,* see 13.4–5n. **21:** *Gouged out his eyes,* cf. 1 Sam 11.2. **23:** *Dagon,* a god of grain. **24–25:** *Entertain . . . performed,* sexual innuendo. **30:** *Those he killed at his death,* Samson fulfills his grim mission (see 13.5; 14.4). **31:** *Zorah and Eshtaol,* Samson's story ends where it began (13.25). *Twenty years,* see 15.20n.

17.1–21.25: The days before a king. The concluding section consists of two stories about religious and social chaos in an era summed up in the refrain "In those days there was no king in Israel" (17.6; 18.1; 19.1; 21.25). The focus is on the ritual and moral misdeeds of Dan and Benjamin, the sites of shrines that come to rival the Temple in Jerusalem.

possession; I took it; but now I will return it to you."[a] And his mother said, "May my son be blessed by the LORD!" [3] Then he returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother; and his mother said, "I consecrate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make an idol of cast metal." [4] So when he returned the money to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver, and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into an idol of cast metal; and it was in the house of Micah. [5] This man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and teraphim, and installed one of his sons, who became his priest. [6] In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.

[7] Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the clan of Judah. He was a Levite residing there. [8] This man left the town of Bethlehem in Judah, to live wherever he could find a place. He came to the house of Micah in the hill country of Ephraim to carry on his work.[b] [9] Micah said to him, "From where do you come?" He replied, "I am a Levite of Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to live wherever I can find a place." [10] Then Micah said to him, "Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, a set of clothes, and your living."[c] [11] The Levite agreed to stay with the man; and the young man became to him like one of his sons. [12] So Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. [13] Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because the Levite has become my priest."

18 In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking for itself a territory to live in; for until then no territory among the tribes of Israel had been allotted to them. [2] So the Danites sent five valiant men from the whole number of their clan, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to explore it; and they said to them, "Go, explore the land." When they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they stayed there. [3] While they were at Micah's house, they recognized the voice of the young Levite; so they went over and asked him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What is your business here?" [4] He said to them, "Micah did such and such for me, and he hired me, and I have become his priest." [5] Then they said to him, "Inquire of God that we may know whether the mission we are undertaking will succeed." [6] The priest replied, "Go in peace. The mission you are on is under the eye of the LORD."

[7] The five men went on, and when they came to Laish, they observed the people who were there living securely, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and

[a] The words *but now I will return it to you* are transposed from the end of verse 3 in Heb
[b] Or *Ephraim, continuing his journey*
[c] Heb *living, and the Levite went*

17.1–18.31: Micah and the Danites. The first story is about the tainted origins of the artifacts and priesthood of the shrine at Dan.

17.1–13: Micah's shrine and its idol. The religious anarchy of the premonarchical period is typified by this story about the contaminated roots of an idol eventually housed in the shrine at Dan (18.30).

17.1–13: Micah's idol and his priests. 1–6: A woman's silver is stolen, her guilty son cursed, and an idol, contrary to commandment (Ex 20.4), forged. **2:** *Eleven hundred pieces* connects this story to the previous narrative (16.5). Though the silver is returned, the curse remains in force. **3:** *Idol of cast metal,* a prohibited form of worship; see Ex 34.17; Deut 27.15. **5:** For other family shrines, see 6.25; 8.27. *Ephod,* see 8.27n. *Teraphim,* probably ancestor figurines (Gen 31.19). *Installed . . . his son* as *priest,* cf. 2 Sam 8.18; only later were priestly functions restricted to the tribe of Levi. **7–13:** The shrine acquires a Levite priest. **7:** *Levite,* a member of the priestly tribe that had no territory of its own. **10:** *Father*, an honorific title.

18.1–31: The migration of Dan. Dan migrates from the Judean hills (1.34) to the far north (see Josh 19.47), acquiring a priest and equipment for a shrine along the way. The previous story in Judges (chs 13–16) features Samson, also a Danite, another link between the two sections (see also 17.2n.; 18.2n.). **2:** *Zorah and Eshtaol,* see 13.25; 16.31, another link with chs 13–16. **5:** *Inquire,* see 1.1n. **7:** *Laish,* to be renamed Dan (v. 29), was located in the extreme northeastern corner of Israel. *Sidonians*, residents of the Phoenician city-state Sidon on the

unsuspecting, lacking[a] nothing on earth, and possessing wealth.[b] Furthermore, they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with Aram.[c] 8 When they came to their kinsfolk at Zorah and Eshtaol, they said to them, "What do you report?" 9 They said, "Come, let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and it is very good. Will you do nothing? Do not be slow to go, but enter in and possess the land. 10 When you go, you will come to an unsuspecting people. The land is broad—God has indeed given it into your hands—a place where there is no lack of anything on earth."

11 Six hundred men of the Danite clan, armed with weapons of war, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol, 12 and went up and encamped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. On this account that place is called Mahaneh-dan[d] to this day; it is west of Kiriath-jearim. 13 From there they passed on to the hill country of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.

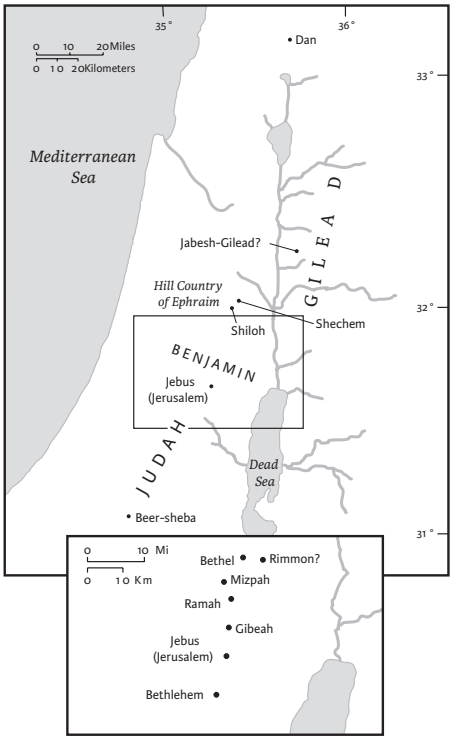
14 Then the five men who had gone to spy out the land (that is, Laish) said to their comrades, "Do you know that in these buildings there are an ephod, teraphim, and an idol of cast metal? Now therefore consider what you will do." 15 So they turned in that direction and came to the house of the young Levite, at the home of Micah, and greeted him. 16 While the six hundred men of the Danites, armed with their weapons of war, stood by the entrance of the gate, 17 the five men who had gone to spy out the land proceeded to enter and take the idol of cast metal, the ephod, and the teraphim.[e] The priest was standing by the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men armed with weapons of war. 18 When the men went into Micah's house and took the idol of cast metal, the ephod, and the teraphim, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" 19 They said to him, "Keep quiet! Put your hand over your mouth, and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one person, or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?" 20 Then the priest accepted the offer. He took the ephod, the teraphim, and the idol, and went along with the people.

21 So they resumed their journey, putting the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them. 22 When they were some distance from the home of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah's house were called out, and they overtook the Danites. 23 They shouted to the Danites, who turned around and said to Micah, "What is the matter that you come with such a company?" 24 He replied, "You take my gods that I made, and the priest, and go away, and what have I left? How then can you ask me, 'What is the matter?' " 25 And the Danites said to him, "You had better not let your voice be heard among us or else hot-tempered fellows will attack you, and you will lose your life and the lives of your household." 26 Then the Danites went their way. When Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his home.

27 The Danites, having taken what Micah had made, and the priest who belonged to him, came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, put them to the sword, and burned down the city. 28 There was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with Aram.[f] It was in the valley that belongs to Beth-rehob. They rebuilt the city, and lived in it. 29 They named the city Dan, after their ancestor Dan, who was born to Israel; but the name of the city was formerly Laish. 30 Then the Danites set up the idol for themselves. Jonathan son of

[a] Cn Compare 18.10: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Symmachus: Heb *with anyone*
[d] That is *Camp of Dan*
[e] Compare 17.4, 5; 18.14: Heb *teraphim and the cast metal*
[f] Cn Compare verse 7: Heb *with anyone*

Lebanese coast north of Israel. *Aram,* Syria. **11:** *Six hundred men,* cf. 1 Sam 30.9. **12:** *Kiriath-jearim,* ca. 8 mi (13 km) northwest of Jerusalem. *Mahaneh-dan,* see 13.25. **21:** The Danites depart from Micah's compound, warriors in the rear, anticipating trouble. **28:** *Beth-rehob,* a district in southern Aram (2 Sam 10.6), or a small town near Dan. **30–31:** The origins of the shrine at Dan (1 Kings 12.25–30). **30:** *Jonathan son of Gershom, son of Moses,* Jonathan belonged to the third generation after the Exodus, yet by now scores of years had passed according to the



Chs 19–21: The Benjaminite War.

Gershom, son of Moses,[a] and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the time the land went into captivity. [31] So they maintained as their own Micah's idol that he had made, as long as the house of God was at Shiloh.

19 In those days, when there was no king in Israel, a certain Levite, residing in the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim, took to himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. [2] But his concubine became angry with[b] him, and she went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there some four months. [3] Then her husband set out after her, to speak tenderly to her and bring her back. He had with him his servant and a couple of donkeys. When he reached[c] her father's house, the girl's father saw him and came with joy to meet him. [4] His father-in-law, the girl's father, made him stay, and he remained with him three days; so they ate and drank, and he[d] stayed there. [5] On the fourth day they got up early in the morning, and he prepared to go; but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Fortify yourself with a bit of food, and after that you may go." [6] So the two men sat and ate and drank together; and the girl's father said to the man, "Why not spend the night and enjoy yourself?" [7] When the man got up to go, his father-in-law kept urging him until he spent the night there again. [8] On the fifth day he got up early in the morning to leave; and the girl's father said, "Fortify yourself." So they lingered[e] until the day declined, and the two of them ate and drank.[f] [9] When the man with his concubine and his servant got up to leave, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Look, the day has worn on until it is almost evening. Spend the night. See, the day has drawn to a close. Spend the night here and enjoy yourself. Tomorrow you can

[a] Another reading is *son of Manasseh*
[b] Gk OL: Heb *prostituted herself against*
[c] Gk: Heb *she brought him to*
[d] Compare verse 7 and Gk: Heb *they*
[e] Cn: Heb *Linger*
[f] Gk: Heb lacks *and drank*

chronology of Judges (see 3.11,30; 5.31; 8.28); this suggests that this episode is placed here for thematic rather than chronological reasons. Pious scribes seeking to protect the name of Moses from association with an illicit shrine connected to his grandson inserted the Heb letter "nun" ("n") above his name in the Hebrew text, turning "Mosheh" (Moses) into "Menashsheh" (Manasseh; see textual note *a*). *Captivity,* when the Galileans were exiled by Assyria, 732 BCE (2 Kings 15.29). **31:** *Shiloh*, the main religious center in the era of Samuel (1 Sam 1–4), was destroyed by the Philistines over three centuries before the Assyrian invasion.

19.1–21.25: The Benjaminite war. This graphic and horrific account serves as a final statement about the era's social and religious anarchy. Though unnamed and not yet born, the shadow of Saul, whose hometown (Gibeah) and tribe (Benjamin) initiate the chain reaction of atrocities, looms large. The trouble begins with Benjamin, but spreads throughout the north.

19.1–30: The outrage in Gibeah. This episode closely resembles the story of Sodom (Gen 19.1–29. **1:** *Concubine*, 8.31n. **8:** The typical biblical pattern is 3–4 (see 16.15n.); leaving on *the fifth day* suggests trouble.

get up early in the morning for your journey, and go home."

10 But the man would not spend the night; he got up and departed, and arrived opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). He had with him a couple of saddled donkeys, and his concubine was with him. 11 When they were near Jebus, the day was far spent, and the servant said to his master, "Come now, let us turn aside to this city of the Jebusites, and spend the night in it." 12 But his master said to him, "We will not turn aside into a city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of Israel; but we will continue on to Gibeah." 13 Then he said to his servant, "Come, let us try to reach one of these places, and spend the night at Gibeah or at Ramah." 14 So they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. 15 They turned aside there, to go in and spend the night at Gibeah. He went in and sat down in the open square of the city, but no one took them in to spend the night.

16 Then at evening there was an old man coming from his work in the field. The man was from the hill country of Ephraim, and he was residing in Gibeah. (The people of the place were Benjaminites.) 17 When the old man looked up and saw the wayfarer in the open square of the city, he said, "Where are you going and where do you come from?" 18 He answered him, "We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah to the remote parts of the hill country of Ephraim, from which I come. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; and I am going to my home.[a] Nobody has offered to take me in. 19 We your servants have straw and fodder for our donkeys, with bread and wine for me and the woman and the young man along with us. We need nothing more." 20 The old man said, "Peace be to you. I will care for all your wants; only do not spend the night in the square." 21 So he brought him into his house, and fed the donkeys; they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

22 While they were enjoying themselves, the men of the city, a perverse lot, surrounded the house, and started pounding on the door. They said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, so that we may have intercourse with him." 23 And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Since this man is my guest, do not do this vile thing. 24 Here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do whatever you want to them; but against this man do not do such a vile thing." 25 But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine, and put her out to them. They wantonly raped her, and abused her all through the night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go. 26 As morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, until it was light.

27 In the morning her master got up, opened the doors of the house, and when he went out to go on his way, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold. 28 "Get up," he said to her, "we are going." But there was no answer. Then he put her on the donkey; and the man set out for his home. 29 When he had entered his house, he took a knife, and grasping his concubine he cut her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. 30 Then he commanded the men whom he sent, saying, "Thus shall you say to all the Israelites, 'Has

[a] Gk Compare 19.29. Heb *to the house of the* LORD

10: *Jerusalem,* later to be David's royal city; the only safe place in this pro-Davidic story. **12:** *A city of foreigners* (see 1.21n.): as it turns out, the Levite and his wife would have been safer among strangers than in Israelite Gibeah. **13:** *Ramah*, Samuel's birthplace (1 Sam 1.19). **22–26:** Unlike the story of Sodom, here no angels come to the rescue. **22:** *A perverse lot,* lit., "sons of Belial," an idiom for "worthless" men (20.13; 1 Sam 2.12; 25.17,25; 1 Kings 21.10,13). **25:** *Seized,* see v. 29n. **26–28:** Whether the woman is alive or dead is not stated; cf. 20.5n. **29:** *Grasping,* the same Heb verb translated "seize" in v. 25; it connotes rough handling. *Twelve pieces,* the woman's body is dismembered by her husband, a piece to arouse each of the twelve tribes toward revenge against the men of Gibeah and to demonstrate the consequences should they not respond; this likely reflects the story of the dismemberment of a yoke of oxen by King Saul in 1 Sam 11.5–7.

such a thing ever happened[a] since the day that the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt until this day? Consider it, take counsel, and speak out.'"

20 Then all the Israelites came out, from Dan to Beer-sheba, including the land of Gilead, and the congregation assembled in one body before the LORD at Mizpah. [2] The chiefs of all the people, of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot-soldiers bearing arms. [3] (Now the Benjaminites heard that the people of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) And the Israelites said, "Tell us, how did this criminal act come about?" [4] The Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered, "I came to Gibeah that belongs to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to spend the night. [5] The lords of Gibeah rose up against me, and surrounded the house at night. They intended to kill me, and they raped my concubine until she died. [6] Then I took my concubine and cut her into pieces, and sent her throughout the whole extent of Israel's territory; for they have committed a vile outrage in Israel. [7] So now, you Israelites, all of you, give your advice and counsel here."

[8] All the people got up as one, saying, "We will not any of us go to our tents, nor will any of us return to our houses. [9] But now this is what we will do to Gibeah: we will go up[b] against it by lot. [10] We will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred of a thousand, and a thousand of ten thousand, to bring provisions for the troops, who are going to repay[c] Gibeah of Benjamin for all the disgrace that they have done in Israel." [11] So all the men of Israel gathered against the city, united as one.

[12] The tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What crime is this that has been committed among you? [13] Now then, hand over those scoundrels in Gibeah, so that we may put them to death, and purge the evil from Israel." But the Benjaminites would not listen to their kinsfolk, the Israelites. [14] The Benjaminites came together out of the towns to Gibeah, to go out to battle against the Israelites. [15] On that day the Benjaminites mustered twenty-six thousand armed men from their towns, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah. [16] Of all this force, there were seven hundred picked men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair, and not miss. [17] And the Israelites, apart from Benjamin, mustered four hundred thousand armed men, all of them warriors.

[18] The Israelites proceeded to go up to Bethel, where they inquired of God, "Which of us shall go up first to battle against the Benjaminites?" And the LORD answered, "Judah shall go up first."

[19] Then the Israelites got up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah. [20] The Israelites went out to battle against Benjamin; and the Israelites drew up the battle line against them at Gibeah. [21] The Benjaminites came out of Gibeah, and struck down on that day twenty-two thousand of the Israelites. [23 d] The Israelites went up and wept before the LORD until the evening; and they inquired of the LORD, "Shall we again draw near to battle against our kinsfolk the Benjaminites?" And the LORD said, "Go up against them." [22] The Israelites took courage, and again formed the

[a] Compare Gk: Heb [30] *And all who saw it said, "Such a thing has not happened or been seen*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *we will go up*
[c] Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Verses 22 and 23 are transposed

20.1–48: The war against Benjamin. 1: *Dan to Beersheba,* the traditional northern and southern limits of Israel (see, e.g., 2 Sam 17.11). *Mizpah,* near Gibeah (Neh 3.7); a frequent site for convocations (1 Sam 7.5–12; 10.17–24). **2:** *Four hundred thousand,* see 1.4n. **5:** *Until she died,* the Levite denies any role in his wife's death; cf. 19.26–28n. **12–17:** The Israelite coalition seeks to avoid warfare if Benjamin delivers the culprits from Gibeah. When the Benjaminites refuse to hand them over, the war is on. **16:** *Left-handed,* like Ehud (3.15), also from Benjamin; in 1 Chr 12.2 Benjaminite warriors are ambidextrous. **18:** *Bethel,* 2.1n; Gen 28.10–17. *Inquired,* 1.1n. *Which of us shall go up first,* 1.1n. These references to the initial episode form a frame around the book. *Judah* is never mentioned in the battle account, but its selection to lead is consistent with its first rank position in ch 1, and reflects the importance of David, who is a Judahite. **19–35:** The coalition defeats Benjamin, but only on the third try. **19–22:** No explanation is given for the loss on the first day. **23:** *Wept before the LORD,* 2.4–5; 21.2. *Inquired,* cf. 1 Kings 22.6.

battle line in the same place where they had formed it on the first day.

24 So the Israelites advanced against the Benjaminites the second day. 25 Benjamin moved out against them from Gibeah the second day, and struck down eighteen thousand of the Israelites, all of them armed men. 26 Then all the Israelites, the whole army, went back to Bethel and wept, sitting there before the LORD; they fasted that day until evening. Then they offered burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being before the LORD. 27 And the Israelites inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, 28 and Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, ministered before it in those days), saying, "Shall we go out once more to battle against our kinsfolk the Benjaminites, or shall we desist?" The LORD answered, "Go up, for tomorrow I will give them into your hand."

29 So Israel stationed men in ambush around Gibeah. 30 Then the Israelites went up against the Benjaminites on the third day, and set themselves in array against Gibeah, as before. 31 When the Benjaminites went out against the army, they were drawn away from the city. As before they began to inflict casualties on the troops, along the main roads, one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah, as well as in the open country, killing about thirty men of Israel. 32 The Benjaminites thought, "They are being routed before us, as previously." But the Israelites said, "Let us retreat and draw them away from the city toward the roads." 33 The main body of the Israelites drew back its battle line to Baal-tamar, while those Israelites who were in ambush rushed out of their place west[a] of Geba. 34 There came against Gibeah ten thousand picked men out of all Israel, and the battle was fierce. But the Benjaminites did not realize that disaster was close upon them.

35 The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel; and the Israelites destroyed twenty-five thousand one hundred men of Benjamin that day, all of them armed.

36 Then the Benjaminites saw that they were defeated.[b]

The Israelites gave ground to Benjamin, because they trusted to the troops in ambush that they had stationed against Gibeah. 37 The troops in ambush rushed quickly upon Gibeah. Then they put the whole city to the sword. 38 Now the agreement between the main body of Israel and the men in ambush was that when they sent up a cloud of smoke out of the city 39 the main body of Israel should turn in battle. But Benjamin had begun to inflict casualties on the Israelites, killing about thirty of them; so they thought, "Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle." 40 But when the cloud, a column of smoke, began to rise out of the city, the Benjaminites looked behind them—and there was the whole city going up in smoke toward the sky! 41 Then the main body of Israel turned, and the Benjaminites were dismayed, for they saw that disaster was close upon them. 42 Therefore they turned away from the Israelites in the direction of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and those who came out of the city[c] were slaughtering them in between.[d] 43 Cutting down[e] the Benjaminites, they pursued them from Nohah[f] and trod them down as far as a place east of Gibeah. 44 Eighteen thousand Benjaminites fell, all of them courageous fighters. 45 When they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, five thousand of them were cut down on the main roads, and they were

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *in the plain*
[b] This sentence is continued by verse 45.
[c] Compare Vg and some Gk Mss: Heb *cities*
[d] Compare Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Gk: Heb *Surrounding*
[f] Gk: Heb *pursued them at their resting place*

24–28: Defeat on the second day leads to even more intense ritual. **27:** *Ark of the covenant*, a cedar chest containing sacred objects that served both as a focal point for ritual and was a visible symbol of invisible divine presence carried into battle. **28:** *Phineas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron* (Num 25.7–13; Josh 22.30–33; 24.33), another member of the third generation after the Exodus (see 18.30n.). *Eleazar* also appears in Num 31, an account with many details similar to the events in the subsequent chapter (see 21.10n.,12n.). **29–34:** For a similar tactic, drawing opponents into the open so that a company in hiding can attack an under-defended town, see 9.42–45; Josh 8.1–24. **38:** *Cloud of smoke,* cf. Josh 8.18–21. **45:** *Rock of Rimmon,* location uncertain but near Gibeah.

pursued as far as Gidom, and two thousand of them were slain. 46 So all who fell that day of Benjamin were twenty-five thousand arms-bearing men, all of them courageous fighters. 47 But six hundred turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and remained at the rock of Rimmon for four months. 48 Meanwhile, the Israelites turned back against the Benjaminites, and put them to the sword—the city, the people, the animals, and all that remained. Also the remaining towns they set on fire.

21 Now the Israelites had sworn at Mizpah, "No one of us shall give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin." 2 And the people came to Bethel, and sat there until evening before God, and they lifted up their voices and wept bitterly. 3 They said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, why has it come to pass that today there should be one tribe lacking in Israel?" 4 On the next day, the people got up early, and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being. 5 Then the Israelites said, "Which of all the tribes of Israel did not come up in the assembly to the LORD?" For a solemn oath had been taken concerning whoever did not come up to the LORD to Mizpah, saying, "That one shall be put to death." 6 But the Israelites had compassion for Benjamin their kin, and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel this day. 7 What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them any of our daughters as wives?"

8 Then they said, "Is there anyone from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to the LORD to Mizpah?" It turned out that no one from Jabesh-gilead had come to the camp, to the assembly. 9 For when the roll was called among the people, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was there. 10 So the congregation sent twelve thousand soldiers there and commanded them, "Go, put the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead to the sword, including the women and the little ones. 11 This is what you shall do; every male and every woman that has lain with a male you shall devote to destruction." 12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins who had never slept with a man and brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

13 Then the whole congregation sent word to the Benjaminites who were at the rock of Rimmon, and proclaimed peace to them. 14 Benjamin returned at that time; and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead; but they did not suffice for them.

15 The people had compassion on Benjamin because the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel. 16 So the elders of the congregation said, "What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since there are no women left in Benjamin?" 17 And they said, "There must be heirs for the survivors of Benjamin, in order that a tribe may not be blotted out from Israel. 18 Yet we cannot give any of our daughters to them as wives."

48: The Israelites treat Gibeah like an apostate city, subjecting it to the ban (see 1.17n.).

21.1–24: The war against the daughters. The Israelite chiefs who had vowed during the hostilities that no Benjaminite would ever marry their daughters grow anxious about the state of the remaining six hundred warriors since the patriarchal family of twelve tribes must be preserved. At Jabesh-gilead, which did not answer the tribal muster against Benjamin, four hundred women are abducted. To secure two hundred more, the elders of Israel, bound by oath not to give their daughters away, direct the Benjaminites to take their daughters by force.

21.1–14: Bride capture at Jabesh-gilead. The Israelite coalition annihilates the village of Jabesh-gilead, which did not participate in the war against Benjamin, in order to secure wives for the surviving Benjaminite warriors whose womenfolk the Israelites had previously annihilated. Some details in this story are reminiscent of Num 31.1–20. **2:** *At Bethel . . . wept bitterly,* 20.23n. Bethel was the site of a weeping ritual at the beginning of Judges (2.1–5). **8:** *Jabesh-gilead,* in Transjordan, is a village associated positively with Saul (1 Sam 11.1–11; 31.11–13; 2 Sam 2.4–7). **10:** *Twelve thousand,* Num 31.1–5. *Women and the little ones,* Num 31.9. **11:** *Devote to destruction,* 1.17n. **12:** *Young virgins who had never slept with a man,* Num 31.17–18. *Shiloh,* ca. 9 mi (5 km) north of Bethel, plays a central role in the following book of Samuel (e.g., 1 Sam 1.3).

21.15–24: Bride capture at Shiloh. The Israelite elders, in an action reminiscent of Jephthah (11.34–40), allow the young women of Shiloh to be captured in order to avoid breaking a vow. The motif of abducting women

For the Israelites had sworn, "Cursed be anyone who gives a wife to Benjamin." [19] So they said, "Look, the yearly festival of the LORD is taking place at Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, on the east of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah." [20] And they instructed the Benjaminites, saying, "Go and lie in wait in the vineyards, [21] and watch; when the young women of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and each of you carry off a wife for himself from the young women of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. [22] Then if their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, we will say to them, 'Be generous and allow us to have them; because we did not capture in battle a wife for each man. But neither did you incur guilt by giving your daughters to them.' " [23] The Benjaminites did so; they took wives for each of them from the dancers whom they abducted. Then they went and returned to their territory, and rebuilt the towns, and lived in them. [24] So the Israelites departed from there at that time by tribes and families, and they went out from there to their own territories.

[25] In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.

on a festival day is known from Greek and Roman literature. **19:** *The yearly festival at Shiloh,* this agricultural festival is otherwise unknown; cf. 11.29–30. *Lebonah,* ca. 4 mi (6.5 km) west-northwest of Shiloh. **21:** *The young women come out to dance,* like Jephthah's daughter (11.34). **22:** *A wife for each man,* see 5.30n. **24:** *So the Israelites departed from there,* in a book with a revolving pattern, Israel ends as it began (2.6).

21.25: Conclusion to the book of Judges. The final refrain leaves Israel in disarray, hinting at the necessity of establishing a monarchy, the theme of the following book of Samuel.

RUTH

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

The book is named after its heroine, a young Moabite widow who leaves her land and family to follow her mother-in-law to Bethlehem in Judah, where she will become the great-grandmother of King David.

The book of Ruth is in the third division of the Hebrew Bible, the Writings; it is one of the Megillot, the five scrolls read on different Jewish holidays, with Ruth read at the late spring harvest festival of Weeks (Shavuot). In the Septuagint, and consequently in Christian Bibles, it comes between the books of Judges and Samuel, since it begins "In the days when the judges ruled" (1.1) and ends with a list of ten generations from Perez to David, preparing us for David's arrival in 1 Samuel and supplying the genealogy lacking there.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The book of Ruth was written by an unknown author, probably in the Second Temple period, to counter the strong opposition to marriage by Jews with foreign women, particularly Ammonites and Moabites (see Ezra 9–10; Neh 10.29–31; 13.24–27). Nehemiah 13.1 cites Deut 23.4 as the basis for its demand to exclude all foreigners from Israel. Our book voices an alternative view: its heroine is an ideal Moabite woman, a model of righteousness, who altruistically follows her mother-in-law. Formal conversion to Judaism did not exist in this period, but Ruth clings to the God of Israel, and God blesses her and provides her with posterity. Boaz is also blessed, like the young Moabite woman whom he marries.

The language of the book of Ruth supports a Second Temple period dating: its words and expressions, and their spelling, attest to a substantial Aramaic influence. Moreover, it shows no sign of the Deuteronomistic redaction that characterizes the earlier historical books (Joshua–Kings). An alternative view is that the book's interest in the ancestry of King David suggests that it was written during the period of the monarchy.

STRUCTURE

While Ruth is one of the shortest of the Bible's books, it comprises one of the Bible's longest stories, one of an idyllic-romantic character with several lines that are markedly poetic (e.g., 1.13,16–17,20–21; 2.12; 4.11,15). The writer is also fond of wordplay. Great misfortunes, both national (famine) and personal-familial (the death of Naomi's husband and sons), occur at the outset and propel the narrative forward. The former is resolved at the end of the exposition (1.6), and the bitter pessimism caused by the latter is limited to the first chapter—from here on, the story is bathed in an optimistic light, full of hope for a better future.

The book has no villains, and the protagonists are all are helpful, considerate, and well intentioned. The absence of conflict also characterizes the relations with God. Apart from Naomi's defiant words in 1.20–21, the book depicts a wonder of harmonious relations with God. Pentateuchal laws also play a role in this harmony: the protagonists are notable in their willingness to go above and beyond what the law requires, and they are rewarded accordingly.

The book is structured symmetrically. The family's history before their return from Moab and following the act of redemption are concentrated at the book's beginning (1.1–6) and end (4.18–22), framing the narrative. Chapters 1 and 4 are parallel, as are chs 2 and 3. Chapter 1 opens with the genealogy of Elimelech, an unknown Ephrathite; ch 4 ends with the genealogy from Perez to David. Chapter 1 opens with an allusion to the period of the judges; ch 4 ends with an allusion to the monarchic period—David. Chapter 1 mentions a direct act of God ending the famine (v. 6); ch 4 mentions God's second intervention, which resolves the personal-familial crisis (v. 13). No further direct acts of God are mentioned, leaving room in the story for human responsibility and benevolent actions. Only for acts that are beyond human capability—ending a famine and opening a female's womb—will God step in. A chorus of women explains Naomi's circumstances in both chapters: in ch 1 their reaction is sad astonishment at Naomi's return to Bethlehem (v. 19), in ch 4 their speech is prolonged and buoyant (vv. 14–15). A striking structural parallel is also developed in the conduct of the secondary characters Orpah, who ultimately decides against following Naomi (1.14), and the next of kin, who recants his willingness to redeem the field (4.6). Both serve to highlight the exceptional goodness of Ruth and Boaz.

Chapters 2 and 3 are also parallel. Chapter 2 depicts one day in Boaz's field; ch 3 describes one night. Both chapters open with conversations between Naomi and Ruth, but here we are presented with clear oppositions:

in ch 2 Ruth initiates, asking Naomi's permission to go to the fields to glean; Naomi is passive and her answer succinct: "Go, my daughter" (v. 2). In ch 3, Naomi initiates, asking Ruth to go to Boaz's field, and Ruth is passive, her answer brief: "All that you tell me I will do" (v. 5). The next locale in both chapters—which is the main locale in both—is Boaz's field. In ch 2, Ruth reaches the field before Boaz, whose arrival is marked by the word *wehinneh*, "just then" (v. 4). In ch 3, Boaz arrives before Ruth, whose appearance is also marked by *wehinneh* (v. 8 [NRSV] "and there"). In 2.5, Boaz asks about Ruth's identity; in 3.9 he asks Ruth, "Who are you?" Ruth's answer alludes to the difference between the characters' functioning in the two chapters: in ch 3 Ruth instructs Boaz what he must do (v. 9); in ch 2 she is passive, astonished at Boaz's graciousness toward her. In both chapters Boaz is careful to protect Ruth's honor: in ch 2 he takes care that she will stay with the young women (and not the men; v. 8), and that the men will neither reproach nor rebuke her (vv. 15,16); in ch 3 he makes sure that no one will see her with him (v. 14). In 2.18 Ruth brings Naomi what was left after she had been satisfied, a sign of her good character, and in 3.17 she delivers barley to Naomi as Boaz had instructed, a sign of his good character. The final locale in both chapters is Naomi's home (2.18–23; 3.16–18).

INTERPRETATION

The author of the book knows Pentateuchal law. The heroine's gleaning of the grain fields blends the law of gleanings (Lev 19.9–10) and that concerning overlooking a sheaf in the field (Deut 24.19). To redeem Ruth (3.9,12–13) and the field (4.3–4), and to bind them together (4.5,9–10), the book boldly combines the laws of redeeming a field (Lev 25.25–28) with that of levirate marriage (Deut 25.5–10). In Ruth, the law regarding the redemption of a woman becomes a logical extension of the law of levirate marriage, as in later rabbinic interpretation in which different laws are combined and their discrepancies reconciled. The book may even anticipate later rabbinic interpretation of Deuteronomy 23.3 ("No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly") as referring exclusively to males and not females (*Mishnah Yebamoth* 8.3).

Other than laws, Ruth quotes or makes extensive use of earlier, First Temple period texts of all types. For example, the words of Boaz to Ruth in 2.11 echo God's command to Abraham in Gen 12.1. Ruth's actions on Boaz's threshing floor (ch 3) are implicitly contrasted to that of Lot's daughters (Gen 19.30–38), and she is presented as being even more dignified than Tamar (Gen 38.14–15). The matriarchs Rachel and Leah are mentioned explicitly (4.11; cf. also Gen 12.1 with Ruth 2.11). The influence of the historical books is similarly evident: 1 Sam 1.8 leaves its imprint on Ruth 4.15; 1 Sam 9.9 is reflected in Ruth 4.7. The genealogy in 4.8–22 is constructed from the genealogy of Judah in 1 Chr 2.

This highly skilled narrative should be understood in its historical context, within the debates of the Second Temple period concerning intermarriage. The stance of Ruth is clear and unambiguous: *ḥesed,* kindness and loyalty, are more important than ethnicity.

Yair Zakovitch

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. **2** The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. **3** But

1.1–5: Famine. These verses provide the background for the entire story. The family's prolonged absence from Israel and a string of misfortunes have left Naomi and her daughters-in-law in desperate straits. Leaving Canaan because of famine is a repeated theme in Genesis (12.10; 26.1; 47.4) **1:** *Bethlehem*, 5 mi (8 km) south of Jerusalem, the home of David's family (1 Sam 16.1–5). It can be translated "house of bread," and thus opens the book on an ironic note. *Moab,* the region east of the Dead Sea. According Gen 19.36–37, the Moabites are related to the Israelites: their patriarch, Lot, was Abraham's nephew. **2:** *Mahlon and Chilion*, the names are symbolic in an escalating order of gravity: Mahlon is related to the word for "sickness" (Heb "maḥalah"), and Chilion to the word for "destruction" (Heb "killayon"). *Ephrathites*, the family is from Bethlehem, also called Ephrathah (4.11; see Gen 35.19; 48.7; Mic 5.2). **3–5:** The legal status of a woman is largely determined by the men she is dependent upon—a father, husband, or male children. The status of these three women is thus dire.

Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died,
and she was left with her two sons. [4] These
took Moabite wives; the name of the one
was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth.
When they had lived there about ten years,
[5] both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that
the woman was left without her two sons
and her husband.

[6] Then she started to return with her
daughters-in-law from the country of Moab,
for she had heard in the country of Moab
that the LORD had considered his people and
given them food. [7] So she set out from the
place where she had been living, she and
her two daughters-in-law, and they went on
their way to go back to the land of Judah. [8] But
Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go
back each of you to your mother's house.
May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you
have dealt with the dead and with me. [9] The
LORD grant that you may find security, each
of you in the house of your husband." Then
she kissed them, and they wept aloud. [10] They
said to her, "No, we will return with you to
your people." [11] But Naomi said, "Turn back,
my daughters, why will you go with me? Do
I still have sons in my womb that they may
become your husbands? [12] Turn back, my
daughters, go your way, for I am too old to
have a husband. Even if I thought there was
hope for me, even if I should have a husband
tonight and bear sons, [13] would you then
wait until they were grown? Would you then
refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it
has been far more bitter for me than for you,
because the hand of the LORD has turned
against me." [14] Then they wept aloud again.
Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth
clung to her.

[15] So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has
gone back to her people and to her gods; re-
turn after your sister-in-law." [16] But Ruth said,

"Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.
[17] Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.
May the LORD do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!"

[18] When Naomi saw that she was deter-
mined to go with her, she said no more to
her.

[19] So the two of them went on until they
came to Bethlehem. When they came to Beth-
lehem, the whole town was stirred because of
them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"
[20] She said to them,

"Call me no longer Naomi,[a]
call me Mara,[b]
for the Almighty[c] has dealt bitterly with
me.
[21] I went away full,
but the LORD has brought me back
empty;
why call me Naomi
when the LORD has dealt harshly with[d]
me,
and the Almighty[c] has brought calamity
upon me?"

[22] So Naomi returned together with Ruth
the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came
back with her from the country of Moab.
They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of
the barley harvest.

[a] That is *Pleasant*
[b] That is *Bitter*
[c] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[d] Or *has testified against*

1.6–19a: The return to Bethlehem. Instead of a description of the journey, we find a dialogue between Naomi and her daughters-in-law. Orpah returns to Moab, persuaded by the bleak picture Naomi describes. Ruth reveals her noble-mindedness, electing to remain with Naomi and follow Naomi's God, without expectation of reward or hope for a better life.

1.19b–22: The arrival at Bethlehem. The narrative focuses on Naomi. **19:** The chorus of women expresses wonder at the change in Naomi and ignores Ruth. In her grief, Naomi blames God for her sorrows. **20:** *Mara*, "bitter," is the opposite of *Naomi,* "pleasant." **22:** The *barley harvest* was the earliest harvest.

2 Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. [2] And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor." She said to her, "Go, my daughter." [3] So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. [4] Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you." They answered, "The LORD bless you." [5] Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "To whom does this young woman belong?" [6] The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. [7] She said, 'Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment."[a]

[8] Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. [9] Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn." [10] Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?" [11] But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. [12] May the LORD reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!" [13] Then she said, "May I continue to find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants."

[14] At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, and eat some of this bread, and dip your morsel in the sour wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he heaped up for her some parched grain. She ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. [15] When she got up to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, "Let her glean even among the standing sheaves, and do not reproach her. [16] You must also pull out some handfuls for her from the bundles, and leave them for her to glean, and do not rebuke her."

[17] So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. [18] She picked it up and came into the town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gleaned. Then she took out and gave her what was left over after she herself had been satisfied. [19] Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have

[a] Compare Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

2.1–23: Ruth and Boaz's first encounter. 1–7: Ruth again takes the initiative—now on foreign soil—and sets out to glean in order to provide for her mother-in-law and herself. "Chance events" bring Ruth and Boaz, a prosperous member of Naomi's husband Elimelech's family, together: Ruth happens to reach Boaz's field, and he happens to arrive while she gleans there. The Bible often suggests that the divine hand is behind such "chance." **8–14:** Boaz and Ruth speak. Boaz guides and dominates their exchange, which secures their connection. He exhibits genuine concern for Ruth, for her food, honor, and drink. Ruth wonders at his solicitude, since she is a foreigner. In his answer—the heart of the exchange—Boaz expresses admiration for her self-sacrifice and devotion to her mother-in-law, and his hope that God will reward her. Boaz proves his interest in her welfare by granting her more than she needs. **15–17:** Ruth returns to glean in Boaz's field, unaware of Boaz's efforts on her behalf. Because of Boaz's generosity; the amount of barley Ruth gleaned (an *ephah* was about 2/3 bushel or 22 L) would have been sufficient for many days. **18–23:** Boaz's opening words in the previous section supply Naomi's closing words here: concern that Ruth will stay with Boaz's young women and so avoid dishonor (vv. 8–9; 22). In the middle of each dialogue, the speaker (Boaz, Naomi) voices esteem for Ruth and a blessing (vv. 11–12; 20). Gaps are filled in the course of the conversation; to the amazed question of Naomi regarding the kindness shown Ruth, Ruth reveals the identity of the field-owner (v. 19). Naomi learns of Boaz's kindness

you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." 20 Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a relative of ours, one of our nearest kin."[a] 21 Then Ruth the Moabite said, "He even said to me, 'Stay close by my servants, until they have finished all my harvest.' " 22 Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is better, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, otherwise you might be bothered in another field." 23 So she stayed close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests; and she lived with her mother-in-law.

3 Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. 2 Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. 3 Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." 5 She said to her, "All that you tell me I will do."

6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. 7 When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet, and lay down. 8 At midnight the man was startled, and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! 9 He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin."[a] 10 He said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. 11 And now, my daughter, do not be afraid, I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. 12 But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. 13 Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin[a] for you, good; let him do it. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin[a] for you, then, as the LORD lives, I will act as next-of-kin[a] for you. Lie down until the morning."

14 So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, "It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." 15 Then he said, "Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out." So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then he went into the city.

[a] Or *one with the right to redeem*

toward Ruth, and Ruth learns that Boaz is one of the redeeming kinsmen (v. 20), a person related to Elimelech; as a male related to the deceased, he can allow the women to have access to the field of Elimelech. Ruth speaks of her intention to glean until the end of the harvest (v. 21). Naomi agrees (v. 22). **21:** The *wheat harvest,* in late spring, followed the barley harvest.

3.1–18: Ruth and Boaz's nighttime encounter. 1–5: As in 2.2, Naomi and Ruth again discuss matters in Naomi's home, though the roles are reversed: Naomi is the initiator who slowly intimates her objective. Naomi's instructions suggest that marriage is the aim (cf. Ezek 16.8–10). She expects Boaz to know what to do. **6–15:** Ruth reaches the field unnoticed; she needs to be seen by Boaz, alone. She follows Naomi's instructions but goes even further, making clear to Boaz that her actions refer to the law of redemption. Ruth's discretion as she proceeds to the threshing floor also characterizes her dialogue with Boaz and their subsequent actions. Ruth continues to lie at Boaz's feet until morning. Although "feet" is often a euphemism in the Bible for genitals (e.g., Isa 7.20), nothing explicit occurs between them. Both Ruth and Boaz are cautious for her reputation, as were Boaz and Naomi in the previous chapter. With Ruth's return from the threshing floor at dawn, hope reigns: Ruth knows that she will be redeemed and she carries much barley, a sign of Boaz's favorable intentions. **10:** *Loyalty,* Heb "ḥesed," which God is expected to show to Israel, and those with more power are expected to show to

16 She came to her mother-in-law, who said,
"How did things go with you,[a] my daughter?"
Then she told her all that the man had done
for her, 17 saying, "He gave me these six mea-
sures of barley, for he said, 'Do not go back to
your mother-in-law empty-handed.' " 18 She
replied, "Wait, my daughter, until you learn
how the matter turns out, for the man will
not rest, but will settle the matter today."

4 No sooner had Boaz gone up to the gate
and sat down there than the next-of-kin,[b]
of whom Boaz had spoken, came passing by.
So Boaz said, "Come over, friend; sit down
here." And he went over and sat down. 2 Then
Boaz took ten men of the elders of the city,
and said, "Sit down here"; so they sat down.
3 He then said to the next-of-kin,[b] "Naomi,
who has come back from the country of
Moab, is selling the parcel of land that
belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. 4 So I
thought I would tell you of it, and say: Buy it
in the presence of those sitting here, and in
the presence of the elders of my people. If
you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will
not, tell me, so that I may know; for there is
no one prior to you to redeem it, and I come
after you." So he said, "I will redeem it."
5 Then Boaz said, "The day you acquire the
field from the hand of Naomi, you are also
acquiring Ruth[c] the Moabite, the widow of
the dead man, to maintain the dead man's
name on his inheritance." 6 At this, the next-
of-kin[b] said, "I cannot redeem it for myself
without damaging my own inheritance. Take
my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot
redeem it."

7 Now this was the custom in former times
in Israel concerning redeeming and exchang-
ing: to confirm a transaction, the one took
off a sandal and gave it to the other; this was
the manner of attesting in Israel. 8 So when
the next-of-kin[b] said to Boaz, "Acquire it for
yourself," he took off his sandal. 9 Then Boaz
said to the elders and all the people, "To-
day you are witnesses that I have acquired
from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to
Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion
and Mahlon. 10 I have also acquired Ruth the
Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my wife,
to maintain the dead man's name on his in-
heritance, in order that the name of the dead
may not be cut off from his kindred and from
the gate of his native place; today you are
witnesses." 11 Then all the people who were at
the gate, along with the elders, said, "We are
witnesses. May the LORD make the woman
who is coming into your house like Rachel
and Leah, who together built up the house of
Israel. May you produce children in Ephra-
thah and bestow a name in Bethlehem; 12 and,
through the children that the LORD will give
you by this young woman, may your house be
like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to
Judah."

13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his
wife. When they came together, the LORD
made her conceive, and she bore a son.

[a] Or *"Who are you,*
[b] Or *one with the right to redeem*
[c] OL Vg: Heb *from the hand of Naomi and from Ruth*

those who are disadvantaged. **16–18:** Here Ruth and Naomi conclude their active role. From now on they are dependent upon the efforts of others.

4.1–22: Ruth is redeemed, Obed is born: the family's name continues. 1–12: Redemption at the city gate. The *gate* was where legal issues were settled (e.g., Deut 25.7). Boaz's authority at the city gate is as great as it was with his young men; here also Boaz commands, and the city elders follow his instructions. Nevertheless, he does not take advantage of his position and treats fairly the closest kinsman, thus allowing him to exercise his legal rights if he so desires. Awareness of the Pentateuch is evident by the rigor with which the law is kept and by repeated allusions to the laws of redeeming and that of levirate marriage (Lev 25.25–28; Deut 25.5–10), and also in the greetings of the people to Boaz and his household, where Ruth is depicted as one of the matriarchs, along with Rachel and Leah, the wives of Jacob (v. 11). **6:** The exact meaning of *damaging my own inheritance* is uncertain, but likely refers to a requirement that the current field of this redeemer would have to be shared with heirs of Ruth as well as with his current heirs. **12:** By comparing Boaz's house to Perez's house, the most important clan in Judah, Ruth is compared to Tamar, the mother of Perez (Gen 38.29), who although a childless widow was granted illustrious progeny as a result of sexual trickery. **13–17:** The marriage of Ruth and Boaz and the birth of Obed. **13:** Just as God intervened to resolve the national crisis at the end of the introduction (1.6), so

14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed
be the LORD, who has not left you this day
without next-of-kin;[a] and may his name be
renowned in Israel! 15 He shall be to you a
restorer of life and a nourisher of your old
age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you,
who is more to you than seven sons, has
borne him." 16 Then Naomi took the child
and laid him in her bosom, and became his
nurse. 17 The women of the neighborhood
gave him a name, saying, "A son has been
born to Naomi." They named him Obed;
he became the father of Jesse, the father of
David.

18 Now these are the descendants of Perez:
Perez became the father of Hezron, 19 Hezron
of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, 20 Amminadab
of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, 21 Salmon of
Boaz, Boaz of Obed, 22 Obed of Jesse, and Jesse
of David.

[a] Or *one with the right to redeem*

he intervenes in this final scene to resolve the family's misfortune. **14–15:** The chorus of women reappears, too, and in a change of tone blesses Naomi's good fortune. Whereas they previously ignored Ruth (1.19), now they glorify her. **16–17:** The meaning of the actions here is uncertain; it may reflect her adoption of this baby as her own. **17:** The section ends, illuminating the family's magnificent future.

18–22: The line of Perez. Once the narrative has named Obed as the grandfather of David (v. 17), it recounts the entire genealogy from Perez to David, combining story with genealogy. Ten is the number of generations from Adam until Noah (Gen 5), and from Noah's son Shem until Abraham (Gen 11.10–26), indicating that the tenth generation, David, is the chosen one. It would appear that Obed has two fathers: Boaz is his biological father (and thus he appears in the list; v. 21), but he will be counted as the seed of Mahlon (4.5,10).

1 SAMUEL

NAME

First and Second Samuel were originally a single work named after the prophet Samuel, who is the focal character of the first eight chapters of 1 Samuel. The name is not entirely appropriate, however, since Samuel dies before 1 Samuel ends (25.1).

LOCATION IN CANON

The original, single book of Samuel was divided into two books in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint, abbreviated LXX) and grouped together with the book of Kings (also divided in two) to form 1–4 Reigns or 1–4 Kingdoms. These divisions were later introduced into Hebrew Bibles and subsequently became standard. The books of Samuel are in the section of the Hebrew Bible known as the Former Prophets. The LXX and most Christian Bibles place 1 and 2 Samuel in the category of the Historical Books.

AUTHORSHIP

In the Babylonian Talmud (*b. B. Bat.* 14b, ca. sixth century CE) the prophet Samuel is identified as the author of those parts of the book that treat events before his death, the rest being attributed to the prophets Nathan and Gad based on 1 Chr 29.29. Modern scholars consider 1 and 2 Samuel to have been written by several anonymous authors, and generally often view it as part of a larger composition called the Deuteronomistic History (DH). The Deuteronomistic History, encompassing the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings, prefaced by Deuteronomy, relates Israel's history in the Promised Land, from the conquest under Joshua until the end of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The foundational work was written by a nameless author/editor known as the Deuteronomist, and it was later supplemented by various anonymous authors and editors.

DATE AND CONTEXT OF COMPOSITION

The Deuteronomistic History was probably completed shortly after the Babylonian exile in 586 BCE and sought to offer a theological reason for the demise of Israel and Judah. Some scholars posit an earlier edition that promoted King Josiah (640–609 BCE) as a new David. Others argue for multiple preexilic, exilic, or postexilic editions.

LITERARY HISTORY

The Deuteronomist (Dtr) edited various traditions into a single, running historical account. In 1 Samuel some scholars have posited hypothetical source documents behind 4.1–7.1 (the "Ark Narrative," possibly continued in 2 Sam 6), chs 8–15 (the "Saul Cycle"), and chs 16–31 (the "Story of David's Rise"). The Dtr(s) also occasionally inserted speeches or commentary in their own distinctive Deuteronomistic style into the narrative; these include 1 Samuel 8.8 (the Exodus), 8.12 (the people crying out), and 12.14–15 (the review of Israel's history and the command to "heed the voice of the LORD").

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

First Samuel falls readily into three parts, each with a different central character: Samuel as a transitional figure—prophet, priest, and judge— between the judges and the monarchy (chs 1–7), the emergence of Saul as Israel's first king (chs 8–15), and David's ascent (chs 16–31). David is the main hero not only of 1 and 2 Samuel but of the Deuteronomistic History as well. The pro-Davidic tone of 1 Samuel is evident in the contrast between Saul, who falters repeatedly, and David, who can do no wrong. God eventually abandons Saul but is constantly with David. God's presence with David, first in Saul's court and then while hiding from Saul, is a major theme in the book.

INTERPRETATION

Perhaps the major issue for the interpretation of the book of Samuel (both 1 and 2) is the relationship of its account to history. There are at least three reasons for doubting that the book is a narrative of history. First,

though its authors no doubt used sources, they wrote centuries after the events it describes. Second, it is a creative literary masterpiece by an "omniscient narrator" who reports private conversations and personal thoughts. It is full of wordplays, intricate plots with subtle twists, and portraits of complex characters. Characters are rarely described, so that descriptions are particularly noteworthy. More often, their inner qualities and motives are revealed by their actions or words, leaving room for ambiguity. Third, the tone or orientation of the book is apologetic or defensive throughout. It may even have been based in parts on an older apologetic work. The charge that David usurped the throne to which he had no hereditary right is addressed in 1 Samuel by the contention that David was the LORD's anointed, who came to prominence as a result of divine choice rather than personal ambition. First Samuel thus presents David as the innocent victim of Saul's jealousy, beloved by Israel's public and leading citizens including Saul's own children, and even by Saul at the beginning of their relationship, when David became a member of the royal family through marriage. Consideration of the apologetic "spin" of the book and the likely ulterior motives of the major characters, especially in cases where the narrative seems to "protest too much," suggest that the historical reality was often quite different from the narrative tale. In the notes that follow the world imagined is that of the story rather than that of historical reality.

Steven L. McKenzie

1 There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite[a] from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. [2] He had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

[3] Now this man used to go up year by year from his town to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. [4] On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; [5] but to Hannah he gave a double portion,[b] because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. [6] Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. [7] So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. [8] Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

[9] After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD.[c] Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. [10] She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. [11] She made this vow:

[a] Compare Gk and 1 Chr 6.35-36: Heb *Ramathaim-zophim*
[b] Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *and presented herself before the LORD*

1.1–28: The birth and consecration of Samuel. The story of a barren woman who bears a child as a favor from God is also told of Sarah (Gen 17.16–19), Rebekah (Gen 25.21–26), Rachel (Gen 29.31; 30.22–24), the mother of Samson (Judg 13.2–5), and Elizabeth (Lk 1.5–17). Such a child is designated by God for a special purpose. **1:** *Ramathaim,* a town in Ephraim, called Ramah in v. 19, but in later chapters the Ramah that was Samuel's home seems to be located in Benjamin (7.16–17). **2:** *Peninnah* is "the second" (NRSV: *the other*) wife; *Hannah* is obviously the favored one. Elkanah may have married Peninnah because of Hannah's failure to produce an heir (see Gen 16.1–2). Elkanah, therefore, was probably prosperous. **3:** Elkanah's annual pilgrimage to worship in Shiloh shows him to be righteous. The *LORD of hosts* or "armies" (Heb "tseba'ot") is a title describing Yahweh's leadership in war on Israel's behalf. *Hophni and Phinehas* are Egyptian names, the second of which is used of several priests. **5:** Cf. Gen 29.30–31. **7:** The *house of the LORD* refers to a temple (Jer 7.12). But other passages reflect a different understanding of the sanctuary at Shiloh. 1 Sam 2.22; Josh 18.1; Ps 78.60 mention a tent of meeting or tabernacle there, and 2 Sam 7.6–7 denies that the LORD dwelt in a "house" before Solomon's Temple. **9:** Eli's *seat beside the doorpost of the temple* (or "sanctuary," Heb "hekal") allowed him to see Hannah praying outside of the temple proper (see also 4.18). **11:** *Nazirite*s were "devoted" to the LORD, usually for a set period of time during

"O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite[a] until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants,[b] and no razor shall touch his head."

12 As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. 14 So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." 15 But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. 16 Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." 17 Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." 18 And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your sight." Then the woman went to her quarters,[c] ate and drank with her husband,[d] and her countenance was sad no longer.[e]

19 They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. 20 In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD."

21 The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD, and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite[a] for all time."[f] 23 Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him; only—may the LORD establish his word."[g] So the woman remained and nursed her son, until she weaned him. 24 When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull,[h] an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young. 25 Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. 26 And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. 27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him. 28 Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD."

She left him there for[i] the LORD.

2 Hannah prayed and said,
"My heart exults in the LORD;
my strength is exalted in my God.[j]

[a] That is *one separated* or *one consecrated*
[b] Cn Compare Gk Q Ms 1.22: MT *then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life*
[c] Gk: Heb *went her way*
[d] Gk: Heb lacks *and drank with her husband*
[e] Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[f] Cn Compare Q Ms: MT lacks *I will offer him as a nazirite for all time*
[g] MT: Q Ms Gk Compare Syr *that which goes out of your mouth*
[h] Q Ms Gk Syr: MT *three bulls*
[i] Gk (Compare Q Ms) and Gk at 2.11: MT *And he* (that is, Elkanah) *worshiped there before*
[j] Gk: Heb *the LORD*

which they were prohibited from drinking alcohol or eating grapes, cutting their hair or beards, and approaching a dead body (Num 6.1–21). *Intoxicants,* probably distilled wine or beer. **13:** *Eli thought she was drunk* because prayers were not usually silent. **17:** *The petition you have made,* the first of several wordplays in this chapter on the name of Saul (Heb "sha'ul"), which sounds like the Heb verb "sha'al," "to ask, petition." Eli's blessing ensures Hannah's pregnancy. **19:** *Elkanah knew his wife,* an idiom for sexual relations. **20:** *Asked,* another pun on the name Saul. **22–24:** *Weaned,* Samuel's age is not given, but he is older than an infant or toddler. *An ephah of flour* (v. 24), ca. 21 qt (23 L). **27:** *The petition that I made,* another pun on Saul's name. **28:** *Lent … given,* the Heb word for both is yet another pun on Saul's name. *He is given,* exactly the same as Saul's name in Heb and so could be translated, "he is Saul to the LORD." Some scholars think, based on these puns, that the story was originally about Saul's birth rather than Samuel's. Others think they are simply allusions to Saul as Israel's first king.

2.1–10: The Song of Hannah. Poems were often inserted into prose books where they seemed appropriate. In this case the poem seems to be considerably later than the surrounding narrative context. It is a psalm of

My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in my[a] victory.

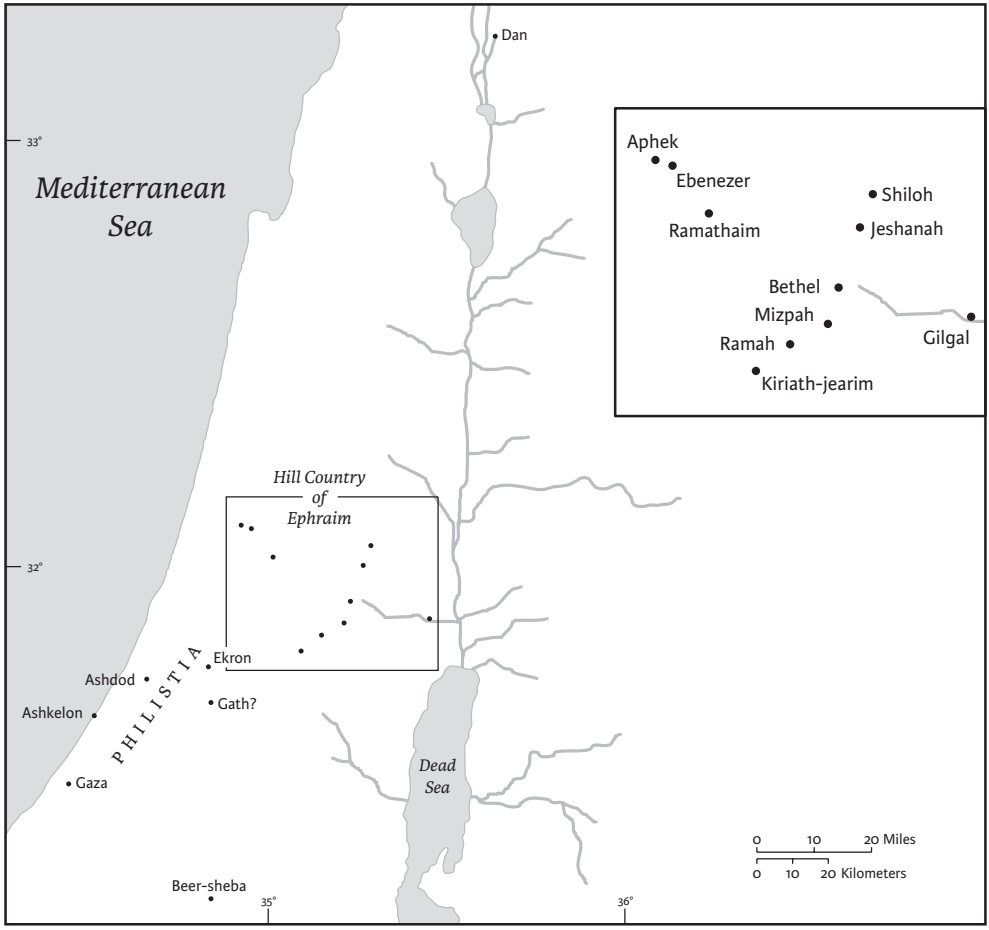
2 "There is no Holy One like the LORD,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.
3 Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.
4 The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.
5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.
6 The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low, he also exalts.
8 He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.[b]
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
and on them he has set the world.

9 "He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness;
for not by might does one prevail.
10 The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered;
the Most High[c] will thunder in heaven.
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king,
and exalt the power of his anointed."
11 Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, while the boy remained to minister to the LORD, in the presence of the priest Eli.
12 Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD 13 or for the duties of the priests to the people. When anyone offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, 14 and he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself.[d] This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the one who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast; for he will not

[a] Q Ms: MT *your*
[b] Gk (Compare Q Ms) adds *He grants the vow of the one who vows, and blesses the years of the just*
[c] Cn Heb *against him he*
[d] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *with it*

national thanksgiving, but its thankful tone appropriately reflects Hannah's sentiments. It was later used as a model for Lk 1.46–55. **1:** *Strength,* lit., "horn" of an animal. **2:** *Rock,* a common metaphor for God (2 Sam 22.2–3; Ps 18.2; 28.1; 62.2,6). **3:** The enemies of Israel are addressed. **4–10:** The reversal of fortune for the downtrodden and oppressed. **5:** *The barren has borne seven,* a line probably explaining the insertion of the poem at this place. *Seven* is symbolic of a sizable family; Hannah will eventually have six children (2.21). **6–7:** *Brings to life* refers to birth, not resurrection from the dead. *Sheol* was the underworld (Isa 14.9–21), where all people were believed to go after death. (The idea of heaven and hell does not exist yet in the Hebrew Bible.) Sheol may be metaphorical for conditions near death (Ps 86.13; 88.3–7), injuries, or serious trouble. **8:** *He raises up the poor . . . he lifts the needy,* a common theme in the Bible. The *earth* is conceived of as a platform resting upon great *pillars*. **10:** *His king* shows that the psalm was written later than Hannah since no king of Israel reigned yet in her time. *Anointed* (Heb "mashiaḥ") was a title for the king and the source of the postbiblical term "messiah," which never means a future Davidic ruler in the Hebrew Bible.

2.12–26: The wicked sons of Eli. Samuel's faithful service, in contrast to the evil deeds of Eli's sons, hints that he will replace Eli. **12:** *They had no regard for,* lit., "they did not know," implying that Eli's sons did not have a personal relationship with the LORD. **13–17:** Priests made their living by receiving a portion of the sacrifices. The custom in Shiloh (vv. 13–14) was for the priest to get whatever the fork brought up while the meat was boiling, which is different from that prescribed elsewhere (contrast Lev 7.28–36; Deut 18.3). By demanding the fat portion, which properly belonged to God, and taking it before the sacrifice was made, Eli's sons were sinning against the LORD (v. 25) and treating him with contempt (vv. 12,17). They also threatened violence against



Chs 1–6: The activity of Samuel.

accept boiled meat from you, but only raw." [16] And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take whatever you wish," he would say, "No, you must give it now; if not, I will take it by force." [17] Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD; for they treated the offerings of the LORD with contempt.

[18] Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. [19] His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. [20] Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD repay[a] you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to[b] the LORD"; and then they would return to their home.

[21] And[c] the LORD took note of Hannah; she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

[a] Q Ms Gk: MT *give*
[b] Q Ms Gk: MT *for the petition that she asked of*
[c] Q Ms Gk: MT *When*

worshipers who tried to do right (v. 16). **18:** This *linen ephod* was a kind of apron worn by priests. **20:** *The gift that she made,* another pun on Saul's name. **22:** *And how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting,* this line, if original, indicates that the shrine at Shiloh was a portable tent or tabernacle (see 1.7n.). However, this line is not in some of the best witnesses to the text of Samuel and may be borrowed from Ex 38.8.

22 Now Eli was very old. He heard all that
his sons were doing to all Israel, and how
they lay with the women who served at the
entrance to the tent of meeting. 23 He said
to them, "Why do you do such things? For
I hear of your evil dealings from all these
people. 24 No, my sons; it is not a good
report that I hear the people of the LORD
spreading abroad. 25 If one person sins
against another, someone can intercede for
the sinner with the LORD;[a] but if someone
sins against the LORD, who can make inter-
cession?" But they would not listen to the
voice of their father; for it was the will of
the LORD to kill them.

26 Now the boy Samuel continued to grow
both in stature and in favor with the LORD
and with the people.

27 A man of God came to Eli and said to
him, "Thus the LORD has said, 'I revealed[b]
myself to the family of your ancestor in
Egypt when they were slaves[c] to the house
of Pharaoh. 28 I chose him out of all the
tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to
my altar, to offer incense, to wear an ephod
before me; and I gave to the family of your
ancestor all my offerings by fire from the
people of Israel. 29 Why then look with
greedy eye[d] at my sacrifices and my offer-
ings that I commanded, and honor your
sons more than me by fattening yourselves
on the choicest parts of every offering of
my people Israel?' 30 Therefore the LORD
the God of Israel declares: 'I promised that
your family and the family of your ancestor
should go in and out before me forever'; but
now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me;
for those who honor me I will honor, and
those who despise me shall be treated with
contempt. 31 See, a time is coming when I
will cut off your strength and the strength
of your ancestor's family, so that no one in
your family will live to old age. 32 Then in
distress you will look with greedy eye[e] on
all the prosperity that shall be bestowed
upon Israel; and no one in your family shall
ever live to old age. 33 The only one of you
whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall
be spared to weep out his[f] eyes and grieve
his[g] heart; all the members of your house-
hold shall die by the sword.[h] 34 The fate of
your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall
be the sign to you—both of them shall die
on the same day. 35 I will raise up for myself
a faithful priest, who shall do according to
what is in my heart and in my mind. I will
build him a sure house, and he shall go in
and out before my anointed one forever.
36 Everyone who is left in your family shall
come to implore him for a piece of silver or
a loaf of bread, and shall say, Please put me
in one of the priest's places, that I may eat a
morsel of bread.' "

[a] Gk Compare Q Ms: MT *another, God will mediate for him*
[b] Gk Tg Syr: Heb *Did I reveal*
[c] Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *slaves*
[d] Q Ms Gk: MT *then kick*
[e] Q Ms Gk: MT *will kick*
[f] Q Ms Gk: MT *your*
[g] Q Ms Gk: Heb *your*
[h] Q Ms See Gk: MT *die like mortals*

It is unknown exactly how these women *served at the entrance to the tent of meeting*. **25:** *It was the will of the LORD to kill them,* compare God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Ex 4–12.

2.27–36: The oracle against Eli. This passage was probably written by the Deuteronomistic author to justify the exclusion of Abiathar, a descendent of Eli, and his sons from the priesthood in favor of Zadok and his descendants (1 Kings 2.27,35) **27–28:** *Your ancestor* may refer to Moses, to whom Eli's family traced their ancestry. The statement that he was chosen *out of all the tribes of Israel* seems to indicate Levi, and Moses was a Levite (Ex 2.1). **28:** *To go up to my altar, to offer incense, to wear an ephod,* three principal duties of priests. Going up to the altar refers to offering sacrifices. **30:** The promise mentioned here is not explicitly found in the Bible but resembles Ex 28.43, which is directed to Aaron. **31–33:** The cutting off of Eli's household probably refers not to the death of Eli and his sons in 4.11,18 but to Saul's annihilation of the priests of Nob in ch 22. *The only one of you* is Abiathar, who alone escaped the slaughter (22.18–23; 1 Kings 2.26–27). The Hebrew of v. 32a is obscure. **35:** The *faithful priest* is Zadok, who came to prominence when Abiathar was banished by Solomon. The language of this verse is very similar to that of 2 Sam 7.11–16, which promises a dynasty to David. Both were probably written by the Deuteronomistic Historian. See also 1 Sam 25.28; 1 Kings 11.38. *Anointed one*, see 2.10n.

3 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; 3 the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. 4 Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!"[a] and he said, "Here I am!" 5 and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. 6 The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. 8 The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. 9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.' " So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." 11 Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. 12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God,[b] and he did not restrain them. 14 Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

15 Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. 16 But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." 17 Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." 18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him."

19 As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD. 21 The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of

4 the LORD. 1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

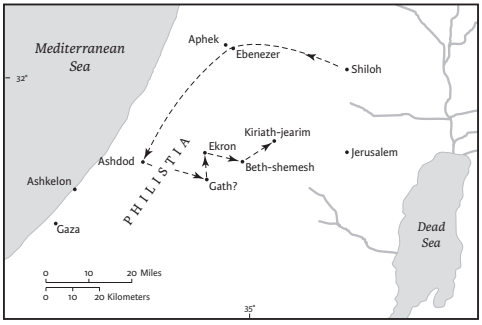
In those days the Philistines mustered for war against Israel,[c] and Israel went out to

[a] Q Ms Gk See 3.10: MT *the LORD called Samuel*
[b] Another reading is *for themselves*
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *In those days the Philistines mustered for war against Israel*

3.1–4.1a: Samuel's call. The threefold repetition of the LORD's call is a literary motif, but it also calls attention to Samuel's youth and inexperience with prophetic revelation. **3.1:** *Word of the LORD . . . visions,* means of prophetic revelation. **3:** The lamp in the temple burned at night (see Ex 27.21). *The lamp of God had not yet gone out,* hence it was just before dawn. Samuel's bed was inside the temple near the inner sanctuary where the *ark of God* was kept, a location thought to facilitate divine communication. The ark was a portable shrine or chest representing God's presence; see 4.4n. **7:** *Samuel did not yet know the LORD,* Samuel's role as a prophet had not yet been established since *the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.* In this story Samuel comes to "know" the LORD by learning to recognize God's revelations. **9–10:** *Your servant,* a polite way of referring to oneself. **14:** Eli's sons profaned the sacrifices that might otherwise have *expiated* or atoned for their sins (2.12–17). **17:** *May God do so to you and more also,* a typical oath formula. Eli places Samuel under oath, forcing him to reveal his conversation with the LORD. **19:** All of Samuel's prophecies come true (none *fall to the ground*). **20:** *Dan to Beer-sheba,* the traditional northern and southern limits of Israel.

4.1b–7.1: The ark narrative. Many scholars think that 4.1–7.1 and possibly 2 Sam 6 are based on an old document called the "Ark Narrative" that described the capture and return of the ark. The ark is the focus of this section rather than Samuel, who is not mentioned.

4.1b–22: The capture of the ark. 1b: The *Philistines* came from the northeastern Mediterranean area (including the island of Crete; see Am 9.7) and entered Canaan (the later term "Palestine" is derived from "Philistine")



Chs 4–6: Wanderings of the Ark of the Covenant.

battle against them;[a] they encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek. [2] The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle was joined,[b] Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. [3] When the troops came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD put us to rout today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, so that he may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies." [4] So the people sent to Shiloh, and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

[5] When the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. [6] When the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come to the camp, [7] the Philistines were afraid; for they said, "Gods have[c] come into the camp." They also said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. [8] Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness. [9] Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, in order not to become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight."

[10] So the Philistines fought; Israel was defeated, and they fled, everyone to his home. There was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. [11] The ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

[12] A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with earth upon his head. [13] When he arrived, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. When the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. [14] When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, "What is this uproar?" Then the man came quickly and told Eli. [15] Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set, so that he could not see. [16] The man said to Eli, "I have just come from the battle; I fled from the battle today." He said, "How did it go, my son?" [17] The messenger replied, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great

[a] Gk: Heb *against the Philistines*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Or *A god has*

in approximately 1200 BCE, about the same time the Israelites were emerging in the central highlands. In this period they were Israel's great enemy. **2:** *Four thousand men,* the numbers throughout this account are exaggerated, although some scholars think that the Hebrew word translated "thousand" refers to a military unit of far fewer than a thousand men. **4:** *Cherubim* were mythical griffinlike creatures with body parts from different creatures, especially human heads and wings. They were commonly depicted in palaces and temples. As the throne of "the LORD of hosts who sits *enthroned on the cherubim*" (cf. 3.3), the ark represented the LORD's presence in battle. In some Deuteronomic passages the ark is described as simple in form and lacking cherubim (Deut 10.2–3) while in Priestly texts it is depicted as ornate (Ex 25.10–22; 37.1–9), and adorned with cherubim. **6:** *Hebrews* is commonly used to distinguish Israelites ethnically from foreigners (Gen 14.13; 39.14; 43.32; Ex 1.15; 2.11,13; 3.18; 1 Sam 14.21; Jon 1.9). **8:** *Gods* implies that the Philistines had no conception that the Israelites worshiped only one god (but cf. 5.7–8,10–11). The Philistines also locate the plagues in the *wilderness* rather than in Egypt. In both cases the Israelite writer may be mocking the Philistines. See also 6.6n. **10:** *Thirty thousand,* see v. 2n. **12:** *With his clothes torn and with earth upon his head,* conventional signs of mourning.

slaughter among the troops; your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured." [18] When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli[a] fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man, and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

[19] Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. When she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth; for her labor pains overwhelmed her. [20] As she was about to die, the women attending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer or give heed. [21] She named the child Ichabod, meaning, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. [22] She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

5 When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod; [2] then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and placed it beside Dagon. [3] When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. [4] But when they rose early on the next morning, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off upon the threshold; only the trunk of[b] Dagon was left to him. [5] This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not step on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

[6] The hand of the LORD was heavy upon the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and struck them with tumors, both in Ashdod and in its territory. [7] And when the inhabitants of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us; for his hand is heavy on us and on our god Dagon." [8] So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" The inhabitants of Gath replied, "Let the ark of God be moved on to us."[c] So they moved the ark of the God of Israel to Gath.[d] [9] But after they had brought it to Gath,[e] the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic; he struck the inhabitants of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. [10] So they sent the ark of the God of Israel[f] to Ekron. But when the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "Why[g] have they brought around to us[h] the ark of the God

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Heb lacks *the trunk of*
[c] Gk Compare Q Ms: MT *They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath."*
[d] Gk: Heb lacks *to Gath*
[e] Q Ms: MT lacks *to Gath*
[f] Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *of Israel*
[g] Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *Why*
[h] Heb *me*

18: Pious *Eli* is moved by the loss of the ark more than the loss of his wicked sons. *Forty years,* a round number for a generation. **18:** The last sentence of the verse assumes that Eli was a judge, despite his absence from lists of the other judges. **21–22:** *Ichabod,* "Where is the glory?" or "Alas for the glory." "Glory" alludes to the ark.

5.1–12: The ark troubles the Philistines. In the ancient Near East, wars between nations were interpreted as contests between their respective gods. This story explains that although the Philistines defeated Israel, the LORD was superior to Dagon, a Philistine god; cf. Ex 12.12. **1:** *Ashdod,* one of five principal Philistine cities along with Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza. **2:** *Beside Dagon* means beside the statue of Dagon in his temple. Dagon was a Canaanite god of grain whom the Philistines adopted as a major deity. **3:** *There was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD,* bowing prostrate was a sign of subservience. **4–5:** An etiology (a story that explains a custom, name, etc.) for the practice of jumping over thresholds in order to avoid offending the spirits of a particular building or space (see Zeph 1.9). **6–12:** The tumors and mice (in the next chapter) suggest that this outbreak was a plaguelike infestation that according to this story was the LORD's doing. **8:** The *lords of the Philistines* are the rulers of the Philistine pentapolis. The word "lord" ("seren") is Philistine and cognate with Gk "tyrannos" ("tyrant").

of Israel to kill us[a] and our[b] people?" [11] They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people." For there was a deathly panic[c] throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there; [12] those who did not die were stricken with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

6 The ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. [2] Then the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us what we should send with it to its place." [3] They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty, but by all means return him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed and will be ransomed;[d] will not his hand then turn from you?" [4] And they said, "What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?" They answered, "Five gold tumors and five gold mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines; for the same plague was upon all of you and upon your lords. [5] So you must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps he will lighten his hand on you and your gods and your land. [6] Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had made fools of them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? [7] Now then, get ready a new cart and two milch cows that have never borne a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. [8] Take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart, and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off, and let it go its way. [9] And watch; if it goes up on the way to its own land, to Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done us this great harm; but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance."

[10] The men did so; they took two milch cows and yoked them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. [11] They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the gold mice and the images of their tumors. [12] The cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went; they turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.

[13] Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. When they looked up and saw the ark, they went with rejoicing to meet it.[e] [14] The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh, and stopped there. A large stone was there; so they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. [15] The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was beside it, in which were the gold objects, and set them upon the large stone. Then the people of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and presented sacrifices on that day to the LORD. [16] When the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron.

[17] These are the gold tumors, which the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for

[a] Heb *me*
[b] Heb *my*
[c] Q Ms reads *a panic from the LORD*
[d] Q Ms Gk: MT *and it will be known to you*
[e] Gk: Heb *rejoiced to see it*

6.1–7.1: The return of the ark. 6.3: *Guilt offering,* not a sacrifice but compensation for taking the ark and appeasement of the LORD in hopes of avoiding further punishment. **4–5:** There is one gold tumor and one gold mouse for each of the five Philistine rulers (vv. 4,17–18). The images serve as substitutes for the rulers and their cities in order to carry the plague away by magic. **6:** Cf. Ex 8.19,32. The Philistines would not have known the story of the Exodus. **7:** A new cart is ritually pure. The two cows have never been yoked and are therefore fit to be sacrificed (cf. Num 19.2; Deut 21.3). *Milch cows* means that they have young calves. **9:** Unaccustomed to pulling a cart, these two cows would be expected to wander aimlessly in search of their calves. If instead they headed for Israelite territory, the Philistines would know that their sufferings had indeed been sent by the LORD. **12:** The cows take the most direct route into Israelite territory. **15:** This verse is likely a later addition by an editor concerned to have the Levites, the priestly tribe, handle the ark (see Deut 10.8; 31.9,25). **17:** See 5.1n.

Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron; 18 also the gold mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwalled villages. The great stone, beside which they set down the ark of the LORD, is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

19 The descendants of Jeconiah did not rejoice with the people of Beth-shemesh when they greeted[a] the ark of the LORD; and he killed seventy men of them.[b] The people mourned because the LORD had made a great slaughter among the people. 20 Then the people of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? To whom shall he go so that we may be rid of him?" 21 So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to you." **7** 1 And the people of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD, and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. They consecrated his son, Eleazar, to have charge of the ark of the LORD.

2 From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented[c] after the LORD.

3 Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Astartes from among you. Direct your heart to the LORD, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." 4 So Israel put away the Baals and the Astartes, and they served the LORD only.

5 Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." 6 So they gathered at Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD. They fasted that day, and said, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.

7 When the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 The people of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, and pray that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines." 9 So Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD; Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. 10 As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew

[a] Gk: Heb *And he killed some of the people of Beth-shemesh, because they looked into*
[b] Heb *killed seventy men, fifty thousand men*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

18: *To this day,* a typical etiological phrase. On stones as witnesses, cf., e.g., Josh 5.20–24; 24.27. **19:** The Hebrew lacks the mention of Jeconiah, which comes from the LXX. Nothing else is known about Jeconiah. The Hebrew also has 5,070 or perhaps 75,000 instead of the more reasonable 70. **20:** *To stand before the LORD* is a technical expression for priestly service, suggesting that the people are asking for a priest to handle the ark. It remains unclear how the absence of a priest relates to Jeconiah. **21:** *Kiriath-jearim* is located ca. 8 mi (13 km) northwest of Jerusalem. **7.1:** *Abinadab* is the father of several important priests (2 Sam 6.3–4,6–8; 1 Chr 13.7,9–11).

7.2–17: Samuel judges Israel. Samuel is depicted as a transitional figure between the judges and the monarchy. He embodies the roles of priest, prophet, and now judge—in most of the chapter as a military leader, as in the book of Judges, and at its conclusion as an actual judge. **2:** *Twenty years,* half a generation. This notice fits Samuel into the structure of the book of Judges where a period of foreign oppression precedes Israel's repentance. **3–4:** *Returning to the Lord with all your heart* is Deuteronomistic language (cf. Deut 30.10; Josh 22.5; 23.14; 24.23; Judg 10.16; 1 Sam 12.20,24; 1 Kings 8.23,48; 14.8; 2 Kings 10.31; 23.25). *Baals* and *Astartes,* the leading male and female gods of Canaan. **5:** *Mizpah,* located ca. 8 mi (13 km) north of Jerusalem, became the administrative and religious capital of Judah after Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BCE (2 Kings 25.23). Hence, the setting of this story in Mizpah may indicate a date of composition after 586 (similarly Judg 19–21). **6:** The elements of this ritual—prayer, libation, fasting, and confession—do not occur together elsewhere in the Bible. Since fasting suggests contrition and pouring out water suggests cleansing, a community purification ritual may be envisioned, perhaps in preparation for war. **8–9:** Samuel is an intercessor for the people, like Moses (e.g., Ex 32.11–14; Num 14.13–19) and Jeremiah (e.g., 37.3; 42.4; cf. 7.16; 11.14). *A whole burnt offering,* one that is entirely consumed (Ex 29.18; Lev 8.21; Deut 13.16; 33.10). **10:** Thunder is considered the *voice* of God.

near to attack Israel; but the LORD thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion; and they were routed before Israel. 11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah,[a] and named it Ebenezer;[b] for he said, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." 13 So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel; the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14 The towns that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.

15 Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16 He went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all these places. 17 Then he would come back to Ramah, for his home was there; he administered justice there to Israel, and built there an altar to the LORD.

8 When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. 2 The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. 3 Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.

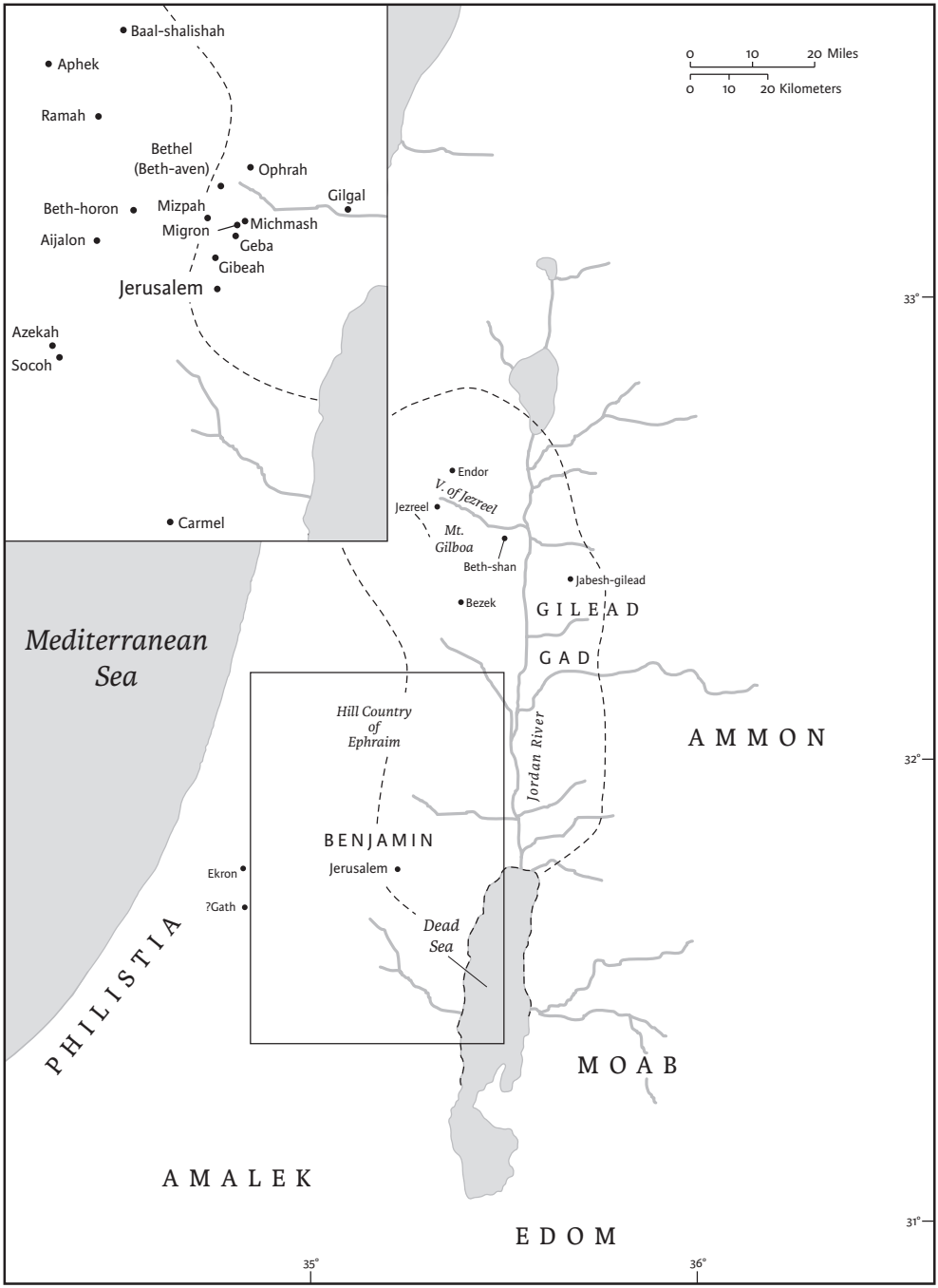
4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 and said to him, "You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations." 6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us." Samuel prayed to the LORD, 7 and the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. 8 Just as they have done to me,[c] from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you. 9 Now then, listen to their voice; only—you

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *Shen*
[b] That is *Stone of Help*
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *to me*

12: An etiology for the name *Ebenezer,* which means "stone of the helper/warrior (God)." **13–14:** The statement that the Philistines *did not again enter the territory of Israel* is contradicted later in 1 Samuel. It may refer only to Samuel's lifetime. It serves the author's effort to cast Samuel as a judge; compare the Deuteronomistic formulas in Judg 3.30; 8.28; 11.33. *Amorites,* in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic literature the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan, called Canaanites in other sources. Contrast, e.g., Gen 14.7; 15.20, where "Amorites" refers to one pre-Israelite group. **15–17:** Like Deborah (Judg 4.4–10), Samuel is both a military leader and a judicial functionary. For the second kind of judge see Judg 10.1–5; 12.8–15. His intercession brings victory over the Philistines (vv. 10–11), and he rides a circuit judging Israel (vv. 15–17). **16:** *Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah,* and *Ramah* were all within traditional Benjaminite territory. See map on p. 417.

Chs 8–12: The beginning of kingship in Israel. These chapters include five distinct episodes: the people's request for a king and Samuel's response (ch 8); Saul's search for his father's asses and his anointing (9.1–10.16); the designation of Saul by lot (10.17–27a); Saul's victory over the Ammonites (10.27b–11.15); and Samuel's farewell address (ch 12). The stories in 9.1–10.16 and 10.27b–11.15 are generally recognized as older and neutral or positive in their attitude toward monarchy, while the other three episodes, widely recognized as Deuteronomistic, view kingship with suspicion and depict the people's request as a sin. In the end, God allows a king but also warns the people against letting their king lead them astray.

8.1–22: The people request a king. 2: *Beer-sheba,* the southernmost city in Judah and far outside Samuel's jurisdiction in 7.15–17. It became an administrative center during the Judean monarchy. **3:** Samuel's sons, like Eli's, are corrupt; Deut 16.19 denounces taking bribes. The expectation that their sons would succeed them is contrary to the other judges but in line with kings. Their unfitness to rule impels the elders to ask for a king. **4:** The *elders* were the leading and usually senior citizens. **5:** The desire to *be like other nations* is opposed to the LORD's desire that Israel be his special people. **6–7:** Samuel and the LORD are displeased by the request and consider it a rejection of the LORD. So is kingship regarded as inherently evil? Or does the request demonstrate a lack of faith in the LORD? **8:** The review of Israel's history is in typical Deuteronomistic style (cf. 2 Kings 21.15).



The kingdom of Saul according to the book of Samuel. The dashed line shows the approximate outer boundary of his kingdom.

shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."

10 So Samuel reported all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king. 11 He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; 12 and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. 15 He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. 16 He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle[a] and donkeys, and put them to his work. 17 He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. 18 And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

19 But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; they said, "No! but we are determined to have a king over us, 20 so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles." 21 When Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. 22 The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and set a king over them." Samuel then said to the people of Israel, "Each of you return home."

9 There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. 2 He had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; he stood head and shoulders above everyone else.

3 Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, had strayed. So Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the boys with you; go and look for the donkeys." 4 He passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then he passed through the land of Benjamin, but they did not find them.

5 When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to the boy who was with him, "Let us turn back, or my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and worry about us." 6 But he said to him, "There is a man of God in this town; he is a man held in honor. Whatever he says always comes true. Let us go there now;

[a] Gk: Heb *young men*

10: *Asking* is a play on the name "Saul"; see 1.17n. **1:** *Ways,* lit., "custom" or "judgment." The king to whom the people look for justice will follow the typical ancient Near Eastern practices of taxation and conscription. The items in this list appear to be based on Solomon's reign (cf. 1 Kings 4.7; 5.13). **18:** This verse is in characteristic Deuteronomistic language and resembles that of the framework of Judges (see, e.g., 3.9,15), in which the people constantly *cry out* for relief from their oppressors. **19:** Samuel listens to God, while the people *refused to listen.* **20:** *Govern* is elsewhere translated "judge." *Go out before us* is an idiom for military leadership. The people trust in a king instead of God for protection from their enemies. **22:** The LORD will permit Israel to have a king even though he does not approve of their request. *Each of you return home* is editorial and sets the stage for Samuel to call another assembly in 10.17.

9.1–10.16: Saul's anointing. This is an old story that has been edited by the Deuteronomist. Samuel appears not as a judge but as a "man of God." Both Saul and kingship are depicted positively. The lengthy genealogy for Saul is probably intended to demonstrate his pedigree. **9.2:** *Handsome* (lit., "good"), a description often attributed to leaders, like Joseph (Gen 39.6), Moses (Ex 2.2), and David (1 Sam 16.12). Saul's height is also an important theme in 1 Samuel, especially for its contrast with David. **3:** *Boys* (better "servants") need not have been young. **4:** *Shalishah* and *Shaalim* may both be puns on Saul's name, "Sha'ul." **6–7:** *(What) can we bring,* a single word in Hebrew, spelled exactly like the word "prophet." The *man of God,* a title for a prophet, turns out to be Samuel (v. 14). But the identification is secondary, since Saul and his servant do not initially know who Samuel is. In the original older tale, Saul's encounter was with an anonymous seer. The *town,* probably Ramah,

perhaps he will tell us about the journey on which we have set out." 7 Then Saul replied to the boy, "But if we go, what can we bring the man? For the bread in our sacks is gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What have we?" 8 The boy answered Saul again, "Here, I have with me a quarter shekel of silver; I will give it to the man of God, to tell us our way." 9 (Formerly in Israel, anyone who went to inquire of God would say, "Come, let us go to the seer"; for the one who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.) 10 Saul said to the boy, "Good; come, let us go." So they went to the town where the man of God was.

11 As they went up the hill to the town, they met some girls coming out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?" 12 They answered, "Yes, there he is just ahead of you. Hurry; he has come just now to the town, because the people have a sacrifice today at the shrine. 13 As soon as you enter the town, you will find him, before he goes up to the shrine to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, since he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those eat who are invited. Now go up, for you will meet him immediately." 14 So they went up to the town. As they were entering the town, they saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the shrine.

15 Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel: 16 "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be ruler over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have seen the suffering of [a] my people, because their outcry has come to me." 17 When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, "Here is the man of whom I spoke to you. He it is who shall rule over my people." 18 Then Saul approached Samuel inside the gate, and said, "Tell me, please, where is the house of the seer?" 19 Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer; go up before me to the shrine, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind. 20 As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, give no further thought to them, for they have been found. And on whom is all Israel's desire fixed, if not on you and on all your ancestral house?" 21 Saul answered, "I am only a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel, and my family is the humblest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Why then have you spoken to me in this way?"

22 Then Samuel took Saul and his servant-boy and brought them into the hall, and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited, of whom there were about thirty. 23 And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion I gave you, the one I asked you to put aside." 24 The cook took up the thigh and what went with it[b] and set them before Saul. Samuel said, "See, what was kept is set before you. Eat; for it is set[c] before you at the appointed time, so that you might eat with the guests."[d]

So Saul ate with Samuel that day. 25 When they came down from the shrine into the

[a] Gk: Heb lacks *the suffering of*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Q Ms Gk: MT *it was kept*
[d] Cn: Heb *it was kept for you, saying, I have invited the people*

Samuel's home. The *present* was a payment to the man of God for divining the whereabouts of the donkeys. **8:** A *quarter shekel* weighed ca. .10 oz (3 gm). **9:** A note by an editor defining the word *seer* for his audience. **11:** *Draw*ing *water* was done by women, usually in the morning or evening when it was cooler. Hence, it was around sundown. **12:** The *shrine* (often translated "high place") was a cultic installation or complex where worship, especially sacrifices, took place. Deuteronomistic literature condemns the "high places" once the Jerusalem Temple is built. **13:** Sacrifices provided occasions for feasting after the portions of the animal designated for God were burned. **16:** *Ruler,* a technical term meaning "king designate." *Their outcry has come to me,* cf. Ex 3.9. **18:** *The gate,* a fortified entryway into a walled city, the site of commerce and judicial proceedings. **19–20:** In the original older tale, the seer consulted God overnight in order to address Saul's need (v. 19). But in the present, edited version, Samuel has been told to expect Saul (vv. 15–17) and now goes ahead and tells him *all that is on* his *mind,* assuring him that the donkeys have been found (v. 20). The next morning is reserved for Saul's anointing. **21:** Like others called by God (Moses: Ex 3–4; Gideon, Judg 6.15; Jeremiah: Jer 1.6), Saul objects that he is unworthy. **22–24:** Saul is the honored guest. *The thigh* is usually reserved for the deity or priests. These verses

town, a bed was spread for Saul[a] on the roof, and he lay down to sleep.[b] 26 Then at the break of dawn[c] Samuel called to Saul upon the roof, "Get up, so that I may send you on your way." Saul got up, and both he and Samuel went out into the street.

27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the town, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the boy to go on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God."

10 1 Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him; he said, "The LORD has anointed you ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around. Now this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you ruler[d] over his heritage: 2 When you depart from me today you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; they will say to you, 'The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has stopped worrying about them and is worrying about you, saying: What shall I do about my son?' 3 Then you shall go on from there further and come to the oak of Tabor; three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three kids, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. 4 They will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept from them. 5 After that you shall come to Gibeath-elohim,[e] at the place where the Philistine garrison is; there, as you come to the town, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the shrine with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre playing in front of them; they will be in a prophetic frenzy. 6 Then the spirit of the LORD will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and be turned into a different person. 7 Now when these signs meet you, do whatever you see fit to do, for God is with you. 8 And you shall go down to Gilgal ahead of me; then I will come down to you to present burnt offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do."

9 As he turned away to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart; and all these signs were fulfilled that day. 10 When they were going from there[f] to Gibeah,[g] a band of prophets met him; and the spirit of God possessed him, and he fell into a prophetic frenzy along with them. 11 When all who knew him before saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" 12 A man of the place

[a] Gk: Heb *and he spoke with Saul*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *and he lay down to sleep*
[c] Gk: Heb *and they arose early and at break of dawn*
[d] Gk: Heb lacks *over his people Israel. You shall… anointed you ruler*
[e] Or *the Hill of God*
[f] Gk: Heb *they came there*
[g] Or *the hill*

are likely editorial, since they presuppose Samuel's foreknowledge of Saul's arrival. **10.1:** Anointing was a rite designating an individual for a special office, usually a king or a priest. It involved pouring or dabbing fine oil on the head of the designee. The LORD's *heritage* is the land of Israel. Every nation is understood as the inheritance of the god it worships. The LORD, creator of the world, is envisioned as having chosen Israel as his people (Deut 10.14–15; 32.8–9). **2–8:** The encounters predicted here serve as signs to Saul ratifying his choice as king. **2:** *Rachel's tomb,* a different location is given in Gen 35.19; 48.7. *Zelzah,* location unknown. **3:** The *three men going up to God at Bethel* are carrying items for sacrifice. Tabor is a different place than that in Judg 4.6. **4:** *Greet you,* lit., "ask (about) your well-being"; the verb is a pun on Saul's name. The men give *two loaves of bread,* one for Saul and one for his servant. The Greek (LXX) reading, "two offerings of bread," suggests that Saul again receives the portion of a priest. **5–7:** Music was used to induce an ecstatic condition in which prophets uttered their oracles (2 Kings 3.15–16); *frenzy* (vv. 5–6,10,13) is a misleadingly pejorative translation. Like the judges, Saul will be moved to action by the spirit of the LORD (see Judg 3.10; 6.34; 11.29; 13.24; etc.). The instruction to *do whatever you see fit to do* is a military commission. **8:** This verse connects this story to 13.7b–15a. **9:** *Another heart,* Saul's psychological state is changed to one befitting his new role as king. **10–13:** An etiology for the proverb, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* Here the proverb has a positive sense, showing that the LORD's spirit empowers Saul to prophesy and rule. A different explanation of the proverb occurs in 19.19–24. The *father* of a group of proph-

answered, "And who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" 13 When his prophetic frenzy had ended, he went home.[a]

14 Saul's uncle said to him and to the boy, "Where did you go?" And he replied, "To seek the donkeys; and when we saw they were not to be found, we went to Samuel." 15 Saul's uncle said, "Tell me what Samuel said to you." 16 Saul said to his uncle, "He told us that the donkeys had been found." But about the matter of the kingship, of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything.

17 Samuel summoned the people to the LORD at Mizpah 18 and said to them,[b] "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' 19 But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses; and you have said, 'No! but set a king over us.' Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans."

20 Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. 21 He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the family of the Matrites was taken by lot. Finally he brought the family of the Matrites near man by man,[c] and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot. But when they sought him, he could not be found. 22 So they inquired again of the LORD, "Did the man come here?"[d] and the LORD said, "See, he has hidden himself among the baggage." 23 Then they ran and brought him from there. When he took his stand among the people, he was head and shoulders taller than any of them. 24 Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the one whom the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people." And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

25 Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship; and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD. Then Samuel sent all the people back to their homes. 26 Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went warriors whose hearts God had touched. 27 But some worthless fellows said, "How can this man save us?" They despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace.

Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right

[a] Cn: Heb *he came to the shrine*
[b] Heb *to the people of Israel*
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *Finally . . . man by man*
[d] Gk: Heb *Is there yet a man to come here?*

ets (v. 12) is their leader. **14–16:** It is surprising that Saul's uncle rather than his father questions him, since the uncle has not been mentioned before in the story. These verses are an editorial addition that prepares for the following story (10.17–27a) by pointing out that since Saul's anointing was private, a later public proclamation of his kingship is needed.

10.17–27a: Saul chosen by lot. 17: *Mizpah,* see 7.5n. **18–19:** The language of these verses is Deuteronomistic, especially the references to bringing up *Israel out of Egypt* and the accusation that they have *rejected* their God. **20–21:** Israelite society was structured in a descending hierarchy of tribe, clan, family ("house of the father"), and individual. In the Bible (Josh 7.14; 1 Sam 14.41; Jon 1.7) the lot is used to find by divine assistance a person responsible for a calamity. Some scholars think that two stories are combined at this point, one in which Saul was present and chosen by lot and another in which he was chosen by oracle or because of his height. **22:** *Inquired,* another pun on Saul's name. *Hidden himself among the baggage* suggests that Saul is humble or perhaps inept. *Long live the king*, an acclamation also found for Absalom (2 Sam 16.16), Adonijah (1 Kings 1.25), Solomon (1 Kings 1.34,39) and Joash (2 Kings 11.12). **25:** *The rights and duties of the kingship* probably set out the responsibilities of king and people to each other. The expression here is nearly identical to "the ways of the king" in 8.9,11. **26–27a:** Saul's return to Gibeah and the doubts of the *worthless fellows* prepare for the subsequent story in which Saul proves his ability to save Israel. By bringing him *no present* these people refuse to accept him as king.

10.27b–11.15: Saul proves himself able to lead in battle and is publicly made king. 10.27b: This paragraph was lost from the Hebrew text and has been restored from a Dead Sea Scroll fragment of Samuel; see textual

eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead.[a]

11 About a month later,[b] Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you." **2** But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "On this condition I will make a treaty with you, namely that I gouge out everyone's right eye, and thus put disgrace upon all Israel." **3** The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you." **4** When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the hearing of the people; and all the people wept aloud.

5 Now Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen; and Saul said, "What is the matter with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the message from the inhabitants of Jabesh. **6** And the spirit of God came upon Saul in power when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. **7** He took a yoke of oxen, and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one. **8** When he mustered them at Bezek, those from Israel were three hundred thousand, and those from Judah seventy[c] thousand. **9** They said to the messengers who had come, "Thus shall you say to the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance.' " When the messengers came and told the inhabitants of Jabesh, they rejoiced. **10** So the inhabitants of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you." **11** The next day Saul put the people in three companies. At the morning watch they came into the camp and cut down the Ammonites until the heat of the day; and those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

12 The people said to Samuel, "Who is it that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Give them to us so that we may put them to death." **13** But Saul said, "No one shall be put

[a] Q Ms Compare Josephus, *Antiquities* VI.v.1 (68-71): MT lacks *Now Nahash . . . entered Jabesh-gilead.*
[b] Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *About a month later*
[c] Q Ms Gk: MT *thirty*

note *a.* The paragraph explains the reason for the conflict in ch 11. *The Gadites and the Reubenites* were Israelites living east of the Jordan in territory that the Ammonite king, Nahash, considered his. The city of Jabesh in Gilead was farther north, outside the disputed area, but Nahash threatened it because some of the Israelites from Gad and Reuben had fled there. **2:** As a visible sign of their subjugation and a punishment for encroaching on his land, *Nahash* had been gouging out *everyone's right eye* among the Gadites and Reubenites (10.27b). **3:** The *elders of Jabesh* are willing to accept Nahash as their overlord. But he insists on the same measure against them as a punishment for their harboring those who fled from him and as a sign of *disgrace upon all Israel.* **3:** The messengers are not sent directly to Saul but *through all the territory of Israel,* thus indicating that this story does not assume Saul's kingship and was independent of preceding ones. **4–5:** Even in Gibeah the messengers do not seek out Saul; he learns of their mission because of the weeping of the people as he returns from the field. The story, then, does not assume that Saul is king. **5:** *Behind the oxen,* cf. 1 Kings 19.19. **6:** The *spirit of God* spurs Saul to military action as in the book of Judges (see 1 Sam 10.7n.). **7:** Saul's dismembering the oxen probably assumes a treaty among the recipients in which they have pledged to help one another in war. Dismemberment was a common curse for breaking a treaty, so that Saul's actions remind them of their treaty obligation and potential reprisal for failure to respond. **8:** The distinction between Israel and Judah either is an anachronism or reflects a differentiation that was always felt. According to 1 Kings 12, it was institutionalized when Israel and Judah became independent kingdoms after Solomon's death. *Seventy thousand,* as often, the number is highly exaggerated. **10:** *We will give ourselves up to you,* lit., "we will come out to you" as in v. 3, could also be understood as "we will fight against you." **11:** Their day began at sundown, hence *the next day* would be "that evening" in our reckoning. *The morning watch* was in the early hours before sunrise. The Israelites marched all night to attack by surprise before dawn. **12–14:** An editorial addition that links 10.17–27a with 10.27b–11.15. *Samuel* plays

to death this day, for today the LORD has brought deliverance to Israel."

14 Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship." 15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they sacrificed offerings of well-being before the LORD, and there Saul and all the Israelites rejoiced greatly.

12 Samuel said to all Israel, "I have listened to you in all that you have said to me, and have set a king over you. 2 See, it is the king who leads you now; I am old and gray, but my sons are with you. I have led you from my youth until this day. 3 Here I am; testify against me before the LORD and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me[a] and I will restore it to you." 4 They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from the hand of anyone." 5 He said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they said, "He is witness."

6 Samuel said to the people, "The LORD is witness, who[b] appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your ancestors up out of the land of Egypt. 7 Now therefore take your stand, so that I may enter into judgment with you before the LORD, and I will declare to you[c] all the saving deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your ancestors. 8 When Jacob went into Egypt and the Egyptians oppressed them,[d] then your ancestors cried to the LORD and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought forth your ancestors out of Egypt, and settled them in this place. 9 But they forgot the LORD their God; and he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of King Jabin of[e] Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. 10 Then they cried to the LORD, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served the Baals and the Astartes; but now rescue us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve you.' 11 And the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Barak,[f] and Jephthah, and Samson,[g] and rescued you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you lived in safety. 12 But when you saw that King Nahash of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' though the LORD your God was your king. 13 See, here is the king whom you have chosen, for whom

[a] Gk: Heb lacks *Testify against me*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *is witness, who*
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *and I will declare to you*
[d] Gk: Heb lacks *and the Egyptians oppressed them*
[e] Gk: Heb lacks *King Jabin of*
[f] Gk Syr: Heb *Bedan*
[g] Gk: Heb *Samuel*

no role in the preceding battle account; his name was probably added secondarily to the story. The editor joins the various stories by speaking of *renew*ing *the kingship.* These verses, and the story as a whole, show how Saul succeeded in delivering Israel and thus answering his critics, and thereby present him in a positive light. **15:** The original story did not assume that Saul was already king but explained that the people *made Saul king* as a result of his victory on this occasion.

12.1–25: Samuel's address. This chapter is a Deuteronomistic composition. Ancient historians often placed speeches, which they themselves composed and considered appropriate to the occasion, into the mouths of their characters; see, e.g., Josh 23–24; 1 Kings 8; and most of Deuteronomy, which is cast as a speech of Moses. **2:** *My sons are with you,* Samuel is not putting his sons forward as leaders but mentions them as illustrating his old age; they are fully grown. **3:** Samuel's actions contrast with the "ways of the king" in 8.11–18; cf. Moses's words in Num 16.15. **6–12:** This retrospective on Israel's history is Deuteronomistic in language and orientation. **9:** *Sisera,* see Judg 4.2. *Philistines,* see Judg 13.1. *Moab,* see Judg 3.12. **10:** *Baals and the Astartes,* see 7.3–4n. **11:** *Barak,* see Judg 4.6. The Hebrew text reads "Bedan." There is no story about Bedan in the book of Judges. Some scholars think Bedan reflects a distinct tradition lacking in Judges; others think it is another name for Jephthah. If Barak is correct, the order here differs from Judges. *Jerubbaal*, see Judg 6.32. *Jephthah,* see Judg 11. *Samson,* see Judg 13–16. The Hebrew has "Samuel"; in either case, the intent seems to be to refer to the last judge. **12:** In ch 8, the Philistine threat leads the Israelites to request a king; here it is *Nahash*'s threat (see 11.1). **13:** *For whom you*

you have asked; see, the LORD has set a king over you. 14 If you will fear the LORD and serve him and heed his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well; 15 but if you will not heed the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king.[a] 16 Now therefore take your stand and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes. 17 Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call upon the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain; and you shall know and see that the wickedness that you have done in the sight of the LORD is great in demanding a king for yourselves." 18 So Samuel called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

19 All the people said to Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for your servants, so that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of demanding a king for ourselves." 20 And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; 21 and do not turn aside after useless things that cannot profit or save, for they are useless. 22 For the LORD will not cast away his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. 23 Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. 24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you. 25 But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

13 Saul was . . .[b] years old when he began to reign; and he reigned . . . and two[c] years over Israel.

2 Saul chose three thousand out of Israel; two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin; the rest of the people he sent home to their tents. 3 Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba; and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" 4 When all Israel heard that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines, the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.

5 The Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude; they came up and encamped at Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. 6 When the Israelites saw that they were in distress (for the troops were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns. 7 Some Hebrews crossed the Jordan

[a] Gk: Heb *and your ancestors*
[b] The number is lacking in the Heb text (the verse is lacking in the Septuagint).
[c] T*wo* is not the entire number; something has dropped out.

have asked, a pun on Saul's name. **16–18:** The *wheat harvest* was in early summer, when rain would be very rare and a threat to the crops. Thus, it shows the LORD's response to Samuel and hints at his displeasure with the people. *Demanding* (vv. 17,19) is another pun on Saul's name. **21:** *Useless things,* i.e., other gods; cf. Isa 41.29. **22:** *For his great name's sake,* the LORD's reputation might be damaged if he destroyed them too readily; see Num 14.13–16. **24–25:** The theology of divine reward and punishment is Deuteronomistic.

13.1–7a: Saul begins the war with the Philistines. 1: Saul's age and length of reign are uncertain. The textually corrupt Hebrew says that he was a year old when he began to reign and reigned two years; see textual notes *b* and *c*. **3:** *Jonathan,* Saul's son, appears here for the first time, and as a grown man, indicating that this story is set much later than 9.1–10.16, where Saul is a young man. *Geba* and Gibeah are very similar in Hebrew and may be confused here. *Hebrews* is rare as a term of self-designation by Israelites. Its use by Saul here may indicate a textual problem; cf. vv. 7,19; 4.6,9; 14.11,21. **4:** Saul, as king, is apparently given credit for his son's victory. **5:** *Beth-aven,* probably an alternate name for Bethel (v. 2). **7:** *Gad and Gilead,* east of the Jordan.

13.7b–15a: Saul's sin and rejection by God. 8: *The time appointed by Samuel* was *seven days* (10.8), but the intervening events in chs 10–12 require a much longer time. **13–14:** The nature of Saul's sin is not clear, since he

to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

8 He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people began to slip away from Saul.[a] 9 So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the offerings of well-being." And he offered the burnt offering. 10 As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel arrived; and Saul went out to meet him and salute him. 11 Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul replied, "When I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines were mustering at Michmash, 12 I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down upon me at Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favor of the LORD'; so I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." 13 Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you. The LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, 14 but now your kingdom will not continue; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart; and the LORD has appointed him to be ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." 15 And Samuel left and went on his way from Gilgal.[b] The rest of the people followed Saul to join the army; they went up from Gilgal toward Gibeah of Benjamin.[c]

Saul counted the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. 16 Saul, his son Jonathan, and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin; but the Philistines encamped at Michmash. 17 And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies; one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual, 18 another company turned toward Beth-horon, and another company turned toward the mountain[d] that looks down upon the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

19 Now there was no smith to be found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, "The Hebrews must not make swords or spears for themselves"; 20 so all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen their plowshares, mattocks, axes, or sickles;[e] 21 The charge was two-thirds of a shekel[f] for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and one-third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads.[g] 22 So on the day of the battle neither sword nor spear was to be found in the possession of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan; but Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

23 Now a garrison of the Philistines had gone out to the pass of Michmash.

14 1 One day Jonathan son of Saul said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison on the other side." But he did not tell his father. 2 Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree that

a Heb *him*
b Gk: Heb *went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin*
c Gk: Heb lacks *The rest . . . of Benjamin*
d Cn Compare Gk: Heb *toward the border*
e Gk: Heb *plowshare*
f Heb *was a pim*
g Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

did wait for Samuel the prescribed time; perhaps he tried to usurp Samuel's role of religious leadership. But cf. 14.35, where Saul builds an altar to the LORD without being criticized. *Your kingdom*: like David later on (2 Sam 7.13–16), Saul had a chance to establish a long-lasting dynasty, but his sin prevented this. Another rejection, perhaps of Saul's individual kingship, occurs in ch 15. The *man after* the LORD's *own heart,* an allusion to David, is a way of saying he is chosen by the LORD and does not necessarily imply any special quality on David's part.

13.15b–14.52: Continuation of the Philistine war. 13.15b–23: These verses set the stage for the battle account in the next chapter. *Geba* and *Michmash* (v. 16) were across from each other on opposite sides of a valley. The Philistine domination took two forms: *Raiders* customarily went out from Michmash to attack Israelite settlements (vv. 17–18), and the Philistines controlled metalworking and hence the manufacture of weapons (vv. 19–22). **19:** *Hebrews*: see 4.6n. **21:** A shekel (of silver) weighed ca. .4 oz (11.4 gr); a "pim" (see textual note *f*) was about *two-thirds of a shekel*. **23:** The battle begins with the Philistines moving to the pass on their side of the valley. **14.1:** *The Philistine garrison on the other side* was the one sent as reinforcements (13.23). The Israelites and Philistines were camped on opposite sides of the ravine at Geba and Michmash, respectively (14.5). Jonathan's

is at Migron; the troops that were with him were about six hundred men, 3 along with Ahijah son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, son of Phinehas son of Eli, the priest of the LORD in Shiloh, carrying an ephod. Now the people did not know that Jonathan had gone. 4 In the pass,[a] by which Jonathan tried to go over to the Philistine garrison, there was a rocky crag on one side and a rocky crag on the other; the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5 One crag rose on the north in front of Michmash, and the other on the south in front of Geba.

6 Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will act for us; for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few." 7 His armor-bearer said to him, "Do all that your mind inclines to.[b] I am with you; as your mind is, so is mine."[c] 8 Then Jonathan said, "Now we will cross over to those men and will show ourselves to them. 9 If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place, and we will not go up to them. 10 But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up; for the LORD has given them into our hand. That will be the sign for us." 11 So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines; and the Philistines said, "Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves." 12 The men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor-bearer, saying, "Come up to us, and we will show you something." Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Come up after me; for the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel." 13 Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer following after him. The Philistines[d] fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer, coming after him, killed them. 14 In that first slaughter Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed about twenty men within an area about half a furrow long in an acre[e] of land. 15 There was a panic in the camp, in the field, and among all the people; the garrison and even the raiders trembled; the earth quaked; and it became a very great panic.

16 Saul's lookouts in Gibeah of Benjamin were watching as the multitude was surging back and forth.[f] 17 Then Saul said to the troops that were with him, "Call the roll and see who has gone from us." When they had called the roll, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there. 18 Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark[g] of God here." For at that time the ark[g] of God went with the Israelites. 19 While Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the camp of the Philistines increased more and more; and Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." 20 Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into the battle; and every sword was against the other, so that there was very great confusion. 21 Now the Hebrews who previously had been with the Philistines and had gone up with them into the camp turned and joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. 22 Likewise, when all the Israelites who had gone into hiding in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too followed closely after them in the battle. 23 So the LORD gave Israel the victory that day.

[a] Heb *Between the passes*
[b] Gk: Heb *Do all that is in your mind. Turn*
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *so is mine*
[d] Heb *They*
[e] Heb *yoke*
[f] Gk: Heb *they went and there*
[g] Gk *the ephod*

plan is to defeat this garrison and then perhaps to rally the Israelites who were hiding (vv. 11,22) into joining in and driving the Philistines back. **3:** For *Ichabod* and *Phinehas*, see 4.4,19. *Carrying an ephod,* not the linen ephod of 2.18, but a container whose contents were used to divine the will of God (v. 41; Ex 28.30). It was carried in priestly garments, which may be why the same word was used for both. *The people* often means the army. **6:** *These uncircumcised,* a derogatory term for the Philistines, who, in contrast to the Israelites and Egyptians, did not practice male circumcision. **18:** *The ark of God,* LXX "the ephod," probably a better reading (see v. 3). **19:** *Withdraw your hand,* Saul had called Ahijah the priest in order to consult the LORD through him, but the growing sound of battle made him decide to attack before finishing his inquiry. **21:** The *Hebrews* here are distinguished from the *Israelites.* They are first allied with the Philistines and then turn against them; they may have been mer-

The battle passed beyond Beth-aven, and the troops with Saul numbered altogether about ten thousand men. The battle spread out over the hill country of Ephraim.

24 Now Saul committed a very rash act on that day.[a] He had laid an oath on the troops, saying, "Cursed be anyone who eats food before it is evening and I have been avenged on my enemies." So none of the troops tasted food. 25 All the troops[b] came upon a honeycomb; and there was honey on the ground. 26 When the troops came upon the honeycomb, the honey was dripping out; but they did not put their hands to their mouths, for they feared the oath. 27 But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the troops with the oath; so he extended the staff that was in his hand, and dipped the tip of it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes brightened. 28 Then one of the soldiers said, "Your father strictly charged the troops with an oath, saying, 'Cursed be anyone who eats food this day.' And so the troops are faint." 29 Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land; see how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. 30 How much better if today the troops had eaten freely of the spoil taken from their enemies; for now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great."

31 After they had struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon, the troops were very faint; 32 so the troops flew upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slaughtered them on the ground; and the troops ate them with the blood. 33 Then it was reported to Saul, "Look, the troops are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a large stone before me here."[c] 34 Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the troops, and say to them, 'Let all bring their oxen or their sheep, and slaughter them here, and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.'" So all of the troops brought their oxen with them that night, and slaughtered them there. 35 And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

36 Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and despoil them until the morning light; let us not leave one of them." They said, "Do whatever seems good to you." But the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." 37 So Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day. 38 Saul said, "Come here, all you leaders of the people; and let us find out how this sin has arisen today. 39 For as the LORD lives who saves Israel, even if it is in my son Jonathan, he shall surely die!" But there was no one among all the people who answered him. 40 He said to all Israel, "You shall be on one side, and I and my son Jonathan will be on the other side." The people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." 41 Then Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant today? If this guilt is in me or in my son Jonathan, O LORD God of Israel, give Urim; but if this guilt is in your people Israel,[d] give Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were indicated by the lot, but the people were cleared. 42 Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was taken.

43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand; here I am, I will die." 44 Saul said, "God do so to me and more also;

[a] Gk: Heb *The Israelites were distressed that day*
[b] Heb *land*
[c] Gk: Heb *me this day*
[d] Vg Compare Gk: Heb *41 Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel*

cenaries. **24–30:** Saul's oath was an expression of piety to attract God's aid in the battle. It was foolish because his troops became faint from hunger. Most *honey* was made from dates; Jonathan has found a true delicacy (cf. Prov 25.16). **31–35:** The soldiers commit a ritual offense by slaughtering animals *on the ground* so that the blood does not drain out and eating meat cooked *with the blood* violated norms reflected in Lev 19.26; Deut 12.16. Animals slaughtered on the *large stone* could be propped up to allow their blood to drain before cooking. **37:** *Inquired,* a pun on Saul's name. The lack of response indicates divine disfavor and may hint ahead to God's future greater displeasure with Saul in 28.6. **41–42:** The *Urim* and *Thummim* (Ex 28.30) answered yes-or-no questions.

you shall surely die, Jonathan!" 45 Then the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great victory in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground; for he has worked with God today." So the people ransomed Jonathan, and he did not die. 46 Then Saul withdrew from pursuing the Philistines; and the Philistines went to their own place.

47 When Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side—against Moab, against the Ammonites, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines; wherever he turned he routed them. 48 He did valiantly, and struck down the Amalekites, and rescued Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them.

49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchishua; and the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the firstborn was Merab, and the name of the younger, Michal. 50 The name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army was Abner son of Ner, Saul's uncle; 51 Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.

52 There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any strong or valiant warrior, he took him into his service.

15 Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the LORD. 2 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did in opposing the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt. 3 Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "

4 So Saul summoned the people, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers, and ten thousand soldiers of Judah. 5 Saul came to the city of the Amalekites and lay in wait in the valley. 6 Saul said to the Kenites, "Go! Leave! Withdraw from among the Amalekites, or I will destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites withdrew from the Amalekites. 7 Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. 8 He took King Agag of the Amalekites alive, but utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and of the cattle and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was valuable, and would not utterly destroy them; all that was despised and worthless they utterly destroyed.

10 The word of the LORD came to Samuel: 11 "I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not carried out my commands." Samuel was angry; and he cried out to the LORD all night. 12 Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, and Samuel was told, "Saul went to Carmel, where he set up a monument for himself, and on returning he passed on down to Gilgal." 13 When Samuel came to Saul, Saul said to him, "May you be blessed by the LORD; I have carried out the command of the LORD." 14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears, and the lowing of cattle that I hear?" 15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the

45: It is not clear exactly how *the people ransomed Jonathan.* Perhaps an animal was substituted (Gen 22.13; Ex 13.13; 34.20). **47–48:** This summary of Saul's military successes contrasts (see map on p. 417) with the surrounding negative portrait of Saul. **48:** *Amalekites*, see 15.2n. **49–51:** A number of the characters named here will play roles in subsequent stories. **49:** *Ishvi,* perhaps another spelling of Ishbaal (2 Sam 2.8). **52:** *Any strong or valiant warrior,* Saul is forming a standing army to replace the militia found previously. The terms "strong" or "valiant" and "warrior" are also used of David in 16.18.

15.1–35: Another story of Saul's rejection. Compare 13.7b–15a. **2:** *Amalekites,* a nomadic people south of Judah. The story mentioned here is recounted in Ex 17.8–16 and Deut 25.17–19. **3:** *Utterly destroy,* the "ban" or "devotion to destruction" (Heb "ḥerem") used by Israel (see Josh 6.17) and other peoples in the ancient Near East. The enemy and their property were exterminated and dedicated to the deity. The instructions are given explicitly here in anticipation of Saul's disobedience. **4:** The numbers are exaggerated or the word "thousand"

cattle, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed." 16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." He replied, "Speak."

17 Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. 18 And the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" 20 Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But from the spoil the people took sheep and cattle, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal." 22 And Samuel said,

"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
as in obedience to the voice of the LORD?
Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed than the fat of rams.
23 For rebellion is no less a sin than divination,
and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has also rejected you from being king."

24 Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, I pray, pardon my sin, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD." 26 Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." 27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. 28 And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this very day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. 29 Moreover the Glory of Israel will not recant[a] or change his mind; for he is not a mortal, that he should change his mind." 30 Then Saul[b] said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God." 31 So Samuel turned back after Saul; and Saul worshiped the LORD.

32 Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." And Agag came to him haltingly.[c] Agag said, "Surely

[a] Q Ms Gk: MT *deceive*
[b] Heb *he*
[c] Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

may refer to a military unit much smaller than a thousand men (see 4.2n.). **6:** *Kenites,* a clan in southern Judah; this verse indicates that they had settled with the Amalekites. Their name means "metalworkers." Their *kindness* to the Israelites is unknown. **9:** *Spared,* a direct violation of the order in v. 3. However, Saul claims (v. 15) that his intent was to kill them in sacrifice to the LORD. He may also have intended to execute Agag in some official or ritual way (vv. 32–33). **12:** Carmel, not the famous mount in northern Israel, but a town in Judah (Josh 15.55). **15:** Saul says his troops (*the people*) *spared the best of the sheep and the cattle,* though he is implicated in v. 9. His claim that the animals were spared for sacrifice provides the ground basis for Samuel's rebuke. *Your God* suggests that Saul has abandoned the LORD. **17–19:** The pronouns and verbs are singular and directed at Saul alone as *the head of the tribes of Israel* (v. 17). **22:** *The fat of rams,* the part of the animal burned in sacrifices. The poetic form of this verse and the next recalls Hos 6.6; Am 5.21–24; Mic 6.6–8. **23:** The *divination* condemned here is often related to foreign idolatry (see Deut 18.9–14). *Rebellion* and *stubbornness,* like *divination,* involve turning away from the LORD. **26:** This verse illustrates a narrative technique known to later rabbinic writers as "measure for measure"; Saul's punishment corresponds to his sin (both labeled "rejection"). See also v. 33. Such measure-for-measure punishment is common in the Bible. **27–28:** Grasping the *hem* of a person's garment was a way of submitting or pleading. Samuel uses the torn hem as an object lesson. The *neighbor* is David. Saul's robe is symbolic of his kingdom; see also 24.4–5. **29:** *The Glory of Israel,* an epithet for the LORD, used only here. The verse seems to contradict the larger context in which the LORD has changed his mind about Saul being king.

this is the bitterness of death."[a] 33 But Samuel said,

"As your sword has made women childless,
so your mother shall be childless
among women."

And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. 35 Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel.

16 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." 2 Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." 4 Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" 5 He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is now before the LORD."[b] 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 10 Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these." 11 Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." 12 He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

14 Now the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD

[a] Q Ms Gk: MT *Surely the bitterness of death is past*
[b] Heb *him*

Some scholars address this contradiction by positing v. 29 as a late pious gloss. **33:** Samuel's dismemberment of Agag *before the LORD* was a ritual execution, perhaps for war crimes or violation of a treaty. **35:** *Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death,* anticipating ch 28 but in tension with 19.18–24.

16.1–13: The anointing of David. 1: *Fill your horn with oil,* fine olive oil, carried in a ram's horn, was used for anointing a new king; cf. 10.1; 1 Kings 1.39. **4–5:** Jesse seems to be among the *elders* or civic leaders of Bethlehem. Their *trembling* is perhaps because they suspect the nature of Samuel's mission and fear that his visit will bring consequences from Saul (see v. 2). Or perhaps they are afraid that he has come to condemn them for some wrongdoing. *Sanctify,* to make oneself holy in preparation for sacrifice by means of ritual washing and the avoidance of ritually unclean items and actions, such as contact with corpses and sexual emissions. **6–7:** Eliab's height and good looks are reminiscent of Saul, whom the LORD has rejected as king. God is more impressed with inner qualities or the *heart,* which Samuel does not know. **8–9:** Samuel is likely using some device like the Urim and Thummim to determine whether each of Jesse's sons is the chosen one. **10:** This verse and 17.12 credit Jesse with eight sons, while 1 Chr 2.13–15 mentions only seven. As the seventh son David would have been seen as specially blessed. His description as the eighth son may highlight his humble origins. **11:** *Youngest* may also mean "the smallest" and contrasts David with Saul. *Keeping the sheep,* shepherd was a common metaphor for a king (e.g., 2 Sam 5.2). **12:** *Ruddy* means "reddish" of hair and complexion (see Gen 25.25). *Handsome,* see 9.2n. **13:** *Spirit of the LORD,* see 10.5–7.

16.14–23: David wins a position at Saul's court. 14: The departure of *the spirit of the LORD* from Saul (cf. 10.5–7n.) and its replacement by an *evil spirit from the LORD* further contrasts Saul and David (v. 13). The evil

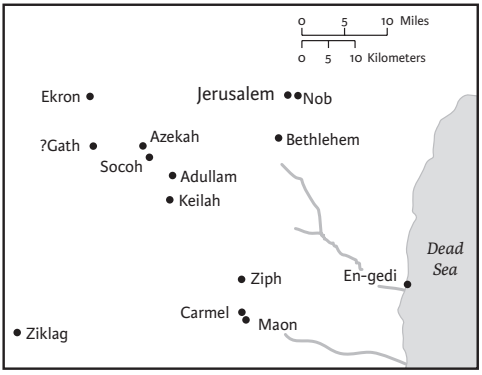
tormented him. 15 And Saul's servants said to him, "See now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. 16 Let our lord now command the servants who attend you to look for someone who is skillful in playing the lyre; and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will feel better." 17 So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me someone who can play well, and bring him to me." 18 One of the young men answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a warrior, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and the LORD is with him." 19 So Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David who is with the sheep." 20 Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and a kid, and sent them by his son David to Saul. 21 And David came to Saul, and entered his service. Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. 22 Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight." 23 And whenever the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him.

17 Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. 2 Saul and the Israelites gathered and encamped in the valley of Elah, and formed ranks against the Philistines. 3 The Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. 4 And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six[a] cubits and a span. 5 He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. 7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him. 8 He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. 9 If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." 10 And the Philistine said, "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together." 11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

[a] MT: Q Ms Gk *four*

spirit may describe mental illness. The theological point is that the LORD abandoned Saul. **16:** *Lyre,* a hand-held stringed instrument. Musicians were thought to ward off evil spirits. **18:** *A man of valor,* a "nobleman" or "man of wealth" (9.1). *Prudent in speech* implies both eloquence and cleverness. *The LORD is with him,* a central theme of the David story. **19:** David's role as a shepherd (see v. 11n.) again hints at his future as king. **21:** *Armor-bearer* indicates David's skill as a warrior and his closeness to Saul.

17.1–58: David defeats the Philistine champion. An earlier version of this story in vv. 1–11,32–49,51–54 has been extensively supplemented in the Hebrew text by vv. 12–31,50,55–58; 18.1–5. The supplementary material is absent from the LXX. Its addition has caused inconsistencies relating to David's presence in Saul's army, the way in which the Philistine died, and Saul's acquaintance with David. **4:** *Goliath,* a Philistine name, occurs only here and in v. 23, which is supplemental. Otherwise, David's opponent is called "the Philistine." The name has come into the story from 2 Sam 21.19, which says that a certain Elhanan killed Goliath. *Six cubits and a span,* about 9.5 ft (3 m). The Greek reading, "four cubits and a span," (6.6 ft [2 m]) is more realistic and probably original. The number "six" was mistakenly imported here (in place of "four") from v. 7. David's small stature contrasts with Goliath's as with Saul's. **5–7:** The armor described here reflects items from different armies at different times and is designed to give an imposing picture of the Philistine. **5:** *Five thousand shekels,* ca. 125 lb (57 kg). **6:** *Greaves*, armor for the shins. *Javelin,* better "scimitar." **7:** The spear's description is borrowed from 2 Sam 21.19. *A weaver's beam* may refer to size or to a leather thong attached to some spears to facilitate hurling. *Six hundred shekels of iron,* ca. 15 lb (7 kg). **10:** *Defy,* a theme in this story. The Philistine's defiance of Yahweh is the reason



Chs 16–28: David's early career and his flight from Saul

12 Now David was the son of an Ephrathite
of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had
eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was
already old and advanced in years.[a] 13 The
three eldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul
to the battle; the names of his three sons who
went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn,
and next to him Abinadab, and the third
Shammah. 14 David was the youngest; the
three eldest followed Saul, 15 but David went
back and forth from Saul to feed his father's
sheep at Bethlehem. 16 For forty days the
Philistine came forward and took his stand,
morning and evening.

17 Jesse said to his son David, "Take for your
brothers an ephah of this parched grain and
these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to
the camp to your brothers; 18 also take these
ten cheeses to the commander of their thou-
sand. See how your brothers fare, and bring
some token from them."

19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of
Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting
with the Philistines. 20 David rose early in the
morning, left the sheep with a keeper, took
the provisions, and went as Jesse had com-
manded him. He came to the encampment
as the army was going forth to the battle line,
shouting the war cry. 21 Israel and the Philis-
tines drew up for battle, army against army.
22 David left the things in charge of the keeper
of the baggage, ran to the ranks, and went
and greeted his brothers. 23 As he talked with
them, the champion, the Philistine of Gath,
Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of
the Philistines, and spoke the same words as
before. And David heard him.

24 All the Israelites, when they saw the
man, fled from him and were very much
afraid. 25 The Israelites said, "Have you seen
this man who has come up? Surely he has
come up to defy Israel. The king will greatly
enrich the man who kills him, and will give
him his daughter and make his family free in
Israel." 26 David said to the men who stood
by him, "What shall be done for the man
who kills this Philistine, and takes away the
reproach from Israel? For who is this un-
circumcised Philistine that he should defy
the armies of the living God?" 27 The people
answered him in the same way, "So shall it be
done for the man who kills him."

28 His eldest brother Eliab heard him talk-
ing to the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled
against David. He said, "Why have you come
down? With whom have you left those
few sheep in the wilderness? I know your
presumption and the evil of your heart; for
you have come down just to see the battle."
29 David said, "What have I done now? It was
only a question." 30 He turned away from him
toward another and spoke in the same way;
and the people answered him again as before.

31 When the words that David spoke were
heard, they repeated them before Saul; and
he sent for him. 32 David said to Saul, "Let no
one's heart fail because of him; your servant

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *among men*

for his defeat. **12:** *Ephrathites*, a subgroup within the Calebite clan, which was part of the tribe of Judah. The introduction of David suggests the beginning of a once independent version of the story. **14–15:** Here, David is a shepherd boy running errands rather than a warrior as in 16.14–23. **16:** In this supplementary version of the story, the Philistine had been challenging the Israelites *for forty days,* while the initial version had David fight him the first time he comes out. **17:** *An ephah,* ca. 21 qt (23 l). **18:** *Some token,* a personal effect showing that the brothers were well. **25:** *Give him his daughter*, the next chapter contains accounts of David marrying Merab and Michal, both Saul's daughters; however, neither marriage is described as a reward for the slaying of Goliath. Free *in Israel* means exempt from slavery, taxes, and compulsory military service. **31:** *Saul* appears for the first time in the story here. Though king of Israel, he is eclipsed by David. **32:** *Your servant,* a polite term for oneself before a

will go and fight with this Philistine." 33 Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, 35 I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. 36 Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 David said, "The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the LORD be with you!"

38 Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. 39 David strapped Saul's sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them." So David removed them. 40 Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

41 The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. 42 When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. 43 The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field." 45 But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, 47 and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's and he will give you into our hand."

48 When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand. 51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine; he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. 52 The troops of Israel and Judah rose up with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath[a] and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. 53 The Israelites came

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *Gai*

superior. **38–39:** David's inability to move in Saul's armor emphasizes his lack of experience as a soldier. It also shows Saul's failure to understand that David's advantage lay in his mobility. **40:** *His staff,* a shepherd's staff, not a weapon. The Philistine sees it as a stick (v. 43). *Wadi,* a dry streambed. The *sling* was a standard weapon of ancient warfare consisting of two cords attached to a pouch from which a stone could be hurled a considerable distance with great force and accuracy (Judg 20.16). **41–47:** Ancient warfare included taunting and trying to demoralize one's enemy. David's speech (vv. 45–47) is religious in nature and promises retribution for the Philistine's defiance of the LORD. David says he does not need the Philistine's arms because the LORD fights for him. The Philistine is distracted by David's staff (v. 43) and overlooks his real weapon, the sling.**47:** This verse succinctly states the theme of this story: victory comes from trusting in the LORD, not from human weaponry. **49:** David's stone strikes the Philistine in the spot where he is vulnerable. David's preceding speech shows that this was understood as God's doing. **50–51:** These verses make it appear as though David killed the Philistine twice,

back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. 54 David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent.

55 When Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know." 56 The king said, "Inquire whose son the stripling is." 57 On David's return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58 Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

18 When David[a] had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2 Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. 5 David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

6 As they were coming home, when David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments.[b] 7 And the women sang to one another as they made merry,

"Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands."

8 Saul was very angry, for this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?" 9 So Saul eyed David from that day on.

10 The next day an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand; 11 and Saul threw the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

12 Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. 13 So Saul removed him from his presence, and made him a commander of a thousand; and David marched out and came in, leading the army. 14 David had success in all his undertakings; for the LORD was with him. 15 When Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in awe of him. 16 But all Israel and

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Or *triangles*, or *three-stringed instruments*

once with the sling stone (v. 50) and once by beheading him with his own sword (v. 51). The repetition results from the combination of two versions of the story, but v. 50 can be read as an overview of the entire episode. **54:** *Jerusalem,* an anachronism, since Jerusalem was conquered several years later, after David became king of Israel (2 Sam 5.6–9). *His tent,* perhaps read "the tent (shrine) of Yahweh." Goliath's sword later surfaces with the priests at Nob (21.9). **55:** *Whose son is this young man?,* idiomatic for "Who is this?" It indicates the story's originally independent nature, since according to 16.14–23 Saul and David already had a close relationship.

18.1–30: Saul becomes jealous of David. 1–3: *Loved* implies political loyalty in addition to the affection of close friends. Whether the statement implies a sexual relationship is not clear; cf. 20.17,41; 2 Sam 1.26. **4:** Jonathan's royal robe and armor represent his status as crown prince. David is thus depicted as Saul's true successor, by the initiative of Jonathan himself. But David does not usurp the throne (see 17.38–39 where he does not wear Saul's armor). **6:** *As they were coming home, when David returned from killing the Philistine,* the continuation of ch 17, showing that vv. 1–5 are an interruption of the initial narrative and part of the supplemental material in ch 17 (not found in the LXX). **7:** *David* has slain *his ten thousands,* but David has killed only the single Philistine, Goliath. This is another indication of the interpolation of ch 17's portrait of David as a young shepherd rather than a warrior. **9:** *Eyed David,* i.e., was suspicious of David. **10–11:** These verses are also supplemental (and lacking in the LXX); initially, Saul's attempt to kill David with his spear (19.8–10) provided the climax to a series of subtle moves against David. *He raved,* lit., "he prophesied," referring to ecstatic behavior. **13–14:** Saul promotes David because he is afraid to have David nearby and hopes that David will be killed in battle. *Marched out and came in,* an idiom for "went to war." **16:** *All Israel and Judah loved David* expresses political loyalty and anticipates David's

Judah loved David; for it was he who marched out and came in leading them.

17 Then Saul said to David, "Here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife; only be valiant for me and fight the LORD's battles." For Saul thought, "I will not raise a hand against him; let the Philistines deal with him." 18 David said to Saul, "Who am I and who are my kinsfolk, my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" 19 But at the time when Saul's daughter Merab should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife.

20 Now Saul's daughter Michal loved David. Saul was told, and the thing pleased him. 21 Saul thought, "Let me give her to him that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David a second time,[a] "You shall now be my son-in-law." 22 Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David in private and say, 'See, the king is delighted with you, and all his servants love you; now then, become the king's son-in-law.'" 23 So Saul's servants reported these words to David in private. And David said, "Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and of no repute?" 24 The servants of Saul told him, "This is what David said." 25 Then Saul said, "Thus shall you say to David, 'The king desires no marriage present except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, that he may be avenged on the king's enemies.'" Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 26 When his servants told David these words, David was well pleased to be the king's son-in-law. Before the time had expired, 27 David rose and went, along with his men, and killed one hundred[b] of the Philistines; and David brought their foreskins, which were given in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. Saul gave him his daughter Michal as a wife. 28 But when Saul realized that the LORD was with David, and that Saul's daughter Michal loved him, 29 Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy from that time forward.

30 Then the commanders of the Philistines came out to battle; and as often as they came out, David had more success than all the servants of Saul, so that his fame became very great.

19 Saul spoke with his son Jonathan and with all his servants about killing David. But Saul's son Jonathan took great delight in David. 2 Jonathan told David, "My father Saul is trying to kill you; therefore be on guard tomorrow morning; stay in a secret place and hide yourself. 3 I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you; if I learn anything I will tell you." 4 Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul, saying to him, "The king should not sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have been of good service to you; 5 for he took his life in his hand when he attacked the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great victory for all Israel. You saw it, and

[a] Heb *by two*

[b] Gk Compare 2 Sam 3.14: Heb *two hundred*

rule over both north and south (2 Sam 5.5). The army was devoted to David because of his military success. **17–19:** These verses are supplemental; they are not found in the LXX. If these verses are related to 17.25, Saul has changed the conditions of his promise. David's response in v. 18 shows his humility and lack of ambition to be king. *Son-in-law to the king* was an important political position as a potential heir to the throne. In the end (v. 19), Saul reneges on his promise despite David's heroic deeds. **20:** *Michal,* Saul's younger daughter. **21:** This plan of Saul's is slightly more direct than his hope that David's promotion over the army would lead to his death. *Therefore Saul said . . . , "You shall now be my son-in-law,"* an editorial addition explaining vv. 17–19. **23–25:** The *marriage present* ("bride-price") was set by the bride's father and paid by the groom. The use of *foreskins* as bridewealth or bride price plays on the references to the Philistines as uncircumcised (14.6; 31.4); David "converted" them to Israelites, an example of dark humor. The foreskins may have been whole phalluses collected as war trophies, a practice attested in Egypt. **26:** *David was well pleased to be the king's son-in-law,* despite his claim to lack of ambition. **28:** *Michal loved him,* Michal's affection also entailed political loyalty, as her betrayal of Saul in the story shows.

19.1–24: Saul actively seeks David's life. 5: Killing *an innocent person* could bring God's wrath. Jonathan

rejoiced; why then will you sin against an innocent person by killing David without cause?" 6 Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan; Saul swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." 7 So Jonathan called David and related all these things to him. Jonathan then brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.

8 Again there was war, and David went out to fight the Philistines. He launched a heavy attack on them, so that they fled before him. 9 Then an evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand, while David was playing music. 10 Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear; but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. David fled and escaped that night.

11 Saul sent messengers to David's house to keep watch over him, planning to kill him in the morning. David's wife Michal told him, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed." 12 So Michal let David down through the window; he fled away and escaped. 13 Michal took an idol[a] and laid it on the bed; she put a net[b] of goats' hair on its head, and covered it with the clothes. 14 When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick." 15 Then Saul sent the messengers to see David for themselves. He said, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him." 16 When the messengers came in, the idol[c] was in the bed, with the covering[b] of goats' hair on its head. 17 Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me like this, and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go; why should I kill you?' "

18 Now David fled and escaped; he came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. He and Samuel went and settled at Naioth. 19 Saul was told, "David is at Naioth in Ramah." 20 Then Saul sent messengers to take David. When they saw the company of the prophets in a frenzy, with Samuel standing in charge of[b] them, the spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also fell into a prophetic frenzy. 21 When Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they also fell into a frenzy. Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also fell into a frenzy. 22 Then he himself went to Ramah. He came to the great well that is in Secu;[d] he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" And someone said, "They are at Naioth in Ramah." 23 He went there, toward Naioth in Ramah; and the spirit of God came upon him. As he was going, he fell into a prophetic frenzy, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 He too stripped off his clothes, and he too fell into a frenzy before Samuel. He lay naked all that day and all that night. Therefore it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

[a] Heb *took the teraphim*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Heb *the teraphim*
[d] Gk reads *to the well of the threshing floor on the bare height*

emphasizes that David is innocent, and Saul has no cause to kill him. **6:** *Saul swore,* an oath was a serious matter, as it often involved the deity, but in 1 Samuel Saul consistently breaks his oaths. **9–10:** Cf. 16.23. **11–17:** This incident follows naturally upon the marriage in 18.20–29. **12:** The house was evidently built into the city wall (see Josh 2.15), so that David went *through the window* and escaped from the city. **13:** *An idol* (Heb "teraphim"), household gods (see Gen. 31.19–35n.; Judg 17.5). The one used by Michal seems to have been close to life-size. **17:** Michal lies to protect herself. A threat from David does not explain her trick with the bed after his departure. **18:** *Ramah,* Samuel's hometown, was about 2 mi (3 km) north of Gibeah. It is unlikely that David would have fled there rather than south to his home in Bethlehem; the story is included for literary and theological reasons to show that the prophets—and God through them—are on David's side. *Naioth* may be not a proper name but a word meaning "camps" or "huts" where the prophets lived near Ramah. **20–24:** Frenzy, see 10.5–7n. **23:** *Spirit of God*, cf. 10.5–7n; 11.6; 16.14–16. **23–24:** *Is Saul also among the prophets?* here has a negative explanation (contrast 10.10–12). His loss of self-control and his nakedness are degrading. Prophecy prevents Saul from harming or arresting David, showing that the LORD is on David's side against Saul. **24:** *Samuel*, cf. 15.35.

20 David fled from Naioth in Ramah. He came before Jonathan and said, "What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin against your father that he is trying to take my life?" [2] He said to him, "Far from it! You shall not die. My father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me; and why should my father hide this from me? Never!" [3] But David also swore, "Your father knows well that you like me; and he thinks, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, or he will be grieved.' But truly, as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, there is but a step between me and death." [4] Then Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you say, I will do for you." [5] David said to Jonathan, "Tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at the meal; but let me go, so that I may hide in the field until the third evening. [6] If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem his city; for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.' [7] If he says, 'Good!' it will be well with your servant; but if he is angry, then know that evil has been determined by him. [8] Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a sacred covenant[a] with you. But if there is guilt in me, kill me yourself; why should you bring me to your father?" [9] Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! If I knew that it was decided by my father that evil should come upon you, would I not tell you?" [10] Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?" [11] Jonathan replied to David, "Come, let us go out into the field." So they both went out into the field.

[12] Jonathan said to David, "By the LORD, the God of Israel! When I have sounded out my father, about this time tomorrow, or on the third day, if he is well disposed toward David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you? [13] But if my father intends to do you harm, the LORD do so to Jonathan, and more also, if I do not disclose it to you, and send you away, so that you may go in safety. May the LORD be with you, as he has been with my father. [14] If I am still alive, show me the faithful love of the LORD; but if I die,[b] [15] never cut off your faithful love from my house, even if the LORD were to cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." [16] Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD seek out the enemies of David." [17] Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own life.

[18] Jonathan said to him, "Tomorrow is the new moon; you will be missed, because your place will be empty. [19] On the day after tomorrow, you shall go a long way down; go to the place where you hid yourself earlier, and remain beside the stone there.[b] [20] I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I shot at a mark. [21] Then I will send the boy, saying, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you, collect them,' then you are to come, for, as the LORD lives, it is safe for you and there is no danger. [22] But if I say to the young man, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then go; for the LORD has sent you away. [23] As for the matter about which you and I have spoken, the LORD is witness[c] between you and me forever."

[24] So David hid himself in the field. When the new moon came, the king sat at the feast

[a] Heb *a covenant of the* LORD
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *witness*

20.1–42: The covenant between David and Jonathan. 2: Jonathan is unaware that Saul has tried to kill David and still believes that his father would not act without first consulting him. **3:** *You like me,* lit., "I have found favor in your eyes" (see v. 29). **5:** *New moon,* a period of sacrificing and feasting at the beginning of the month; see Num 28.11–15; Am 8.5. **8:** David asks Jonathan to *deal kindly* with him. The term implies loyalty to a treaty, and David goes on to mention the covenant between them. **13:** *The LORD do so to Jonathan and more also,* an oath formula. Jonathan swears that he will warn David. Jonathan's wish that the LORD be with David as he was with Saul hints that David will be king. **14–15:** *Faithful love,* "loyalty" (Heb " ḥesed")" the same word as in v. 8. *My house* means Jonathan's descendants. David's oath of loyalty to Jonathan's house explains his treatment of Mephibosheth in 2 Sam 9. **16:** *The enemies of David* include Saul! **17:** *Love* again expresses political loyalty. **18–22:** Jonathan will signal David secretly during his target practice. If Jonathan tells his servant retrieving the arrows that they are back toward Jonathan, it is safe for David to come out of hiding. But if Jonathan tells the

to eat. 25 The king sat upon his seat, as at other times, upon the seat by the wall. Jonathan stood, while Abner sat by Saul's side; but David's place was empty.

26 Saul did not say anything that day; for he thought, "Something has befallen him; he is not clean, surely he is not clean." 27 But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was empty. And Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to the feast, either yesterday or today?" 28 Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem; 29 he said, 'Let me go; for our family is holding a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. So now, if I have found favor in your sight, let me get away, and see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table."

30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan. He said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? 31 For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die." 32 Then Jonathan answered his father Saul, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" 33 But Saul threw his spear at him to strike him; so Jonathan knew that it was the decision of his father to put David to death. 34 Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food on the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, and because his father had disgraced him.

35 In the morning Jonathan went out into the field to the appointment with David, and with him was a little boy. 36 He said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows that I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37 When the boy came to the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called after the boy and said, "Is the arrow not beyond you?" 38 Jonathan called after the boy, "Hurry, be quick, do not linger." So Jonathan's boy gathered up the arrows and came to his master. 39 But the boy knew nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the arrangement. 40 Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said to him, "Go and carry them to the city." 41 As soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap[a] and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. He bowed three times, and they kissed each other, and wept with each other; David wept the more.[b] 42 Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since both of us have sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants, forever.'" He got up and left; and Jonathan went into the city.[c]

21 1 [d] David came to Nob to the priest Ahimelech. Ahimelech came trembling to meet David, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one with you?" 2 David said to the priest Ahimelech, "The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, 'No one must know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.' I have made an appointment[e] with the young men for such and such a place. 3 Now then, what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here." 4 The priest answered David, "I have no ordinary bread at hand, only holy

[a] Gk: Heb *from beside the south*
[b] Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] This sentence is 21.1 in Heb
[d] Ch 21.2 in Heb
[e] Q Ms Vg Compare Gk: Meaning of MT uncertain

servant to go farther, David should flee immediately. **26:** *He is not clean,* ritual impurity, which could be caused by a variety of factors, disqualified a person from participation in some religious ceremonies (Lev 11–15); most types lasted for one day only. **27:** *The son of Jesse,* a disdainful reference to David. **30:** *Chosen the son of Jesse,* Saul accuses Jonathan of treason. *Nakedness,* a euphemism for the genitals. **33:** Saul tries to kill Jonathan with his spear, exactly as he had tried to kill David (18.10–11; 19.8–10). **41–42a:** An addition reiterating the affection and loyalty between David and Jonathan. If they could have met openly like this, the previous signal would have been unnecessary. See vv 21–22.

21.1–15: David escapes to Nob. 1: *Ahimelech,* the great-grandson of Eli, *came trembling to meet David* apparently because David was alone, suggesting his fugitive status. **4:** *Provided that the young men have kept them-*

bread—provided that the young men have kept themselves from women." [5] David answered the priest, "Indeed women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?" [6] So the priest gave him the holy bread; for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.

[7] Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.

[8] David said to Ahimelech, "Is there no spear or sword here with you? I did not bring my sword or my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste." [9] The priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you will take that, take it, for there is none here except that one." David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."

[10] David rose and fled that day from Saul; he went to King Achish of Gath. [11] The servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances,

'Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands'?"

[12] David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of King Achish of Gath. [13] So he changed his behavior before them; he pretended to be mad when in their presence.[a] He scratched marks on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle run down his beard. [14] Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is mad; why then have you brought him to me? [15] Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

22 David left there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; when his brothers and all his father's house heard of it, they went down there to him. [2] Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Those who were with him numbered about four hundred.

[3] David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. He said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come[b] to you, until I know what God will do for me." [4] He left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. [5] Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; leave, and go into the land of Judah." So David left, and went into the forest of Hereth.

[6] Saul heard that David and those who were with him had been located. Saul was sitting at Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height, with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him. [7] Saul said to his servants who stood around

[a] Heb *in their hands*
[b] Syr Vg: Heb *come out*

selves from women, those involved in sacred activities, such as worship and preparing for holy war, were prohibited from engaging in sexual relations (see Ex 19.15). **5:** *Vessels,* probably a euphemism for the sexual organs. **6:** *Bread of the Presence,* see Ex 25.30. **7:** *Detained before the LORD* probably suggests *Doeg* had a vow to fulfill. The fact that he is an *Edomite* is ominous, because Edomites are often depicted as Israel's hated enemies. **9:** *The sword of Goliath,* see 17.54n. The *ephod* mentioned here seems to be an idol (Judg 8.27) rather than a priestly garment. **10:** *Achish,* a Philistine name. In chs 27–29, David is his trusted vassal. **11:** *The king of the land,* if not an anachronism, indicates that the Philistines already recognize David as a ruler. The Philistines quote the song in 18.7. **13–15:** *To be mad*: The Philistines may have thought David was divinely "touched," since prophecy was sometimes associated with madness (2 Kings 9.11; Jer 29.26). The story ridicules the Philistines, who cannot tell madness from sanity and who admit to having plenty of *madmen.*

22.1–23: David at Adullam; massacre of the priests of Nob. 1: *Cave,* possibly an error for "stronghold" (v. 4); the words are graphically similar in Heb. *Adullam* served as David's headquarters. **2:** David becomes a kind of bandit leader surrounded by the disaffected and using the Judean wilderness around Adullam as a hideout. **3–4:** The book of Ruth indicates that David had Moabite ancestry. *Stronghold,* probably Adullam. **5:** *The prophet Gad,* see 2 Sam 24.11. **7:** *Son of Jesse,* a disparaging reference to David. Kings commonly rewarded their servants with

him, "Hear now, you Benjaminites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? 8 Is that why all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a league with the son of Jesse, none of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as he is doing today." 9 Doeg the Edomite, who was in charge of Saul's servants, answered, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech son of Ahitub; 10 he inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

11 The king sent for the priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub and for all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob; and all of them came to the king. 12 Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." He answered, "Here I am, my lord." 13 Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, by giving him bread and a sword, and by inquiring of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as he is doing today?"

14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, "Who among all your servants is so faithful as David? He is the king's son-in-law, and is quick[a] to do your bidding, and is honored in your house. 15 Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? By no means! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any member of my father's house; for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little." 16 The king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house." 17 The king said to the guard who stood around him, "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David; they knew that he fled, and did not disclose it to me." But the servants of the king would not raise their hand to attack the priests of the LORD. 18 Then the king said to Doeg, "You, Doeg, turn and attack the priests." Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests; on that day he killed eighty-five who wore the linen ephod. 19 Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; men and women, children and infants, oxen, donkeys, and sheep, he put to the sword.

20 But one of the sons of Ahimelech son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. 21 Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. 22 David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I am responsible[b] for the lives of all your father's house. 23 Stay with me, and do not be afraid; for the one who seeks my life seeks your life; you will be safe with me."

23 Now they told David, "The Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and are robbing the threshing floors." 2 David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" The LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah." 3 But David's men said to him, "Look, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?" 4 Then David inquired of the LORD again. The LORD answered him, "Yes, go down to Keilah; for I will give the Philistines into your hand." 5 So David and his men went to Keilah, fought with the Philistines, brought away their livestock, and dealt them a heavy defeat. Thus David rescued the inhabitants of Keilah.

6 When Abiathar son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, he came down with an

[a] Heb *and turns aside*
[b] Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

fields and vineyards and military appointments. The *Benjaminites* can expect no such rewards if David becomes king because his native tribe is Judah. **10:** Ch 21 does not mention that Ahimelech *inquired of the LORD for* David, but the accusation (whether true or not) plays an important role in the confrontation to follow. **18:** Only *Doeg* (see 21.7) dares to attack the LORD's priests, because he is an *Edomite. Linen ephod,* a garment worn by priests (2.18) **19:** Ironically, Saul destroys the LORD's priests but failed to devote the Amalekites to destruction in ch 15 (see vv. 8–9,14,19). **20–23:** The one escapee is Abiathar in fulfillment of the oracle in 2.27–36.

23.1–13: David's relief of Keilah. 1: *Keilah,* an independent city within Philistine territory. *Threshing floors,* open-air surfaces where grain was separated from chaff. **2–5:** This episode illustrates the importance of Abiathar's ability to divine. David's inquiries require a yes-or-no answer, which could be determined through Abia-

ephod in his hand. 7 Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, "God has given[a] him into my hand; for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars." 8 Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. 9 When David learned that Saul was plotting evil against him, he said to the priest Abiathar, "Bring the ephod here." 10 David said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, your servant has heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. 11 And now, will[b] Saul come down as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, I beseech you, tell your servant." The LORD said, "He will come down." 12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" The LORD said, "They will surrender you." 13 Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, set out and left Keilah; they wandered wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition. 14 David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but the LORD[c] did not give him into his hand.

15 David was in the Wilderness of Ziph at Horesh when he learned that[d] Saul had come out to seek his life. 16 Saul's son Jonathan set out and came to David at Horesh; there he strengthened his hand through the LORD.[e] 17 He said to him, "Do not be afraid; for the hand of my father Saul shall not find you; you shall be king over Israel, and I shall be second to you; my father Saul also knows that this is so." 18 Then the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

19 Then some Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "David is hiding among us in the strongholds of Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon. 20 Now, O king, whenever you wish to come down, do so; and our part will be to surrender him into the king's hand." 21 Saul said, "May you be blessed by the LORD for showing me compassion! 22 Go and make sure once more; find out exactly where he is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning. 23 Look around and learn all the hiding places where he lurks, and come back to me with sure information. Then I will go with you; and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah." 24 So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul.

David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. 25 Saul and his men went to search for him. When David was told, he went down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard that, he pursued David into the wilderness of Maon. 26 Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. David was hurrying to get away from Saul, while Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them. 27 Then a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come; for the Philistines have made a raid on the land." 28 So Saul stopped pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape.[f] 29 [g]David then went up from there, and lived in the strongholds of En-gedi.

[a] Gk Tg: Heb *made a stranger of*
[b] Q Ms Compare Gk: MT *Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will*
[c] Q Ms Gk: MT *God*
[d] Or *saw that*
[e] Compare Q Ms Gk: MT *God*
[f] Or *Rock of Division;* meaning of Heb uncertain
[g] Ch 24.1 in Heb

thar's *ephod* (v. 6). **7–13:** David receives forewarning from the ephod, which allows him to escape Saul. Saul, in contrast, has no ephod, and later his efforts to consult the LORD go unanswered (28.6). **17:** It is unlikely that Jonathan would admit that David would be king in his place; this is part of the author's attempt to present David as Saul's legitimate successor. **18:** Cf. 20.16. **21:** Saul is in a pitiful state, requiring *compassion* even though he is king. **25–29:** Saul's withdrawal just at the moment he has David trapped hints at divine intervention. The name of this place (v. 28) means either "rock of escape" or "rock of division"; both are appropriate to the story.

24 When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the wilderness of En-gedi." [2] Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to look for David and his men in the direction of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. [3] He came to the sheepfolds beside the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself.[a] Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. [4] The men of David said to him, "Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'" Then David went and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's cloak. [5] Afterward David was stricken to the heart because he had cut off a corner of Saul's cloak. [6] He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to raise my hand against him; for he is the LORD's anointed." [7] So David scolded his men severely and did not permit them to attack Saul. Then Saul got up and left the cave, and went on his way.

[8] Afterwards David also rose up and went out of the cave and called after Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. [9] David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of those who say, 'David seeks to do you harm'? [10] This very day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you into my hand in the cave; and some urged me to kill you, but I spared[b] you. I said, 'I will not raise my hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed.' [11] See, my father, see the corner of your cloak in my hand; for by the fact that I cut off the corner of your cloak, and did not kill you, you may know for certain that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life. [12] May the LORD judge between me and you! May the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. [13] As the ancient proverb says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you. [14] Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A single flea? [15] May the LORD therefore be judge, and give sentence between me and you. May he see to it, and plead my cause, and vindicate me against you."

[16] When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Saul lifted up his voice and wept. [17] He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. [18] Today you have explained how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. [19] For who has ever found an enemy, and sent the enemy safely away? So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. [20] Now I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. [21] Swear to me

[a] Heb *to cover his feet*
[b] Gk Syr Tg Vg: Heb *it* (my eye) *spared*

24.1–22: David spares Saul's life. This story is a more disparaging version of the one in ch 26 on which it is dependent. In both, Saul is unknowingly defenseless before David, who is urged by his men to kill Saul but refuses because of Saul's status as the LORD's anointed. David then reveals to Saul that he could have killed him, and Saul expresses remorse for persecuting David and hints or states that David will succeed him as king. **2:** *Three thousand,* see 4.2n. **3:** *To relieve himself* (see textual note *a*), a denigrating portrayal of a king. **4a:** The prophecy cited by David's men is not recorded and could be their own invention. **4b–5:** These verses originally belonged after v. 7a; they were accidentally omitted and then put back in the wrong place. David's cutting off Saul's hem (cf. 15.27) is symbolic for emasculation or usurpation of Saul's kingdom, which is why David's conscience bothers him. **6:** To attack *the LORD's anointed* (Saul) was to attack the LORD. **8:** David shows the proper respect toward Saul as the LORD's anointed. **11:** *My father* is a respectful address from the younger David; it may also imply David's right to inherit Saul's kingdom. **14:** *A dead dog? A single flea?* Deliberately ambiguous. David could be disparaging himself as insignificant, or he could be saying that Saul is mistaken if he thinks David is insignificant. **16:** Saul's reference to David as *my son* recalls their once close relationship and hints that David will be Saul's successor. **20:** Saul explicitly recognizes that David will succeed him. **21–22:** A new king from a different dynasty commonly killed all the descendants of the previous king in order to be rid of potential rivals.

therefore by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not wipe out my name from my father's house." [22] So David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home; but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

25 Now Samuel died; and all Israel assembled and mourned for him. They buried him at his home in Ramah.

Then David got up and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

[2] There was a man in Maon, whose property was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. [3] Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was clever and beautiful, but the man was surly and mean; he was a Calebite. [4] David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. [5] So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. [6] Thus you shall salute him: 'Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. [7] I hear that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing, all the time they were in Carmel. [8] Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your sight; for we have come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.' "

[9] When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David; and then they waited. [10] But Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are breaking away from their masters. [11] Shall I take my bread and my water and the meat that I have butchered for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" [12] So David's young men turned away, and came back and told him all this. [13] David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every one of them strapped on his sword; David also strapped on his sword; and about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

[14] But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he shouted insults at them. [15] Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we never missed anything when we were in the fields, as long as we were with them; [16] they were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. [17] Now therefore know this and consider what you should do; for evil has been decided against our master and against all his house; he is so ill-natured that no one can speak to him."

David's oath not to wipe out Saul's descendants anticipates his treatment of Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9); see further 20.14–15n.

25.1a: The death of Samuel. An editor's note that prepares for ch 28.

25.1b–43: Nabal and Abigail. In chs 24 and 26 David refuses to kill Saul, but in ch 25 he refrains only at the last minute from killing many innocent people in Nabal's household. **2:** Carmel, see 15.12n. Nabal, like Saul, is a rich and powerful man. **3:** *Calebite,* an early scribal correction of the reading "as his heart," which makes less sense but might allude to vv. 36–37. The Calebites were the leading clan of Judah. "Calebite" is also very similar to the word for "dog," which may be significant in view of the idiom for males in v. 22 as those who urinate on walls. *Nabal,* meaning "fool" (v. 25), is an unlikely name for parents to give to a child. Either the name "Nabal" was invented as appropriate to this man's character, or it originally meant something different (the root is homonymic). Nabal is also similar to the Heb words for "wine bottle" and "corpse," and so may allude to Nabal's later death following his drunkenness (vv. 36–38). Nabal's wife, *Abigail,* is his complete opposite. The only other Abigail in the Bible is David's sister (1 Chr 2.16). **4–8:** *Shearing his sheep,* a time of celebration. David hopes that Nabal, in the spirit of the festival, will give a generous gift. This gift is more or less obligatory as payment for not harming Nabal's shepherds. Hence, David's request is a kind of extortion. The *ten young men* give Nabal an idea of the size of gift David is expecting—whatever ten men can carry; they may also be meant to intimidate Nabal. **10–11:** The words *Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?* demean David as insignificant. Nabal goes on to call David a runaway slave and a vagabond. **14:** Nabal's own servants go to Abigail because they recognize him

18 Then Abigail hurried and took two
hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep
ready dressed, five measures of parched
grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and
two hundred cakes of figs. She loaded them
on donkeys 19 and said to her young men, "Go
on ahead of me; I am coming after you." But
she did not tell her husband Nabal. 20 As she
rode on the donkey and came down under
cover of the mountain, David and his men
came down toward her; and she met them.
21 Now David had said, "Surely it was in vain
that I protected all that this fellow has in the
wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all
that belonged to him; but he has returned me
evil for good. 22 God do so to David[a] and more
also, if by morning I leave so much as one
male of all who belong to him."

23 When Abigail saw David, she hurried
and alighted from the donkey, and fell before
David on her face, bowing to the ground.
24 She fell at his feet and said, "Upon me alone,
my lord, be the guilt; please let your servant
speak in your ears, and hear the words of your
servant. 25 My lord, do not take seriously this
ill-natured fellow, Nabal; for as his name is,
so is he; Nabal[b] is his name, and folly is with
him; but I, your servant, did not see the young
men of my lord, whom you sent.

26 "Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives,
and as you yourself live, since the LORD has
restrained you from bloodguilt and from tak-
ing vengeance with your own hand, now let
your enemies and those who seek to do evil
to my lord be like Nabal. 27 And now let this
present that your servant has brought to my
lord be given to the young men who follow
my lord. 28 Please forgive the trespass of your
servant; for the LORD will certainly make my
lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting
the battles of the LORD; and evil shall not be
found in you so long as you live. 29 If anyone
should rise up to pursue you and to seek
your life, the life of my lord shall be bound
in the bundle of the living under the care
of the LORD your God; but the lives of your
enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow
of a sling. 30 When the LORD has done to my
lord according to all the good that he has
spoken concerning you, and has appointed
you prince over Israel, 31 my lord shall have
no cause of grief, or pangs of conscience, for
having shed blood without cause or for hav-
ing saved himself. And when the LORD has
dealt well with my lord, then remember your
servant."

32 David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the
LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet
me today! 33 Blessed be your good sense, and
blessed be you, who have kept me today from
bloodguilt and from avenging myself by my
own hand! 34 For as surely as the LORD the
God of Israel lives, who has restrained me
from hurting you, unless you had hurried
and come to meet me, truly by morning there
would not have been left to Nabal so much as
one male." 35 Then David received from her
hand what she had brought him; he said to
her, "Go up to your house in peace; see, I have
heeded your voice, and I have granted your
petition."

36 Abigail came to Nabal; he was holding
a feast in his house, like the feast of a king.

[a] Gk Compare Syr: Heb *the enemies of David*
[b] That is *Fool*

as ill-natured and untrustworthy. **18:** *Five measures* (Heb "se'ah"), about 1 bu (38 L). *Cakes,* clumps of dried *figs.* **22:** David vows to annihilate every *male* (see v. 3n.) in Nabal's household. Only the wise woman, Abigail, can prevent the tragedy; cf. 2 Sam 20.16–22. **23:** Abigail bows to David as before a king. **24:** Abigail is eloquent and tactful, calling herself David's *servant* (v. 24). **26:** This verse anticipates the conclusion of the story, where Nabal dies but though not by David's hand. It may be out of place. **27:** Abigail diplomatically refers to the supplies she brings as a *present* for David's men. **28:** *Sure house* (see 2.35n.) suggests that Abigail knows David will be king. **29:** *If anyone should rise up to pursue you and to seek your life* alludes to Saul. The *bundle of the living,* the list of those who are alive. *Sling out* recalls David's victory in ch 17 over Goliath and anticipates Nabal's death in 25.37. **30–31:** Abigail points out that shedding innocent blood would be an obstacle to David's kingship. *Prince,* elsewhere rendered "ruler" in the NRSV—the king designate. *When the LORD has dealt well with my lord* may refer to David's becoming king or ironically to Nabal's death. *Remember your servant* is a marriage proposal. **32–33:** David praises *the LORD* for sending Abigail because she saved him from committing murder and thus incurring *bloodguilt.* **35:** *I have granted your petition,* David already speaks as a king. **36:** The Heb word for *feast* is related

Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she told him nothing at all until the morning light. 37 In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him; he became like a stone. 38 About ten days later the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD who has judged the case of Nabal's insult to me, and has kept back his servant from evil; the LORD has returned the evildoing of Nabal upon his own head." Then David sent and wooed Abigail, to make her his wife. 40 When David's servants came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, "David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife." 41 She rose and bowed down, with her face to the ground, and said, "Your servant is a slave to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." 42 Abigail got up hurriedly and rode away on a donkey; her five maids attended her. She went after the messengers of David and became his wife.

43 David also married Ahinoam of Jezreel; both of them became his wives. 44 Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

26 Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "David is in hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon."[a] 2 So Saul rose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, with three thousand chosen men of Israel, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph. 3 Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon[a] beside the road. But David remained in the wilderness. When he learned that Saul had come after him into the wilderness, 4 David sent out spies, and learned that Saul had indeed arrived. 5 Then David set out and came to the place where Saul had encamped; and David saw the place where Saul lay, with Abner son of Ner, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within the encampment, while the army was encamped around him.

6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, "Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?" Abishai said, "I will go down with you." 7 So David and Abishai went to the army by night; there Saul lay sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the army lay around him. 8 Abishai said to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand today; now therefore let me pin him to the ground with one stroke of the spear; I will not strike him twice." 9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can raise his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?" 10 David said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him down; or his day will come to die; or he will go down into battle and perish. 11 The LORD forbid that I should raise my hand against the LORD's anointed; but now take the spear that is at his head, and the water jar, and let us go." 12 So David took the spear that was at Saul's head and the water jar, and they went away. No one saw it, or knew it, nor did anyone awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them.

13 Then David went over to the other side, and stood on top of a hill far away, with a great distance between them. 14 David called to the army and to Abner son of Ner, saying, "Abner! Will you not answer?" Then Abner replied, "Who are you that calls to the king?" 15 David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord the king? For

[a] Or *opposite the wasteland*

to the root for "to drink," suggesting that drinking was the primary activity. *Like the feast of a king,* Nabal is again compared to a king. **37:** *When the wine had gone out of Nabal,* the name "Nabal" is similar to the word for wineskin or bottle in v. 18. *He became like a stone,* perhaps a coma, and another allusion to David's sling (ch 17). **43:** Saul's wife was also named *Ahinoam* (14.50). *Jezreel,* apparently a town near Carmel (Josh 15.56) rather than the northern valley and city of that name. **44:** This notice illustrates Saul's enmity toward David and prepares for the story of Michal's return in 2 Sam 3.13–16.

26.1–25: David spares Saul's life again. See 24.1–22n. **5:** The army sleeps around the king in order to protect him. **6:** *Joab,* David's nephew (1 Chr 2.16), later the commander of his army. **8:** Ironically, the same *spear* that Saul used to try to kill David is now available for David to use against Saul. **9:** See 24.6n. **13:** *David went over to the*

one of the people came in to destroy your lord the king. 16 This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the LORD's anointed. See now, where is the king's spear, or the water jar that was at his head?"

17 Saul recognized David's voice, and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." 18 And he added, "Why does my lord pursue his servant? For what have I done? What guilt is on my hands? 19 Now therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the LORD who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering; but if it is mortals, may they be cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out today from my share in the heritage of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' 20 Now therefore, do not let my blood fall to the ground, away from the presence of the LORD; for the king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea, like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains."

21 Then Saul said, "I have done wrong; come back, my son David, for I will never harm you again, because my life was precious in your sight today; I have been a fool, and have made a great mistake." 22 David replied, "Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and get it. 23 The LORD rewards everyone for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD gave you into my hand today, but I would not raise my hand against the LORD's anointed. 24 As your life was precious today in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may he rescue me from all tribulation."

25 Then Saul said to David, "Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them." So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

27 David said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than to escape to the land of the Philistines; then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand." 2 So David set out and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to King Achish son of Maoch of Gath. 3 David stayed with Achish at Gath, he and his troops, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow. 4 When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought for him.

5 Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your sight, let a place be given me in one of the country towns, so that I may live there; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" 6 So that day Achish gave him Ziklag; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. 7 The length of time that David lived in the country of the Philistines was one year and four months.

8 Now David and his men went up and made raids on the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites; for these were the landed settlements from Telam[a] on the way to Shur and on to the land of Egypt. 9 David struck the land, leaving neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep,

[a] Compare Gk 15.4: Heb *from of old*

other side, if Saul pursues him he can lead Saul's army away from his own men. **19:** David curses anyone who caused Saul to pursue him, because this has driven him from the land of Israel, which is the LORD's *heritage*, and he can therefore no longer worship Israel's God. Each god was believed to have his own nation and each nation its god. *Other gods,* the gods of countries outside Israel where David says he has been driven. **20:** *A partridge,* lit., "the caller." David calls to Saul from a mountain; cf. 24.14n. **25:** Saul's blessing hints that David will be king (cf. 24.20).

27.1–28.2: David becomes a vassal of the Philistines. This chapter is in tension with 21.10–22.1, in which David escapes from *Achish* by pretending to be mad. **27.3:** *Gath,* Goliath's home (17.4). **6:** Kings commonly gave land grants to faithful servants. *Ziklag* also guarded the southern frontier of Achish's territory. **8–12:** *The Negeb,* the southern wilderness area of Israel. The story admits that David was a mercenary for the Philistines but denies that he fought against the people of Judah or Israel; he ruthlessly exterminated non-Israelite peoples (v. 8) so that the Philistines never learned the truth. The mention of *Amalekites* is inconsistent with ch 15, in which they are all killed. David fools Achish by claiming to attack clans within Judah such as *the Jerahmeelites* and

the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing, and came back to Achish. 10 When Achish asked, "Against whom[a] have you made a raid today?" David would say, "Against the Negeb of Judah," or "Against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites," or, "Against the Negeb of the Kenites." 11 David left neither man nor woman alive to be brought back to Gath, thinking, "They might tell about us, and say, 'David has done so and so.' " Such was his practice all the time he lived in the country of the Philistines. 12 Achish trusted David, thinking, "He has made himself utterly abhorrent to his people Israel; therefore he shall always be my servant."

28 In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war, to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "You know, of course, that you and your men are to go out with me in the army." 2 David said to Achish, "Very well, then you shall know what your servant can do." Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

3 Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. Saul had expelled the mediums and the wizards from the land. 4 The Philistines assembled, and came and encamped at Shunem. Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. 5 When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. 6 When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, not by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. 7 Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and inquire of her." His servants said to him, "There is a medium at Endor."

8 So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes and went there, he and two men with him. They came to the woman by night. And he said, "Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you." 9 The woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land. Why then are you laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?" 10 But Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing." 11 Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He answered, "Bring up Samuel for me." 12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!" 13 The king said to her, "Have no fear; what do you see?" The woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being[b] coming up out of the ground." 14 He said to her, "What is his appearance?" She said, "An old man is coming up; he is wrapped in a robe." So Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.

15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams; so I have summoned you to tell me what I should do." 16 Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and

[a] Q Ms Gk Vg: MT lacks *whom*
[b] Or *a god*; or *gods*

the "Kenizzites" (a better reading than *Kenites*). Thus, while Achish felt confident of David's loyalty because he thought David had betrayed his own people, the writer asserts that David's loyalty remained with Israel. **28.2:** *Then you shall know what your servant can do,* an artfully ambiguous statement. Achish thinks David is saying that he will show his potential against Israel, but the reader knows that David is actually saying that in the heat of battle Achish will find out how David remains loyal to Israel.

28.3–25: Saul consults a spirit. 3: *Mediums* and *wizards* refer to persons who communicated with the dead; this is forbidden in Lev 19.31; 20.6,27; Deut 18.10. Ironically, Saul, who had *expelled* them, now seeks one out. Although consulting them was prohibited, they still were effective. **4:** *Shunem* and *Gilboa,* near the Jezreel Valley, far north of the Negeb where the previous stories were set. **6:** Three means of divining were *dreams,* or incubation, in which one slept at a holy place anticipating the answer to an inquiry; *Urim* or lots, used earlier in 14.41; and *prophets* like the man of God in 9.1–10.16. **11–12a:** An insertion identifying Samuel as the spirit. Originally, the woman recognized Saul because of his oath not to punish her in v. 10, a promise that could only have been made by Saul. **13:** *Divine being,* a god or a ghost or spirit. *The ground,* better "the underworld." **15:** *Disturbed me,*

become your enemy? 17 The LORD has done to you just as he spoke by me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, David. 18 Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD, and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you today. 19 Moreover the LORD will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; the LORD will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."

20 Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel; and there was no strength in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night. 21 The woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified, she said to him, "Your servant has listened to you; I have taken my life in my hand, and have listened to what you have said to me. 22 Now therefore, you also listen to your servant; let me set a morsel of bread before you. Eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way." 23 He refused, and said, "I will not eat." But his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he listened to their words. So he got up from the ground and sat on the bed. 24 Now the woman had a fatted calf in the house. She quickly slaughtered it, and she took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened cakes. 25 She put them before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

29 Now the Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, while the Israelites were encamped by the fountain that is in Jezreel. 2 As the lords of the Philistines were passing on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were passing on in the rear with Achish, 3 the commanders of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of King Saul of Israel, who has been with me now for days and years? Since he deserted to me I have found no fault in him to this day." 4 But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him; and the commanders of the Philistines said to him, "Send the man back, so that he may return to the place that you have assigned to him; he shall not go down with us to battle, or else he may become an adversary to us in the battle. For how could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of the men here? 5 Is this not David, of whom they sing to one another in dances,

'Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands'?"

6 Then Achish called David and said to him, "As the LORD lives, you have been honest, and to me it seems right that you should march out and in with me in the campaign; for I have found nothing wrong in you from the day of your coming to me until today. Nevertheless the lords do not approve of you. 7 So go back now; and go peaceably; do nothing to displease the lords of the Philistines." 8 David said to Achish, "But what have I done? What have you found in your servant from the day I entered your service until now, that I should not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" 9 Achish replied to David, "I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless, the commanders of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.' 10 Now then rise early in the morning, you and the servants of your lord

the spirits in the underworld were viewed as sleeping. **17–18:** See ch 15. **19:** *Tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me,* they will be dead. **20:** Saul's being *filled with fear* is unbecoming of the king and suggests that he is unfit to rule. **21:** *The woman* who is the medium is calmer and stronger than the *terrified* Saul. **24:** *A fatted calf in the house,* livestock were kept on the ground floor of houses with people's sleeping quarters on a second story.

29.1–11: The Philistines reject David. 2: *The lords of the Philistines,* the rulers of the five main Philistine cities; see 5.2n. **3:** It is the *commanders* of the Philistine army who will actually be in battle, rather than the Philistine lords, who object to the presence of David and his men. *Hebrews,* see 4.6n. **5:** The same song as in 18.7. **6:** *As the LORD lives,* Achish, the Philistine, swears by Yahweh, the God of Israel! **8:** *The enemies of my lord the king,* Achish takes this as a reference to himself, but David's words are ambiguous and could refer to Saul. **9:** *Angel of God,* see 2 Sam 14.17,20; 19.27. Achish uses the comparison to emphasize David's innocence in his view. The statement illustrates his own foolishness and gullibility. **10:** *The place that I appointed for you,* Ziklag.

who came with you, and go to the place that I appointed for you. As for the evil report, do not take it to heart, for you have done well before me.[a] Start early in the morning, and leave as soon as you have light." [11] So David set out with his men early in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. But the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

30 Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negeb and on Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag, burned it down, [2] and taken captive the women and all[b] who were in it, both small and great; they killed none of them, but carried them off, and went their way. [3] When David and his men came to the city, they found it burned down, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. [4] Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept, until they had no more strength to weep. [5] David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. [6] David was in great danger; for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in spirit for their sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

[7] David said to the priest Abiathar son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. [8] David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" He answered him, "Pursue; for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue." [9] So David set out, he and the six hundred men who were with him. They came to the Wadi Besor, where those stayed who were left behind. [10] But David went on with the pursuit, he and four hundred men; two hundred stayed behind, too exhausted to cross the Wadi Besor.

[11] In the open country they found an Egyptian, and brought him to David. They gave him bread and he ate; they gave him water to drink; [12] they also gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins. When he had eaten, his spirit revived; for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. [13] Then David said to him, "To whom do you belong? Where are you from?" He said, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite. My master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago. [14] We had made a raid on the Negeb of the Cherethites and on that which belongs to Judah and on the Negeb of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag down." [15] David said to him, "Will you take me down to this raiding party?" He said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me, or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them."

[16] When he had taken him down, they were spread out all over the ground, eating and drinking and dancing, because of the great amount of spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. [17] David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not one of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled. [18] David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken; and David rescued his two wives. [19] Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken;

[a] Gk: Heb lacks *and go to the place . . . done well before me*

[b] Gk: Heb lacks *and all*

11: David and the Philistines separate and go in opposite directions. Thus the writer shows that David is far away from the battle and had nothing to do with Saul's death.

30.1–31: The burning of Ziklag and David's pursuit of the Amalekites. 1: *On the third day.* Ziklag was about 50 mi (80 km) south of Aphek (29.1). Again the writer emphasizes David's distance from the battle where Saul was killed. The Amalekite *raid* on Ziklag may have been in retaliation for David's raids against them (27.8). This story is inconsistent with ch 15, in which the Amalekites were all destroyed. **2:** *Both small and great,* poor or unimportant and wealthy or socially prominent, a figure of speech (a merism) meaning "everyone." **6:** *Strengthened himself in the LORD his God,* David finds strength and comfort in his faith, showing him to be a model ruler. **7–8:** *Ephod,* a device (see 23.2–5n.) used by priests to divine the answers to yes-or-no questions. David's access to God through the ephod contrasts with Saul's lack of response from God in 28.6 and highlights the theme: "the LORD was with him (David)." **9:** *Wadi Besor,* a major watercourse south of Gaza, not far north of Egypt. **12:** *Fig cake,* see 25.18n. **14:** *Cherethites,* probably "Cretans," mercenaries from Crete, associated with the Philistines.

David brought back everything. 20 David also captured all the flocks and herds, which were driven ahead of the other cattle; people said, "This is David's spoil."

21 Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David, and who had been left at the Wadi Besor. They went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. When David drew near to the people he saluted them. 22 Then all the corrupt and worthless fellows among the men who had gone with David said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may take his wife and children, and leave." 23 But David said, "You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us; he has preserved us and handed over to us the raiding party that attacked us. 24 Who would listen to you in this matter? For the share of the one who goes down into the battle shall be the same as the share of the one who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike." 25 From that day forward he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel; it continues to the present day.

26 When David came to Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, "Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD"; 27 it was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, 28 in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, 29 in Racal, in the towns of the Jerahmeelites, in the towns of the Kenites, 30 in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, in Athach, 31 in Hebron, all the places where David and his men had roamed.

31 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines, and many fell[a] on Mount Gilboa. 2 The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. 3 The battle pressed hard upon Saul; the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by them. 4 Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and thrust me through with it, so that these uncircumcised may not come and thrust me through, and make sport of me." But his armor-bearer was unwilling; for he was terrified. So Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. 5 When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. 6 So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together on the same day. 7 When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their towns and fled; and the Philistines came and occupied them.

8 The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9 They cut off his head, stripped off his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to the houses of their idols and to the people. 10 They put his armor in the temple of Astarte;[b] and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. 11 But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead

[a] Heb *and they fell slain*
[b] Heb plural

23–25: An etiology for a custom in the writer's day. *A statute and an ordinance for Israel,* an illustration of David's kingly decisiveness and authority. **23:** Again, David is cast as a model of piety and faithfulness. **26–31:** David's gifts to the *elders* of these cities, all in southern Judah, would cause them to look favorably upon him when the time came to choose a king over Judah (2 Sam 2.4).

31.1–13: Saul's death. 1 Chr 10 provides a later, slightly revised version of this story, and in 2 Sam 1 the story is related by an Amalekite claiming to have been present. For the locations, see map on p. 461. **4:** *These uncircumcised,* a deprecating term for the Philistines. **5:** Although not condemned, suicide is rare in the Bible; see 2 Sam 17.23; 1 Kings 16.18; Mt 27.5. **9–10:** The Philistines humiliate Saul's corpse and credit their gods with the victory. *Astarte,* a Canaanite goddess. **11–13:** The men of Jabesh are likely moved to rescue Saul's body because of his rescue of their city at the beginning of his reign (10.27b–11.15). Cremation (vv. 12–13) was not practiced by the Israelites. They may have burned the bodies in this case to avoid further desecration of them by the Philistines. They *fasted seven days* apparently in mourning for Saul and his sons.

heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,
12 all the valiant men set out, traveled all night
long, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan.
They came to Jabesh and burned them there.
13 Then they took their bones and buried
them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and
fasted seven days.

2 SAMUEL

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

First and Second Samuel were originally a single work, so that much of the information in the Introduction to 1 Samuel (pp. 405-06) pertains to 2 Samuel as well. The name of the book (as relating to the prophet Samuel) is even less appropriate for 2 Samuel, since Samuel dies in 1 Sam 25.1 and is never mentioned in 2 Samuel.

The division between 1 and 2 Samuel is artificial and was apparently based on considerations of length when it was first made in the LXX, where 2 Samuel bears the title 2 Kingdoms or 2 Reigns. Following a pattern found in the Torah/Pentateuch and Joshua, the book division was determined by the death of a main character—in this case, King Saul.

LITERARY HISTORY

Many major critical issues in 2 Samuel revolve around chs 9–20. These chapters (or in some views chs 13–20), together with 1 Kings 1–2, have been named the "Court History" or "Succession Narrative," after their perceived intention of dealing with the question of who would succeed David as king. Many scholars have viewed this proposed source document as almost contemporaneous with the events it narrates. However, the extent and early date of this hypothetical source have been called into question because it is impossible to extract these chapters cleanly from the surrounding narrative and to see them as a separate source; there are, for example, ties between chs 9–20 and chs 2–4, such as the description of Mephibosheth's (Meribbaal's) injury in 4.4 and 9.3 and the importance of the "sons of Zeruiah," Joab and his brothers outside of this unit. In general, many scholars are now skeptical that any part of 2 Samuel was written close to the time of the events that it putatively describes. Questions of literary history also loom large in the consideration of ch 7, with its unconditional promise of a dynasty made to David. While scholars generally recognize this as a Deuteronomistic composition as it now stands, many think that underlying it is an older version of God's promise to David.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

Second Samuel can be divided into four sections.

Section one (1.1–5.5) describes how, after Saul's death (ch 1), David becomes king first of Judah (2.1–4a) and then, after a civil war that included the assassinations of Saul's relatives Abner (ch 3) and Ishbaal (ch 4), king of all Israel (5.1–5).

Section two (5.6–12.31) tells of David's annexation of Jerusalem (5.5–6.23), his interest in building a temple there resulting in the divine promise of a dynasty (ch 7), and his victories over surrounding peoples (chs 8–12), which are interrupted by the story of his affair with Bathsheba (11.2–12.25).

Section three (chs 13–20) recounts Absalom's revolt and that led by Sheba (ch 20).

Section four (chs 21–24), often considered an appendix, is a miscellaneous collection of narratives, military lists, and poems.

INTERPRETATION

Scholars and other readers disagree about the perspective on David in these chapters. Some contend that the pro-Davidic, apologetic character of 1 Samuel continues, as those who stand in David's way perish, though never by his own hand or order. Joab and the "sons of Zeruiah" are often blamed for the murders of David's enemies—Abner (3.26–30), Absalom (18.1–15), and Amasa (20.4–10)—while David is too tender for such deeds (3.39; 16.10; 19.22) and is deeply grieved by their deaths (3.31–37; 18.22–19.8). In this reading, the annihilation of Saul's line (recounted apologetically in 21.1–14, which once preceded ch 9) secures David's hold on the throne. Only Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled disabled son, remains alive, and David keeps a watchful eye on him by bringing him to the royal court (ch 9). Even when David commits adultery with Bathsheba and arranges for the death of her husband, it has been argued, David's repentance is exemplary and is immediately accepted (12.13). However, other readers point precisely to David's adultery and his inability to control his children as evidence that the Court History paints both David and the monarchy in a very negative light. It is fair to say that 2 Samuel

in its current form depicts David as a complex, highly ambiguous character who is nevertheless blessed by the LORD.

Characterization exemplified by deeds and speeches is even more significant in 2 Samuel than in 1 Samuel. The array of characters can bewilder new readers, so that keeping tabs on the identities of characters and their relationship to David can be useful. Minute, seemingly insignificant details in the narrative often signal points of ideological or literary significance beneath the surface. Readers do well to ask which characters—especially David—benefit from events that are reported and whether those characters may have been responsible for bringing them about. As in 1 Samuel, a narrative that "protests too much" may lead the critical reader to question whether apologetic interest has replaced historical accuracy. For example, David benefits from Abner's death (3.20–39), and the narrative's repeated assertion that David dismissed Abner in peace and knew nothing about Joab's plan to murder him may lead one to suspect that the narrator is trying to counter just such a charge and even to speculate that David had some role in Abner's death.

The final four chapters of 2 Samuel contain six passages arranged in symmetrical order: narrative, list, poem, poem, list, narrative. The list poem in (23.1–7) provides David's "last words," in the tradition of other leading biblical characters.

Steven L. McKenzie

1 After the death of Saul, when David had returned from defeating the Amalekites, David remained two days in Ziklag. **2** On the third day, a man came from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground and did obeisance. **3** David said to him, "Where have you come from?" He said to him, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel." **4** David said to him, "How did things go? Tell me!" He answered, "The army fled from the battle, but also many of the army fell and died; and Saul and his son Jonathan also died." **5** Then David asked the young man who was reporting to him, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan died?" **6** The young man reporting to him said, "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa; and there was Saul leaning on his spear, while the chariots and the horsemen drew close to him. **7** When he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. I answered, 'Here sir.' **8** And he said to me, 'Who are you?' I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.' **9** He said to me, 'Come, stand over me and kill me; for convulsions have seized me, and yet my life still lingers.' **10** So I stood over him, and killed him, for I knew that he could not live after he had fallen. I took the crown that was on his head and the armlet that was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord."

11 Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them; and all the men who were with him did the same. **12** They mourned and wept, and fasted until evening for Saul and for his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. **13** David said to the young man who had reported to him, "Where do you come from?" He answered, "I am the son of a resident alien, an Amalekite." **14** David said to him, "Were you not afraid to lift your

1.1–16: David learns of the death of Saul and Jonathan. Some scholars think this is a separate tradition of the account in 1 Sam 31, with which it disagrees. Alternatively, the man who brings the news to David changes the story for his own benefit. **1.2:** Tearing clothes and scattering dust on the head were conventional signs of mourning. *Fell to the ground and did obeisance,* prostrating oneself was a sign of submission to God or the king. **6:** *The young man*'s claim that he *happened to be on Mount Gilboa* in the heat of battle is probably a lie (see v. 10). **8:** *Amalekite,* David has just come from successfully pursuing Amalekites (1 Sam 30), who are depicted as scavengers. It is ironic that an Amalekite killed Saul, who (according to 1 Sam 15) lost his kingship because he did not kill off the Amalekites. The young man's Amalekite identity also makes it easy for David to order his execution (v. 15). **10:** The Amalekite stripped Saul's corpse and brought the *crown* and *armlet*, symbols of kingship, to David hoping for a reward. **12:** Fasting was another sign of mourning. **13–16:** As a *resident alien*, the Amalekite was subject to the same laws as an Israelite citizen, and therefore David holds him responsible for killing *the LORD's anointed.*

hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" [15] Then David called one of the young men and said, "Come here and strike him down." So he struck him down and he died. [16] David said to him, "Your blood be on your head; for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed.'"

[17] David intoned this lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan. [18] (He ordered that The Song of the Bow[a] be taught to the people of Judah; it is written in the Book of Jashar.) He said:

[19] Your glory, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places!
How the mighty have fallen!
[20] Tell it not in Gath,
proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice,
the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult.

[21] You mountains of Gilboa,
let there be no dew or rain upon you,
nor bounteous fields![b]
For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,
the shield of Saul, anointed with oil no more.

[22] From the blood of the slain,
from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan did not turn back,
nor the sword of Saul return empty.

[23] Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely!
In life and in death they were not divided;
they were swifter than eagles,
they were stronger than lions.

[24] O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
who clothed you with crimson, in luxury,
who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

[25] How the mighty have fallen
in the midst of the battle!

Jonathan lies slain upon your high places.
[26] I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
greatly beloved were you to me;
your love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women.

[27] How the mighty have fallen,
and the weapons of war perished!

2 After this David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" The LORD said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" He said, "To Hebron." [2] So David went up there, along with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. [3] David brought up the men who were with him, every one with his household; and they settled in the towns of Hebron. [4] Then the people of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

[a] Heb *that The Bow*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

1.17–27: David's elegy over Saul and Jonathan. Some scholars consider plausible the text's attribution of authorship to David himself. **18:** *Song of the Bow,* the Hebrew has simply "bow." If not a copyist's mistake, this may refer to a type of song or a title. *Book of Jashar,* a collection of poems no longer extant (see Josh 10.13). **19:** *Your glory,* an allusion to Saul and Jonathan. **20:** *Gath, Ashkelon,* Philistine cities. *Uncircumcised,* a disparaging term for the Philistines. **21:** *Mountains of Gilboa,* the site of the battle where Saul and Jonathan were killed. *Shield*s were made of leather and were *anointed with oil* to keep them battle-ready. **24:** Saul's reign brought prosperity to Israel. **26:** *Greatly beloved were you to me; your love for me was wonderful, passing the love of women* expresses the closeness of David's relationship to Jonathan, but does not necessarily imply a sexual relationship.

2.1–11: David becomes king of Judah. 1: *Inquired,* probably by means of the ephod and Urim and Thummim (1 Sam 14.3,41; 28.6; 30.7–8). *Hebron,* principal city of the Calebites (see Josh 14.13; Judg 1.20), the leading clan in Judah and also the traditional site of the tombs of Israel's ancestors (Gen 23.19; 25.9; 49.29–32). **2:** *Ahinoam of Jezreel, Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel,* see 1 Sam 25, esp. v. 43. Both women were from the Calebite region. Nabal had been a leading Calebite, and marriage to his wife strengthened David's claims to the throne of Judah. **4:** David's earlier gifts to the elders of Judah (1 Sam 30.26–31) further helped his bid to be their king. *Anointed,*

When they told David, "It was the people of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul," [5] David sent messengers to the people of Jabesh-gilead, and said to them, "May you be blessed by the LORD, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord, and buried him! [6] Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you! And I too will reward you because you have done this thing. [7] Therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

[8] But Abner son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, had taken Ishbaal[a] son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim. [9] He made him king over Gilead, the Ashurites, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, and over all Israel. [10] Ishbaal,[a] Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. [11] The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

[12] Abner son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbaal[a] son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. [13] Joab son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. One group sat on one side of the pool, while the other sat on the other side of the pool. [14] Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men come forward and have a contest before us." Joab said, "Let them come forward." [15] So they came forward and were counted as they passed by, twelve for Benjamin and Ishbaal[a] son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. [16] Each grasped his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim,[b] which is at Gibeon. [17] The battle was very fierce that day; and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten by the servants of David.

[18] The three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle. [19] Asahel pursued Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he followed him. [20] Then Abner looked back and said, "Is it you, Asahel?" He answered, "Yes, it is." [21] Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or to your left, and seize one of the young men, and take his spoil." But Asahel would not turn away from following him. [22] Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn away from following me; why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I show my face to your brother Joab?" [23] But he refused to turn away. So Abner struck him in the stomach with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back. He fell there, and died where he lay. And all those who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

[24] But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. As the sun was going down they came to the hill of Ammah, which lies before Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon. [25] The Benjaminites rallied around Abner and formed a single band; they took their stand on the top of a hill. [26] Then Abner called to Joab, "Is the sword to keep devouring for-

[a] Gk Compare 1 Chr 8.33; 9.39: Heb *Ish-bosheth,* "man of shame"

[b] That is *Field of Sword-edges*

see 1 Sam 10.1n. *Jabesh-gilead,* see 1 Sam 11; 31.11–13. **5–7:** In wooing Jabesh-gilead, David is seeking to win over the strongest enclave of support for Saul. His overture to Jabesh is likely what sparked the military response by Abner (v. 12). **8:** *Ishbaal* (Heb "Ish-bosheth"), pious scribes substituted the word "boshet," meaning "shame," for the name of the Canaanite god Baal. But Heb "baʿal" can also simply mean "lord" and might have been an epithet for Yahweh. The original form of the name, Ishbaal, is preserved in 1 Chr 8.33; 9.39 and in some early Greek translations. *Mahanaim* was east of the Jordan in Gilead. Abner was forced to go there because the Philistines controlled much of the territory west of the Jordan. **9:** This list of Ishbaal's domains is idealistic at best considering the Philistine domination. "Ashurites" should probably read "Geshurites." Geshur was the region north of Gilead. *Israel,* an ambiguous term that may or may not have included Judah. It is also anachronistic, reflecting a much later understanding of the tribes and territories in Israel, which may not have been included in Saul's kingdom, assuming that Saul was a historical figure.

2.12–32: War between Israel and Judah. 14–17: This contest, the exact nature of which is unclear, quickly turned to war. **18:** *Zeruiah,* David's sister, according to 1 Chr 2.16. **19–23:** Asahel's death provides the motive

ever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you order your people to turn from the pursuit of their kinsmen?" [27] Joab said, "As God lives, if you had not spoken, the people would have continued to pursue their kinsmen, not stopping until morning." [28] Joab sounded the trumpet and all the people stopped; they no longer pursued Israel or engaged in battle any further.

[29] Abner and his men traveled all that night through the Arabah; they crossed the Jordan, and, marching the whole forenoon,[a] they came to Mahanaim. [30] Joab returned from the pursuit of Abner; and when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing of David's servants nineteen men besides Asahel. [31] But the servants of David had killed of Benjamin three hundred sixty of Abner's men. [32] They took up Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was at Bethlehem. Joab and his men marched all night, and the day broke upon them at Hebron.

3 There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker.

[2] Sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel; [3] his second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur; [4] the fourth, Adonijah son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah son of Abital; [5] and the sixth, Ithream, of David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

[6] While there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul. [7] Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah daughter of Aiah. And Ishbaal[b] said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?" [8] The words of Ishbaal[c] made Abner very angry; he said, "Am I a dog's head for Judah? Today I keep showing loyalty to the house of your father Saul, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David; and yet you charge me now with a crime concerning this woman. [9] So may God do to Abner and so may he add to it! For just what the LORD has sworn to David, that will I accomplish for him, [10] to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beer-sheba." [11] And Ishbaal[b] could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

[12] Abner sent messengers to David at Hebron,[d] saying, "To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and I will give you my support to bring all Israel over to you." [13] He said, "Good; I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you: you shall never appear in my presence unless you bring Saul's daughter Michal when you come

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *And he*
[c] Gk Compare 1 Chr 8.33; 9.39: Heb *Ish-bosheth,* "man of shame"
[d] Gk: Heb *where he was*

for Joab's murder of Abner in 3.26–30. **29:** *Arabah,* the extensive rift valley of which the Jordan Valley is a part.

3.1–5: David's sons. 1: The suggestion that there was *a long war* indicates that Saul and his family had more popular support than Saul's negative depiction in the second half of 1 Samuel might imply. **2:** *Amnon,* see ch 13. *Ahinoam,* see 1 Sam 25.43; 2 Sam 2.2. **3:** Nothing more is known of *Chileab,* who apparently died young; in the LXX his name is Dalouia, and in 1 Chr 3.1 he is called Daniel. *Abigail,* see 1 Sam 25. *Absalom,* see chs 13–18. *Geshur,* see 2.9n. David's marriage to *Maacah* indicates that he had a political alliance with her father, *King Talmai.* **4–5:** *Adonijah,* see 1 Kings 1. *Shephatiah* and *Ithream* are mentioned only here and in 1 Chr 3.3.

3.6–39: Abner's death. 7: *Concubine,* a secondary wife. To sleep with a member of the royal harem was to claim the throne (see 16.21–22; 1 Kings 2.13–25). Hence, Ishbaal's question is tantamount to an accusation of treason. **8:** *Dog's head,* used only here in the Bible, this expression is obviously reproachful (cf. 9.8; 2 Kings 18.3). Abner does not deny Ishbaal's accusation but is contemptuous. Although the power is his (2.8–9), he has been loyal to Ishbaal. **10:** *From Dan to Beer-sheba,* the traditional northern and southern limits of Israel. **12:** Abner offers to join David and bring the army with him. The author thereby shows that David had no motive for killing Abner. **13:** David demands the return of *Saul's daughter Michal* because it is through her that he

to see me." [14] Then David sent messengers to Saul's son Ishbaal,[a] saying, "Give me my wife Michal, to whom I became engaged at the price of one hundred foreskins of the Philistines." [15] Ishbaal[a] sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. [16] But her husband went with her, weeping as he walked behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go back home!" So he went back.

[17] Abner sent word to the elders of Israel, saying, "For some time past you have been seeking David as king over you. [18] Now then bring it about; for the LORD has promised David: Through my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from all their enemies." [19] Abner also spoke directly to the Benjaminites; then Abner went to tell David at Hebron all that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin were ready to do.

[20] When Abner came with twenty men to David at Hebron, David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. [21] Abner said to David, "Let me go and rally all Israel to my lord the king, in order that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David dismissed Abner, and he went away in peace.

[22] Just then the servants of David arrived with Joab from a raid, bringing much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David at Hebron, for David[b] had dismissed him, and he had gone away in peace. [23] When Joab and all the army that was with him came, it was told Joab, "Abner son of Ner came to the king, and he has dismissed him, and he has gone away in peace." [24] Then Joab went to the king and said, "What have you done? Abner came to you; why did you dismiss him, so that he got away? [25] You know that Abner son of Ner came to deceive you, and to learn your comings and goings and to learn all that you are doing."

[26] When Joab came out from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah; but David did not know about it. [27] When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gateway to speak with him privately, and there he stabbed him in the stomach. So he died for shedding[c] the blood of Asahel, Joab's[d] brother. [28] Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, "I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD for the blood of Abner son of Ner. [29] May the guilt[e] fall on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge, or who is leprous,[f] or who holds a spindle, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks food!" [30] So Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

[31] Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourn over Abner." And King David followed the bier. [32] They buried Abner at Hebron. The king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. [33] The king lamented for Abner, saying,

[a] Heb *Ish-bosheth*
[b] Heb *he*
[c] Heb lacks *shedding*
[d] Heb *his*
[e] Heb *May it*
[f] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

claims a right to Saul's kingdom. **14:** See 1 Sam 18.20–29. **15:** It is not clear why *Ishbaal* returns Michal to David. Some scholars have suggested that he was under legal obligation. *Paltiel,* or Palti (1 Sam 25.44). **16:** Paltiel's emotional expression of love for his wife is unusual in the Bible. **17:** *The elders of Israel,* the tribal leaders. **18:** *The Philistines,* Israel's principal enemy in 1 Samuel, whose defeat of Saul (1 Sam 31) meant that they were still a problem for David, which he will resolve in 5.17–25; cf. 21.15–22. **19:** *Benjamin,* the tribe of both Saul and Abner; they would be the most reluctant to make David, a non-Benjaminite, king. **21:** *In peace,* repeated in the following verses; the writer emphasizes (perhaps too much) David's noninvolvement in Abner's death. **25:** *Comings and goings,* military maneuvers. Joab accuses Abner of spying. **26–27:** The writer stresses that Joab, seeking to avenge his brother (2.18–23), acted alone. Some have suggested that Joab also feared losing his position as army commander to Abner (see 19.13; 20.8–10). **29:** While David curses Joab, he does not now punish him (but see 1 Kings 2.5–6). *Spindle,* better "crutch." **30:** *Abishai* is not mentioned in the story but may have helped Joab plan Abner's murder. **31:** *Sackcloth,* material worn by mourners. **33:** *Fool* (Heb "nabal") recalls the story in 1 Sam 25.

"Should Abner die as a fool dies?
34 Your hands were not bound,
your feet were not fettered;
as one falls before the wicked
you have fallen."
And all the people wept over him again.
35 Then all the people came to persuade David to eat something while it was still day; but David swore, saying, "So may God do to me, and more, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun goes down!" 36 All the people took notice of it, and it pleased them; just as everything the king did pleased all the people. 37 So all the people and all Israel understood that day that the king had no part in the killing of Abner son of Ner. 38 And the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? 39 Today I am powerless, even though anointed king; these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too violent for me. The LORD pay back the one who does wickedly in accordance with his wickedness!"

4 When Saul's son Ishbaal[a] heard that Abner had died at Hebron, his courage failed, and all Israel was dismayed. 2 Saul's son had two captains of raiding bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab. They were sons of Rimmon a Benjaminite from Beeroth—for Beeroth is considered to belong to Benjamin. 3 (Now the people of Beeroth had fled to Gittaim and are there as resident aliens to this day).

4 Saul's son Jonathan had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled; and, in her haste to flee, it happened that he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.[b]

5 Now the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out, and about the heat of the day they came to the house of Ishbaal,[c] while he was taking his noonday rest. 6 They came inside the house as though to take wheat, and they struck him in the stomach; then Rechab and his brother Baanah escaped.[d] 7 Now they had come into the house while he was lying on his couch in his bedchamber; they attacked him, killed him, and beheaded him. Then they took his head and traveled by way of the Arabah all night long. 8 They brought the head of Ishbaal[c] to David at Hebron and said to the king, "Here is the head of Ishbaal,[c] son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life; the LORD has avenged my lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring."

9 David answered Rechab and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity, 10 when the one who told me, 'See, Saul is dead,' thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him at Ziklag—this was the reward I gave him for his news. 11 How much more then, when wicked men have killed a righteous man on his bed in his own house! And now shall I not require his blood at your hand, and destroy you from the earth?" 12 So David commanded the young men, and they killed them; they cut off their hands and feet, and hung their bodies beside the pool at Hebron. But the head of Ishbaal[c] they took and buried in the tomb of Abner at Hebron.

[a] Heb lacks *Ishbaal*
[b] In 1 Chr 8.34 and 9.40, *Merib-baal*
[c] Heb *Ish-bosheth*
[d] Meaning of Heb of verse 6 uncertain

35–39: These verses continue to stress (perhaps too strongly) David's lack of involvement in Abner's death. **35:** Fasting was a way of showing sadness and mourning.

4.1–12: The assassination of Ishbaal. Here too the author stresses that David was in no way involved in the death of his enemy. **3:** An explanation of how *Beeroth* came to be considered a Benjaminite city; the event referred to here is otherwise unknown. **4:** *Mephibosheth,* the original form of the name was Merib-baal (1 Chr 8.34; 9.40); cf. 2.8n. Mephibosheth's disability seems to have disqualified him from becoming king, and this is likely the reason that David did not have him executed with the rest of Saul's sons (21.7). **7:** *Arabah,* see 2.29n. **8:** The assassins bring Ishbaal's head to David, expecting a reward for killing his enemy. **9–10:** See 1.1–16. **11:** *A righteous man,* David does not recognize Ishbaal's kingship and therefore does not call him the LORD's anointed.

5 Then all the tribes of Israel came to
David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we
are your bone and flesh. 2 For some time,
while Saul was king over us, it was you who
led out Israel and brought it in. The LORD
said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd
of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler
over Israel." 3 So all the elders of Israel came
to the king at Hebron; and King David made
a covenant with them at Hebron before the
LORD, and they anointed David king over
Israel. 4 David was thirty years old when he
began to reign, and he reigned forty years.
5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven
years and six months; and at Jerusalem he
reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three
years.

6 The king and his men marched to Jeru-
salem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants
of the land, who said to David, "You will
not come in here, even the blind and the
lame will turn you back"—thinking, "David
cannot come in here." 7 Nevertheless David
took the stronghold of Zion, which is now
the city of David. 8 David had said on that
day, "Whoever would strike down the
Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to
attack the lame and the blind, those whom
David hates."[a] Therefore it is said, "The
blind and the lame shall not come into the
house." 9 David occupied the stronghold,
and named it the city of David. David built
the city all around from the Millo inward.
10 And David became greater and greater,
for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with
him.

11 King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to
David, along with cedar trees, and carpen-
ters and masons who built David a house.
12 David then perceived that the LORD had
established him king over Israel, and that he
had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his
people Israel.

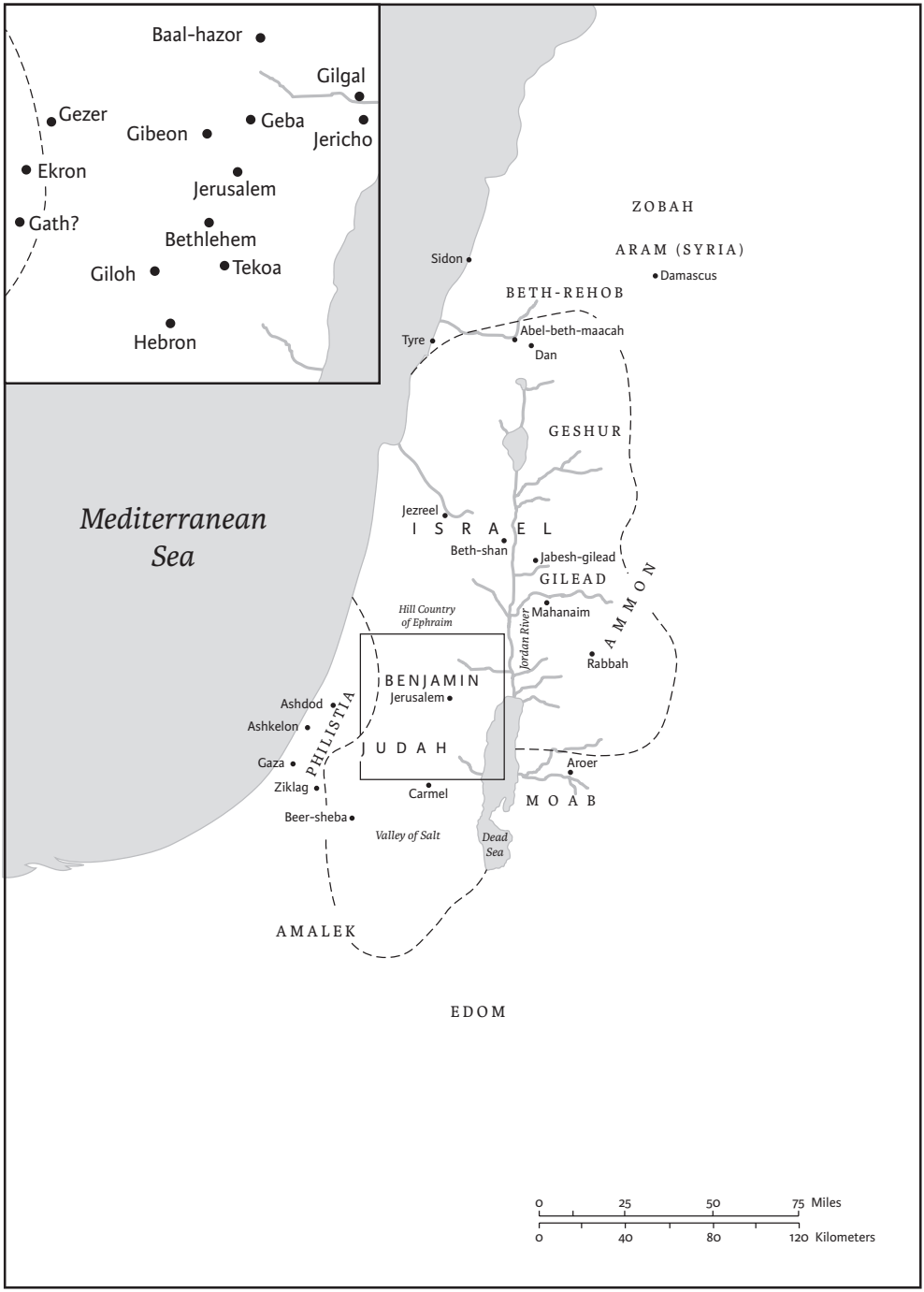
13 In Jerusalem, after he came from He-
bron, David took more concubines and wives;
and more sons and daughters were born to
David. 14 These are the names of those who
were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua,
Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, 15 Ibhar, Elishua,
Nepheg, Japhia, 16 Elishama, Eliada, and
Eliphelet.

17 When the Philistines heard that David
had been anointed king over Israel, all the
Philistines went up in search of David; but
David heard about it and went down to the
stronghold. 18 Now the Philistines had come
and spread out in the valley of Rephaim.

[a] Another reading is *those who hate David*

5.1–16: David becomes king of all Israel and conquers Jerusalem. Jerusalem's location between Israel and Judah was ideal for a neutral capital in David's effort to unite the two. **1:** *All the tribes of Israel,* the northern tribes, excluding Judah where David is already king (2.4). **2:** *Led out* and *brought . . . in* are idioms for military leadership. *Shepherd,* a common metaphor for kings. *Ruler,* "king designate" (translated "prince" in 7.8). **3:** *Elders,* senior tribal leaders. **4:** *Forty years,* a round number for a generation. The actual length of David's reign is not certain, but scholars have proposed ca. 1005–965 BCE. **6–8:** Exactly how David conquered Jerusalem is not clear. The parallel in 1 Chr 11.5–6 leaves out these verses, perhaps indicating that the Chronicler found them confusing. The account may be an etiology for the saying in v. 8. **6:** *Jebusites,* according to the Bible, one group of pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land; see, e.g., Gen 15.21; Ex 3.8. **7:** *Zion,* one of the hills on which Jerusalem stood; it becomes a name for the city as a whole. **8:** One scholar has argued that *get up the water shaft* means "strike at the wind pipe" so as to kill the enemy rather than leaving any wounded (blind and lame). The saying may refer to the prohibition reflected in Lev 21.18. **9:** *Millo,* meaning "fill," apparently refers to a terrace or artificial platform near the *stronghold.* **11:** *Tyre,* the capital of Phoenicia, northwest of Israel. *Cedar,* a luxury item for which Lebanon in Phoenician territory was renowned. **13–16:** A large harem was a sign of royal prestige. Marriages were also a way of sealing treaties with foreign powers. *Solomon* is born later (12.24); these verses are an anticipatory summary, suggesting that the material has been organized thematically rather than chronologically. A list of sons born to David in Hebron was given in 2 Sam 3.2–5.

5.17–25: War with the Philistines. 17: If historical, David's defeat of the Philistines (see 3.18n.) would have preceded his conquest of Jerusalem, since they stood between Hebron and Jerusalem and would have resisted the unification of Israel and Judah. *The stronghold,* probably Adullam (see 1 Sam 22.1), not Jerusalem. **18:** *The valley*



The kingdom of David according to Second Samuel. The dashed line shows the approximate boundary of the kingdom at its greatest extent.

19 David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?" The LORD said to David, "Go up; for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." 20 So David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. He said, "The LORD has burst forth against[a] my enemies before me, like a bursting flood." Therefore that place is called Baal-perazim.[b] 21 The Philistines abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them away.

22 Once again the Philistines came up, and were spread out in the valley of Rephaim. 23 When David inquired of the LORD, he said, "You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come upon them opposite the balsam trees. 24 When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then be on the alert; for then the LORD has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." 25 David did just as the LORD had commanded him; and he struck down the Philistines from Geba all the way to Gezer.

6 David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. 3 They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio,[c] the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart 4 with the ark of God;[d] and Ahio[c] went in front of the ark. 5 David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with songs[e] and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. 7 The anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there because he reached out his hand to the ark;[f] and he died there beside the ark of God. 8 David was angry because the LORD had burst forth with an outburst upon Uzzah; so that place is called Perez-uzzah,[g] to this day. 9 David was afraid of the LORD that day; he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come into my care?" 10 So David was unwilling to take the ark of the LORD into his care in the city of David; instead David took it to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 11 The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

12 It was told King David, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to

[a] Heb *paraz*
[b] That is *Lord of Bursting Forth*
[c] Or *and his brother*
[d] Compare Gk: Heb *and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill with the ark of God*
[e] Q Ms Gk 1 Chr 13.8: Heb *fir trees*
[f] 1 Chr 13.10 Compare Q Ms: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[g] That is *Bursting Out Against Uzzah*

of Rephaim, probably located southwest of Jerusalem. **19:** *David inquired,* see 2.1n. **20:** An etiology explaining the name *Baal-perazim* (see textual note *b*); Yahweh and Baal are here equated (see 2.8 n.). **21:** A victorious army typically captured the religious symbols that its opponent brought to the battlefield to show the superiority of its own gods; this is an ironic reversal of 1 Sam 4.5–11. **24:** The *sound of marching* is interpreted as the Divine Warrior—the LORD—coming out to fight on Israel's behalf. **25:** *From Geba* near Jerusalem *all the way to Gezer* near the border of Philistine territory.

6.1–23: David brings the ark to Jerusalem. This chapter is often taken to be the continuation of the "Ark Narrative"; see 1 Sam 4.1b–7.1n. **1:** *Thousand* probably designates a military unit of much smaller size; see 1 Sam 4.2n. **2:** *Baale-judah,* another name for Kiriath-jearim, according to Josh 15.9, where the ark was left in 1 Sam 7.1. The *ark of God* was viewed as the throne of the LORD. Having it in Jerusalem would make the city the religious as well as the political capital. *Cherubim,* mythical griffins that often guarded temples and palaces (see 1 Sam 4.4n.). **6–8:** *Uzzah*'s death shows the awesome holiness of the ark, which was not to be touched, except by priests even with the best intentions. The story is also an etiology explaining the name *Perez-uzzah* ("Uzzah's breach"). **10:** *Obed-edom the Gittite* (i.e., from Gath) was apparently among the Philistines who followed David from his

the city of David with rejoicing; [13] and when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. [14] David danced before the LORD with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. [15] So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

[16] As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

[17] They brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the LORD. [18] When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts, [19] and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat,[a] and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

[20] David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' maids, as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself!" [21] David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me in place of your father and all his household, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the LORD, that I have danced before the LORD. [22] I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in my own eyes; but by the maids of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor." [23] And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

7 Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, [2] the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." [3] Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

[4] But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: [5] Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to

[a] Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

days with Achish (1 Sam 27; 29). **13–14:** *He sacrificed,* David officiates as a priest here, which was not unusual for kings in the ancient Near East (8.18; 1 Kings 3.15; 9.25; Gen 14.18). His sacrifices are intended to placate the LORD in order to avoid another disaster. *Linen ephod,* an apron typically worn by priests (1 Sam 2.18). Apparently David is wearing little else (see v. 20). **19:** As part of the celebration David distributes food items to the people; the items named were probably rarities for most of them. **20:** Michal accuses David of fraternizing with the lowest element of society, implying that he is not dignified enough to be king. **21–22:** David replies that he has been humbling himself before the LORD and that the LORD was pleased enough with him to make him king in place of her father, Saul. **23:** *Michal . . . had no child,* probably because David had no relations with her since her children would have been Saul's heirs and potentially a threat to David's rule.

7.1–29: A dynasty for David. This chapter with the LORD's promise to David of an eternal dynasty is a key passage in the Deuteronomistic History, combining its central themes of Jerusalem as the divinely chosen center for worship and the Davidic line as the chosen dynasty in Judah. The chapter's major theme is the eternity of that dynasty, reflected in expressions for "forever" that occur eight times; scholars debate as to whether the term refers to eternity or a very long time period. In the broader context of the Deuteronomistic History, it explains Judah's survival in contrast to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE. It later provided a foundation for messianic hope for a new Davidic king. The language and style of the chapter are thoroughly Deuteronomistic, although many scholars think that one or more older oracles underlie vv. 1–7. This promise is reflected in various forms in the Deuteronomistic History and in Pss 89 and 132, as well as in Chronicles. Some of these texts temper the unconditional, eternal nature of the promise. **1:** *The LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him,* this statement is inconsistent with the accounts of David's wars in chs 8–20 and with 1 Kings 5.3–4, which say that rest came only to Solomon. It is also inconsistent with v. 11, which indicates that the "rest" lies in the future, and is not in the parallel in 1 Chr 17.1. **2:** *In a tent*, the tabernacle. **4–17:** The LORD's promise to David. **5–7:** The *house* (Heb "bayit") David proposes to build is a temple.

build me a house to live in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. 7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders[a] of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" 8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; 9 and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. 15 But I will not take[b] my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me;[c] your throne shall be established forever. 17 In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

18 Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? 19 And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD; you have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come. May this be instruction for the people,[d] O Lord GOD! 20 And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord GOD! 21 Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have wrought all this greatness, so that your servant may know it. 22 Therefore you are great, O LORD God; for there is no one like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23 Who is like your people, like Israel? Is there another[e] nation on earth whose God went to redeem it as a people, and to make a name for himself, doing great and awesome things for them,[f] by driving out[g] before his people nations and their gods?[h] 24 And you established your people Israel for yourself to be your people forever; and you, O LORD, became their God. 25 And now, O LORD God, as for the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, confirm it forever; do as you have promised. 26 Thus your name

[a] Or *any of the tribes*
[b] Gk Syr Vg 1 Chr 17.13: Heb *shall not depart*
[c] Gk Heb Mss: MT *before you;* Compare 2 Sam 7.26, 29
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Gk: Heb *one*
[f] Heb *you*
[g] Gk 1 Chr 17.21: Heb *for your land*
[h] Cn: Heb *before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, nations and its gods*

The LORD says instead (v. 11) that he will build David a house ("bayit"), that is, a dynasty. The claim in vv. 6–7 that the LORD has never had a *house* (i.e., temple) ignores or does not acknowledge the temple in Shiloh (1 Sam 1–3). **8:** *Following the sheep,* see 1 Sam 17.15, 34. Kings in the ancient Near East were often described as shepherds; see 24.17; 1 Chr 11.2; Ps 78.70; Isa 44.28. *Prince,* "king designate" (translated "ruler" in 5.2). **10:** *Place* (Heb "maqom") in Hebrew may mean a shrine or place of worship, here probably the Jerusalem Temple. (The second occurrence of "place " is a different Heb word.) **13:** David's son, Solomon, will build the Temple. **14:** *Father . . . son,* a king could be described as the (adopted) "son" of God; see, e.g., Pss 2.7; 89.26–27. **15:** *Steadfast love* (Heb "ḥesed"), another form of the promise; see Ps 89.1,24. **16:** Cf. 1 Sam 25.28. **18–29:** David's prayer to the LORD. Compare Solomon's prayers in 1 Kings 3.6–9 and 8.22–53. **23:** *Redeem . . . driving out* refer to the Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan; the language is Deuteronomistic. **24:** Cf. Ex 6.7; Deut 29.10–15.

will be magnified forever in the saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel'; and the house of your servant David will be established before you. 27 For you, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house'; therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. 28 And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant; 29 now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you; for you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever."

8 Some time afterward, David attacked the Philistines and subdued them; David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

2 He also defeated the Moabites and, making them lie down on the ground, measured them off with a cord; he measured two lengths of cord for those who were to be put to death, and one length[a] for those who were to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.

3 David also struck down King Hadadezer son of Rehob of Zobah, as he went to restore his monument[b] at the river Euphrates. 4 David took from him one thousand seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. David hamstrung all the chariot horses, but left enough for a hundred chariots. 5 When the Arameans of Damascus came to help King Hadadezer of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand men of the Arameans. 6 Then David put garrisons among the Arameans of Damascus; and the Arameans became servants to David and brought tribute. The LORD gave victory to David wherever he went. 7 David took the gold shields that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8 From Betah and from Berothai, towns of Hadadezer, King David took a great amount of bronze.

9 When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, 10 Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to greet him and to congratulate him because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him. Now Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi. Joram brought with him articles of silver, gold, and bronze; 11 these also King David dedicated to the LORD, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, 12 from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of King Hadadezer son of Rehob of Zobah.

13 David won a name for himself. When he returned, he killed eighteen thousand Edomites[c] in the Valley of Salt. 14 He put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

15 So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and equity to all his people. 16 Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; 17 Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Seraiah

[a] Heb *one full length*
[b] Compare 1 Sam 15.12 and 2 Sam 18.18
[c] Gk: Heb *returned from striking down eighteen thousand Arameans*

27–29: *Your servant,* a way of referring to oneself before a superior.

8.1–18: David's wars. 1: This verse represents David's decisive defeat of the Philistines, the archenemies of Saul. They never surface again as enemies during his reign. **2:** The *Moabites* lived east of the Dead Sea. **3:** *Zobah* was an Aramean (Syrian) city-state. *Restore* may also mean "leave," so that David, rather than Hadadezer, was traveling to the Euphrates to erect a monument. **4:** *Hamstrung,* David crippled the hind legs of the horses he could not use to keep someone else from using them against him (see Josh 11.6). Thus the Israelites are portrayed as not yet making extensive use of chariots. **5:** *Twenty-two thousand,* see 6.1n. **9:** *Hamath,* modern Hama, an important city-state in central Syria north of Zobah. **10:** *Joram* is an Israelite (Yahwistic) name; 1 Chr 18.18 calls him "Hadoram," an Aramaic name. **12:** *Edom,* east of the Jordan, south of Moab and, at times, Judah. The kingdom of Ammon was north of Moab, in the vicinity of the modern city of Amman, Jordan. **15:** It was viewed as the responsibility of kings in the ancient Near East to ensure the just and equitable treatment of all subjects, especially the poor and disadvantaged. **16–18:** Cf. the similar list of David's officials in 20.23–26. **17:** *Ahimelech son of Abiathar*

was secretary; [18] Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over[a] the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were priests.

9 David asked, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" [2] Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and he was summoned to David. The king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "At your service!" [3] The king said, "Is there anyone remaining of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?" Ziba said to the king, "There remains a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet." [4] The king said to him, "Where is he?" Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar." [5] Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. [6] Mephibosheth[b] son of Jonathan son of Saul came to David, and fell on his face and did obeisance. David said, "Mephibosheth!"[b] He answered, "I am your servant." [7] David said to him, "Do not be afraid, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan; I will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul, and you yourself shall eat at my table always." [8] He did obeisance and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon a dead dog such as I?"

[9] Then the king summoned Saul's servant Ziba, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. [10] You and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him, and shall bring in the produce, so that your master's grandson may have food to eat; but your master's grandson Mephibosheth[b] shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. [11] Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so your servant will do." Mephibosheth[b] ate at David's[c] table, like one of the king's sons. [12] Mephibosheth[b] had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's[d] servants. [13] Mephibosheth[b] lived in Jerusalem, for he always ate at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.

10 Some time afterward, the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun succeeded him. [2] David said, "I will deal loyally with Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father dealt loyally with me." So David sent envoys to console him concerning his father. When David's envoys came into the land of the Ammonites, [3] the princes of the Ammonites said to their lord Hanun, "Do you really think that David is honoring your father just because he has sent messengers with condolences to you? Has not David sent his envoys to you to search the city, to spy it out, and

[a] Syr Tg Vg 20.23; 1 Chr 18.17: Heb lacks *was over*
[b] Or M*erib-baal*: See 4.4 note
[c] Gk: Heb *my*
[d] Or M*erib-baal's*: See 4.4 note

should probably be changed to "Abiathar son of Ahimelech" as indicated in 20.25 and also throughout 2 Sam. **18:** *The Cherethites and the Pelethites,* perhaps "Cretans" and "Philistines" who composed the royal bodyguard (23.23), probably mercenaries. *David's sons were priests,* the restriction of priesthood to the Levites had apparently not yet arisen; see 6.13–14n.

9.1–13: Jonathan's son. 1: *Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul?* David's execution of Saul's sons and grandsons in 21.1–14 provides background to this question, and the story in 21.1–14 probably originally preceded ch 9. *Kindness* (Heb "ḥesed") is covenant faithfulness. David wants to keep the promise of loyalty he made to Jonathan (1 Sam 18.1–4; 20.14–17). **3:** *Crippled in his feet,* see 4.4. This disability made Mephibosheth unable to go to war and therefore unsuitable to be king. **4:** *Machir* became a loyal supporter of David (17.27). *Lo-debar,* a northern Israelite city east of the Jordan. **6:** *Fell on his face and did obeisance,* see 1.2n. *Mephibosheth,* the name was originally Merib-baal; see 4.4n. **7:** Eating at the king's *table* was a sign of favor. In this case it also allowed David to keep a close watch on Merib-baal, who was still heir to Saul's kingdom and therefore a potential rival (see 16.1–4; 19.24–30). **8:** *Dead dog,* a term of self-reproach (see 3.8n.). **9–13:** Merib-baal was to receive the income from Saul's lands, which Ziba and his family would work.

10.1–19: David defeats the Ammonites and Arameans. 2: *Nahash,* Saul's enemy in 1 Sam 10.27b–11.15. *Ammonites,* see 8.12n. *Deal loyally . . . dealt loyally,* indicate that David and Nahash had a treaty. *Hanun*'s actions in the following verses indicate that Israel was the superior partner in the treaty or that David was trying to

to overthrow it?" [4] So Hanun seized David's envoys, shaved off half the beard of each, cut off their garments in the middle at their hips, and sent them away. [5] When David was told, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. The king said, "Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return."

[6] When the Ammonites saw that they had become odious to David, the Ammonites sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, twenty thousand foot soldiers, as well as the king of Maacah, one thousand men, and the men of Tob, twelve thousand men. [7] When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army with the warriors. [8] The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the gate; but the Arameans of Zobah and of Rehob, and the men of Tob and Maacah, were by themselves in the open country.

[9] When Joab saw that the battle was set against him both in front and in the rear, he chose some of the picked men of Israel, and arrayed them against the Arameans; [10] the rest of his men he put in the charge of his brother Abishai, and he arrayed them against the Ammonites. [11] He said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. [12] Be strong, and let us be courageous for the sake of our people, and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what seems good to him." [13] So Joab and the people who were with him moved forward into battle against the Arameans; and they fled before him. [14] When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, and entered the city. Then Joab returned from fighting against the Ammonites, and came to Jerusalem.

[15] But when the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. [16] Hadadezer sent and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the Euphrates; and they came to Helam, with Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head. [17] When it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. The Arameans arrayed themselves against David and fought with him. [18] The Arameans fled before Israel; and David killed of the Arameans seven hundred chariot teams, and forty thousand horsemen,[a] and wounded Shobach the commander of their army, so that he died there. [19] When all the kings who were servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel, and became subject to them. So the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites any more.

11 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

[2] It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that

[a] 1 Chr 19.18 and some Gk Mss read *foot soldiers*

make Israel the superior partner, and Hanun resisted. **4:** *The beard* was a symbol of masculinity, and cutting off half of it was symbolic emasculation. Ancient Israelite and Judean men were typically bearded. Cutting off *their garments* below the waist was symbolic castration. **5:** *Jericho,* the closest Israelite city west of the Jordan opposite Ammon. **6:** *Beth-rehob, Zobah,* Aramean (Syrian) city-states. *Thousand,* see 6.1n. *Maacah, Tob,* small states in northern Transjordan. **8:** *The gate* of the city of Rabbah, capital of the Ammonites (see 11.1; 12.26). *Rehob,* another Aramean city-state. **12:** *The cities of our God* were the cities Israel claimed east of the Jordan. **18:** *Thousand,* see 6.1n.

11.1–27: David and Bathsheba. This story is artfully narrated. The writer leaves no doubt that David was in the wrong, but leaves the motives of the other characters unexplained so that the reader may suspect but cannot know for certain what each of the characters knows or when they know it. **1:** *In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle,* an alternate translation is: "A year after the kings had gone out to battle." The story is set a year after the events in ch 10, which was probably spring and the time when kings typically went to war after the rainy season. This does not necessarily mean, though, as some scholars claim, that David was obligated to go to war and that his failure to do so got him into trouble. **2:** *The roof of the king's house* was breezy and cool in the late afternoon, the ideal place for a nap. From there he was able to look down into the

he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. 3 David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." 4 So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. 5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

6 So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. 9 But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths;[a] and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, 13 David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

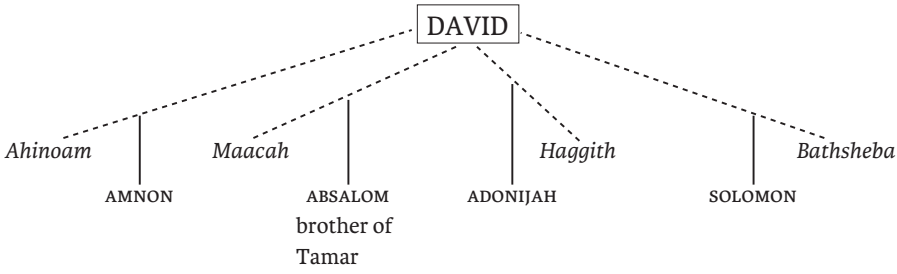
14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15 In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die." 16 As Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant warriors. 17 The men of the city came out and fought with Joab; and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite was killed as well. 18 Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting; 19 and he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling the king all the news about the fighting, 20 then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? 21 Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbaal?[b] Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too.' "

22 So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell.

[a] Or *at Succoth*

[b] Gk Syr Judg 7.1: Heb *Jerubbesheth*

courtyard of surrounding houses, where he saw the *woman bathing.* **3:** *Inquire about the woman,* David wants to know whether she is married; if not, he can add her to his harem. *Eliam,* perhaps the son of Ahithophel, David's adviser (see 23.34; 16.15–17.23). *Uriah,* one of the "thirty" best soldiers of David (23.39). Thus, Bathsheba was well-married and came from a distinguished family. The name "Uriah" is Israelite, but his epithet "the Hittite" indicated his non-Israelite heritage. He may have been a resident alien, a class whose rights kings were especially charged to guard. **4:** Bathsheba *was purifying herself after her period;* hence her bath (see Lev 15.19–28). She was at the most fertile time of her cycle when she slept with David. It is thus clear that David must be her child's father. **6–7:** It was unusual for a soldier to be called back from battle for a personal audience. Since David asked Uriah only the most general questions, Uriah may have thought he was being tested, which in turn motivated him to demonstrate his loyalty to David and the army in the following verses. Alternatively, he may have suspected David of trying to cover up something. The *people,* the army. **8:** *Wash your feet,* a euphemism for sexual intercourse. *Feet* can refer to the genitals (see Isa 6.2; 7.20). **9–13:** As a pious soldier consecrated for war (see 1 Sam 21.4), Uriah refuses to have sexual relations with his wife, even when David gets him drunk. **14:** David trusts Uriah's loyalty enough to send his death warrant by his own hand, knowing that Uriah, if he could read, would not open it. **16–17:** Joab sets Uriah in a dangerous place but does not have time to implement David's order fully. Uriah is killed along with other soldiers because of Joab's tactical error. **18–21:** Joab uses Uriah's death to cover up his mistake in allowing the troops to come too close to the city wall. **21:** *Abimelech son of Jerubbaal,* see Judg



The sons of David. According to 2 Sam 3.2–5 (see also 1 Chr 3.1–4) and 2 Sam 5.13–14 (1 Chr 3.5–9; 14.3–7), David had many children, at least twenty of whom are named. In the narrative of the struggle for succession in 2 Samuel 13–18 and 1 Kings 1–2, the principal sons in the order of their birth are: Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, and Solomon. Dashed lines show wives; solid lines show sons.

[23] The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us, and came out against us in the field; but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. [24] Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall; some of the king's servants are dead; and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." [25] David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another; press your attack on the city, and overthrow it.' And encourage him."

[26] When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. [27] When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

12 But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD, [1] and the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. [2] The rich man had very many flocks and herds; [3] but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. [4] Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him." [5] Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; [6] he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

[7] Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; [8] I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. [9] Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have

9.50–55. *An upper millstone,* a large stone used for grinding grain. **25:** David's attitude toward Joab changes when he learns of Uriah's death. **27b:** *David . . . displeased the* LORD, the author's moral condemnation links the account of David's offense in ch 11 with the judgment in ch 12.

12.1–25: David's punishment. 1–6: The prophet Nathan couches his parable as a legal case to get David to pronounce judgment on himself. As king he was responsible for protecting the rights of the poor. However, the vagueness of the case ("*Two men in a certain city*") hints that it is contrived by Nathan. *Fourfold* (v. 6), as prescribed in Ex 22.1; other textual witnesses have "sevenfold." **3:** Daughter, Heb "bat," hints at the name of Bathsheba. **8:** There is some textual support for reading "daughter" (Heb "bat") and "daughters" for the two occurrences of *house* (Heb "bayit" or "beyt") in this verse. "Daughter(s)" would fit the point that David had many wives, including Saul's harem and his daughter Michal, but like the rich man in Nathan's parable, he stole what

killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.
10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart
from your house, for you have despised me,
and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite
to be your wife. 11 Thus says the LORD: I will
raise up trouble against you from within your
own house; and I will take your wives before
your eyes, and give them to your neighbor,
and he shall lie with your wives in the sight
of this very sun. 12 For you did it secretly;
but I will do this thing before all Israel, and
before the sun." 13 David said to Nathan, "I
have sinned against the LORD." Nathan said to
David, "Now the LORD has put away your sin;
you shall not die. 14 Nevertheless, because by
this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD,[a]
the child that is born to you shall die." 15 Then
Nathan went to his house.

The LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife
bore to David, and it became very ill. 16 David
therefore pleaded with God for the child;
David fasted, and went in and lay all night
on the ground. 17 The elders of his house
stood beside him, urging him to rise from the
ground; but he would not, nor did he eat food
with them. 18 On the seventh day the child
died. And the servants of David were afraid to
tell him that the child was dead; for they said,
"While the child was still alive, we spoke to
him, and he did not listen to us; how then can
we tell him the child is dead? He may do him-
self some harm." 19 But when David saw that
his servants were whispering together, he
perceived that the child was dead; and David
said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They
said, "He is dead."

20 Then David rose from the ground,
washed, anointed himself, and changed his
clothes. He went into the house of the LORD,
and worshiped; he then went to his own
house; and when he asked, they set food
before him and he ate. 21 Then his servants
said to him, "What is this thing that you have
done? You fasted and wept for the child while
it was alive; but when the child died, you rose
and ate food." 22 He said, "While the child was
still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who
knows? The LORD may be gracious to me, and
the child may live.' 23 But now he is dead; why
should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I
shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

24 Then David consoled his wife Bathsheba,
and went to her, and lay with her; and she
bore a son, and he named him Solomon. The
LORD loved him, 25 and sent a message by the
prophet Nathan; so he named him Jedidiah,[b]
because of the LORD.

26 Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the
Ammonites, and took the royal city. 27 Joab
sent messengers to David, and said, "I have
fought against Rabbah; moreover, I have
taken the water city. 28 Now, then, gather
the rest of the people together, and encamp
against the city, and take it; or I myself will
take the city, and it will be called by my
name." 29 So David gathered all the people
together and went to Rabbah, and fought
against it and took it. 30 He took the crown of
Milcom[c] from his head; the weight of it was a
talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone;
and it was placed on David's head. He also
brought forth the spoil of the city, a very great
amount. 31 He brought out the people who
were in it, and set them to work with saws
and iron picks and iron axes, or sent them to

[a] Ancient scribal tradition: Compare 1 Sam 25.22 note: Heb *scorned the enemies of the LORD*
[b] That is *Beloved of the LORD*
[c] Gk See 1 Kings 11.5, 33: Heb *their kings*

belonged to his poor neighbor. **10:** *The sword,* a metaphor for violence, alluding to the events in chs 13–20. The persecution by *sword forever* recalls the promise of a dynasty lasting "forever" in ch. 7. **11–12:** An allusion to Absalom's future revolt, specifically his deed in 16.20–23. **13–18:** David's sin is transferred (not *put away*) to his newborn son, who dies because of it. This is a clear example of the application of intergenerational punishment by God (see Ex 20.5; 34.7; Deut 5.9), where the sin is perceived as property that may be inherited. **20:** *House of the LORD,* an anachronism, since the Temple in Jerusalem had not yet been built. **24–25:** *Solomon* means "his replacement"; he was a replacement for the dead child. *Jedidiah* ("beloved of Yahweh"), which does not occur elsewhere for Solomon, hints that he will replace David (whose name means "beloved") as king.

12.26–31: The conclusion of the Ammonite war. 26–29: Joab captured the citadel and the water supply of Rabbah, the Ammonite capital, so that conquering the rest of the city was fairly simple. This Joab left for David, as the king, to complete. **30:** *Milcom,* the national Ammonite god. *A talent,* about 75 lb (34 kg).

the brickworks. Thus he did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

13 Some time passed. David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; and David's son Amnon fell in love with her. [2] Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. [3] But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. [4] He said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." [5] Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, so that I may see it and eat it from her hand.' " [6] So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand."

[7] Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." [8] So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. [9] Then she took the pan and set them[a] out before him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. [10] Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, so that I may eat from your hand." So Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. [11] But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." [12] She answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile! [13] As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." [14] But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

[15] Then Amnon was seized with a very great loathing for her; indeed, his loathing was even greater than the lust he had felt for her. Amnon said to her, "Get out!" [16] But she said to him, "No, my brother;[b] for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. [17] He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my

[a] Heb *and poured*

[b] Cn Compare Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

13.1–39: The rape of Tamar and the murder of Amnon. In its current context, this and the following chapter reflect a measure-for-measure punishment of David. He appropriated Bathsheba and arranged for Uriah's death, so rape and death are unleashed against his house. Originally, though, this story may have been unconnected to the Bathsheba event and served to introduce Absalom's revolt. **1:** Tamar was Absalom's full *sister,* Amnon's half-sister. *Amnon* was David's oldest son and the crown prince. The next oldest had apparently died (perhaps as a child), leaving Absalom as second in line of succession to the throne (cf. 3.2–3). **2:** *It seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her,* as the king's virgin daughter Tamar may have been guarded. However, the verb translated "seemed impossible" might be translated "seemed wonderful." **6:** *Cakes,* the Heb word is derived from the word for "heart," indicating their shape and hinting at the erotic aspect of the story. **10:** *The chamber,* Amnon's bedroom where he is feigning illness. **11:** *My sister* not only reflects the kinship of Amnon to Tamar but is also a term of endearment and sexual desire in ancient love poetry (i.e., Song 4.9–10; 5.1). **12:** *Such a thing* may refer to incest or rape or both. *Anything so vile,* lit., "this foolishness"; the same word is used of sexual crimes in Gen 34.7; Deut 22.21; Judg 19.23. **13:** *He will not withhold me from you,* Tamar suggests that David would allow their marriage despite its incestuous nature. Perhaps she is just trying to buy time. **16:** Ex 22.16 and Deut 22.28–29 required marriage in such cases. Tamar may have such laws in mind when she says that in sending her away Amnon is committing a *greater* wrong than the rape itself. **17:** *This woman,* a contemptuous reference. The word "woman" is not in the Heb, so that it might be translated "this thing." Having robbed Tamar

presence, and bolt the door after her." 18 (Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times.[a]) So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her. 19 But Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe that she was wearing; she put her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.

20 Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar remained, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. 21 When King David heard of all these things, he became very angry, but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn.[b] 22 But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had raped his sister Tamar.

23 After two full years Absalom had sheepshearers at Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons. 24 Absalom came to the king, and said, "Your servant has sheepshearers; will the king and his servants please go with your servant?" 25 But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us not all go, or else we will be burdensome to you." He pressed him, but he would not go but gave him his blessing. 26 Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." The king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" 27 But Absalom pressed him until he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. Absalom made a feast like a king's feast.[c] 28 Then Absalom commanded his servants, "Watch when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then kill him. Do not be afraid; have I not myself commanded you? Be courageous and valiant." 29 So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons rose, and each mounted his mule and fled.

30 While they were on the way, the report came to David that Absalom had killed all the king's sons, and not one of them was left. 31 The king rose, tore his garments, and lay on the ground; and all his servants who were standing by tore their garments. 32 But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah, said, "Let not my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men the king's sons; Amnon alone is dead. This has been determined by Absalom from the day Amnon[d] raped his sister Tamar. 33 Now therefore, do not let my lord the king take it to heart, as if all the king's sons were dead; for Amnon alone is dead."

34 But Absalom fled. When the young man who kept watch looked up, he saw many people coming from the Horonaim road[e] by the side of the mountain. 35 Jonadab said to the king, "See, the king's sons have come; as your servant said, so it has come about." 36 As soon as he had finished speaking, the king's sons arrived, and raised their voices and wept; and the king and all his servants also wept very bitterly.

[a] Cn: Heb *were clothed in robes*
[b] Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *but he would not punish . . . firstborn*
[c] Gk Compare Q Ms: MT lacks *Absalom made a feast like a king's feast*
[d] Heb *he*
[e] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *the road behind him*

of her virginity, Amnon deprives her of her identity as well. **18:** *A long robe with sleeves,* used also for Joseph's garment in Gen 37.3; the exact nature of this garment is unknown. **19:** Putting *ashes* on the head and tearing clothes were signs of grief, though Tamar may also have torn *the long robe* worn by the king's virgin daughters because it was no longer appropriate. **20:** *Desolate,* because she is unmarried and childless. **21:** *Because he loved him* may be the writer's way of assuring the reader that David had nothing to do with Amnon's death. **22:** *Neither good nor bad* means not at all. **23:** Sheepshearing was a time of celebration. **24–25:** In light of what follows, Absalom's invitation to David makes the reader wonder whether he already intended to kill his father and assume the throne. **27:** The *feast* was a drinking bout, as indicated by the word's etymology and the next verse. **29:** David and his sons rode on *mules*, a royal mount (18.9; 1 Kings 1.33). **30–33:** David initially thought that Absalom had killed all the king's sons, which would make sense if he were attempting a coup. But his intention at this point is purely revenge against Amnon. *Jonadab* appears as a false friend to Amnon (cf. vv. 3–5). **36:** *The king . . . wept very bitterly,* David's great love for Amnon and his noninvolvement in Amnon's death are stressed.

37 But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai
son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. David
mourned for his son day after day. 38 Absa-
lom, having fled to Geshur, stayed there three
years. 39 And the heart of [a] the king went out,
yearning for Absalom; for he was now con-
soled over the death of Amnon.

14 Now Joab son of Zeruiah perceived
that the king's mind was on Absalom.
2 Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there
a wise woman. He said to her, "Pretend to be
a mourner; put on mourning garments, do
not anoint yourself with oil, but behave like
a woman who has been mourning many days
for the dead. 3 Go to the king and speak to
him as follows." And Joab put the words into
her mouth.

4 When the woman of Tekoa came to the
king, she fell on her face to the ground and
did obeisance, and said, "Help, O king!" 5 The
king asked her, "What is your trouble?" She
answered, "Alas, I am a widow; my husband
is dead. 6 Your servant had two sons, and they
fought with one another in the field; there
was no one to part them, and one struck the
other and killed him. 7 Now the whole family
has risen against your servant. They say, 'Give
up the man who struck his brother, so that
we may kill him for the life of his brother
whom he murdered, even if we destroy the
heir as well.' Thus they would quench my one
remaining ember, and leave to my husband
neither name nor remnant on the face of the
earth."

8 Then the king said to the woman, "Go to
your house, and I will give orders concerning
you." 9 The woman of Tekoa said to the king,
"On me be the guilt, my lord the king, and on
my father's house; let the king and his throne
be guiltless." 10 The king said, "If anyone says
anything to you, bring him to me, and he
shall never touch you again." 11 Then she said,
"Please, may the king keep the LORD your God
in mind, so that the avenger of blood may kill
no more, and my son not be destroyed." He
said, "As the LORD lives, not one hair of your
son shall fall to the ground."

12 Then the woman said, "Please let your
servant speak a word to my lord the king."
He said, "Speak." 13 The woman said, "Why
then have you planned such a thing against
the people of God? For in giving this deci-
sion the king convicts himself, inasmuch
as the king does not bring his banished one
home again. 14 We must all die; we are like
water spilled on the ground, which can-
not be gathered up. But God will not take
away a life; he will devise plans so as not to
keep an outcast banished forever from his
presence.[b] 15 Now I have come to say this to
my lord the king because the people have

[a] Q Ms Gk: MT *And David*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

37: *Talmai . . . king of Geshur,* Absalom's maternal grandfather with whom David apparently has a treaty (see 2.9n.). **39:** *And the heart of the king went out, yearning for Absalom,* better: "The king's spirit for marching out against Absalom was exhausted." David did not yearn for Absalom but was tired of going out after him. This fits with his reluctance in the next chapter to allow Absalom back into his presence.

14.1–33: Absalom's return. 1: *The king's mind was on Absalom* does not mean that David was now favorably inclined toward Absalom, as this story makes clear; see 13.39n. **2:** *Tekoa,* a village south of Bethlehem (see Am 1.1). Perhaps David took an interest in this case because the woman was from his home territory. *Wise* in the Hebrew Bible often means skilled as well as clever (see Ex 28.3). This woman was a skilled actress. **4:** *Fell . . . to the ground and did obeisance,* see 1.2n. **5–7:** As in ch 12, a fictional legal case is presented to David in order to get him to pronounce judgment on a matter concerning himself; in both cases David does not catch on until it is too late. *Two sons* (v. 6), one of whom kills the other, like Amnon and Absalom. *Leave to my husband neither name nor remnant* (v. 7), this part of the woman's case, not paralleled in David's family since he has many other sons, is crucial to her argument, yet does not figure into David's decision or the outcome of the story. **8–11:** David grants the woman's request and swears by the LORD that her one remaining son will not be harmed. The woman will urge David to apply this oath to his situation with Absalom. Since David's ruling is contrary to the customary punishment, the woman accepts any guilt that David may incur (v. 9). *Avenger of blood,* one charged with taking vengeance for the death of a relative. **13:** *The woman* now applies David's decree to the situation with Absalom. It is not clear how David's refusal to bring Absalom back is *a thing against the people of God.* **14:** Amnon is dead and cannot be brought to life again, but David can accept Absalom, who is still alive. **15–17:** These verses seem

made me afraid; your servant thought, 'I will speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his servant. 16 For the king will hear, and deliver his servant from the hand of the man who would cut both me and my son off from the heritage of God.' 17 Your servant thought, 'The word of my lord the king will set me at rest'; for my lord the king is like the angel of God, discerning good and evil. The LORD your God be with you!"

18 Then the king answered the woman, "Do not withhold from me anything I ask you." The woman said, "Let my lord the king speak." 19 The king said, "Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?" The woman answered and said, "As surely as you live, my lord the king, one cannot turn right or left from anything that my lord the king has said. For it was your servant Joab who commanded me; it was he who put all these words into the mouth of your servant. 20 In order to change the course of affairs your servant Joab did this. But my lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth."

21 Then the king said to Joab, "Very well, I grant this; go, bring back the young man Absalom." 22 Joab prostrated himself with his face to the ground and did obeisance, and blessed the king; and Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord the king, in that the king has granted the request of his servant." 23 So Joab set off, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. 24 The king said, "Let him go to his own house; he is not to come into my presence." So Absalom went to his own house, and did not come into the king's presence.

25 Now in all Israel there was no one to be praised so much for his beauty as Absalom; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. 26 When he cut the hair of his head (for at the end of every year he used to cut it; when it was heavy on him, he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head, two hundred shekels by the king's weight. 27 There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman.

28 So Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, without coming into the king's presence. 29 Then Absalom sent for Joab to send him to the king; but Joab would not come to him. He sent a second time, but Joab would not come. 30 Then he said to his servants, "Look, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire. 31 Then Joab rose and went to Absalom at his house, and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" 32 Absalom answered Joab, "Look, I sent word to you: Come here, that I may send you to the king with the question, 'Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still.' Now let me go into the king's presence; if there is guilt in me, let him kill me!" 33 Then Joab went to the king and told him; and he summoned Absalom. So he came to the king and prostrated himself with his face to the ground before the king; and the king kissed Absalom.

15 After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run ahead of him. 2 Absalom used to rise

out of place and may originally have come after v. 7. The woman continues to plead for her son, but David has already rendered his decision. *The man who would cut both me and my son off,* the avenger of blood (see v. 11). *The heritage of God,* the land of Israel and its people. **17:** *Angel of God,* here and in v. 20 the expression alludes to wisdom. The same is likely true of 19.27. But see also 1 Sam 29.9. **19:** *Your servant,* a polite form of self-reference. **21–24:** David allows Absalom to return but refuses to see him personally. **25:** Good looks were a desirable quality for a king; cf. 1 Sam 9.2; 16.18. **26:** *Two hundred shekels,* ca. 5 lb (2.3 kg), an extraordinary amount of hair. The reference to his hair foreshadows Absalom's mode of death (18.9–15). **27:** Absalom named his daughter after his sister, *Tamar* (ch 13). The reference to his three sons is contradicted in 18.18, where he says he had no son. **28–33:** This episode further shows Absalom's violent nature and suggests that Joab may have held a grudge against him. *The king kissed Absalom,* a gesture of recognition and reconciliation, performed only after Absalom did his obeisance to David. This subservience, however, did not last long.

15.1–12: Absalom revolts. 1: *Chariot and horses, and fifty men to run ahead,* parts of the king's entourage (1 Kings 1.5). The fifty men were probably a royal bodyguard. Absalom is making a claim to be king. **2:** *When*

early and stand beside the road into the gate; and when anyone brought a suit before the king for judgment, Absalom would call out and say, "From what city are you?" When the person said, "Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel," 3 Absalom would say, "See, your claims are good and right; but there is no one deputed by the king to hear you." 4 Absalom said moreover, "If only I were judge in the land! Then all who had a suit or cause might come to me, and I would give them justice." 5 Whenever people came near to do obeisance to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of them, and kiss them. 6 Thus Absalom did to every Israelite who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel.

7 At the end of four[a] years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go to Hebron and pay the vow that I have made to the LORD. 8 For your servant made a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram: If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will worship the LORD in Hebron."[b] 9 The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he got up, and went to Hebron. 10 But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then shout: Absalom has become king at Hebron!" 11 Two hundred men from Jerusalem went with Absalom; they were invited guests, and they went in their innocence, knowing nothing of the matter. 12 While Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for[c] Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. The conspiracy grew in strength, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

13 A messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the Israelites have gone after Absalom." 14 Then David said to all his officials who were with him at Jerusalem, "Get up! Let us flee, or there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Hurry, or he will soon overtake us, and bring disaster down upon us, and attack the city with the edge of the sword." 15 The king's officials said to the king, "Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king decides." 16 So the king left, followed by all his household, except ten concubines whom he left behind to look after the house. 17 The king left, followed by all the people; and they stopped at the last house. 18 All his officials passed by him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king.

19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also coming with us? Go back, and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner, and also an exile from your home. 20 You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, while I go wherever I can? Go back, and take your kinsfolk with you; and may the LORD show[d] steadfast

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *forty*
[b] Gk Mss: Heb lacks *in Hebron*
[c] Or *he sent*
[d] Gk Compare 2.6: Heb lacks *may the LORD show*

anyone brought a suit before the king for judgment, one of the king's roles in the ancient world was to serve as a judge in special cases. David may have been weak in this role, and Absalom took advantage. **5:** *Do obeisance to him,* the proper attitude before a king, but Absalom presented himself as a man of the people. **6:** *Stole the hearts* or "deceived" (cf. Gen 31.20). **7–10:** Absalom has made a vow to worship at the local shrine of *the LORD in Hebron* (v. 8) and must go there to fulfill it. But he has ulterior motives for choosing Hebron: he is deliberately recalling his father's rise by declaring himself king in Hebron, the capital of Judah, where David had been made king of both Judah and Israel and had ruled Judah for seven years (5.1–7). Absalom probably found supporters in Hebron among those discontent that David had moved the capital. His revolt, however, spread *throughout all the tribes of Israel* (v. 10). *Geshur in Aram* (v. 8), where Absalom fled after killing Amnon (13.37–39). **12:** *Ahithophel* was renowned as *David's counselor* (see 16.15–23). His presence with Absalom meant that *the conspiracy grew in strength.*

15.13–16.14: David flees Jerusalem. 15.13: *Israelites,* perhaps only the residents of the north. But since Absalom began the revolt in Hebron, it has now spread through the entire country. **16:** *Concubines,* see 3.7n. **17:** *The last house,* on the outskirts of Jerusalem. **18:** *Cherethites* and *Pelethites,* see 8.18n. *Gittites,* Philistines from Gath. All these groups had followed David from his days with the Philistines (1 Sam 27; 29). **19:** *Ittai,* commander of the Gittites. **20:** *Yesterday,* better, "recently." David is amazed that these Philistines who only recently joined him are

love and faithfulness to you." 21 But Ittai answered the king, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be." 22 David said to Ittai, "Go then, march on." So Ittai the Gittite marched on, with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. 23 The whole country wept aloud as all the people passed by; the king crossed the Wadi Kidron, and all the people moved on toward the wilderness.

24 Abiathar came up, and Zadok also, with all the Levites, carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, until the people had all passed out of the city. 25 Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and the place where it stays. 26 But if he says, 'I take no pleasure in you,' here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him." 27 The king also said to the priest Zadok, "Look,[a] go back to the city in peace, you and Abiathar,[b] with your two sons, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan son of Abiathar. 28 See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." 29 So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there.

30 But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, with his head covered and walking barefoot; and all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went. 31 David was told that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, "O LORD, I pray you, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

32 When David came to the summit, where God was worshiped, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and earth on his head. 33 David said to him, "If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. 34 But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so now I will be your servant,' then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel. 35 The priests Zadok and Abiathar will be with you there. So whatever you hear from the king's house, tell it to the priests Zadok and Abiathar. 36 Their two sons are with them there, Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan; and by them you shall report to me everything you hear." 37 So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

16 When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth[c] met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, carrying two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred bunches of raisins, one hundred of summer fruits, and one skin of wine. 2 The king said to Ziba, "Why have you brought these?" Ziba answered, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine is for those to drink who faint in the wilderness." 3 The king said, "And where is your master's son?" Ziba said to the king, "He remains in Jerusalem; for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will give me back my grandfather's kingdom.'" 4 Then

[a] Gk: Heb *Are you a seer* or *Do you see?*
[b] Cn: Heb lacks *and Abiathar*
[c] Or *Merib-baal:* See 4.4 note

more loyal than his own people. **21:** It is striking that Ittai, a Philistine, swears by the LORD (Yahweh) the God of Israel. **23:** *The Wadi Kidron,* the valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. David heads east toward the Jordan River. **24:** *Abiathar* and *Zadok,* David's two priests. **25–29:** David leaves the ark behind to make sure it is properly cared for, something he cannot do on the run. Besides, the priests could serve as David's spies in Jerusalem. **30:** *His head covered and walking barefoot,* conventional signs of mourning. **31–37:** David was disheartened to learn that his wise adviser, Ahithophel (see 16.23), had joined Absalom. As he walked up the Mount of Olives (v. 31), he prayed for help against Ahithophel. His prayer was answered at the *summit* when he met Hushai, who would help him defeat Ahithophel's advice. *Where God was worshiped* (v. 32), a shrine at the top of the Mount of Olives; such "high places" are outlawed in the Deuteronomistic History once the Temple is built. **37:** *David's friend* (v. 37), perhaps a title for an intimate adviser. **16.2:** *Young men,* soldiers. **3–4:** *Your master's son,* Merib-baal (Mephibosheth), Saul's grandson (see ch 9). Ziba claims that Merib-baal is planning to take over his grandfather's place as king. But Ziba may be lying (19.24–30). David rewards Ziba by giving him Saul's property;

the king said to Ziba, "All that belonged to Mephibosheth[a] is now yours." Ziba said, "I do obeisance; let me find favor in your sight, my lord the king."

5 When King David came to Bahurim, a man of the family of the house of Saul came out whose name was Shimei son of Gera; he came out cursing. 6 He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; now all the people and all the warriors were on his right and on his left. 7 Shimei shouted while he cursed, "Out! Out! Murderer! Scoundrel! 8 The LORD has avenged on all of you the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, disaster has overtaken you; for you are a man of blood."

9 Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head." 10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David,' who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?' " 11 David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "My own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD has bidden him. 12 It may be that the LORD will look on my distress,[b] and the LORD will repay me with good for this cursing of me today." 13 So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, throwing stones and flinging dust at him. 14 The king and all the people who were with him arrived weary at the Jordan;[c] and there he refreshed himself.

15 Now Absalom and all the Israelites[d] came to Jerusalem; Ahithophel was with him. 16 When Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!" 17 Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?" 18 Hushai said to Absalom, "No; but the one whom the LORD and this people and all the Israelites have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain. 19 Moreover, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? Just as I have served your father, so I will serve you."

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give us your counsel; what shall we do?" 21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, the ones he has left to look after the house; and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened." 22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom upon the roof; and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. 23 Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the oracle[e] of God; so all the counsel of Ahithophel was esteemed, both by David and by Absalom.

[a] Or *Merib-baal:* See 4.4 note
[b] Gk Vg: Heb *iniquity*
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *at the Jordan*
[d] Gk: Heb *all the people, the men of Israel*
[e] Heb *word*

it is unclear if David has the legal right to do this. **5:** *Shimei* belonged not only to Saul's tribe (Benjamin) but also to his *family* or clan. **6–8:** Shimei accused David of murdering members of Saul's family and usurping the throne. This indicates that David's execution of Saul's sons and grandsons (21.1–14) preceded Absalom's revolt. **9–10:** *Abishai,* the brother of Joab and Asahel (see 2.18–23). Called the *sons of Zeruiah* (David's sister) in 2 Samuel and portrayed as violent men in contrast to gentle David. *Dead dog,* see 3.8n.; 9.8n. **11:** *This Benjaminite,* a demeaning reference to Shimei.

16.15–17.29: Overcoming Ahithophel. 16.16: *David's friend,* see 15.37n. *Long live the king,* the utterance is duplicitous; for Hushai, David is still king. **18:** *The one whom the LORD and this people and all the Israelites have chosen,* again, Hushai means David. **19:** Hushai's duplicity continues. *Should it not be his son?* For Hushai, the answer is no. *Just as I have served your father, so I will serve you,* Hushai is saying that by serving Absalom he is actually serving David. In all cases (vv. 16–19), Absalom is unaware of Hushai's true meaning. **20–22:** By having relations with David's concubines, Absalom makes his claim to kingship emphatic (see 3.7n.). He also fulfills Nathan's prophecy (12.12), which was likely written with Absalom's act in view. **23:** *Ahithophel* may have been Bathsheba's grandfather (cf. 11.3 and 23.34) and may have held a grudge against David for his treatment of Bathsheba and

17 Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will set out and pursue David tonight. 2 I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged, and throw him into a panic; and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king, 3 and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man,[a] and all the people will be at peace." 4 The advice pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

5 Then Absalom said, "Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear too what he has to say." 6 When Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, "This is what Ahithophel has said; shall we do as he advises? If not, you tell us." 7 Then Hushai said to Absalom, "This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good." 8 Hushai continued, "You know that your father and his men are warriors, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the troops. 9 Even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits, or in some other place. And when some of our troops[b] fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.' 10 Then even the valiant warrior, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear; for all Israel knows that your father is a warrior, and that those who are with him are valiant warriors. 11 But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beer-sheba, like the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. 12 So we shall come upon him in whatever place he may be found, and we shall light on him as the dew falls on the ground; and he will not survive, nor will any of those with him. 13 If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there." 14 Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring ruin on Absalom.

15 Then Hushai said to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, "Thus and so did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and so I have counseled. 16 Therefore send quickly and tell David, 'Do not lodge tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means cross over; otherwise the king and all the people who are with him will be swallowed up.' " 17 Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel; a servant-girl used to go and tell them, and they would go and tell King David; for they could not risk being seen entering the city. 18 But a boy saw them, and told Absalom; so both of them went away quickly, and came to the house of a man at Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard; and they went down into it. 19 The man's wife took a covering, stretched it over the well's mouth, and spread out grain on it; and nothing was known of it. 20 When Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" The woman said to them, "They have crossed over the brook[c] of water." And when they had searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

[a] Gk: Heb *like the return of the whole (is) the man whom you seek*
[b] Gk Mss: Heb *some of them*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

Uriah. **17.1–4:** *Ahithophel's* sensible advice is to attack while David's forces are weak from fleeing. Once David is dead, he says, all who followed him will turn to Absalom. **1:** *Thousand,* see 6.1n. **5–14:** *Hushai* says that David will not be so easy to find or his troops so easy to defeat (vv. 8–10). He advises Absalom to wait, gather the full force of Israel, then attack (vv. 11–13). Hushai is trying to buy time for David to reorganize his forces. Hushai also plays on Absalom's ego, saying that all the people will follow him, and he can lead them into battle (v. 12). Even though Ahithophel's advice is better than Hushai's *the LORD had ordained* that Absalom would be persuaded to follow Hushai. **15:** *Hushai* sends word to David through *the priests Zadok and Abiathar* and their sons (see 15.24–29). **16:** Hushai has bought David some time but urges him to cross the Jordan quickly and escape. **17:** *Jonathan and Ahimaaz*, the sons of Zadok and Abiathar. En-rogel, "the spring of the fuller," in the Kidron Valley south of Jerusalem; a "fuller" prepared cloth by treading on it when it was wet. **18–19:** *Well,* a simple pit whose

21 After they had gone, the men came up
out of the well, and went and told King David.
They said to David, "Go and cross the water
quickly; for thus and so has Ahithophel
counseled against you." 22 So David and all
the people who were with him set out and
crossed the Jordan; by daybreak not one was
left who had not crossed the Jordan.

23 When Ahithophel saw that his counsel
was not followed, he saddled his donkey and
went off home to his own city. He set his
house in order, and hanged himself; he died
and was buried in the tomb of his father.

24 Then David came to Mahanaim, while
Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men
of Israel. 25 Now Absalom had set Amasa over
the army in the place of Joab. Amasa was the
son of a man named Ithra the Ishmaelite,[a]
who had married Abigal daughter of Na-
hash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26 The
Israelites and Absalom encamped in the land
of Gilead.

27 When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi
son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Am-
monites, and Machir son of Ammiel from
Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from
Rogelim, 28 brought beds, basins, and earthen
vessels, wheat, barley, meal, parched grain,
beans and lentils,[b] 29 honey and curds, sheep,
and cheese from the herd, for David and the
people with him to eat; for they said, "The
troops are hungry and weary and thirsty in
the wilderness."

18 Then David mustered the men who
were with him, and set over them com-
manders of thousands and commanders of
hundreds. 2 And David divided the army into
three groups:[c] one third under the command
of Joab, one third under the command of
Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and
one third under the command of Ittai the
Gittite. The king said to the men, "I myself
will also go out with you." 3 But the men said,
"You shall not go out. For if we flee, they
will not care about us. If half of us die, they
will not care about us. But you are worth ten
thousand of us;[d] therefore it is better that you
send us help from the city." 4 The king said to
them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do."
So the king stood at the side of the gate, while
all the army marched out by hundreds and
by thousands. 5 The king ordered Joab and
Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my
sake with the young man Absalom." And all
the people heard when the king gave orders
to all the commanders concerning Absalom.

6 So the army went out into the field
against Israel; and the battle was fought in
the forest of Ephraim. 7 The men of Israel
were defeated there by the servants of David,
and the slaughter there was great on that day,
twenty thousand men. 8 The battle spread
over the face of all the country; and the for-
est claimed more victims that day than the
sword.

9 Absalom happened to meet the servants
of David. Absalom was riding on his mule,
and the mule went under the thick branches

[a] 1 Chr 2.17: Heb *Israelite*
[b] Heb *and lentils and parched grain*
[c] Gk: Heb *sent forth the army*
[d] Gk Vg Symmachus: Heb *for now there are ten thousand such as we*

opening could be covered with a blanket and *grain* spread over it for camouflage. **23:** *Ahithophel . . . hanged himself,* perhaps because he knew that the end of Absalom's reign was imminent. There is no stigma associated with suicide in the Bible; see 1 Sam 31.5n. **24:** *Mahanaim,* the site east of the Jordan where Abner had conducted Ishbaal after making him king (2.8); it was easily defensible. **25:** *Amasa,* David's nephew, the son of his sister *Zeruiah* (see 1 Chr 2.16). Zeruiah is called the daughter of *Nahash* here rather than the daughter of Jesse. This may be a scribal error (note that Nahash occurs in v. 27), or *Abigal* may have been David's half-sister. **27:** *Nahash,* the Ammonite king with whom David had a treaty (10.1–2). His son, *Shobi,* loyal to the treaty, now helps David in exile. *Machir,* see 9.4.

18.1–19.10: The defeat and death of Absalom. 18.3: *You shall not go out,* cf. 21.15–17. **5:** Through David's order concerning Absalom, the writer shows that David was not responsible for Absalom's death. **6–8:** David chooses the rugged *forest of Ephraim* as the battle site, thereby countering the larger numbers of Absalom's army. The location of the forest of Ephraim is unknown. The story is set east of the Jordan, but the territory of Ephraim was west of the Jordan. This is another benefit afforded him by the delay that Hushai achieved. **9:** *Mule,* see 13.29n. Thus, Absalom's unseating from the mule symbolizes his loss of the kingdom. His being caught by the

of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging[a] between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. 10 A man saw it, and told Joab, "I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." 11 Joab said to the man who told him, "What, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have been glad to give you ten pieces of silver and a belt." 12 But the man said to Joab, "Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not raise my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying: For my sake protect the young man Absalom! 13 On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life[b] (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof." 14 Joab said, "I will not waste time like this with you." He took three spears in his hand, and thrust them into the heart of Absalom, while he was still alive in the oak. 15 And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him.

16 Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops came back from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the troops. 17 They took Absalom, threw him into a great pit in the forest, and raised over him a very great heap of stones. Meanwhile all the Israelites fled to their homes. 18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar that is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance"; he called the pillar by his own name. It is called Absalom's Monument to this day.

19 Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Let me run, and carry tidings to the king that the LORD has delivered him from the power of his enemies." 20 Joab said to him, "You are not to carry tidings today; you may carry tidings another day, but today you shall not do so, because the king's son is dead." 21 Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed before Joab, and ran. 22 Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said again to Joab, "Come what may, let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, seeing that you have no reward[c] for the tidings?" 23 "Come what may," he said, "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the Plain, and outran the Cushite.

24 Now David was sitting between the two gates. The sentinel went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and when he looked up, he saw a man running alone. 25 The sentinel shouted and told the king. The king said, "If he is alone, there are tidings in his mouth." He kept coming, and drew near. 26 Then the sentinel saw another man running; and the sentinel called to the gatekeeper and said, "See, another man running alone!" The king said, "He also is bringing tidings." 27 The sentinel said, "I think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz son of Zadok." The king said, "He is a good man, and comes with good tidings."

28 Then Ahimaaz cried out to the king, "All is well!" He prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground, and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king." 29 The king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent your servant,[d] I

[a] Gk Syr Tg: Heb *was put*
[b] Another reading is *at the risk of my life*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Heb *the king's servant, your servant*

head recalls his glorious hair (14.26) and suggests that his pride was his downfall. **12:** *In our hearing the king commanded,* see v. 5. **14:** *Spears* may also be translated "sticks." Apparently, Joab stabbed or struck Absalom with them in order to dislodge him from the tree and finish him off (v. 15). **15:** *Ten young men,* hence, no individual could be blamed for the actual killing. **17:** *A very great heap of stones,* this kind of burial was reserved for a cursed person (Josh 7.26). **18:** *No son*, cf. 14.27n. *Absalom's Monument,* later identified with a late Hellenistic or Roman-period tomb in the Kidron Valley. **19–20:** *Ahimaaz* wants to deliver the good news of the victory to David, but Joab refuses because he knows that Absalom's death will not be welcome news to David. *Because the king's son* was *dead* may be the narrator's words rather than Joab's (see v. 29). **21:** *Cushite,* a Nubian or Ethiopian. **27:** *Good tidings,* victory usually constitutes good news. But the writer goes on to depict David as focused on Absalom, whose death will be bad news to David despite the victory. **29:** *Ahimaaz* apparently does not know that Absalom

saw a great tumult, but I do not know what it was." 30 The king said, "Turn aside, and stand here." So he turned aside, and stood still.

31 Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, "Good tidings for my lord the king! For the LORD has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you." 32 The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man."

33 [a]The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

19 It was told Joab, "The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom." 2 So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the troops; for the troops heard that day, "The king is grieving for his son." 3 The troops stole into the city that day as soldiers steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle. 4 The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!" 5 Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, "Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your officers who have saved your life today, and the lives of your sons and your daughters, and the lives of your wives and your concubines, 6 for love of those who hate you and for hatred of those who love you. You have made it clear today that commanders and officers are nothing to you; for I perceive that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. 7 So go out at once and speak kindly to your servants; for I swear by the LORD, if you do not go, not a man will stay with you this night; and this will be worse for you than any disaster that has come upon you from your youth until now." 8 Then the king got up and took his seat in the gate. The troops were all told, "See, the king is sitting in the gate"; and all the troops came before the king.

Meanwhile, all the Israelites had fled to their homes. 9 All the people were disputing throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies, and saved us from the hand of the Philistines; and now he has fled out of the land because of Absalom. 10 But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?"

11 King David sent this message to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, "Say to the elders of Judah, 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his house? The talk of all Israel has come to the king.[b] 12 You are my kin, you are my bone and my flesh; why then should you be the last to bring back the king?' 13 And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? So may God do to me, and more, if you are not the commander of my army from now on, in place of Joab.'" 14 Amasa[c] swayed the hearts of all the people of Judah as one, and they sent word to the king, "Return, both you and all your

[a] Ch 19.1 in Heb
[b] Gk: Heb *to the king, to his house*
[c] Heb *He*

is dead. **32:** The *Cushite* thinks that Absalom's death is also good news. **18.33–19.8:** David is portrayed as very distraught at his son's death, despite the political gain it means for him. Compare David's laments over Saul and Jonathan (1.11–27) and Abner (3.31–39), whose deaths also benefited him. **19.6:** *Love* and *hate* can be political terms for loyalty and disloyalty. Joab's point is that David shows love to those who are disloyal to him (Absalom) while failing to show love or appreciation toward his loyal subjects. **9:** *All the tribes of Israel* may refer to the northern tribes, not Judah, which is the focus of the subsequent narrative.

19.11–43: David returns to Jerusalem. 11–12: David contacts the tribal leaders or *elders* of Judah to encourage them to welcome him back as king before *all Israel* (i.e., the northern tribes) does so. **13:** David appoints *Amasa* as his army commander in place of Joab because of Amasa's influence in Judah's army (see 17.25), and perhaps also because David shrewdly calculated that this would gain favor with the troops who had been loyal to Absalom, since Amasa was Absalom's commander. It may also be intended to express David's anger at Joab for having disobeyed his instructions regarding Absalom. All of these factors may provide motivation for Joab's murder of Amasa (20.10). *My bone and my flesh,* David was Amasa's uncle (see 17.25). **14:** Amasa, in turn, persuades the

servants." [15] So the king came back to the Jordan; and Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and to bring him over the Jordan.

[16] Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite, from Bahurim, hurried to come down with the people of Judah to meet King David; [17] with him were a thousand people from Benjamin. And Ziba, the servant of the house of Saul, with his fifteen sons and his twenty servants, rushed down to the Jordan ahead of the king, [18] while the crossing was taking place,[a] to bring over the king's household, and to do his pleasure.

Shimei son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was about to cross the Jordan, [19] and said to the king, "May my lord not hold me guilty or remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem; may the king not bear it in mind. [20] For your servant knows that I have sinned; therefore, see, I have come this day, the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king." [21] Abishai son of Zeruiah answered, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?" [22] But David said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should today become an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?" [23] The king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king gave him his oath.

[24] Mephibosheth[b] grandson of Saul came down to meet the king; he had not taken care of his feet, or trimmed his beard, or washed his clothes, from the day the king left until the day he came back in safety. [25] When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?"[b] [26] He answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me; for your servant said to him, 'Saddle a donkey for me,[c] so that I may ride on it and go with the king.' For your servant is lame. [27] He has slandered your servant to my lord the king. But my lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you. [28] For all my father's house were doomed to death before my lord the king; but you set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right have I, then, to appeal to the king?" [29] The king said to him, "Why speak any more of your affairs? I have decided: you and Ziba shall divide the land." [30] Mephibosheth[b] said to the king, "Let him take it all, since my lord the king has arrived home safely."

[31] Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim; he went on with the king to the Jordan, to escort him over the Jordan. [32] Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. He had provided the king with food while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man. [33] The king said to Barzillai, "Come over with me, and I will provide for you in Jerusalem at my side." [34] But Barzillai said to the king, "How many years have I still to live, that I should go up with the

[a] Cn: Heb *the ford crossed*
[b] Or M*erib-baal*: See 4.4 note
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *said, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself*

people (i.e., the army) of Judah to return to David. **15:** *Gilgal,* just west of the Jordan River, was an ancient Israelite shrine where Saul had been made king (1 Sam 11.15). **16–23:** *Shimei* and those with him were from the tribe of *Benjamin,* Saul's tribe. Shimei had ridiculed David when he fled from Jerusalem (16.5–13). Now that David is victorious, he asks forgiveness; David grants it, perhaps in part because of the *thousand people* (soldiers) *from Benjamin* with Shimei. *House of Joseph* (v. 20), the northern tribes, Israel as opposed to Judah. *Abishai* still wants to kill Shimei (16.9), but David refuses. This is part of the author's portrayal of David as gentle, in contrast to the violent *sons of Zeruiah* (v. 22). **24:** *Taken care of his feet* may mean trimmed his toenails, since the writer cites it as evidence that Merib-baal (*Mephibosheth*) had been mourning David's exile. **25–30:** *Ziba* had accused Merib-baal of plotting to take the throne (16.1–4). Merib-baal here defends himself, saying that Ziba refused to help him to flee with David, and he could not leave on his own accord because of his disability. David's decision (v. 29) indicates that he does not know which of them is telling the truth. *All my father's house were doomed to death before my lord the king,* a new king often executed all the heirs of his predecessor in order to have no rival for the throne. **31–40:** *Barzillai* had helped to provide for David in exile (17.27). David now invites him to come live in his palace in Jerusalem. Barzillai replies that he is too old to enjoy it, but he arranges for the king to take his

king to Jerusalem? 35 Today I am eighty years old; can I discern what is pleasant and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? 36 Your servant will go a little way over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king recompense me with such a reward? 37 Please let your servant return, so that I may die in my own town, near the graves of my father and my mother. But here is your servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do for him whatever seems good to you." 38 The king answered, "Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you; and all that you desire of me I will do for you." 39 Then all the people crossed over the Jordan, and the king crossed over; the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own home. 40 The king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him; all the people of Judah, and also half the people of Israel, brought the king on his way.

41 Then all the people of Israel came to the king, and said to him, "Why have our kindred the people of Judah stolen you away, and brought the king and his household over the Jordan, and all David's men with him?" 42 All the people of Judah answered the people of Israel, "Because the king is near of kin to us. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?" 43 But the people of Israel answered the people of Judah, "We have ten shares in the king, and in David also we have more than you. Why then did you despise us? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?" But the words of the people of Judah were fiercer than the words of the people of Israel.

20 Now a scoundrel named Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjaminite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and cried out,

"We have no portion in David,
no share in the son of Jesse!
Everyone to your tents, O Israel!"

2 So all the people of Israel withdrew from David and followed Sheba son of Bichri; but the people of Judah followed their king steadfastly from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

3 David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten concubines whom he had left to look after the house, and put them in a house under guard, and provided for them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood.

4 Then the king said to Amasa, "Call the men of Judah together to me within three days, and be here yourself." 5 So Amasa went to summon Judah; but he delayed beyond the set time that had been appointed him. 6 David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom; take your lord's servants and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities for himself, and escape from us." 7 Joab's men went out after him, along with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the warriors; they went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bichri. 8 When they were at the large stone that is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was wearing a soldier's garment and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened at his waist; as he went forward it fell out. 9 Joab said to Amasa, "Is it well with you, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. 10 But Amasa did not notice

son Chimham instead. **35:** *Can I discern . . .*, lit., "Can I know between good and evil?" likely a reference to sexual pleasure. Cf. Gen 2.9; Isa 7.15. **41:** Barzillai says that he is too old to enjoy the pleasures of taste, music, or sex that are available at David's court, but his son is not too old. The army (*people*) of Judah welcomes David back before the army of Israel. **42:** The army of Judah denies that it has received any special favors or bribes from David. **43:** *Ten shares*, the ten northern tribes of Israel.

20.1–26: Sheba's revolt. 1: *Happened to be there*, at the scene in Gilgal described in 19.41–43. Ch 20 continues that story. *Everyone to your tents*, an idiom for military demobilization; Sheba is calling for the army of Israel to withdraw from David; cf. 1 Kings 12.16. **2:** *All the people of Israel*, the northern tribes. The phrase exaggerates the extent of the northern disaffection with David (see v. 21). **3:** David no longer had sexual relations with the *ten concubines* he had left behind, because Absalom had slept with them (16.20–22). **7:** *The Cherethites* and *Pelethites*, see 8.18n. **8–10:** *Joab*'s assassination of *Amasa* is similar to his murder of Abner (3.26–39). His implied

the sword in Joab's hand; Joab struck him in the belly so that his entrails poured out on the ground, and he died. He did not strike a second blow.

Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bichri. 11 And one of Joab's men took his stand by Amasa, and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab." 12 Amasa lay wallowing in his blood on the highway, and the man saw that all the people were stopping. Since he saw that all who came by him were stopping, he carried Amasa from the highway into a field, and threw a garment over him. 13 Once he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bichri.

14 Sheba[a] passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel of Beth-maacah;[b] and all the Bichrites[c] assembled, and followed him inside. 15 Joab's forces[d] came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah; they threw up a siege ramp against the city, and it stood against the rampart. Joab's forces were battering the wall to break it down. 16 Then a wise woman called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, 'Come here, I want to speak to you.' " 17 He came near her; and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your servant." He answered, "I am listening." 18 Then she said, "They used to say in the old days, 'Let them inquire at Abel'; and so they would settle a matter. 19 I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel; you seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel; why will you swallow up the heritage of the LORD?" 20 Joab answered, "Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! 21 That is not the case! But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David; give him up alone, and I will withdraw from the city." The woman said to Joab, "His head shall be thrown over the wall to you." 22 Then the woman went to all the people with her wise plan. And they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, and all went to their homes, while Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king.

23 Now Joab was in command of all the army of Israel;[e] Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites; 24 Adoram was in charge of the forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder; 25 Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; 26 and Ira the Jairite was also David's priest.

[a] Heb *He*
[b] Compare 20.15: Heb *and Beth-maacah*
[c] Compare Gk Vg: Heb *Berites*
[d] Heb *They*
[e] Cn: Heb *Joab to all the army, Israel*

motive had to do with Amasa having taken Joab's place as army commander (19.13). His actual motive in the story was more likely political: to rid David of a powerful rival for the leadership of Judah. **13:** *The people,* the army. **14:** *Abel of Beth-maacah* is in the extreme northern part of Israel. **15:** Ancient Israelite cities were surrounded by thick walls that had to be broken through with battering rams, a time-consuming process that would be followed by the slaughter of the population inside. **16:** *Wise woman,* cf. 14.1–24.She may have held some office in the city; she is certainly intelligent and eloquent and acts on behalf of her city. **18:** *Let them inquire at Abel* implies that Abel was a central city for settling legal disputes or for divination. **19:** *A mother in Israel,* a large city, a metropolis. *The heritage of the LORD,* the land and people of Israel; see 1 Sam 10.1. **20:** The woman pleads for her city based on its antiquity and historical value to Israel. **21:** The woman apparently does not know about Sheba, indicating that his revolt did not reach to all Israel but included only part of Benjamin and *the hill country of Ephraim.* **23–26:** This list of officials is similar to that in 8.16–18. It probably came to this location by attachment to 21.1–14, which originally stood directly before 9.1. Alternatively, the two lists are used to frame the section, sometimes called "David under the curse." The two lists are probably variants, although according to some scholars they reflect different periods in David's reign. *The Cherethites and the Pelethites,* see 8.18n. *Forced labor,* conscripted from the northern tribes by David and Solomon. *Adoram* or Adoniram (1 Kings 4.6) was later stoned when the Israelites rebelled against the Davidic dynasty (1 Kings 12.18).

21 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. The LORD said, "There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death." [2] So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; although the people of Israel had sworn to spare them, Saul had tried to wipe them out in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.) [3] David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? How shall I make expiation, that you may bless the heritage of the LORD?" [4] The Gibeonites said to him, "It is not a matter of silver or gold between us and Saul or his house; neither is it for us to put anyone to death in Israel." He said, "What do you say that I should do for you?" [5] They said to the king, "The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel— [6] let seven of his sons be handed over to us, and we will impale them before the LORD at Gibeon on the mountain of the LORD."[a] The king said, "I will hand them over."

[7] But the king spared Mephibosheth,[b] the son of Saul's son Jonathan, because of the oath of the LORD that was between them, between David and Jonathan son of Saul. [8] The king took the two sons of Rizpah daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth;[b] and the five sons of Merab[c] daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite; [9] he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they impaled them on the mountain before the LORD. The seven of them perished together. They were put to death in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of barley harvest.

[10] Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it on a rock for herself, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell on them from the heavens; she did not allow the birds of the air to come on the bodies[d] by day, or the wild animals by night. [11] When David was told what Rizpah

[a] Cn Compare Gk and 21.9: Heb *at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD*
[b] Or *Merib-baal*: See 4.4 note
[c] Two Heb Mss Syr Compare Gk: MT *Michal*
[d] Heb *them*

Chs 21–24: An appendix of miscellaneous stories and poems. The final four chapters of 2 Samuel contain six passages arranged in chiastic order: narrative (21.1–14), list (21.15–22), poem (22.1–51), poem (23.1–7), list (23.8–38), narrative (24.1–25). The accumulation of these passages may have come about as follows. 21.1–14 was moved from its original place before ch 9. The motive was likely to lessen the impression that David had Saul's heirs killed for political reasons. The story in 24.1–25 was added to 21.1–14 (see 24.1) and placed as the final episode in David's life before the account of his death in 1 Kings 1–2 because it anticipated the founding of the Temple under Solomon. The lists may have been added next, separating the two narratives. The two psalms were then inserted. Ch 22 is a song of deliverance and praise for victory. It is appropriate following the list of victories in 21.15–22. Then 23.1–7 was added to provide David's "last words," in the tradition of other leading biblical characters.

21.1–14: The execution of Saul's heirs. 1–2: This story builds upon Josh 9, where the *Gibeonites* had a special treaty with Israel; this story assumes that the violation of that treaty brought divine wrath. The Bible nowhere recounts Saul's attempted extermination of the Gibeonites. *Amorites,* one of several groups of pre-Israelite residents of the land of Canaan, often used in the Deuteronomistic History for all of them. **3:** *The heritage of the LORD,* the land and people of Israel; see 1 Sam 10.1n. **4:** The Gibeonites regard this as a matter for blood vengeance, but as resident aliens in Israel they do not have the right to seek direct vengeance by execution. **5–9:** Typically, the founder of a new dynasty annihilated the potential claimants from the previous dynasty as David does here. Saul's alleged offense provides a religious legitimation for this political act. Only Merib-baal is spared (v. 7), probably because he is disabled and therefore cannot be king, though it is also explained as a reflection of David's relationship with Jonathan (see 1 Sam 18.1–3; 20.17,41–42). On the other hand, the theme of David's affection for and covenant with Jonathan may have developed in conjunction with David's preservation of Merib-baal. This event took place early in David's reign and originally came before 9.1, where David asks if anyone is left in Saul's house. **6:** *Sons* also includes grandsons. **8:** *Mephibosheth*, not Jonathan's son, Merib-baal, who was spared. **9:** The *barley harvest* was in April-May. **10:** *Rizpah* was Saul's concubine (3.7–11). **11–14:** As a result of Rizpah's courageous action, David honors the memory of Saul and Jonathan; see 1 Sam 31.12–13.

daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done, [12] David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan from the people of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hung them up, on the day the Philistines killed Saul on Gilboa. [13] He brought up from there the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan; and they gathered the bones of those who had been impaled. [14] They buried the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan in the land of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of his father Kish; they did all that the king commanded. After that, God heeded supplications for the land.

[15] The Philistines went to war again with Israel, and David went down together with his servants. They fought against the Philistines, and David grew weary. [16] Ishbi-benob, one of the descendants of the giants, whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of bronze, and who was fitted out with new weapons,[a] said he would kill David. [17] But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and attacked the Philistine and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, "You shall not go out with us to battle any longer, so that you do not quench the lamp of Israel."

[18] After this a battle took place with the Philistines, at Gob; then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was one of the descendants of the giants. [19] Then there was another battle with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. [20] There was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great size, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; he too was descended from the giants. [21] When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of David's brother Shimei, killed him. [22] These four were descended from the giants in Gath; they fell by the hands of David and his servants.

22 David spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. [2] He said:

The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,
[3] my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation,
my stronghold and my refuge,
my savior; you save me from violence.
[4] I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.

[5] For the waves of death encompassed me,
the torrents of perdition assailed me;
[6] the cords of Sheol entangled me,
the snares of death confronted me.

[7] In my distress I called upon the LORD;
to my God I called.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry came to his ears.

[8] Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations of the heavens trembled
and quaked, because he was angry.

[a] Heb *was belted anew*

21.15–22: Stories from the Philistine wars. The stories recounted here come from the battles with the Philistines earlier in David's reign. **16:** *Three hundred shekels,* ca. 8 lb (3.5 kg). **17:** The insistence of David's men that he not go to battle may lie behind 11.1; 18.3. **19:** An alternate tradition concerning the death of Goliath: the otherwise unknown Elhanan, rather than David, slays him. The story in 1 Sam 17 is an elaboration and reworking of this tradition, attributing the victory to the better-known David; cf. 1 Chr 20.5.

22.1–51: A psalm of praise. This psalm, which is essentially the same as Psalm 18, was written long after David's time but is inserted here as appropriate to his sentiments. Variants between this version and the one in Psalms illustrate how larger and smaller changes occurred as texts were copied and transmitted over time. The psalm praises the LORD for appearing to rescue the psalmist (vv. 1–20) and for continued support of the psalmist's military activities (vv. 21–51). Its placement following the exploits of David's heroes in 21.15–22 and David's own rescue (vv. 15–17) is appropriate. **2–3:** *Rock,* a metaphor for the LORD as protector. **5–6:** *Perdition,* the underworld, the abode of the dead, also called *Sheol.* **7:** *Temple* suggests that this psalm was written after David's time, since the Temple was built by Solomon, although it may refer to God's heavenly abode (see Ps 11.4). **8:** The LORD's ap-

9 Smoke went up from his nostrils,
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.
10 He bowed the heavens, and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.
11 He rode on a cherub, and flew;
he was seen upon the wings of the wind.
12 He made darkness around him a canopy,
thick clouds, a gathering of water.
13 Out of the brightness before him
coals of fire flamed forth.
14 The LORD thundered from heaven;
the Most High uttered his voice.
15 He sent out arrows, and scattered them
—lightning, and routed them.
16 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
the foundations of the world were laid bare
at the rebuke of the LORD,
at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

17 He reached from on high, he took me,
he drew me out of mighty waters.
18 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
from those who hated me;
for they were too mighty for me.
19 They came upon me in the day of my calamity,
but the LORD was my stay.
20 He brought me out into a broad place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

21 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.
22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
23 For all his ordinances were before me,
and from his statutes I did not turn aside.
24 I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from guilt.
25 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
according to my cleanness in his sight.

26 With the loyal you show yourself loyal;
with the blameless you show yourself blameless;
27 with the pure you show yourself pure,
and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.
28 You deliver a humble people,
but your eyes are upon the haughty to bring them down.
29 Indeed, you are my lamp, O LORD,
the LORD lightens my darkness.
30 By you I can crush a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a wall.
31 This God—his way is perfect;
the promise of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

32 For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?
33 The God who has girded me with strength[a]
has opened wide my path.[b]
34 He made my[c] feet like the feet of deer,
and set me secure on the heights.
35 He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
36 You have given me the shield of your salvation,
and your help[d] has made me great.
37 You have made me stride freely,
and my feet do not slip;
38 I pursued my enemies and destroyed them,

[a] Q Ms Gk Syr Vg Compare Ps 18.32: MT *God is my strong refuge*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Another reading is *his*
[d] Q Ms: MT *your answering*

pearance is accompanied by earthquake. **9:** The LORD is pictured here as a fire-breathing dragon. **11–16:** The LORD is depicted here as a storm god. **11:** *Cherub*, a mythical, griffinlike creature. **14–15:** God's *voice* is thunder (Job 40.9; Ps 29.3), and he throws *lightning* bolts at his enemies. *Most High*, a title of El, the head of the Canaanite pantheon. The title is later appropriated for the LORD. **16:** The psalmist envisions the world as flat; he is trapped in the underworld beneath *the foundations of the world,* which the LORD's roar uncovers. **32:** This is a monotheistic claim; the LORD (Yahweh) alone is God. Such claims are rare in the Bible, especially in early texts (contrast Ex 15.11). **33–43:** The LORD

and did not turn back until they were consumed.
39 I consumed them; I struck them down, so that they did not rise;
they fell under my feet.
40 For you girded me with strength for the battle;
you made my assailants sink under me.
41 You made my enemies turn their backs to me,
those who hated me, and I destroyed them.
42 They looked, but there was no one to save them;
they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them.
43 I beat them fine like the dust of the earth,
I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets.

44 You delivered me from strife with the peoples;[a]
you kept me as the head of the nations;
people whom I had not known served me.
45 Foreigners came cringing to me;
as soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me.
46 Foreigners lost heart,
and came trembling out of their strongholds.

47 The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock,
and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation,
48 the God who gave me vengeance
and brought down peoples under me,
49 who brought me out from my enemies;
you exalted me above my adversaries,
you delivered me from the violent.

50 For this I will extol you, O LORD, among the nations,
and sing praises to your name.
51 He is a tower of salvation for his king,
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,
to David and his descendants forever.

23 Now these are the last words of David:
The oracle of David, son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man whom God exalted,[b]
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:

2 The spirit of the LORD speaks through me,
his word is upon my tongue.
3 The God of Israel has spoken,
the Rock of Israel has said to me:
One who rules over people justly,
ruling in the fear of God,
4 is like the light of morning,
like the sun rising on a cloudless morning,
gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.

5 Is not my house like this with God?
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.

[a] Gk: Heb *from strife with my people*
[b] Q Ms: MT *who was raised on high*

equips the psalmist for battle. **47:** *Rock,* see vv. 2–3n. **50:** Compare, e.g., Ps 117.1. **51:** *Steadfast love* (Heb "ḥesed"), covenant loyalty. This verse alludes to the LORD's promise to David of an enduring dynasty (2 Sam 7). *Anointed,* Heb "mashiaḥ" ("messiah"), a royal title (see 1 Sam 2.10n.). *David and his descendants,* if original, suggests that the psalm comes from royal circles in Judah.

23.1–7: The last words of David. There may have been a literary tradition in the Bible of ascribing poems to leading characters as their "last words"; compare the poems attributed to Jacob in Gen 49 and to Moses in Deut 33. David's last words, though, do not consist of a blessing of Israel. Like Moses, however, David is portrayed as a prophet pronouncing an oracle (23.1–2). The actual date of David's "last words" is uncertain. In contrast to ch 22, 23.1–7 has no parallel in Psalms. **1:** *Anointed,* a royal title, here referring to David, echoing 22.51. *Strong One of Israel,* probably an epithet for the LORD, as in the NRSV, but it could be rendered "(the favorite of) Israel's songs." **2:** David portrays himself as a spokesman for God, i.e., a prophet. **3:** *Rock,* see 22.3,47. **4:** The image of the king as the sun was common in the ancient Near East, especially in Egypt, although less so in Israel. **5:** *House,* the king's (David's) dynasty. *Everlasting covenant,* the LORD's promise of a dynasty for David in 7.16; cf. Ps 89.28–29.

Will he not cause to prosper
all my help and my desire?
6 But the godless are[a] all like thorns that
are thrown away;
for they cannot be picked up with the
hand;
7 to touch them one uses an iron bar
or the shaft of a spear.
And they are entirely consumed in fire
on the spot.[b]

8 These are the names of the warriors whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite; he was chief of the Three;[c] he wielded his spear[d] against eight hundred whom he killed at one time.

9 Next to him among the three warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle. The Israelites withdrew, 10 but he stood his ground. He struck down the Philistines until his arm grew weary, though his hand clung to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. Then the people came back to him—but only to strip the dead.

11 Next to him was Shammah son of Agee, the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the army fled from the Philistines. 12 But he took his stand in the middle of the plot, defended it, and killed the Philistines; and the LORD brought about a great victory.

13 Towards the beginning of harvest three of the thirty[e] chiefs went down to join David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim. 14 David was then in the stronghold; and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem. 15 David said longingly, "O that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!" 16 Then the three warriors broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and brought it to David. But he would not drink of it; he poured it out to the LORD, 17 for he said, "The LORD forbid that I should do this. Can I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. The three warriors did these things.

18 Now Abishai son of Zeruiah, the brother of Joab, was chief of the Thirty.[f] With his spear he fought against three hundred men and killed them, and won a name beside the Three. 19 He was the most renowned of the Thirty,[g] and became their commander; but he did not attain to the Three.

20 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant warrior[h] from Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds; he struck down two sons of Ariel[i] of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. 21 And he killed an Egyptian, a handsome man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but Benaiah went against him with a staff, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed

[a] Heb *But worthlessness*
[b] Heb *in sitting*
[c] Gk Vg Compare 1 Chr 11.11: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] 1 Chr 11.11: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Heb adds *head*
[f] Two Heb Mss Syr: MT *Three*
[g] Syr Compare 1 Chr 11.25: Heb *Was he the most renowned of the Three?*
[h] Another reading is *the son of Ish-hai*
[i] Gk: Heb lacks *sons of*

6–7: These verses continue the image of vv. 3–4. The *godless* are like *thorns*, quickly consumed by fire.

23.8–39: David's heroes. This passage is a list of legendary heroes from David's army with some of the exploits that brought them renown. **8–12:** Nothing more is known about *the Three* greatest warriors in David's army. **13–17:** This story is not about the three warriors just listed but about three anonymous members of the honor guard of *the thirty.* **13:** *The beginning of harvest,* the weather was hot and dry, which is why David became thirsty. *Cave,* see 1 Sam 22.1n. *Adullam* was David's headquarters and hideout when he fled from Saul. **14:** *Stronghold,* the fortress at Adullam. Since a *garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem,* this must have been early in David's reign or even before he became king. *Bethlehem,* David's hometown, hence his fond remembrance of the water there. **16–17:** *He poured it out to the LORD,* some interpreters think David is angry that the men risked their lives foolishly, while others suggest that this was a libation or sacrifice to God, a great honor to the three men. **20–23:** *Benaiah,* the commander of David's bodyguard and later of the army under Solomon (1 Kings 4.4).

him with his own spear. 22 Such were the things Benaiah son of Jehoiada did, and won a name beside the three warriors. 23 He was renowned among the Thirty, but he did not attain to the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

24 Among the Thirty were Asahel brother of Joab; Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem; 25 Shammah of Harod; Elika of Harod; 26 Helez the Paltite; Ira son of Ikkesh of Tekoa; 27 Abiezer of Anathoth; Mebunnai the Hushathite; 28 Zalmon the Ahohite; Maharai of Netophah; 29 Heleb son of Baanah of Netophah; Ittai son of Ribai of Gibeah of the Benjaminites; 30 Benaiah of Pirathon; Hiddai of the torrents of Gaash; 31 Abi-albon the Arbathite; Azmaveth of Bahurim; 32 Eliahba of Shaalbon; the sons of Jashen: Jonathan 33 son of [a] Shammah the Hararite; Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite; 34 Eliphelet son of Ahasbai of Maacah; Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite; 35 Hezro[b] of Carmel; Paarai the Arbite; 36 Igal son of Nathan of Zobah; Bani the Gadite; 37 Zelek the Ammonite; Naharai of Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah; 38 Ira the Ithrite; Gareb the Ithrite; 39 Uriah the Hittite—thirty-seven in all.

24 Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, count the people of Israel and Judah." 2 So the king said to Joab and the commanders of the army,[c] who were with him, "Go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, and take a census of the people, so that I may know how many there are." 3 But Joab said to the king, "May the LORD your God increase the number of the people a hundredfold, while the eyes of my lord the king can still see it! But why does my lord the king want to do this?" 4 But the king's word prevailed against Joab and the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to take a census of the people of Israel. 5 They crossed the Jordan, and began from[d] Aroer and from the city that is in the middle of the valley, toward Gad and on to Jazer. 6 Then they came to Gilead, and to Kadesh in the land of the Hittites;[e] and they came to Dan, and from Dan[f] they went around to Sidon, 7 and came to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites; and they went

[a] Gk: Heb lacks *son of*
[b] Another reading is *Hezrai*
[c] 1 Chr 21.2 Gk: Heb *to Joab the commander of the army*
[d] Gk Mss: Heb *encamped in Aroer south of*
[e] Gk: Heb *to the land of Tahtim-hodshi*
[f] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *they came to Dan-jaan and*

24: *Asahel* seems to be a young warrior aspiring to greatness in the story of his death (2.18–23). It is surprising to find his name in this list of soldiers who distinguished themselves in David's army. This may indicate that the story in ch 2 was invented to give Joab a personal motive, rather than the political one of following David's order, for killing Abner. *Elhanan* killed Goliath (21.19). **30:** *Benaiah,* a different man from the Benaiah in vv. 20–23. **39:** *Uriah,* Bathsheba's husband (ch 11). It is uncertain how the count of *thirty-seven* is achieved; the list in vv. 24–39 has thirty names in it, while adding the "Three" plus Abishai and Benaiah brings the number to thirty-five. Joab may have been counted as a member of this elite group, though his name is not specifically mentioned. In some textual variations in vv. 24–39 an additional name is present.

24.1–25: David's census. The final narrative in 2 Samuel. Because 2 Samuel and 1 Kings were originally part of a larger work and not separate books, this chapter was not written as a conclusion to 2 Samuel but anticipates the building of the Temple under Solomon (vv. 18–25; see 1 Kings chs 5–6; 8) and thus looks forward to the sequel of David's reign. **1:** *Again* implies that this story follows an earlier one, perhaps 21.1–14. A revised version of this story is found in 1 Chronicles 21, which attributes the pestilence to "a satan" (lit., "an adversary"). There is no "devil" in the Hebrew Bible; both texts reflect the belief that natural calamity is the result of human sin, although it is unclear why taking a census was sinful; some scholars suggest it was a sign of David's inordinate pride or that the census was meant to bring about unacceptable changes in Israelite society. (A census usually provided the basis for conscription and taxation.) Another interpretation is that some rule of ritual purity was violated. **2:** *From Dan to Beer-sheba,* see 3.10n. **3–4:** These potential dangers may explain Joab's reluctance to carry out the census. **5–7:** The census takers began at *Aroer* east of the Dead Sea and moved north as far as *Dan,* then crossed over the Jordan and went south through traditional Israel until

out to the Negeb of Judah at Beer-sheba. 8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9 Joab reported to the king the number of those who had been recorded: in Israel there were eight hundred thousand soldiers able to draw the sword, and those of Judah were five hundred thousand.

10 But afterward, David was stricken to the heart because he had numbered the people. David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, I pray you, take away the guilt of your servant; for I have done very foolishly." 11 When David rose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12 "Go and say to David: Thus says the LORD: Three things I offer[a] you; choose one of them, and I will do it to you." 13 So Gad came to David and told him; he asked him, "Shall three[b] years of famine come to you on your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to the one who sent me." 14 Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into human hands."

15 So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from that morning until the appointed time; and seventy thousand of the people died, from Dan to Beer-sheba. 16 But when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented concerning the evil, and said to the angel who was bringing destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." The angel of the LORD was then by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 17 When David saw the angel who was destroying the people, he said to the LORD, "I alone have sinned, and I alone have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house."

18 That day Gad came to David and said to him, "Go up and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." 19 Following Gad's instructions, David went up, as the LORD had commanded. 20 When Araunah looked down, he saw the king and his servants coming toward him; and Araunah went out and prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. 21 Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you in order to build an altar to the LORD, so that the plague may be averted from the people." 22 Then Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him; here are the oxen for the burnt offering, and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. 23 All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God respond favorably to you."

[a] Or *hold over*

[b] 1 Chr 21.12 Gk: Heb *seven*

they reached *Beer-sheba* (see map on p. 461). **9:** The count is limited to men of military age. *Thousand,* see 6.1n. Israel and Judah are numbered separately because Judah, as David's native tribe, was exempted from taxation. **10–14:** *Stricken to the heart,* conscience-stricken. The language David uses is similar to 2 Sam 12.13; here, as well, *take away* is better rendered "transfer." David is given a choice of three punishments that will befall others; he chooses *the hand of the LORD,* an idiom for plague, perhaps trusting in the LORD's mercy. **15–16:** David's strategy works. The plague is stopped after only one day and Jerusalem is spared. **15:** *The appointed time* may be the time of the evening meal. *Thousand,* see 6.1n. **16:** *Angel:* Cf. Ex 12.23. Angels sometimes occur in the Bible as surrogates for the LORD where misfortunes occur. *Evil,* not moral evil but destruction. *Araunah,* called Ornan in 1 Chr 21. *Jebusite,* a pre-Israelite native of Jerusalem (5.6–10). *Threshing floor,* a flat, high area where grain was separated from the chaff. God also appears to people at threshing floors elsewhere in the Bible (Judg 6.11–12). **17:** *Sheep,* the people of Jerusalem with David, as king, imagined as their shepherd; see 7.8n. **18–25:** These verses indicate that the plague was stopped after David built his altar and made his offerings rather than by the LORD's free will as in v. 16. 1 Chr 22.1 explicitly identifies this as the site where the altar of the Temple would be built. *Fifty shekels,* ca. 1.25 lb (.57 kg).

[24] But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy them from you for a price; I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. [25] David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. So the LORD answered his supplication for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.

1 KINGS

NAME

The books of Kings, which describe the period from the death of King David through the aftermath of the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, were originally a single book. It was divided into two in the Greek Bible because it was too long to fit easily on one scroll. This division artificially splits up the stories of the Israelite king Ahaziah and those of the prophet Elijah. What is now 2 Kings 1.1 was considered a suitable book opening since its wording, "after the death of Ahab," parallels the opening of the books of Joshua ("after the death of Moses"), Judges ("after the death of Joshua"), and 2 Samuel ("after the death of Saul"). In the Greek Bible (the Septuagint, abbreviated LXX), 1 and 2 Kings are called 3 and 4 Basileiōn ("reigns" or "dynasties"); the Greek translators linked Samuel and Kings (the books of Samuel are called 1 and 2 Basileiōn) because they narrate the story of the Israelite and Judean monarchy from its beginning until its end; indeed, 1 Kings opens with the death of David, the main character of the book of Samuel.

CANONICAL STATUS AND LOCATION

In the Christian canon, 1 and 2 Kings belong to the "Historical Books" and are followed by the books of Chronicles, which offer an alternative account of the period of the monarchy. In the Jewish Bible, the book of Kings closes the first part of the Prophets, the "Former Prophets" comprised of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Although prophetic figures play a major role in these books, they are quite different from the "Latter Prophets" that comprise the prophetic books. The Former Prophets, however, provide the necessary background for understanding the oracles in the "Latter Prophets."

AUTHORSHIP

Jewish tradition (*b. B. Bat.* 14b–15a) regards the prophet Jeremiah, a contemporary of the last kings of Judah, as the author of the book of Kings, perhaps because of stylistic similarities between the books of Kings and Jeremiah. Modern scholars have called this style "Deuteronomistic" because it is based on the key vocabulary and theological concepts of Deuteronomy. This style is also found in Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, and thus most scholars call the books of Deuteronomy through Kings the "Deuteronomistic History." The book of Kings reflects the reworking of annals and oral traditions, and the composition of new material, by these Deuteronomists, who even embedded references to the Babylonian exile in the book of Deuteronomy itself (see esp. Deut 6.15; 28.47–68).

DATES OF COMPOSITION AND LITERARY HISTORY

The first Deuteronomistic edition of the book of Kings as well as of the book of Deuteronomy were probably written in approximately 620 BCE, during the reign of the Judean king Josiah. According to 2 Kings 22–23, this king undertook a religious and a political reform aimed at making Jerusalem the only legitimate sanctuary for the worship of the LORD. This reform follows the main theological ideas expressed in Deuteronomy, namely the centralization of worship at the Jerusalem Temple and the exclusive veneration of the LORD, the God who had chosen Israel as his special property.

The scribes who edited the books of Kings under the patronage of King Josiah wanted to show that he was in fact the best of all Judean kings, who fulfilled God's will through his religious and political actions. This edition's conclusion was probably 2 Kings 23.25: "Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might," which corresponds exactly to the exhortation of the book of Deuteronomy: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut 6.5). This optimistic work was revised after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE; it was updated to incorporate the final kings of Judah, and to explain the reasons for that calamity. These updates in the mid- to late sixth century BCE, during the Babylonian exile or the first decades of the Persian period, offered a "theodicy," an explanation of how the LORD, the God of Israel, could cause such evil to his own people. These late Deuteronomistic editors explain that the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple are not due to the LORD's inability to defend his nation against its enemies; on the contrary, the LORD himself had called the

Babylonians to invade Judah in order to punish it because it did not conform to divine law as expressed in the book of Deuteronomy.

The Deuteronomistic authors and editors who edited the books of Kings integrated several older sources or independent documents into their work, including the "Book of the Acts of Solomon" (1 Kings 11.41), and "the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel" (e.g., 1 Kings 14.19) and "the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah" (e.g., 1 Kings 14.29), from the courts of Samaria and Jerusalem. The final event related in 2 Kings is the improvement of the status of King Jehoiachin, who was imprisoned in Babylon; this occurred under the Babylonian king Evil-merodach (Amel-Marduk), who reigned briefly in 562–561 BCE. Scholars debate whether this notice is a theological justification of the end of monarchy and the exile, or expresses hope for the renewal of the Davidic dynasty.

Although many scholars think that the account of Jehoiachin's release indicates that the book was written shortly after this date, it likely underwent further revision during the Persian period. For example, in the last revision of Solomon's dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8), the Temple becomes a kind of "qibla," indicating the direction in which everyone should pray, reflecting the needs of the Diaspora communities in Babylon, Egypt, and elsewhere. During this period, Kings was also revised in order to fit into the "prophetic canon." This happened after the book of Deuteronomy was seen not as the introduction to the Deuteronomistic History, but as conclusion of the Pentateuch. The prophetic stories about Elijah and Elisha, which existed before as independent scrolls, were now integrated into the books of Kings in order to make it more prophetic; in its current form, approximately half of Kings contains prophetic narratives.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The book of Kings tells the story of the Judean and Israelite monarchies from the united monarchy under Solomon (1 Kings 1–11) and its division after his death into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah (1 Kings 12), until the end of Israel (2 Kings 17) and of Judah (2 Kings 24–25). First Kings covers the time from Solomon until King Jehoshaphat of Judah and King Ahaziah of Israel. The account of the divided monarchy, after the death of Solomon, is narrated (until 2 Kings 17) in a synchronistic fashion, which correlated the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. The reign of each king is framed by introductory and final formulas. The information about Judean kings is more extensive, indicating that the Judean scribes likely had more information about their own kings. The formulas have the following pattern:

JUDEAN KINGS	ISRAELITE KINGS
Introductory synchronism	Introductory synchronism
The king's age at his enthronement	–
Length of reign	Length of reign
Name of his mother	
Theological judgment	Theological judgment
Final reference to the annals of the kings of Judah	Final reference to the annals of the kings of Israel
Death of the king	Death of the king
Burial	–
Name of the successor	Name of the successor

INTERPRETATION

The book of Kings is historiography in the sense that it presents a chronologically arranged story from King Solomon until the end of the monarchy, covering roughly from 970 to 560 BCE; beginning with the reign of Rehoboam, king of Judah in the late tenth century BCE, many of the events and individuals in 1–2 Kings are also mentioned in nonbiblical sources. But Kings is not historiography in the ancient Greek or modern meaning of the term. Kings is an anonymous work; in contrast to the ancient Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides, no author speaks in the first person, presenting sources and evaluating information. There is little interest

about "how things really happened." For the authors of Kings, the God of Israel is the major actor in the history of the Judean and Israelite kings. The kings whose reigns are positively evaluated are monarchs who follow God's will, whereas the unfaithful kings provoke God's punishment and, in some cases, are ultimately responsible for the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem. Kings shows no interest in an objective, comprehensive, and complete recounting of the past. Kings such as Hezekiah, whose hazardous geopolitical policies may appear strange to modern readers, are presented very positively, whereas kings with a long, apparently peaceful reign, such as Manasseh, are judged very negatively. The main interest of the authors of Kings is not the political, economic, and military achievements of kings, but their religious attitude, especially as expressed through exclusive worship of the LORD in the Jerusalem Temple. Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom after its separation from Judah, is described as the founder of two sanctuaries in Dan and Bethel, which are presented as illegitimate competitors with the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 12); consequently, all subsequent northern kings are systematically blamed for "Jeroboam's sin." The southern kings are compared to their "father" David (1 Kings 15.3,11; 2 Kings 14.3; 16.2; 18.3; 22.2) and are evaluated based on their loyalty to the Jerusalem Temple and their condemnation of the other places of worship (especially the "high places").

An early form of the books of Samuel and Kings triggered an interpretative rewriting, namely the books of Chronicles, which offers an alternative account of the Judean monarchy. It omits almost everything of the story of the Northern Kingdom, and ends with the decree of the Persian king Cyrus in 538, allowing the Judeans to return from exile and to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple.

Thomas Römer

1 King David was old and advanced in years; and although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. **2** So his servants said to him, "Let a young virgin be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait on the king, and be his attendant; let her lie in your bosom, so that my lord the king may be warm." **3** So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. **4** The girl was very beautiful. She became the king's attendant and served him, but the king did not know her sexually.

5 Now Adonijah son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king"; he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. **6** His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why

1.1–11.43: The reign of King Solomon. The story of Solomon can be divided into three parts: chs 1–2; 3.1–9.9; and 9.10–11.43. Chapters 1–2 relate Solomon's rise to power. The second section, the main narrative of his reign, is bookmarked by two divine manifestations in chs 3 and 9. Chapters 3–8 present the positive part of Solomon's activity: his wisdom and especially his construction of the Jerusalem Temple, which is concluded by a long prayer. The second divine speech to Solomon in ch 9 is forward looking, evoking the possibility of his disobedience, and ultimately the destruction of the Temple and the exile. First Kings 9.10–11.43, the final section, presents Solomon negatively: he imposes forced labor upon the people, marries many foreign women, and worships their deities. These chapters prepare the reader for ch 12, where the kingdom is divided.

1.1–53: Solomon's rise to the throne. The opening chapters of 1 Kings continue the account of the succession to David from 2 Samuel. Chapter 1 makes clear that Solomon was not the expected successor, but became king after a court intrigue; this is a well-attested motif in Assyrian and Babylonian literature, and may reflect historical reality. **1–4:** Virility and the ability to govern were connected in antiquity (see, e.g., 2 Sam 16.22). David's servants try to "warm up" their king by sending him the beautiful virgin Abishag. This strategy fails, because David is unable to have sex with her; the question of his successor has thus become unavoidable. **3:** *Abishag* was from Shunem, a town in the Jezreel valley in northern Israel, ca. 8 mi (13 km) south of Nazareth. **5–8:** After the deaths of Amnon and Absalom (2 Sam 13.28–29; 18.14–15; Chileab, absent here, is mentioned only in 2 Sam 3.4), Adonijah, the next oldest son, wants to succeed his father to the throne. The narrator, who presents him as having David's favor, suggests his suitability because he is *very handsome*, a royal attribute (see 1 Sam 9.2; 16.12). Adonijah's actions recall the revolt of Absalom, who also claimed to be the legitimate king during David's reign; this foreshadows Adonijah's fall. Two important members of the court side with Adonijah: *Joab*,

have you done thus and so?" He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom. [7] He conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with the priest Abiathar, and they supported Adonijah. [8] But the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the prophet Nathan, and Shimei, and Rei, and David's own warriors did not side with Adonijah.

[9] Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fatted cattle by the stone Zoheleth, which is beside En-rogel, and he invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, [10] but he did not invite the prophet Nathan or Benaiah or the warriors or his brother Solomon.

[11] Then Nathan said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, "Have you not heard that Adonijah son of Haggith has become king and our lord David does not know it? [12] Now therefore come, let me give you advice, so that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. [13] Go in at once to King David, and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then is Adonijah king?' [14] Then while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words."

[15] So Bathsheba went to the king in his room. The king was very old; Abishag the Shunammite was attending the king. [16] Bathsheba bowed and did obeisance to the king, and the king said, "What do you wish?" [17] She said to him, "My lord, you swore to your servant by the LORD your God, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne. [18] But now suddenly Adonijah has become king, though you, my lord the king, do not know it. [19] He has sacrificed oxen, fatted cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the children of the king, the priest Abiathar, and Joab the commander of the army; but your servant Solomon he has not invited. [20] But you, my lord the king—the eyes of all Israel are on you to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. [21] Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king sleeps with his ancestors, that my son Solomon and I will be counted offenders."

[22] While she was still speaking with the king, the prophet Nathan came in. [23] The king was told, "Here is the prophet Nathan." When he came in before the king, he did obeisance to the king, with his face to the ground. [24] Nathan said, "My lord the king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne'? [25] For today he has gone down and has sacrificed oxen, fatted cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king's children, Joab the commander [a] of the army, and the priest Abiathar, who are now eating and drinking before him, and saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!' [26] But he did not invite me, your servant, and the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon. [27] Has this thing been brought about by my lord the king and you have not let your servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"

[a] Gk: Heb *the commanders*

apparently David's nephew (see 1 Chr 2.16) and head of the army, and *Abiathar*, one of David's priests, who had escaped Saul's slaughter of the priests of Nob (1 Sam 22.20–23; 2 Sam 20.25). The opposing group (v. 8) includes members of the Jerusalemite aristocracy: *the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan*, *Benaiah*, a chief of foreign mercenaries (2 Sam 8.18), and *Shimei* (perhaps the same Shimei mentioned in 2 Sam 16.5–14). The Zadok-Nathan party is also supported by *David's own warriors*, David's bodyguard (cf. 2 Sam 23.8–39). **9–10:** Adonijah's abundant sacrifices by the stone *Zoheleth* (the "snake stone") at *En-rogel* (the "fuller's spring," in the Kidron Valley southeast of Jerusalem) are meant to foster unity among his party and to make public his claim to become David's successor. **11–14:** This oath, not mentioned previously, may be an invention of Nathan and Bathsheba to manipulate the ailing king. **15–31:** Although Nathan knows how to plot by pretending that Adonijah has already been proclaimed king (the narrative speaks only about his sacrificial feast and not about a coronation), Bathsheba and Nathan's strategy is successful in convincing David to proclaim Solomon his successor, and they also make David believe that he has already confirmed Solomon as king by oath. In v. 22 Bathsheba is present while Nathan is speaking to David, but in v. 28 she seems to have left the audience, suggesting that the story

28 King David answered, "Summon Bathsheba to me." So she came into the king's
presence, and stood before the king. 29 The
king swore, saying, "As the LORD lives, who
has saved my life from every adversity, 30 as I
swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel,
'Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king,
and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' so
will I do this day." 31 Then Bathsheba bowed
with her face to the ground, and did obeisance to the king, and said, "May my lord
King David live forever!"

32 King David said, "Summon to me the
priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada." When they came before
the king, 33 the king said to them, "Take with
you the servants of your lord, and have my
son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring
him down to Gihon. 34 There let the priest
Zadok and the prophet Nathan anoint him
king over Israel; then blow the trumpet, and
say, 'Long live King Solomon!' 35 You shall go
up following him. Let him enter and sit on my
throne; he shall be king in my place; for I have
appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over
Judah." 36 Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered
the king, "Amen! May the LORD, the God of
my lord the king, so ordain. 37 As the LORD
has been with my lord the king, so may he be
with Solomon, and make his throne greater
than the throne of my lord King David."

38 So the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan,
and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and had
Solomon ride on King David's mule, and led
him to Gihon. 39 There the priest Zadok took
the horn of oil from the tent and anointed
Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and
all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!"
40 And all the people went up following him,
playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy,
so that the earth quaked at their noise.

41 Adonijah and all the guests who were
with him heard it as they finished feasting.
When Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, "Why is the city in an uproar?"
42 While he was still speaking, Jonathan son
of the priest Abiathar arrived. Adonijah said,
"Come in, for you are a worthy man and
surely you bring good news." 43 Jonathan
answered Adonijah, "No, for our lord King
David has made Solomon king; 44 the king has
sent with him the priest Zadok, the prophet
Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and
the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and
they had him ride on the king's mule; 45 the
priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan have
anointed him king at Gihon; and they have
gone up from there rejoicing, so that the
city is in an uproar. This is the noise that
you heard. 46 Solomon now sits on the royal
throne. 47 Moreover the king's servants came
to congratulate our lord King David, saying,
'May God make the name of Solomon more
famous than yours, and make his throne
greater than your throne.' The king bowed
in worship on the bed 48 and went on to pray
thus, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who today has granted one of my offspring[a]
to sit on my throne and permitted me to witness it.' "

49 Then all the guests of Adonijah got up
trembling and went their own ways. 50 Adonijah, fearing Solomon, got up and went to

[a] Gk: Heb *one*

has undergone revision. **32–40:** The anointing of Solomon by Nathan and Zadok takes place at *Gihon*, the main spring of Jerusalem located in the Kidron Valley. **38:** Saul and David were anointed only by the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 10.1; 16.13), but following the LORD's instructions; Solomon is anointed by a prophet and by a priest, but without explicit divine authorization. Strikingly, the story does not explicitly state that Solomon's coronation was the LORD's will (but cf. 2.15). The *Cherethites* and *Pelethites*, David's personal troops; the names may allude to their Cretan and Philistine origin. **39:** *The Tent*, the mobile sanctuary, which David transferred to Jerusalem, will soon be replaced by the Temple built by Solomon. **40:** After the anointing a solemn procession with music and exuberance begins the new king's rule. The noise is so intense that the earth splits (cf. Num. 16.31), reflecting the ancient Near Eastern idea that the coronation of a new king had cosmic consequences. **41–53:** *Jonathan*, the son of Abiathar, who supported David during Absalom's revolt (2 Sam 15.36; 17.17) informs Adonijah that he will not become king over Israel. **47:** David *bowing on his bed* might reflect bowing before Solomon, thereby acknowledging him as the new king. **50:** Adonijah fears Solomon's revenge, flees to the sanctuary and grasps *the horns of the altar*. The altar with four horns (see Ex 29.12; 30,3; Lev 4.7), quarter-round stones on each corner,

grasp the horns of the altar. 51 Solomon was informed, "Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; see, he has laid hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me first that he will not kill his servant with the sword.' " 52 So Solomon responded, "If he proves to be a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die." 53 Then King Solomon sent to have him brought down from the altar. He came to do obeisance to King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, "Go home."

2 When David's time to die drew near, he charged his son Solomon, saying: 2 "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, 3 and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. 4 Then the LORD will establish his word that he spoke concerning me: 'If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.'

5 "Moreover you know also what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner son of Ner, and Amasa son of Jether, whom he murdered, retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet. 6 Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace. 7 Deal loyally, however, with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from your brother Absalom. 8 There is also with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a terrible curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim; but when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' 9 Therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him, and you must bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol."

10 Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. 11 The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and

was understood in some traditions as offering a place of asylum. **52:** Solomon promises that he will not harm Adonijah if he proves to be a *worthy man*, behaving loyally to the new king (but see 2.29–30).

2.1–12: David's last words and his death. 1–4: This passage, marked by Deuteronomistic style and ideology, recalls God's words to Joshua, Israel's leader after Moses's death (Josh 1.2–3,7–9). Solomon, like every king in Israel, must abide by God's commandments as written in the *law of Moses*, particularly in the book of Deuteronomy; many of David's exhortations are taken from that book (see Deut 4.29,40; 8.6; 10.12; 11.1; 29.9). **4:** A summary and interpretation of the dynastic promise of 2 Sam 7.12–16, though the unconditional promise of an eternal dynasty in 2 Sam 7 is here transformed into a conditional promise, stating that the Davidic dynasty will last only if his successors respect God's will as expressed in Deuteronomy. This transformation explains the catastrophe of Israel's and Judah's fall. **5–9:** These words put on David's lips legitimate Solomon's cruel killing of *Joab* and *Shimei* (vv. 28–46). **5–6:** *Joab*, a supporter of Adonijah, was formerly a loyal follower of David, who had carried out several murders, some at David's request. David accuses him of killing Abner (2 Sam 3.6–39) and Amasa (2 Sam 20.9–10). **8–9:** *Shimei*, who did not support Adonijah (1.8), has to die because he cursed David; David had sworn to him that he would not harm him (2 Sam 19.23), but he now asks Solomon to kill his former antagonist. **9:** Solomon's wisdom (Heb "ḥokmah"), which will be a main feature of his reign, is first alluded to here, although the word can also mean "cunning." *Sheol*, the underworld where all the dead go. **7:** In contrast to Joab and Shimei, Barzillai was a model of dutiful service to the king (2 Sam 17.27–29; 19.32–39), so his sons must be treated with respect and be allowed to eat at the king's table, a high distinction (cf. 2 Kings 25.27–30). **10:** *David slept with his ancestors*, this standard formula occurs for kings who died a natural death and expresses the idea of being united with one's ancestors in the underworld; see also 16.25n. **11:** The *forty-year* reign of David (and later, of Solomon—see 11.42) should be understood symbolically as a reign of a complete, perfect period. It is impossible to reconstruct historical dates for Israel's first kings (Saul, David, and Solomon), though

thirty-three years in Jerusalem. 12 So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

13 Then Adonijah son of Haggith came to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. She asked, "Do you come peaceably?" He said, "Peaceably." 14 Then he said, "May I have a word with you?" She said, "Go on." 15 He said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel expected me to reign; however, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother's, for it was his from the LORD. 16 And now I have one request to make of you; do not refuse me." She said to him, "Go on." 17 He said, "Please ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife." 18 Bathsheba said, "Very well; I will speak to the king on your behalf."

19 So Bathsheba went to King Solomon, to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. 20 Then she said, "I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you." 21 She said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to your brother Adonijah as his wife." 22 King Solomon answered his mother, "And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom as well! For he is my elder brother; ask not only for him but also for the priest Abiathar and for Joab son of Zeruiah!" 23 Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, "So may God do to me, and more also, for Adonijah has devised this scheme at the risk of his life! 24 Now therefore as the LORD lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of my father David, and who has made me a house as he promised, today Adonijah shall be put to death." 25 So King Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he struck him down, and he died.

26 The king said to the priest Abiathar, "Go to Anathoth, to your estate; for you deserve death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and because you shared in all the hardships my father endured." 27 So Solomon banished Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, thus fulfilling the word of the LORD that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

28 When the news came to Joab—for Joab had supported Adonijah though he had not supported Absalom—Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and grasped the horns of the altar. 29 When it was told King Solomon, "Joab has fled to the tent of the LORD and now is beside the altar," Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, strike him down." 30 So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and said to him, "The king commands, 'Come out.' " But he said, "No, I will die here." Then Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, "Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me." 31 The king replied to him, "Do as he has said, strike him down and bury him; and thus take away from me and from my father's house the guilt for the blood that Joab shed without cause. 32 The LORD will bring back his bloody deeds on his own head, because, without the knowledge of my father David, he attacked

they likely ruled in the first half of the tenth century BCE; see Chronological Table of Rulers on pp. 1914–17. **12:** The notice about the establishment of Solomon's kingdom is repeated in v. 46; between these two verses the narrator tells us how this was accomplished.

2.13–46: Solomon's elimination of his enemies and consolidation of his kingship. The narrator's attitude toward these events is often unclear. **13–25:** *Adonijah*'s request, which is relayed by Bathsheba, to marry David's last concubine Abishag could be understood as legitimating a claim to the throne (see 2 Sam 16.20–23). **19:** Bathsheba's coming to Solomon is similar to her coming to David in 1.15–21 (see also 2 Sam 11.4). In both cases her focus is on Adonijah, though here, in contrast to ch 1, she pleads on his behalf. **23:** In Solomon's eyes Adonijah is still a rival who has to die. **24:** This alludes to 2 Sam 7.11,16,26, and Solomon thereby presents himself as the one who will continue the Davidic dynasty. **26–27:** Adonijah's death is followed by banishing his supporter, the priest *Abiathar*. Abiathar's exile to *Anathoth* (ca. 4 mi [6 km] northeast of Jerusalem), the hometown of the prophet Jeremiah, fulfills the divine oracle against the descendants of the priest Eli in 1 Sam 2.27–36. **28–35:** The death of *Joab* casts a negative light on Solomon since he has Benaiah (who also killed Adonijah) kill him while he is seeking sanctuary, grasping the horns of the altar as Adonijah had done earlier (see 1.50). **31:** *The guilt for*

and killed with the sword two men more righteous and better than himself, Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. [33] So shall their blood come back on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever; but to David, and to his descendants, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace from the LORD forevermore." [34] Then Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up and struck him down and killed him; and he was buried at his own house near the wilderness. [35] The king put Benaiah son of Jehoiada over the army in his place, and the king put the priest Zadok in the place of Abiathar.

[36] Then the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and live there, and do not go out from there to any place whatever. [37] For on the day you go out, and cross the Wadi Kidron, know for certain that you shall die; your blood shall be on your own head." [38] And Shimei said to the king, "The sentence is fair; as my lord the king has said, so will your servant do." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days.

[39] But it happened at the end of three years that two of Shimei's slaves ran away to King Achish son of Maacah of Gath. When it was told Shimei, "Your slaves are in Gath," [40] Shimei arose and saddled a donkey, and went to Achish in Gath, to search for his slaves; Shimei went and brought his slaves from Gath. [41] When Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and returned, [42] the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD, and solemnly adjure you, saying, 'Know for certain that on the day you go out and go to any place whatever, you shall die'? And you said to me, 'The sentence is fair; I accept.' [43] Why then have you not kept your oath to the LORD and the commandment with which I charged you?" [44] The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your own heart all the evil that you did to my father David; so the LORD will bring back your evil on your own head. [45] But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever." [46] Then the king commanded Benaiah son of Jehoiada; and he went out and struck him down, and he died.

So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

3 Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt; he took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David, until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem. [2] The people were sacrificing at the high places, however, because no house had yet been built for the name of the LORD.

[3] Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. [4] The

the blood, see vv. 5–6n. **34:** *House,* the reading in some Greek manuscripts as "grave" is preferable. **36–46:** *Shimei* is first put under house arrest in Jerusalem in order to prevent him from crossing the *Wadi Kidron,* to enter the territory of Benjamin, King Saul's home. As a descendant of Saul, Shimei was a potential danger to the Davidic dynasty. When Shimei goes westward to the Philistine town of Gath, Solomon takes this opportunity to have him executed. **46:** Solomon's kingdom is established by violence, but the author does not evaluate this negatively; Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian annals tell similar stories about the rise to power of important kings.

3.1–28: Solomon's wisdom. A more positive image of Solomon than in the previous chapter. **1:** The story of Solomon's reign starts with a note about his marriage with *Pharaoh's daughter*, also mentioned in the MT in 7.8 and 9.16–17,24, while the LXX reports it in different places (2.35c,f.; 5.14; 7.45). The historicity of this information is difficult to establish, especially since the Pharaoh's name is not given, but it may be Shishak, mentioned in 11.40. **2–3:** The people and Solomon, in contradiction to Deuteronomic law (Deut 12) worship Yahweh at the *high places*, local open-air sanctuaries, which are often condemned as idolatrous. Solomon is here exonerated, since the temple for the God of Israel, the only legitimate sanctuary in the eyes of the Deuteronomists, has not yet been built. *Walking in the statutes of his father David* refers back to 2.2–4. **4–15:** The divine vision, along with that in 9.1–9, organizes the story of Solomon's rule into two parts: 3.4–8.66 relates mostly the positive aspects of his reign, which culminates with the building of the Temple; 9.10–11.43 relates Solomon's problematic behavior, which led to disaster. **4:** *Gibeon*, ca. 6 mi (10 km) north-northwest of Jerusalem, was an important religious

king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.
5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." 6 And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. 7 And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. 9 Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 11 God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, 12 I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. 13 I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. 14 If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

15 Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream. He came to Jerusalem where he stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. He offered up burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, and provided a feast for all his servants.

16 Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him.
17 The one woman said, "Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. 18 Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house. 19 Then this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. 20 She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. 21 When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne." 22 But the other woman said, "No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours." The first said, "No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine." So they argued before the king.

23 Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; while the other says, 'Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one.' "
24 So the king said, "Bring me a sword," and

and political center during the monarchy. Solomon honors the place by seeking there, through sacrifices and an incubation dream, a divine oracle at the beginning of his reign. **5–9:** God tests Solomon and he behaves rightly in asking for wisdom in order to accomplish his royal task. **7:** Solomon's self-presentation as a *little child* or a young boy is a conventional expression of incapacity to accomplish an important task (see Judg 6.15; Jer 1.6). *To go out or come in* concerns military experience (see Num 27.15–17). **10–13:** God is pleased by Solomon's quest for wisdom and not for long life (see Ps. 21.5) or victory against his enemies (see Ps 2.8–9), and also promises him outstanding wealth. Both themes are developed in the following account of Solomon's reign. **14:** The divine promise is offered conditionally with a typical Deuteronomistic vocabulary and theology: the king must obey the divine law; see also 6.11–13n. **15:** Solomon moves from Gibeon to Jerusalem, emphasizing that the only legitimate place for worshiping the LORD is in Jerusalem. **16–28:** The "judgment of Solomon" is the first illustration of the king's newly acquired wisdom. Solomon's name is not mentioned in this story, which may originally have been an independent folktale. **16:** The protagonists in this story are two prostitutes who live together in the same house for economic reasons; the text does not condemn their profession. **19–24:** For the king as for the reader, it is difficult to decide which woman is speaking the truth and which is lying. The mortality rate of newborn babies in antiquity was very high. **24–27:** Contrary to ch 2, where Solomon kills his enemies by the

they brought a sword before the king. 25 The king said, "Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other." 26 But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—because compassion for her son burned within her—"Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!" The other said, "It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it." 27 Then the king responded: "Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother." 28 All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.

4 King Solomon was king over all Israel, 2 and these were his high officials: Azariah son of Zadok was the priest; 3 Elihoreph and Ahijah sons of Shisha were secretaries; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; 4 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in command of the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; 5 Azariah son of Nathan was over the officials; Zabud son of Nathan was priest and king's friend; 6 Ahishar was in charge of the palace; and Adoniram son of Abda was in charge of the forced labor.

7 Solomon had twelve officials over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each one had to make provision for one month in the year. 8 These were their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim; 9 Ben-deker, in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, and Elon-beth-hanan; 10 Ben-hesed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh and all the land of Hepher); 11 Ben-abinadab, in all Naphath-dor (he had Taphath, Solomon's daughter, as his wife); 12 Baana son of Ahilud, in Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth-shean, which is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, and from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, as far as the other side of Jokmeam; 13 Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead (he had the villages of Jair son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead, and he had the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars); 14 Ahinadab son of Iddo, in Mahanaim; 15 Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he had taken Basemath, Solomon's daughter, as his wife); 16 Baana son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; 17 Jehoshaphat son of Paruah, in Issachar; 18 Shimei son of Ela, in Benjamin; 19 Geber son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of King Sihon of the Amorites and of King Og of Bashan. And there was one official in the land of Judah.

20 Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank and were happy. 21 [a]Solomon was sovereign over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, even to the border of

[a] Ch 5.1 in Heb

sword, it is used here to preserve life and establish justice. **26:** *Compassion,* literally "bowels" or "womb," a seat of emotions in the ancient Near East. **28:** Solomon is legitimated through his divine wisdom, which means he represents God to his subjects.

4.1–34: The organization of Solomon's kingdom. 1–6: A list of Solomon's high officials. The most important positions at the royal court were the priest; the state-secretary or "scribe" and spokesman; the chief commander of the army; the chief of the officials (see vv. 7–19); the king's friend, a title for the king's confidant; the prime minister, called the one who "was in charge of the palace," the most important official (cf. Gen 39.4; 41.40); and the supervisor of the forced labor, a new institution that will play an important role during Solomon's reign. **4:** Surprisingly *Abiathar*, who according to 2.27 had been banished, is mentioned together with *Zadok.* **6:** The mention of Adoniram as in charge of the corvée (see also 5.14) prepares the reader for the conflict that arises in ch 12, after Solomon's death. **7–19:** Twelve officials who functioned as governors in charge of twelve regions in northern Israel, only partially based on traditional tribal areas (see map on p. 503). They organized taxes and provisions for the king and the Jerusalem court, with each region responsible for the provision for one month of the year. Judah was not represented in this system. **19:** The text is uncertain here. The NRSV reference to *Judah* is found in some Greek manuscripts but not in the Hebrew. A later copyist probably missed a reference to Judah and inserted it here. The Hebrew reads: "there was one official in the land," probably the person "over the officials" mentioned in v. 5 to whom the twelve district-officials were responsible. **20:** The concluding remark suggests that under Solomon's reign God's promise that Israel would be *as numerous as the sand by the sea* (Gen 22.17; 32.12) had been fulfilled. **21–28:** Solomon is described as dominating all kingdoms in the ancient

4:7-19: Solomon's twelve administrative districts

Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

22 Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of choice flour, and sixty cors of meal, 23 ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl. 24 For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphsah to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates; and he had peace on all sides. 25 During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees. 26 Solomon also had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. 27 Those officials supplied provisions for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table, each one in his month; they let nothing be lacking. 28 They also brought to the required place barley and straw for the horses and swift steeds, each according to his charge.

29 God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore, 30 so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, children of Mahol; his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations. 32 He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. 33 He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that grows in the wall; he would speak of animals, and birds, and reptiles, and fish. 34 People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

5 [a] Now King Hiram of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father; for Hiram had always been a friend to David. 2 Solomon sent word to Hiram, saying, 3 "You know that my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.[b] 4 But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune. 5 So I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD said to my father David, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.' 6 Therefore command that cedars from the Lebanon be cut for me. My servants will join your servants, and I will give you whatever wages you set for your servants; for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians."

[a] Ch 5.15 in Heb
[b] Gk Tg Vg: Heb *my feet* or *his feet*

Near East, an idealized description based on the borders of the land promised to Abraham in Gen 15.18. This description covers the Persian satrapy of Transeuphratene, beyond the Euphrates, which is likely reflected in the Hebrew text of v. 24. More realistic boundaries of Israel are found in v. 25, "from Dan to Beer-sheba," the traditional northern and southern limits of Israel and Judah, though this too was probably too extensive for the boundaries of Israel in this period. **22–23, 27–28:** Additional information (see 4.7) about the royal provisions, which are incredibly high. **26:** For Solomon's *horses* see 10.26–29 and also the critique in Deut 17.16. **29–34:** Solomon surpasses the other nations also in wisdom. He is wiser than the great nations of wisdom, *Egypt* and *the people of the east* (perhaps Assyria and Babylon, but see Prov 30.1; 31.1) and wiser than the great men known for their wisdom: *Ethan*, *Heman*, *Calcol,* and *Darda* (mentioned in 1 Chr 2.6; 6.18–28). **32:** Solomon's reputation as a maker of *proverbs* is reflected in Prov 1.1; 10.1; 25.1, where he is considered the author of different collections of proverbs. For the attribution of *songs* to Solomon, see Pss 72; 127; Song 1.1.

5.1–18: Solomon's relation with Hiram of Tyre and the preparations for building the Temple. According to 2 Sam 5.11, King Hiram of Tyre, an important Phoenician city on the Mediterranean coast just north of Israel, was an ally of David. This Hiram is not mentioned in nonbiblical sources; a king of Tyre named Hirummu appears ca. 730 BCE in the annals of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III. **3–4:** The divine gift of *rest* from all enemies is a prominent theme in the Deuteronomistic History (e.g., Deut 12.10; Josh 21.44; 23.1; 2 Sam 7.1). Here this rest is a necessary condition for the building of the Temple, explaining that David could not build the Temple because he, unlike Solomon, had to fight many wars. **6:** The Phoenicians were famous for their *cedars*, one of their chief

7 When Hiram heard the words of Solomon, he rejoiced greatly, and said, "Blessed be the LORD today, who has given to David a wise son to be over this great people." 8 Hiram sent word to Solomon, "I have heard the message that you have sent to me; I will fulfill all your needs in the matter of cedar and cypress timber. 9 My servants shall bring it down to the sea from the Lebanon; I will make it into rafts to go by sea to the place you indicate. I will have them broken up there for you to take away. And you shall meet my needs by providing food for my household." 10 So Hiram supplied Solomon's every need for timber of cedar and cypress. 11 Solomon in turn gave Hiram twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty cors of fine oil. Solomon gave this to Hiram year by year. 12 So the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him. There was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and the two of them made a treaty.

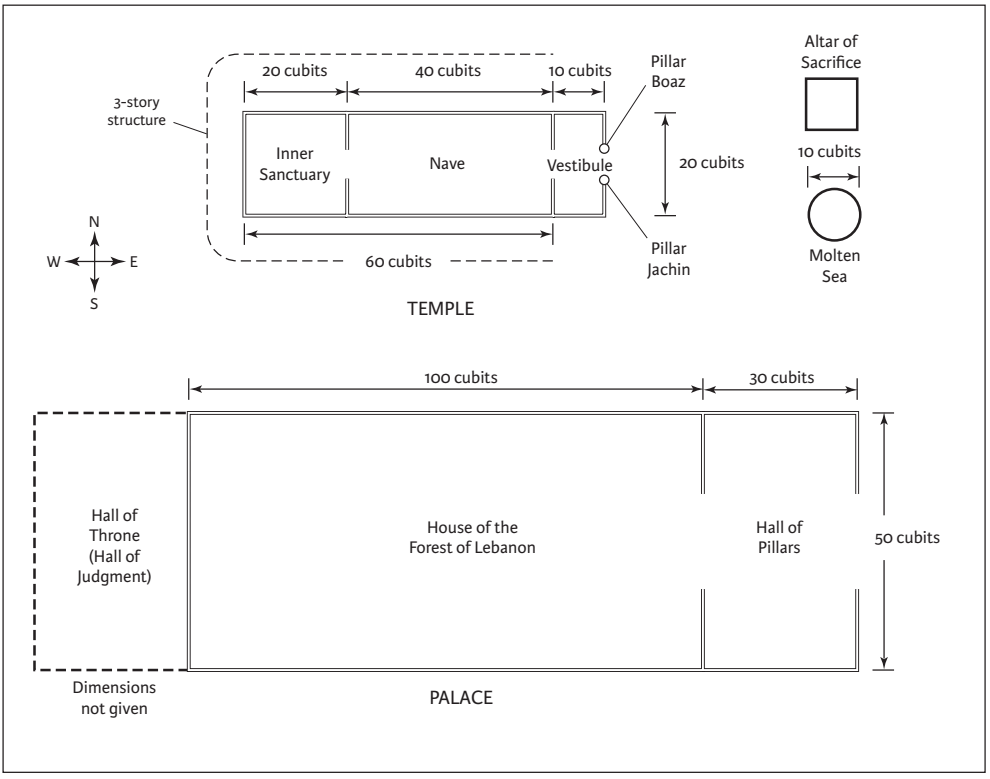
13 King Solomon conscripted forced labor out of all Israel; the levy numbered thirty thousand men. 14 He sent them to the Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts; they would be a month in the Lebanon and two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor. 15 Solomon also had seventy thousand laborers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country, 16 besides Solomon's three thousand three hundred supervisors who were over the work, having charge of the people who did the work. 17 At the king's command, they quarried out great, costly stones in order to lay the foundation of the house with dressed stones. 18 So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the Gebalites did the stonecutting and prepared the timber and the stone to build the house.

6 In the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD. 2 The house that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. 3 The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits wide, across the width of the house. Its depth was ten cubits in front of the house. 4 For the house he made windows with recessed frames.[a] 5 He also built a structure against the wall of the house,

[a] Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

exports. Sidon was a city just north of Tyre; *Sidonians* is used as a general term for the Phoenicians. **7–12:** Hiram transports the wood in *rafts* and Solomon pays with very large amounts of *wheat* and *oil*. **11:** A *cor* as a liquid measure was ca. 61 gal (230 L), as a dry measure ca. 6.5 bushels (230 L). **12:** There is wordplay between *peace* (Heb "shalom") and Solomon ("Shelomoh"). **13–18:** Contrary to 9.20–22, this passage states that Solomon used Israelite *forced labor* in order to build the Temple. **16:** *Three thousand three hundred supervisors,* an exaggerated number, as are the others in this unit. **18:** The *Gebalites*, the inhabitants of Byblos, a Phoenician city north of Beirut, are mentioned here as a separate group. From early times Byblos was an important timber port, and later was a major shipping center of papyrus; the term "Bible" is derived from the city's name.

6.1–38: The building of the Temple. The Temple and its furnishings are described in detail, whereas the larger palace complex is described more briefly (7.1–12), suggesting that the writer was more interested in the Temple than the palace. The Temple is foreshadowed in the Tabernacle of Ex 25–31; 35–40, and is similar in design to sanctuaries found in Assyria, Syria, and Israel; the closest parallels are at Hazor in Israel, Tell Tayinat in southeastern Turkey, and Ain Dara in Syria. It is difficult to know what kind of information the author has about the First Temple of Jerusalem. The whole complex of 1 Kings 5–8 is similar to Assyrian royal inscriptions where the king reports how he received a divine call to construct or reconstruct a temple, the preparations for the construction, the description of the building, and the dedication of the sanctuary. In many places in chs 6–8, the MT and the LXX differ in details, **1:** The *four hundred eightieth year* (LXX "four hundred fortieth") after the Exodus belongs to a late system, which tries to provide a chronological structure to the narrative running from Genesis to 2 Kings. *Ziv*, the *second month* according to the Babylonian system from the spring New Year, falls in April-May. **2–10:** A *cubit* is the distance from the tip of the elbow to the tip of the middle finger (ca. 18 in [45 cm]). The Temple's form is tripartite, comprising the *vestibule* or entrance hall, the *nave* or main hall, and the *inner sanctuary*, the "most holy place" (v. 16) of the sanctuary, to which access was severely restricted. A complex structure is built around the Temple, especially *side chambers* that served as storage rooms, offices,



The Temple and palace of Solomon according to First Kings

running around the walls of the house, both the nave and the inner sanctuary; and he made side chambers all around. 6 The lowest story[a] was five cubits wide, the middle one was six cubits wide, and the third was seven cubits wide; for around the outside of the house he made offsets on the wall in order that the supporting beams should not be inserted into the walls of the house.

7 The house was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built.

8 The entrance for the middle story was on the south side of the house: one went up by winding stairs to the middle story, and from the middle story to the third. 9 So he built the house, and finished it; he roofed the house with beams and planks of cedar. 10 He built the structure against the whole house, each story[b] five cubits high, and it was joined to the house with timbers of cedar.

11 Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, 12 "Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father David. 13 I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel."

[a] Gk: Heb *structure*
[b] Heb lacks *each story*

and "chapels." **7:** No *iron* tools were used at the Temple site; cf. Ex 20.25; Deut 27.5. 1 Chr 22.2, however, notes that David prepares hewn stones for the Temple. **9:** The note about the completion of the work is reminiscent of Gen 2.1. **11–13:** God's speech to Solomon interrupts the building report and insists that the divine presence will inhabit the sanctuary only if Solomon observes the divine *commandments* (see also Jer 7.1–15). This corrects the idea in 2 Sam 7.11–16 of an unconditionally eternal dynasty. v. 12 reflects Deuteronomistic terminology,

14 So Solomon built the house, and finished it. 15 He lined the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the rafters of the ceiling, he covered them on the inside with wood; and he covered the floor of the house with boards of cypress. 16 He built twenty cubits of the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the rafters, and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the most holy place. 17 The house, that is, the nave in front of the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long. 18 The cedar within the house had carvings of gourds and open flowers; all was cedar, no stone was seen. 19 The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. 20 The interior of the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high; he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar.[a] 21 Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, then he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. 22 Next he overlaid the whole house with gold, in order that the whole house might be perfect; even the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

23 In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olivewood, each ten cubits high. 24 Five cubits was the length of one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the length of the other wing of the cherub; it was ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. 25 The other cherub also measured ten cubits; both cherubim had the same measure and the same form. 26 The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and so was that of the other cherub. 27 He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house; the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one was touching the one wall, and a wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall; their other wings toward the center of the house were touching wing to wing. 28 He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.

29 He carved the walls of the house all around about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms. 30 The floor of the house he overlaid with gold, in the inner and outer rooms.

31 For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olivewood; the lintel and the doorposts were five-sided.[a] 32 He covered the two doors of olivewood with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; he overlaid them with gold, and spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees.

33 So also he made for the entrance to the nave doorposts of olivewood, four-sided each, 34 and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding. 35 He carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, overlaying them with gold evenly applied upon the carved work. 36 He built the inner court with three courses of dressed stone to one course of cedar beams.

37 In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv. 38 In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

while v. 13 is Priestly. **14–36:** After the building of the external structure is concluded, the construction of the interior of the Temple is described. **15–18:** The interior walls, floors, and ceilings are covered with wood, so that all stones are concealed. **16:** *Most holy place,* lit., "holy of holies." **19–28:** Particular attention is paid to the inner sanctuary, the holiest part of the Temple where the *ark of the covenant* is placed. The ark symbolizes the LORD's presence among his people. **23–28:** The *cherubim* are winged composite creatures (human head and animal body) well known in the ancient Near East. In Assyria and Babylon, statues of similar hybrid creatures stood outside of temples and palaces to control and to protect the entrance; see also Gen 3.24, where they are guardians of the garden of Eden. In Canaanite and Phoenician art, winged human-faced creatures support the throne of a king, a function they likely had in the Temple (see Ps 99.1; 2 Kings 19.15); thus the ark as a whole was the throne of the LORD. **29–36:** This passage highlights the splendor of the decoration: everything was overlaid with gold, and there were special carvings, with the *cherubim* symbolizing divine protection, and *open flowers* and *palm trees* for fertility. The different, richly decorated *doors* separate the three parts of the Temple. **36–38:** Building the Temple took seven years and six months. *Bul,* September-October.

was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications. He was seven years in building it.

7 Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished his entire house.

[2] He built the House of the Forest of the Lebanon one hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high, built on four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams on the pillars. [3] It was roofed with cedar on the forty-five rafters, fifteen in each row, which were on the pillars. [4] There were window frames in the three rows, facing each other in the three rows. [5] All the doorways and doorposts had four-sided frames, opposite, facing each other in the three rows.

[6] He made the Hall of Pillars fifty cubits long and thirty cubits wide. There was a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy in front of them.

[7] He made the Hall of the Throne where he was to pronounce judgment, the Hall of Justice, covered with cedar from floor to floor.

[8] His own house where he would reside, in the other court back of the hall, was of the same construction. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken in marriage.

[9] All these were made of costly stones, cut according to measure, sawed with saws, back and front, from the foundation to the coping, and from outside to the great court. [10] The foundation was of costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight and ten cubits. [11] There were costly stones above, cut to measure, and cedarwood. [12] The great court had three courses of dressed stone to one layer of cedar beams all around; so had the inner court of the house of the LORD, and the vestibule of the house.

[13] Now King Solomon invited and received Hiram from Tyre. [14] He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, whose father, a man of Tyre, had been an artisan in bronze; he was full of skill, intelligence, and knowledge in working bronze. He came to King Solomon, and did all his work.

[15] He cast two pillars of bronze. Eighteen cubits was the height of the one, and a cord of twelve cubits would encircle it; the second pillar was the same.[a] [16] He also made two capitals of molten bronze, to set on the tops of the pillars; the height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits. [17] There were nets of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals on the tops of the pillars; seven[b] for the one capital, and seven[b] for the other capital. [18] He made the columns with two rows around each latticework to cover the capitals that were above the pomegranates; he did the same with the other capital. [19] Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-work, four cubits high. [20] The capitals were on the two

[a] Cn: Heb *and a cord of twelve cubits encircled the second pillar*; Compare Jer 52.21
[b] Heb: Gk *a net*

7.1–12: Building the palace. In the ancient Near East the palace and the (royal) sanctuary often belong to the same complex. Here the Temple is relatively modest compared to the palace. **1:** Solomon spent *thirteen years*, almost twice as long on his palace as he did on the Temple. **2–5:** *House of the Forest of the Lebanon,* the rows of cedar pillars suggest the idea of a forest. Such a structure, which may show Egyptian influence, was perhaps a treasury and armory (see 1 Kings 10.17; Isa 22.8) or a reception hall. For the author, this was the most important building of the palace complex. *Cubit,* see 6.2–10n. **6–7:** *The Hall of Pillars* could have been the waiting hall for *the Hall of the Throne*, where the king held audience and dispensed justice. **8:** The private quarters comprise Solomon's residence and a residence for the daughter of Pharaoh (see 3.1; 9.24). The author does not tell us about the harem for Solomon's other wives. **9–12:** The foundations were built with huge quarry blocks.

7.13–51: Hiram and the furnishings of the Temple. 13–14: The Israelite *Hiram* who appears here as craftsman, called Huram-abi in 2 Chr 2.12–13, should not be confused with King Hiram of ch 5. His skills are like those of Bezalel, who constructed the Tabernacle (Ex 31.3; 35.31). **15–22:** The two huge pillars (more than 26 ft [8 m] high) at the entry of the vestibule symbolize the LORD's protection of the royal dynasty. *Jachin,* meaning "he will establish," refers to God's initiative to establish the throne of the king (2 Sam 7.13); *Boaz,* "by (his) strength," expresses the king's dependence on the divine favor. Apparently, these pillars function as stylized gates of the Temple; in Mesopotamia, gates often bore specific names that implored the deities for blessing and assis-

pillars and also above the rounded projection that was beside the latticework; there were two hundred pomegranates in rows all around; and so with the other capital. 21 He set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple; he set up the pillar on the south and called it Jachin; and he set up the pillar on the north and called it Boaz. 22 On the tops of the pillars was lily-work. Thus the work of the pillars was finished.

23 Then he made the molten sea; it was round, ten cubits from brim to brim, and five cubits high. A line of thirty cubits would encircle it completely. 24 Under its brim were panels all around it, each of ten cubits, surrounding the sea; there were two rows of panels, cast when it was cast. 25 It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; the sea was set on them. The hindquarters of each were toward the inside. 26 Its thickness was a handbreadth; its brim was made like the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily; it held two thousand baths.[a]

27 He also made the ten stands of bronze; each stand was four cubits long, four cubits wide, and three cubits high. 28 This was the construction of the stands: they had borders; the borders were within the frames; 29 on the borders that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. On the frames, both above and below the lions and oxen, there were wreaths of beveled work. 30 Each stand had four bronze wheels and axles of bronze; at the four corners were supports for a basin. The supports were cast with wreaths at the side of each. 31 Its opening was within the crown whose height was one cubit; its opening was round, as a pedestal is made; it was a cubit and a half wide. At its opening there were carvings; its borders were four-sided, not round. 32 The four wheels were underneath the borders; the axles of the wheels were in the stands; and the height of a wheel was a cubit and a half. 33 The wheels were made like a chariot wheel; their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast. 34 There were four supports at the four corners of each stand; the supports were of one piece with the stands. 35 On the top of the stand there was a round band half a cubit high; on the top of the stand, its stays and its borders were of one piece with it. 36 On the surfaces of its stays and on its borders he carved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, where each had space, with wreaths all around. 37 In this way he made the ten stands; all of them were cast alike, with the same size and the same form.

38 He made ten basins of bronze; each basin held forty baths,[a] each basin measured four cubits; there was a basin for each of the ten stands. 39 He set five of the stands on the south side of the house, and five on the north side of the house; he set the sea on the southeast corner of the house.

40 Hiram also made the pots, the shovels, and the basins. So Hiram finished all the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of the Lord: 41 the two pillars, the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars, the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars; 42 the four hundred pomegranates for the two latticeworks, two rows of pomegranates for each latticework, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars; 43 the ten stands, the ten basins on the stands; 44 the one sea, and the twelve oxen underneath the sea.

45 The pots, the shovels, and the basins, all these vessels that Hiram made for King Solomon for the house of the Lord were

[a] A Heb measure of volume

tance. **23–26:** *Molten*, molded or cast. The *molten sea* was a large metal basin filled with water representing the primeval watery chaos subdued by the Lord, creator of the world (see, e.g., Pss 74.12–17; 89.9–12). The twelve *oxen* or bulls that supported the basin represented divine strength (cf. 1 Kings 12.28), while the number twelve also alludes to the twelve tribes of Israel. *Two thousand baths,* ca. 12,000 gal (46,000 L). **27–39:** The wheeled stands and their basins may have originally symbolized God's power to provide water and rain, but later they were understood to provide the water necessary for the performance of sacrificial worship (2 Chr 4.6). **40–51:** The division of work between Hiram and Solomon: Hiram made the objects of *bronze*, whereas Solomon made

of burnished bronze. 46 In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan. 47 Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because there were so many of them; the weight of the bronze was not determined.

48 So Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of the LORD: the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of the Presence, 49 the lampstands of pure gold, five on the south side and five on the north, in front of the inner sanctuary; the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of gold; 50 the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and firepans, of pure gold; the sockets for the doors of the innermost part of the house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the nave of the temple, of gold.

51 Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the LORD was finished. Solomon brought in the things that his father David had dedicated, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

8 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. 2 All the people of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the festival in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. 3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests carried the ark. 4 So they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. 5 King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. 6 Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. 7 For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles. 8 The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside; they are there to this day. 9 There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses had placed there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites, when they came out of the land of Egypt. 10 And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

12 Then Solomon said,

"The LORD has said that he would dwell in
thick darkness.

the more prestigious vessels of *gold*. The lists in vv. 45–45 and 48–51 resemble an inventory. **46:** Hiram did his work in the *Jordan* valley, where appropriate clay is to be found. *Succoth,* probably Deir Alla, and *Zarethan*, were in Transjordan near the Jabbok River. **48–50:** Solomon himself is responsible for all objects related directly to sacrificial worship. These verses depend on the Tabernacle account in Ex 25 and 30, one of the few places where a Priestly editor has revised Kings. **48:** *Bread of the Presence,* see Ex 25.30; Lev 24.5–9. Such breads were placed in front of a statue that symbolized the presence of the deity in the sanctuary. **51:** See 2 Sam 8.9–12, on the tribute that David *dedicated.*

8.1–66: The inauguration of the Temple. 1–13: The ark is now transferred from the tent sanctuary into the inner sanctuary of the Temple. **1–2:** The different identification of those *assembled* is one of many indications of the composite nature of this chapter; see also v. 65. The Temple was finished in the eighth month (6.38), so the inauguration took place in the following year in the *seventh month* (September-October), after the end of the harvest seasons, at the festival of booths (Sukkoth). **3–4:** As in Josh 3–4, the ark is carried by the *priests* and *Levites*, because touching it is dangerous for lay people; see also 2 Sam 6.6–7. **5:** The ceremony is framed by sacrifices; see v. 62. **9:** The statement that nothing was in the ark but the *tablets of stone that Moses had placed* (see Deut 10.1–5) is meant to counter the popular idea that there were other objects in the ark representing God's presence; but see Heb 9.4 and cf. Ex 16.32–34; Num 17.10. **10–11:** A cloud signifies divine presence (e.g., Ex 13.21–22; 16.10; 19.9) and covered the earlier tent sanctuary upon its completion (Ex 40.34–38). **12–13:** An independent poetic statement, which appears in a different, perhaps more original form in the LXX after v. 53.

13 I have built you an exalted house,
a place for you to dwell in forever."
14 Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. 15 He said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David, saying, 16 'Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any of the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.' 17 My father David had it in mind to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. 18 But the LORD said to my father David, 'You did well to consider building a house for my name; 19 nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.' 20 Now the LORD has upheld the promise that he made; for I have risen in the place of my father David; I sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. 21 There I have provided a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with our ancestors when he brought them out of the land of Egypt."

22 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. 23 He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, 24 the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. 25 Therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' 26 Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David.

27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! 28 Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O LORD my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; 29 that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. 30 Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive.

31 "If someone sins against a neighbor and is given an oath to swear, and comes and swears before your altar in this house, 32 then hear in heaven, and act, and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing their conduct on their own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding them according to their righteousness.

It depicts the God of Israel as a storm god who wants to dwell in the *darkness* of a thick cloud. **14–66:** Solomon pronounces three prayers that provide important clues to the authors' and redactors' theological understanding of the Temple. **14–21:** The first prayer, in front of the assembly, builds on the promise to David of an eternal dynasty in 2 Sam 7 and highlights that Solomon is David's legitimate successor and the proper Temple builder. **16:** The LORD chose David before he chose a city for his dwelling place. Some Greek manuscripts add "I have chosen Jerusalem that my name might be there" to correct the idea that David chose Jerusalem (2 Sam 5.6–9). **22–53:** The second prayer, in front of the altar, is the central piece of the dedication. The author and redactors of this prayer reassert seven times that the LORD does not *dwell* in the Temple (contrast v. 13), but in *heaven* (vv. 32,34,36,39,43,45,49). The Temple is here not so much the place for sacrifices, but the place to pray to God, suggesting an exilic or postexilic origin for this prayer. Solomon enumerates seven different occasions for prayer—sin of an individual (vv. 31–32); defeat in battle (vv. 33–34); drought (vv. 35–36); famine and plagues (vv. 37–40); a foreigner who comes to pray (vv. 41–43); war (vv. 44–45); sin of the people and deportation (vv. 46–51). In the first occasions, prayer is located in the Temple, then in v. 35 it is in the direction of the sanctuary ("toward this place"), and finally, the praying individuals are in another country and pray *toward* the city and the Temple

33 "When your people Israel, having sinned
against you, are defeated before an enemy
but turn again to you, confess your name,
pray and plead with you in this house, 34 then
hear in heaven, forgive the sin of your people
Israel, and bring them again to the land that
you gave to their ancestors.
35 "When heaven is shut up and there is no
rain because they have sinned against you,
and then they pray toward this place, confess
your name, and turn from their sin, because
you punish[a] them, 36 then hear in heaven, and
forgive the sin of your servants, your people
Israel, when you teach them the good way
in which they should walk; and grant rain
on your land, which you have given to your
people as an inheritance.
37 "If there is famine in the land, if there is
plague, blight, mildew, locust, or caterpillar;
if their enemy besieges them in any[b] of their
cities; whatever plague, whatever sickness
there is; 38 whatever prayer, whatever plea
there is from any individual or from all your
people Israel, all knowing the afflictions of
their own hearts so that they stretch out
their hands toward this house; 39 then hear in
heaven your dwelling place, forgive, act, and
render to all whose hearts you know—ac-
cording to all their ways, for only you know
what is in every human heart— 40 so that
they may fear you all the days that they live in
the land that you gave to our ancestors.
41 "Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of
your people Israel, comes from a distant land
because of your name 42 —for they shall hear
of your great name, your mighty hand, and
your outstretched arm—when a foreigner
comes and prays toward this house, 43 then
hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do
according to all that the foreigner calls to you,
so that all the peoples of the earth may know
your name and fear you, as do your people
Israel, and so that they may know that your
name has been invoked on this house that I
have built.
44 "If your people go out to battle against
their enemy, by whatever way you shall send
them, and they pray to the LORD toward the
city that you have chosen and the house that
I have built for your name, 45 then hear in
heaven their prayer and their plea, and main-
tain their cause.
46 "If they sin against you—for there is no
one who does not sin—and you are angry
with them and give them to an enemy, so that
they are carried away captive to the land of
the enemy, far off or near; 47 yet if they come
to their senses in the land to which they have
been taken captive, and repent, and plead
with you in the land of their captors, saying,
'We have sinned, and have done wrong; we
have acted wickedly'; 48 if they repent with all
their heart and soul in the land of their ene-
mies, who took them captive, and pray to you
toward their land, which you gave to their
ancestors, the city that you have chosen, and
the house that I have built for your name;
49 then hear in heaven your dwelling place
their prayer and their plea, maintain their
cause 50 and forgive your people who have
sinned against you, and all their transgres-
sions that they have committed against you;
and grant them compassion in the sight of
their captors, so that they may have compas-
sion on them 51 (for they are your people and
heritage, which you brought out of Egypt,
from the midst of the iron-smelter). 52 Let
your eyes be open to the plea of your servant,
and to the plea of your people Israel, listening
to them whenever they call to you. 53 For you
have separated them from among all the peo-
ples of the earth, to be your heritage, just as
you promised through Moses, your servant,
when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt,
O Lord GOD."
54 Now when Solomon finished offering all
this prayer and this plea to the LORD, he arose

[a] Or *when you answer*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *in the land*

(v. 48), explicitly presupposing the situation in the Babylonian exile. **33–40, 46–51:** These occasions for prayer parallel the curses in Deut 28.21–25,38,64–65. **46:** A correction of the traditional Deuteronomistic implication that one can keep all the commandments and live without sin (see also Eccl 7.20). **50:** This verse also reflects the exile, hoping that the (Babylonian) captors will be merciful to the deportees. Rather than envisaging return to Israel, it hopes for a peaceful life in the Diaspora. **51:** The idea that Israel is the LORD's *heritage* typifies Deuteronomistic theology. *Iron-smelter,* see Deut 4.20; Jer 11.4. **54:** This verse presupposes that Solomon prayed

from facing the altar of the LORD, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven; 55 he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice:

56 "Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel according to all that he promised; not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke through his servant Moses. 57 The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our ancestors; may he not leave us or abandon us, 58 but incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his ordinances, which he commanded our ancestors. 59 Let these words of mine, with which I pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires; 60 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. 61 Therefore devote yourselves completely to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day."

62 Then the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD. 63 Solomon offered as sacrifices of well-being to the LORD twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. 64 The same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the fat pieces of the sacrifices of well-being, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the fat pieces of the sacrifices of well-being.

65 So Solomon held the festival at that time, and all Israel with him—a great assembly, people from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt—before the LORD our God, seven days.[a] 66 On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents, joyful and in good spirits because of all the goodness that the LORD had shown to his servant David and to his people Israel.

9 When Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king's house and all that Solomon desired to build, 2 the LORD appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. 3 The LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you made before me; I have consecrated this house that you have built, and put my name there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time. 4 As for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, 5 then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised your father David, saying, 'There shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.'

6 "If you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, 7 then I will cut Israel off

[a] Compare Gk: Heb *seven days and seven days, fourteen days*

kneeling, but in v. 22 he was standing. **55:** Introduction to the last prayer, which is presented as a blessing of the people. Solomon is again standing, the typical posture for someone blessing others. **56–61:** The last prayer reasserts, like Josh 21.43–45, that the LORD has fulfilled all his promises. It repeats the Deuteronomistic exhortation to respond to this gift by the observance of the divine commandments. **60:** The affirmation that Yahweh alone is God is also made in Deut 4.35,39 and often in Second Isaiah, both exilic texts. **62–64:** The number of the *sacrifices* is highly exaggerated, symbolizing Solomon's wealth and his devotion to the new sanctuary. **65–66:** The dedication of the Temple took place during the festival of Tabernacles. Following Deut 16.13–15 (but not Lev 23.36,39), the festival lasts seven, not eight days. The limits of the land are defined here (less extensively than in 4.21,24) in the north by *Lebo-hamath* (in the southern Orontes valley in Lebanon) and in the south by the *Wadi of Egypt* (the Wadi el-Arish or the Wadi Besor, both south of Gaza).

9.1–9: God's second appearance to Solomon. This recalls 3.4–15 and hints at the king's sinful side, which will appear more and more clearly. **3–5:** God's loyalty to Solomon depends on his behavior regarding the divine law. **5:** The promise of an everlasting dynasty reflects 2 Sam 7.13. **6–9:** The disobedience of Solomon and his

from the land that I have given them; and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight; and Israel will become a proverb and a taunt among all peoples. 8 This house will become a heap of ruins;[a] everyone passing by it will be astonished, and will hiss; and they will say, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this house?' 9 Then they will say, 'Because they have forsaken the LORD their God, who brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, worshiping them and serving them; therefore the LORD has brought this disaster upon them.' "

10 At the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king's house, 11 King Hiram of Tyre having supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress timber and gold, as much as he desired, King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. 12 But when Hiram came from Tyre to see the cities that Solomon had given him, they did not please him. 13 Therefore he said, "What kind of cities are these that you have given me, my brother?" So they are called the land of Cabul[b] to this day. 14 But Hiram had sent to the king one hundred twenty talents of gold.

15 This is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon conscripted to build the house of the LORD and his own house, the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer 16 (Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it down, had killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife; 17 so Solomon rebuilt Gezer), Lower Beth-horon, 18 Baalath, Tamar in the wilderness, within the land, 19 as well as all of Solomon's storage cities, the cities for his chariots, the cities for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build, in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. 20 All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel— 21 their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the Israelites were unable to destroy completely—these Solomon conscripted for slave labor, and so they are to this day. 22 But of the Israelites Solomon made no slaves; they were the soldiers, they were his officials, his commanders, his captains, and the commanders of his chariotry and cavalry.

23 These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work: five hundred fifty, who had charge of the people who carried on the work.

24 But Pharaoh's daughter went up from the city of David to her own house that Solomon had built for her; then he built the Millo.

25 Three times a year Solomon used to offer up burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being on the altar that he built for the LORD, offering incense[c] before the LORD. So he completed the house.

26 King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of

[a] Syr Old Latin: Heb *will become high*
[b] Perhaps meaning *a land good for nothing*
[c] Gk: Heb *offering incense with it that was*

successor is suggested; this disobedience will lead to the exile. **8–9:** Cf. Deut 29.23–24. Similar language is used in inscriptions of the seventh-century BCE Assyrian king Assurbanipal to describe the fate of his enemies.

9.10–28: The ambiguity of Solomon's wealth (see also 10.14–29). **10–14:** The text reports that Solomon paid a heavy price to the king of Tyre, *twenty cities*; this almost makes Solomon into Hiram's vassal. To correct this idea, the text states that Hiram had paid Solomon 120 talents of gold (a *talent* is ca. 75 lb [34 kg]). **13:** The name of the town of *Cabul,* ca. 8 mi (14 km) southeast of Acco, is explained with a play on the Heb "to be like nothing." **15:** The many building projects attributed to Solomon are accomplished through *forced labor*. *The Millo* (lit., "filled-in") refers to terraces to stabilize the wall and the official buildings of Jerusalem. **15–19:** The *cities* that Solomon built are located in strategic places, and are enumerated from north to south. **16:** The note about *Gezer,* claiming that the town was presented as Pharaoh's dowry to Solomon (see also 3.1; 9.24; 11.1), interrupts the list. **19**: The same Heb term for *storage cities*, perhaps an Akkadian loanword, occurs also in Ex 1.11, where the Hebrews in Egypt have to build such places, and several times in 2 Chr. **20–23:** This passage modifies 5.13 and 11.26–28, stating that only the former inhabitants of the land, and not all Israel, were conscripted for forced labor. **24–28:** Miscellaneous collection of different notes about Solomon's reign. **26:** *Ezion-geber,* perhaps a small

the Red Sea,[a] in the land of Edom. 27 Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, sailors who were familiar with the sea, together with the servants of Solomon. 28 They went to Ophir, and imported from there four hundred twenty talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

10 When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon (fame due to[b] the name of the LORD), she came to test him with hard questions. 2 She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. 3 Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her. 4 When the queen of Sheba had observed all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, 5 the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his valets, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.

6 So she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your accomplishments and of your wisdom, 7 but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. Not even half had been told me; your wisdom and prosperity far surpass the report that I had heard. 8 Happy are your wives![c] Happy are these your servants, who continually attend you and hear your wisdom! 9 Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king to execute justice and righteousness." 10 Then she gave the king one hundred twenty talents of gold, a great quantity of spices, and precious stones; never again did spices come in such quantity as that which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

11 Moreover, the fleet of Hiram, which carried gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir a great quantity of almug wood and precious stones. 12 From the almug wood the king made supports for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, lyres also and harps for the singers; no such almug wood has come or been seen to this day.

13 Meanwhile King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba every desire that she expressed, as well as what he gave her out of Solomon's royal bounty. Then she returned to her own land, with her servants.

14 The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred sixty-six talents of gold, 15 besides that which came from the traders and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land. 16 King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each large shield. 17 He made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went into each shield; and the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. 18 The

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Gk Syr: Heb *men*

island in the Gulf of Aqaba/Eilat. *Eloth,* also spelled "Elath," is at the northern tip of the same body of water. *Red Sea,* lit., "Sea of Reeds." In Hebrew the same term is used in the account of the crossing of the sea after the Exodus (Ex 14; etc.), but it can hardly be the same sea. **28:** The location of *Ophir* is uncertain. For the biblical writers it probably designated southern Arabia (Gen 10.29; Isa 13.12; Job 28.16).

10.1–13: The visit of the queen of Sheba. This story, which resembles a tale from *A Thousand and One Nights*, interrupts the enumeration of Solomon's wealth. Assyrian inscriptions from the seventh century BCE mention Arabian queens, and the author of this story may have known this situation. The queen of Sheba, in Arabia, is overwhelmed by Solomon's wealth and wisdom, and praises the God of Israel. Although the biblical narrative does not hint at a sexual relationship between Solomon and the queen of Sheba, an Ethiopian tradition sees the Ethiopian emperors as descendants of a union between them. **11–12:** These verses, which interrupt the narrative, belong to 9.26–28. *Ophir,* see 9.28n. *Almug wood*, a precious wood of uncertain species (traditionally sandalwood).

10.14–29: The ambiguity of Solomon's wealth, continued (see also 9.10–28). **14–22:** Contrary to Deut 17.17, Solomon has an obsession for *gold*. **14–15:** A *talent* is ca. 75 lb (34 kg). The number *six hundred sixty-six*, Solomon's income of gold, symbolizes totality (see also Ezra 2.13; contrast Rev 13.18); the annual amount is more than twenty-five tons **16:** A *shekel*, ca. 0.4 oz (11.5 g). **17:** A *mina,* ca. 20 oz (570 g). **18–20:** Solomon's *throne*, which

king also made a great ivory throne, and overlaid it with the finest gold. 19 The throne had six steps. The top of the throne was rounded in the back, and on each side of the seat were arm rests and two lions standing beside the arm rests, 20 while twelve lions were standing, one on each end of a step on the six steps. Nothing like it was ever made in any kingdom. 21 All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver—it was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. 22 For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.[a]

23 Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. 24 The whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. 25 Every one of them brought a present, objects of silver and gold, garments, weaponry, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.

26 Solomon gathered together chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. 27 The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars as numerous as the sycamores of the Shephelah. 28 Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders received them from Kue at a price. 29 A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred fifty; so through the king's traders they were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

11 King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the Israelites, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you; for they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods"; Solomon clung to these in love. 3 Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not completely follow the LORD, as his father David had done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. 8 He did the same

[a] Or *baboons*

symbolizes the divine cosmos of which the king was the guarantor, has many parallels in ancient Near Eastern art. **22:** The location of *Tarshish* is uncertain; it may be Tarsus in southern Turkey or Tartessus in southern Spain. If *peacock* is a correct translation, this would imply a trade connection with India. **26–29:** Contrary to Deut 17.16, Solomon accumulates many *horses* and apparently engages in horse trading. **27:** *The Shephelah,* the foothills between the Mediterranean coastal plain and the Judean hill country. **28–29:** According to this translation, Solomon was the intermediary in horse trading between Egypt and Asia Minor. **28:** *Kue*, Cilicia, in southern Asia Minor. **29:** The price of a *chariot* is highly exaggerated, as is Solomon's wealth in general. *Hittites,* a non-Semitic population in northern Syria and Asia Minor; *Aram,* northeast of Israel.

11.1–43: The troublesome end of Solomon's reign. 1–8: Solomon's many wives, contrary to Deut 17.17. **2:** A quotation from Deut 7.3–4, which prohibited intermarriage with the Canaanite population. Strictly speaking, the nations listed in v. 1 do not belong to the indigenous population of Canaan. **3:** Even for an oriental monarch, a harem with a thousand wives is difficult to imagine. According Song 6.8, Solomon had sixty wives and eighty concubines. **4:** The note about Solomon's old age recalls the aging David, who was manipulated by his wife Bathsheba. Now the foreign wives lead Solomon to worship their foreign deities (see Deut 17.17). **5:** *Astarte,* a popular Canaanite goddess especially venerated in Sidon; *Milcom,* the chief god of the Ammonites. **7:** *High place,* an open-air sanctuary, also used for worshiping the LORD (see 3.4). *Chemosh*, the chief god of the Moabites. *Molech,* a deity associated with child sacrifice, may be a mistake for Milcom (see v. 33). *The mountain east*

for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrificed to their gods.

9 Then the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10 and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD commanded. 11 Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. 12 Yet for the sake of your father David I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 I will not, however, tear away the entire kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

14 Then the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal house in Edom. 15 For when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the dead, he killed every male in Edom 16 (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had eliminated every male in Edom); 17 but Hadad fled to Egypt with some Edomites who were servants of his father. He was a young boy at that time. 18 They set out from Midian and came to Paran; they took people with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, assigned him an allowance of food, and gave him land. 19 Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him his sister-in-law for a wife, the sister of Queen Tahpenes. 20 The sister of Tahpenes gave birth by him to his son Genubath, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house; Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the children of Pharaoh. 21 When Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his ancestors and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me depart, that I may go to my own country." 22 But Pharaoh said to him, "What do you lack with me that you now seek to go to your own country?" And he said, "No, do let me go."

23 God raised up another adversary against Solomon,[a] Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, King Hadadezer of Zobah. 24 He gathered followers around him and became leader of a marauding band, after the slaughter by David; they went to Damascus, settled there, and made him king in Damascus. 25 He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon, making trouble as Hadad did; he despised Israel and reigned over Aram.

26 Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, rebelled against the king. 27 The following was the reason he rebelled against the king. Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the gap in the wall[b] of the city of his father David. 28 The man Jeroboam was very able, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious he gave him charge over all the forced labor

[a] Heb *him*
[b] Heb lacks *in the wall*

of Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives. **9–13:** In his final speech to Solomon, the LORD announces the splitting up of the kingdom during the reign of Solomon's son. **14–40:** Solomon is also punished during his own lifetime by three enemies that God raises up. **14–22:** *Hadad*, an Edomite prince who fled to Egypt during David's campaign against Edom (2 Sam 8.14); this episode thus would have transpired early rather than late in Solomon's reign, suggesting that the material here is arranged theologically, not chronologically. **19–22:** Hadad's integration into Pharaoh's house recalls the story of the young Moses (Ex 2.5–10). Like Solomon he also marries an Egyptian princess. *Tahpenes,* not a proper name, but a transcription of the Egyptian title "wife of the king." **20:** *Genubath,* perhaps loan word meaning "guest"; cf. Ex 2.22. **23–25:** *Rezon son of Eliada*, a mercenary who had served king *Hadadezer of Zobah*, an Aramean city-state north of *Damascus*, where he became king. Rezon's rise to kingship is reminiscent of David's rise to the throne. **25:** The reintroduction of Hadad may be a secondary insertion. **26–40:** The third enemy, Jeroboam. **26:** *Zeredah,* an important town in the hill country of Ephraim. *Zeruah,* the name of his mother, means "having a skin disease"; scribes may have modified her original name to vilify the first ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. **28:** Jeroboam is supervisor of the corvée of the *house of Joseph*,

of the house of Joseph. 29 About that time, when Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Ahijah had clothed himself with a new garment. The two of them were alone in the open country 30 when Ahijah laid hold of the new garment he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. 31 He then said to Jeroboam: Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "See, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon, and will give you ten tribes. 32 One tribe will remain his, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. 33 This is because he has[a] forsaken me, worshiped Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and has[a] not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, as his father David did. 34 Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom away from him but will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of my servant David whom I chose and who did keep my commandments and my statutes; 35 but I will take the kingdom away from his son and give it to you—that is, the ten tribes. 36 Yet to his son I will give one tribe, so that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name. 37 I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires; you shall be king over Israel. 38 If you will listen to all that I command you, walk in my ways, and do what is right in my sight by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you, and will build you an enduring house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. 39 For this reason I will punish the descendants of David, but not forever." 40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam promptly fled to Egypt, to King Shishak of Egypt, and remained in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

41 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did as well as his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon? 42 The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. 43 Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him.

12 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. 2 When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from[b] Egypt. 3 And they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, 4 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you." 5 He said to them, "Go away for three

[a] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they have*
[b] Gk Vg Compare 2 Chr 10.2: Heb *lived in*

which designates northern tribes, especially Ephraim and Manasseh. **29–39:** The encounter between Jeroboam and the prophet *Ahijah* from Shiloh, an important sanctuary in Ephraim (see 1 Sam 1.3), ca. 20 mi (32 km) north of Jerusalem, has many parallels with the account of Saul's rejection in 1 Sam 15.27–28. **29–33:** After the prophet tore his mantle into twelve pieces, ten parts (symbolizing ten tribes) are given to Jeroboam and only one tribe (Judah) is given to the Davidic dynasty. The missing tribe may be Benjamin (see 12.21), sometimes belonging to the Northern Kingdom, and finally, perhaps under King Josiah, annexed by Judah; or it may be Simeon, absorbed into Judah. **34–39:** Because of the promise related in 2 Sam 7.11–16, God will not bring David's dynasty to a total end. **36:** The *lamp* of David, also in 15.4; 2 Kings 8.19 (and see Ps 132.17), meaning that the Davidic dynasty will continually shine. **40:** Like Hadad, Jeroboam seeks asylum in *Egypt*. The Pharaoh *Shishak* is Shoshenq I, ruled ca. 945–924 BCE; he is the first pharaoh named in the Bible. **41–43:** The concluding formula for Solomon. The *Book of the Acts of Solomon* may have been a source for the authors of 1 Kings 1–11. *Forty years,* like David; see 2.11n. *Rehoboam* ruled ca. 928–911 BCE.

12.1–33: The disruption of Solomon's kingdom. 1–5: To rally the northern tribes, *Rehoboam,* Solomon's son, goes to *Shechem*, an important political and religious center (Gen 12.6–7; Josh 24) located between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim near modern Nablus. For David, the northern tribes had come to Hebron in the south (2 Sam 5.3); now Solomon's successor Rehoboam is obliged to go north. **2–5:** His rival *Jeroboam* is depicted as a second Moses who has come back from Egypt to liberate the people, who suffer under forced labor. He negotiates

The divided monarchy, the geography of chs 12–16. The dashed line shows the approximate boundaries between Israel, Judah, and Philistia.

days, then come again to me." So the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the older men who had attended his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" 7 They answered him, "If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever." 8 But he disregarded the advice that the older men gave him, and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and now attended him. 9 He said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us'?" 10 The young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus you should say to this people who spoke to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must lighten it for us'; thus you should say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. 11 Now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.' "

with Rehoboam as Moses did with Pharaoh. **6–15:** Rehoboam is patterned after the Pharaoh of the Exodus story, increasing the labor he requires from the populace (the *yoke*). **10:** NRSV *my little finger* follows the interpretive translation of the LXX; MT has "my small one," probably a euphemism for the penis. Rehoboam thinks that he is much more virile than his father Solomon. **11:** *Scorpions,* an apt metaphor for a whip embedded with thorns.

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to
Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said,
"Come to me again the third day." 13 The king
answered the people harshly. He disregarded
the advice that the older men had given him
14 and spoke to them according to the advice
of the young men, "My father made your
yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my
father disciplined you with whips, but I will
discipline you with scorpions." 15 So the king
did not listen to the people, because it was a
turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that
he might fulfill his word, which the LORD had
spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam
son of Nebat.

16 When all Israel saw that the king would
not listen to them, the people answered the
king,

"What share do we have in David?
We have no inheritance in the son of
Jesse.
To your tents, O Israel!
Look now to your own house, O David."

So Israel went away to their tents. 17 But Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites who were
living in the towns of Judah. 18 When King
Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster
over the forced labor, all Israel stoned him
to death. King Rehoboam then hurriedly
mounted his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So
Israel has been in rebellion against the house
of David to this day.

20 When all Israel heard that Jeroboam
had returned, they sent and called him to the
assembly and made him king over all Israel.
There was no one who followed the house of
David, except the tribe of Judah alone.

21 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem,
he assembled all the house of Judah and
the tribe of Benjamin, one hundred eighty
thousand chosen troops to fight against the
house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to
Rehoboam son of Solomon. 22 But the word of
God came to Shemaiah the man of God: 23 Say
to King Rehoboam of Judah, son of Solomon,
and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin,
and to the rest of the people, 24 "Thus says the
LORD, You shall not go up or fight against your
kindred the people of Israel. Let everyone
go home, for this thing is from me." So they
heeded the word of the LORD and went home
again, according to the word of the LORD.

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill
country of Ephraim, and resided there; he
went out from there and built Penuel. 26 Then
Jeroboam said to himself, "Now the kingdom
may well revert to the house of David. 27 If
this people continues to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem,
the heart of this people will turn again to
their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they
will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of
Judah." 28 So the king took counsel, and made
two calves of gold. He said to the people,[a]
"You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough.
Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you
up out of the land of Egypt." 29 He set one in
Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 And
this thing became a sin, for the people went
to worship before the one at Bethel and before the other as far as Dan.[b] 31 He also made

[a] Gk: Heb *to them*
[b] Compare Gk: Heb *went to the one as far as Dan*

16–20: The tribes of the north refuse to follow Rehoboam. **16:** *To your tents, O Israel!* a traditional exclamation (see 2 Sam 20.1) of the northern tribes, perhaps used as an appeal to return home after a battle. **17:** It is unclear *who the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah* are. **18:** *Adoram*, a variant spelling of Adoniram (4.6; 5.14). **19:** This conclusion, written from a Judahite perspective, is from a period when the Northern Kingdom still existed. **21–24:** Rehoboam, who wants to wage war against the northern tribes, is forbidden to do so by the otherwise unknown prophet *Shemaiah*. LXX has a second, shorter and different, version of 12.1–33, labeled 12.24.a–z, a midrashic addition of the sort found in Chronicles. **25–33:** Jeroboam constructs national sanctuaries at northern and southern cities in his kingdom, *Dan* and *Bethel*, an act referred to in a refrain throughout Kings as "the sin of Jeroboam." **28–29:** According to the Deuteronomistic historians, Jeroboam worshiped the LORD there in the form of a calf; thus the plural in v. 28 ("your gods") may refer to the two statues at Dan and Bethel. More likely, however, an original singular (as in Neh 9.18) has been changed to a plural to accuse Jeroboam not only of idolatry, but of polytheism. The wording is almost identical to the people's comment when Aaron made the golden calf in the desert (Ex 32.4), which has also the plural form. **31–33:** The Judean authors relate what they believe are further religious transgressions of Jeroboam: high places, illegitimate priests, and a different festival calendar.

houses[a] on high places, and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not Levites. 32 Jeroboam appointed a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the festival that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar; so he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. 33 He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he alone had devised; he appointed a festival for the people of Israel, and he went up to the altar to offer incense.

13 While Jeroboam was standing by the altar to offer incense, a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the LORD to Bethel 2 and proclaimed against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the LORD: 'A son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who offer incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.' " 3 He gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign that the LORD has spoken: 'The altar shall be torn down, and the ashes that are on it shall be poured out.' " 4 When the king heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Seize him!" But the hand that he stretched out against him withered so that he could not draw it back to himself. 5 The altar also was torn down, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign that the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. 6 The king said to the man of God, "Entreat now the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, so that my hand may be restored to me." So the man of God entreated the LORD; and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as it was before. 7 Then the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and dine, and I will give you a gift." 8 But the man of God said to the king, "If you give me half your kingdom, I will not go in with you; nor will I eat food or drink water in this place. 9 For thus I was commanded by the word of the LORD: You shall not eat food, or drink water, or return by the way that you came." 10 So he went another way, and did not return by the way that he had come to Bethel.

11 Now there lived an old prophet in Bethel. One of his sons came and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words also that he had spoken to the king, they told to their father. 12 Their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" And his sons showed him the way that the man of God who came from Judah had gone. 13 Then he said to his sons, "Saddle a donkey for me." So they saddled a donkey for him, and he mounted it. 14 He went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak tree. He said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" He answered, "I am." 15 Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat some food." 16 But he said, "I cannot return with you, or go in with you; nor will I eat food or drink water with you in this place; 17 for it was said to me by the word of the LORD: You shall not eat food or drink water there, or return by the way that you came."

[a] Gk Vg Compare 13.32: Heb *a house*

13.1–34: Jeroboam and the man of God from Judah. 1–10: Jeroboam is confronted by an anonymous man of God, a prophet, who announces the end of the kingdom of Israel and the profanation of the sanctuary of Bethel by the late seventh-century BCE Judean king *Josiah*. This oracle is fulfilled in 2 Kings 23.15–19, and originates from the period of Josiah. Such prophecies that connect distant parts of this work are typical of the Deuteronomistic History. This is one of many stories imported into Kings from a prophetic source that also included the Elijah and Elisha stories (see Introduction). **2–3:** Uniquely, the oracle is addressed not to the king, but to the altar where Jeroboam is offering incense. **4:** The *withered* (lit., "dried") *hand* of Jeroboam demonstrates the prophet's power over the king. **5:** This verse interrupts the story of the king's dried hand and was inserted by a redactor who wanted to anticipate the destruction of the altar of Bethel. **6–10:** Having restored the king's hand, the prophet obeys the LORD's order and refuses any compensation. **11–32:** In the following story the man of God acts differently and follows a prophet from Bethel who claims that God has also spoken to him; together, the stories illustrate the difficulty in distinguishing true from false divine oracles, and suggest, like Deut 18.21–22,

18 Then the other[a] said to him, "I also am a
prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me
by the word of the LORD: Bring him back with
you into your house so that he may eat food
and drink water." But he was deceiving him.
19 Then the man of God[a] went back with him,
and ate food and drank water in his house.

20 As they were sitting at the table, the
word of the LORD came to the prophet who
had brought him back; 21 and he proclaimed
to the man of God who came from Judah,
"Thus says the LORD: Because you have
disobeyed the word of the LORD, and have
not kept the commandment that the LORD
your God commanded you, 22 but have come
back and have eaten food and drunk water
in the place of which he said to you, 'Eat no
food, and drink no water,' your body shall
not come to your ancestral tomb." 23 After the
man of God[a] had eaten food and had drunk,
they saddled for him a donkey belonging
to the prophet who had brought him back.
24 Then as he went away, a lion met him on
the road and killed him. His body was thrown
in the road, and the donkey stood beside it;
the lion also stood beside the body. 25 People
passed by and saw the body thrown in the
road, with the lion standing by the body. And
they came and told it in the town where the
old prophet lived.

26 When the prophet who had brought
him back from the way heard of it, he said,
"It is the man of God who disobeyed the
word of the LORD; therefore the LORD has
given him to the lion, which has torn him
and killed him according to the word that the
LORD spoke to him." 27 Then he said to his
sons, "Saddle a donkey for me." So they sad-
dled one, 28 and he went and found the body
thrown in the road, with the donkey and the
lion standing beside the body. The lion had
not eaten the body or attacked the donkey.
29 The prophet took up the body of the man
of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought
it back to the city,[b] to mourn and to bury
him. 30 He laid the body in his own grave;
and they mourned over him, saying, "Alas,
my brother!" 31 After he had buried him, he
said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the
grave in which the man of God is buried; lay
my bones beside his bones. 32 For the saying
that he proclaimed by the word of the LORD
against the altar in Bethel, and against all the
houses of the high places that are in the cit-
ies of Samaria, shall surely come to pass."

33 Even after this event Jeroboam did not
turn from his evil way, but made priests for
the high places again from among all the
people; any who wanted to be priests he
consecrated for the high places. 34 This matter
became sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as
to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of
the earth.

14 At that time Abijah son of Jeroboam
fell sick. 2 Jeroboam said to his wife,
"Go, disguise yourself, so that it will not be
known that you are the wife of Jeroboam, and
go to Shiloh; for the prophet Ahijah is there,
who said of me that I should be king over
this people. 3 Take with you ten loaves, some
cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him; he
will tell you what shall happen to the child."

4 Jeroboam's wife did so; she set out and
went to Shiloh, and came to the house of
Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see, for his eyes
were dim because of his age. 5 But the LORD
said to Ahijah, "The wife of Jeroboam is com-

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Gk: Heb *he came to the town of the old prophet*

that the prophetic word is absolute and unchanging. **24–28:** The motif of a *lion* as instrument of divine punishment is also associated with Bethel in 2 Kings 17.25–26. The odd behavior of the lion—killing a man and then standing over the body beside an uneaten donkey— show that the lion was carrying out a divine order. **32:** *Samaria* became the capital of the Northern Kingdom only under Omri (16.24). The name here, which reflects a broad area beyond the capital city, likely reflects the Assyrian province of Samerina. **33–34:** These verses bridge the preceding and following stories.

14.1–31: The deaths of Jeroboam of Israel and Rehoboam of Judah. 1–18: The story of the illness of Jeroboam's son leads to an encounter between Jeroboam's wife and the prophet Ahijah, who had invested Jeroboam as ruler over Israel (11.29–31). **2:** Jeroboam asks his wife to disguise herself, thinking that a woman immediately recognized as the king's wife might receive a more positive oracle. **3:** It was a common practice to offer something to a prophet when seeking advice. **4–5:** Ahijah has become blind but the LORD is still revealing his plans to

ing to inquire of you concerning her son; for he is sick. Thus and thus you shall say to her."

When she came, she pretended to be another woman. [6] But when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam; why do you pretend to be another? For I am charged with heavy tidings for you. [7] Go, tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because I exalted you from among the people, made you leader over my people Israel, [8] and tore the kingdom away from the house of David to give it to you; yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my sight, [9] but you have done evil above all those who were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods, and cast images, provoking me to anger, and have thrust me behind your back; [10] therefore, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free in Israel, and will consume the house of Jeroboam, just as one burns up dung until it is all gone. [11] Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat; and anyone who dies in the open country, the birds of the air shall eat; for the LORD has spoken.' [12] Therefore set out, go to your house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die. [13] All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him; for he alone of Jeroboam's family shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something pleasing to the LORD, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam. [14] Moreover the LORD will raise up for himself a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam today, even right now![a]

[15] "The LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; he will root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their ancestors, and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their sacred poles,[b] provoking the LORD to anger. [16] He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and which he caused Israel to commit."

[17] Then Jeroboam's wife got up and went away, and she came to Tirzah. As she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. [18] All Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by his servant the prophet Ahijah.

[19] Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred and how he reigned, are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel. [20] The time that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years; then he slept with his ancestors, and his son Nadab succeeded him.

[21] Now Rehoboam son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. [22] Judah

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *Asherim*

him. **6–11:** Ahijah first delivers an oracle about the fall of Jeroboam's dynasty, unrelated to the illness of his son. **10:** The curse to *cut off . . . every male, both bond and free in Israel* is used against other northern kings (1 Kings 21.21; 2 Kings 9.8); *every male,* lit., "whoever urinates against a wall." **11:** This curse also appears in Assyrian loyalty treaties for those who do not respect the treaty (see also Deut 28.26). **12–13:** Only now does Abijah announce the death of Jeroboam's son. His burial contrasts with the violent end of the house of Jeroboam. The *something pleasing* in his behavior is not elaborated. **14:** An allusion to the conspiracy of Baasha (15.27–30), who overthrew the dynasty of Jeroboam. **15–16:** A further prophecy predicting the fall of the Northern Kingdom. **15:** *Ancestors*, lit., "fathers," the generation that entered the land; *beyond the Euphrates*, allusion to the Assyrian empire, which annexed the Northern Kingdom and deported part of its population in 722 BCE (see 2 Kings 17.6). *Sacred poles,* symbols of the goddess Asherah, who may have also been venerated as the consort of the God of Israel. **16:** *The sins of Jeroboam,* see 12.25–33n. **17–18:** The mention of *Tirzah* (probably Tell el-Farah, ca. 6 mi [10 km] north-northeast of Shechem) suggests that it had become Jeroboam's city of residence. According to 15.21 it became Israel's capital under Baasha. **19–20:** A standard conclusion for the reign of each king (see Introduction). **21–31:** In the view of the Deuteronomists, the reign of *Rehoboam* is not much better than that of Jeroboam; the description of the disorder in worship is very close to what is reported from the north. **21:** The presentation of his mother as an Ammonite (see also the repetition in v. 31, which frames the account of his

did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their ancestors had done. 23 For they also built for themselves high places, pillars, and sacred poles[a] on every high hill and under every green tree; 24 there were also male temple prostitutes in the land. They committed all the abominations of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.

25 In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; 26 he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took everything. He also took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made; 27 so King Rehoboam made shields of bronze instead, and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house. 28 As often as the king went into the house of the LORD, the guard carried them and brought them back to the guardroom.

29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 30 There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. 31 Rehoboam slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. His son Abijam succeeded him.

15 Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam began to reign over Judah. 2 He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom. 3 He committed all the sins that his father did before him; his heart was not true to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David. 4 Nevertheless for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him, and establishing Jerusalem; 5 because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. 6 The war begun between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continued all the days of his life. 7 The rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. 8 Abijam slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in the city of David. Then his son Asa succeeded him.

9 In the twentieth year of King Jeroboam of Israel, Asa began to reign over Judah; 10 he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom. 11 Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD, as his father David

[a] Heb *Asherim*

reign) links back to Solomon's foreign wives. **23:** *Pillars,* phallus-shaped standing stones, which stood, together with the Asherah poles (see v. 15n.), on *high hills* and under *green trees*, a standard expression for open-air sanctuaries (see, e.g., Deut 12.2–3, Jer 2.20). **24:** *Male prostitutes,* lit., "holy, consecrated persons," perhaps associated with the worship of the goddess Asherah. **25–28:** The campaign of Pharaoh *Shishak* (see 11.40) to the north is also attested in Egyptian sources that mention many locations in the Northern Kingdom but not Jerusalem or the specific names of the kings of Judah or Israel. **30:** *Wars* will frequently occur between Israel and Judah.

15.1–24: Abijam and Asa, kings of Judah. From this point until the fall of the Northern Kingdom, the accession year of each Judean king is dated with respect to the year of reign of the northern king. **1–8:** Abijam (called Abijah in the books of Chronicles), who reigned for a short time (ca. 911–908 BCE), is said to be as bad as Rehoboam. **2:** His mother was Maacah (see 2 Sam 3.3; 2 Chr 11.20; but 2 Chr 13.2 gives a different name), identified as the daughter of Abishalom. It is not clear whether this is the same person as David's son Absalom whose only known daughter is Tamar. **4:** The LORD maintains the dynasty only because of David; a *lamp,* see 11.36n. **5:** *The matter of Uriah the Hittite,* see 2 Sam 11–12. **6:** Contrary to the NRSV translation, the verse repeats 14.30; it may be misplaced or copied from there, and is missing in most Greek manuscripts. **9–24:** Asa is depicted as a good king with one of the longest reigns (ca. 907–867 BCE). **10–15:** If the *Maacah* here is identical with the one mentioned in 15.2, then Asa would be Abijam's brother, and not his son (v. 8). Perhaps *mother* is here a title for the queen mother, who would remain in power as long as she lived; Maacah's removal from that office (v. 13) strengthens this hypothesis. According to the Deuteronomistic authors of Kings, *Asa* is the first reforming king, who acts against the presence of other deities in Jerusalem. Nevertheless he does not close the *high places*,

had done. 12 He put away the male temple prostitutes out of the land, and removed all the idols that his ancestors had made. 13 He also removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother, because she had made an abominable image for Asherah; Asa cut down her image and burned it at the Wadi Kidron. 14 But the high places were not taken away. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was true to the LORD all his days. 15 He brought into the house of the LORD the votive gifts of his father and his own votive gifts—silver, gold, and utensils.

16 There was war between Asa and King Baasha of Israel all their days. 17 King Baasha of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, to prevent anyone from going out or coming in to King Asa of Judah. 18 Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and gave them into the hands of his servants. King Asa sent them to King Ben-hadad son of Tabrimmon son of Hezion of Aram, who resided in Damascus, saying, 19 "Let there be an alliance between me and you, like that between my father and your father: I am sending you a present of silver and gold; go, break your alliance with King Baasha of Israel, so that he may withdraw from me." 20 Ben-hadad listened to King Asa, and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. 21 When Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah and lived in Tirzah. 22 Then King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah, none was exempt: they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building; with them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. 23 Now the rest of all the acts of Asa, all his power, all that he did, and the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? But in his old age he was diseased in his feet. 24 Then Asa slept with his ancestors, and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his father David; his son Jehoshaphat succeeded him.

25 Nadab son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of King Asa of Judah; he reigned over Israel two years. 26 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of his ancestor and in the sin that he caused Israel to commit.

27 Baasha son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon. 28 So Baasha killed Nadab[a] in the third year of King Asa of Judah, and succeeded him. 29 As soon as he was king, he killed all the house of Jeroboam; he left to the house of Jeroboam

[a] Heb *him*

sanctuaries for the God of Israel outside of Jerusalem, although he favored the Jerusalem Temple. **12:** *Male temple prostitutes,* see 14.24n. **16–22:** Military hostilities between Asa and the northern usurper *Baasha*, whose reign is related in 15.27–30 and 15.33–16.7. **17:** Baasha conquered *Ramah,* in the territory of Benjamin 6 mi (10 km) north of Jerusalem, and fortified it as a border citadel against Judah. **18–19:** Asa is forced to make an alliance against Baasha with *King Ben-hadad* of *Damascus,* the name of several Aramean kings. **20–21:** *Ijon,* see 2 Kings 15.29; *Dan*, at the headwaters of the Jordan River; *Abel-beth-maacah*, 5 mi (8 km) west of Dan; *Chinneroth*, on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee (the plural refers to the town and the surrounding territory.) **21:** *Tirzah,* see 14.17–18n. **22–24:** Asa builds two border fortresses in northern Benjamin because he wants to stress that Benjamin belongs to Judah: *Geba,* ca. 6 mi (10 km) north of Jerusalem, and *Mizpah,* ca. 8 mi (12 km) north of Jerusalem, whose name means "lookout post" and which became an important administrative center after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE (see 2 Kings 25.22). **23–24:** The note about the king's disease of the *feet*, perhaps a euphemism for the genitals, may come from the royal archives. This could mean that his son Jehoshaphat (22.41) governed during the last years of Asa's life.

15.25–16.34: The northern kings from Nadab to Ahab. This section emphasizes the instability of the northern monarchy, in contrast to that of Judah. **15.25–32:** The authors provide little precise information about Nadab's short reign, ca. 907–906 BCE. **27–28:** *Baasha*, an officer from the tribe of *Issachar*, kills Nadab during the siege of the Philistine town *Gibbethon*, ca. 22 mi (35 km) west-northwest of Jerusalem. No motive, other than the theological, is given for this assassination. **29–30:** The extermination of the whole family of Jeroboam

not one that breathed, until he had destroyed it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite— [30] because of the sins of Jeroboam that he committed and that he caused Israel to commit, and because of the anger to which he provoked the LORD, the God of Israel.

[31] Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? [32] There was war between Asa and King Baasha of Israel all their days.

[33] In the third year of King Asa of Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah began to reign over all Israel at Tirzah; he reigned twenty-four years. [34] He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam and in the sin that he caused Israel to commit.

16 The word of the LORD came to Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, [2] "Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have caused my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins, [3] therefore, I will consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat. [4] Anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the air shall eat."

[5] Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, what he did, and his power, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? [6] Baasha slept with his ancestors, and was buried at Tirzah; and his son Elah succeeded him. [7] Moreover the word of the LORD came by the prophet Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha and his house, both because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and also because he destroyed it.

[8] In the twenty-sixth year of King Asa of Judah, Elah son of Baasha began to reign over Israel in Tirzah; he reigned two years. [9] But his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him. When he was at Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who was in charge of the palace at Tirzah, [10] Zimri came in and struck him down and killed him, in the twenty-seventh year of King Asa of Judah, and succeeded him.

[11] When he began to reign, as soon as he had seated himself on his throne, he killed all the house of Baasha; he did not leave him a single male of his kindred or his friends. [12] Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke against Baasha by the prophet Jehu— [13] because of all the sins of Baasha and the sins of his son Elah that they committed, and that they caused Israel to commit, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols. [14] Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?

[15] In the twenty-seventh year of King Asa of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. Now the troops were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, [16] and the troops who were encamped heard it said, "Zimri has conspired, and he has killed the king"; therefore all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp. [17] So Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. [18] When Zimri saw that the

fulfills the prophetic oracle against the house of Jeroboam in 14.7–14. **15.33–16.7:** Baasha (ca. 906–883) reigned in Tirzah (see 14.17–18n.; 16.23–24). **16.1–4:** The divine oracle by the otherwise unknown prophet *Jehu* (not to be confused with the later King Jehu) announces to Baasha, who *walked in the way of Jeroboam* (15.34), the end of his dynasty, as had the prophet Ahijah to Jeroboam (14.7–14). **8–14:** Baasha's son Elah (ca. 883–882 BCE) has a very short reign. His officer Zimri murders him during a banquet in the house of Arza, the royal chamberlain (for the title, see 4.6). Zimri's father is not named, which may indicate foreign origin or a lowly lineage. Like Baasha (15.29–30), Zimri exterminates all the descendants of the murdered king. **11:** *Every male,* lit., "whoever urinates against a wall." **15–22:** The reign of *Zimri* is the shortest of any king, lasting only a week—the Judean editor seems to delight in the instability of the non-Davidic kings. During the siege of Gibbethon (see 15.27–28n.), Omri, supported by an important part of the army ("all Israel" in v. 17 is a rhetorical exaggeration) besieged Tirzah in order to remove Zimri from the throne. Zimri committed suicide to avoid the humiliation of being

city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house; he burned down the king's house over himself with fire, and died— 19 because of the sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and for the sin that he committed, causing Israel to sin. 20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and the conspiracy that he made, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?

21 Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts; half of the people followed Tibni son of Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri. 22 But the people who followed Omri overcame the people who followed Tibni son of Ginath; so Tibni died, and Omri became king. 23 In the thirty-first year of King Asa of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel; he reigned for twelve years, six of them in Tirzah.

24 He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; he fortified the hill, and called the city that he built, Samaria, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill.

25 Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did more evil than all who were before him. 26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and in the sins that he caused Israel to commit, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols. 27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri that he did, and the power that he showed, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 28 Omri slept with his ancestors, and was buried in Samaria; his son Ahab succeeded him.

29 In the thirty-eighth year of King Asa of Judah, Ahab son of Omri began to reign over Israel; Ahab son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. 30 Ahab son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him.

31 And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. 32 He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. 33 Ahab also made a sacred pole.[a] Ahab did more to provoke the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than had all the kings of Israel who were before him. 34 In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua son of Nun.

[a] Heb *Asherah*

killed by his enemy. Such heroic motifs are well attested in classical tradition. **21–22:** For five years there are two competing factions in the Israelite army. Omri's claim to kingship is challenged by *Tibni*, who finally *died*; in all likelihood, he was killed. The LXX mentions a brother (Joram) who died with him, which may suggest that both fell in battle. **23–28:** The biblical authors describe Omri's reign (ca. 882–871) very briefly. The Assyrians considered Omri as one of Israel's most important kings, referring to Israel as "the land of the house of Omri" long after Omri's descendants had ceased to rule. The disparity between the Assyrian and Judean sources highlights the theological nature of Kings. The name Omri is likely not Hebrew, perhaps reflecting non-Israelite ancestry. **24:** The only reported event of his reign is his purchase of the hill of *Samaria* (modern Sebaste), which became the capital of the Northern Kingdom until its fall in 722; cf. David's purchase of Araunah's threshing floor in 2 Sam 24.18–25. **25–27:** The rest consists of stereotypical expressions, presenting Omri as a worse sinner than his predecessors. **28:** *Slept with his ancestors* is a stereotypical expression (see 2.10n.) and does not suggest that the bones of the former Israelite kings had been transferred to Samaria. **29–34:** Ahab's reign (ca. 873–852 BCE) is presented as even worse than Omri's. **31:** The authors condemn his marriage to *Jezebel,* a Phoenician princess, whose name includes a title of the Canaanite god Baal, "Zebul" ("Prince"). Her father *Ethbaal* appears in an Assyrian inscription as king of Tyre and Sidon (for *Sidon* as a general term, see 6.6n.). **32–33:** According to this account, Ahab introduces the worship of Baal into the Northern Kingdom, though it probably had existed earlier. *Baal,* a title meaning "lord, master," is given in the Levant to the storm god who brought rain and fertility to the land. Despite the claim of these verses, the names of Ahab's children all contain a form of the name of the God of Israel. **34:** A fulfillment of Josh 6.26, joining the books of Joshua and Kings. Archeological evidence, however, suggests that *Jericho* was reoccupied only in the seventh century BCE. The text implies that two brothers were offered as foundation sacrifices when the city was rebuilt.

17 Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe[a] in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." [2] The word of the LORD came to him, saying, [3] "Go from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. [4] You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." [5] So he went and did according to the word of the LORD; he went and lived by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. [6] The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the wadi. [7] But after a while the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

[8] Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, [9] "Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you." [10] So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink." [11] As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." [12] But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." [13] Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. [14] For thus says the LORD the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth." [15] She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. [16] The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

[17] After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. [18] She then said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!" [19] But he said to her, "Give me your son." He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. [20] He cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" [21] Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." [22] The LORD listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. [23] Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and

[a] Gk: Heb *of the settlers*

17.1–21.29: Elijah. Most of the narratives about the prophet Elijah are inserted into the account of the reign of Ahab, whose death is related in 22.37–40; the final Elijah narratives take place during the reign of Ahaziah (2 Kings 1–2). Originally independent folklore, the narratives about Elijah and his successor Elisha continue the Deuteronomistic historians' use of prophets to shape their history.

17.1–18.46: Elijah and the drought. 17.1: *Elijah* comes from *Tishbe*, a town in Transjordan mentioned only here. Elijah's name, which means "My god is the LORD," may reflect his theological program, since he will fight against the worship of Baal. The LORD's bringing a drought upon the land shows that he is the real storm god instead of Baal. **2–5:** Following a divine order Elijah escapes the famine and dwells at the *Wadi Cherith, east of the Jordan*. **6:** The feeding of the hero by animals is a frequent motif in folktales. **9:** *Zarephath,* 10 mi (16 km) south of Sidon, is in Phoenician territory, the heartland of Baal-worship. **12:** The use of the LORD's name by the Phoenician widow is surprising. *Meal* and *oil* are the basic ingredients for bread. **14–16:** Elijah's miracle shows the power of the God of Israel. **17–24:** Elijah's revival of the widow's son again manifests the LORD's power. The biblical story may be polemical, emphasizing that the God of Israel is not a dying god, like Baal in Ugaritic myth; on the contrary, his prophet is able to bring the dead back to life. **18:** The woman understands the death of her son as punishment for some unnamed *sin*. **19–23:** Elijah's lying on the dead boy has a parallel in a related story about Elisha in 2 Kings 4.34. It reflects a magical conception of transferring life into a dead body, although the

The geography of the Elijah narratives. The dashed line shows the approximate boundaries between Israel, Judah, and Philistia.

gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." [24] So the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

18 After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year of the drought,[a] saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab; I will send rain on the earth." [2] So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. The famine was severe in Samaria. [3] Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. (Now Obadiah revered the LORD greatly; [4] when Jezebel was killing off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets, hid them fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water.) [5] Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the wadis; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses

[a] Heb lacks *of the drought*

story emphasizes that this magic can work only if God pays attention to the *voice* of his prophet. **24:** Only now does the woman acknowledge Elijah as God's true prophet. **18.1–46:** Elijah, the prophet of the LORD, directly confronts the prophets of Baal. **1–16:** This confrontation is introduced by an encounter between Elijah and *Obadiah*, Ahab's chamberlain, which prepares the way for the meeting between Elijah and Ahab. As Obadiah's

and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals." 6 So they divided the land between them to pass through it; Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself.

7 As Obadiah was on the way, Elijah met him; Obadiah recognized him, fell on his face, and said, "Is it you, my lord Elijah?" 8 He answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here." 9 And he said, "How have I sinned, that you would hand your servant over to Ahab, to kill me? 10 As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom to which my lord has not sent to seek you; and when they would say, 'He is not here,' he would require an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you. 11 But now you say, 'Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here.' 12 As soon as I have gone from you, the spirit of the LORD will carry you I know not where; so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have revered the LORD from my youth. 13 Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid a hundred of the LORD's prophets fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water? 14 Yet now you say, 'Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here'; he will surely kill me." 15 Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today." 16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" 18 He answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. 19 Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

20 So Ahab sent to all the Israelites, and assembled the prophets at Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah then came near to all the people, and said, "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The people did not answer him a word. 22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets number four hundred fifty. 23 Let two bulls be given to us; let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. 24 Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the LORD; the god who answers by fire is indeed God." All the people answered, "Well spoken!" 25 Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many; then call on the name of your god, but put no fire to it." 26 So they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, crying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no answer. They limped about the altar that they had made. 27 At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps

name ("servant of the LORD") indicates, he is a faithful worshiper of the God of Israel and protects God's prophets from Ahab's wife Jezebel. **10:** For Ahab, Elijah is a traitor, so he calls upon allied kingdoms have Elijah extradited. **17–20:** The encounter between Ahab and Elijah prepares the way for the competition between the many prophets of Baal and the one prophet of the LORD. **19:** The high number of the prophets of Baal (*four hundred fifty*) emphasizes the disproportion of forces. The *four hundred prophets of Asherah*, who do not appear again, have been inserted here to further denounce Jezebel's religious practices. The competition is on *Mount Carmel*, on the Mediterranean coast above modern Haifa, a symbol of majesty and fertility. **20:** *All the Israelites,* a rhetorical expression, meaning the people as represented by its elders and other dignitaries. **21:** *Limping with two different opinions,* the translation obscures the implicit metaphor, which is of a bird hopping on two branches. **22:** *I only am left,* but see 18.4. **24:** For the LORD's association with *fire* and lightning, see, e.g., Ex 19.16–18; Lev 9.24. Baal was also venerated as a storm god, associated with thunder and lightning. **25–29:** Baal's prophets are unsuccessful, despite their engaging in self-laceration, a ritual likely meant to evoke the deity's sympathy, until evening, *the time of the offering of the oblation*. **26:** The prophets of Baal perform a ritual dance in order to attract the deity's attention. **27:** *He has wandered away*, a disrespectful euphemism meaning that Baal is relieving him-

he is asleep and must be awakened." [28] Then they cried aloud and, as was their custom, they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out over them. [29] As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice, no answer, and no response.

[30] Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come closer to me"; and all the people came closer to him. First he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down; [31] Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, "Israel shall be your name"; [32] with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed. [33] Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." [34] Then he said, "Do it a second time"; and they did it a second time. Again he said, "Do it a third time"; and they did it a third time, [35] so that the water ran all around the altar, and filled the trench also with water.

[36] At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. [37] Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." [38] Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. [39] When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD indeed is God; the LORD indeed is God." [40] Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." Then they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon, and killed them there.

[41] Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of rushing rain." [42] So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; there he bowed himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees. [43] He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." He went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." Then he said, "Go again seven times." [44] At the seventh time he said, "Look, a little cloud no bigger than a person's hand is rising out of the sea." Then he said, "Go say to Ahab, 'Harness your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'" [45] In a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind; there was a heavy rain. Ahab rode off and went to Jezreel. [46] But the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; he girded up his loins and ran in front of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

19 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. [2] Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." [3] Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

[4] But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under

self. **29:** *They raved,* lit., "they prophesied (in an ecstatic way)." **30–32:** Elijah prepares for the revelation of the LORD by restoring (v. 30) or building (vv. 31–32) an altar for sacrifice. Apparently the text is composite. **30–32:** A sacrifice to the LORD needs to be offered on an *altar*. The author quotes Gen 35.10. **33–35:** The large *trench* filled with water prevents any human manipulation; the presence of water is inconsistent with the drought framework, another indication of a composite text. **36–37:** Elijah's prayer contrasts with the ecstatic behavior of the prophets of Baal. **36:** The invocation of the LORD as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel" (instead of Jacob) appears elsewhere only in 1 Chr 29.18; 2 Chr 30.6. **38–39:** The people's cry *The LORD indeed is God* echoes the name of Elijah (see 17.1n.). **40:** For a parallel to the killing of the prophets of Baal, see Ex 32.27–28. *Wadi Kishon*, a seasonal stream at the eastern base of Mount Carmel. **41–46:** The conclusion of the drought narrative. **45:** Ahab and Jezebel had a palace (21.1) in the town of *Jezreel*, ca. 25 mi (40 km) southeast of Mount Carmel, in the Valley of Jezreel. **46:** Elijah *ran* as fast as Ahab's chariot, which illustrates his extraordinary power as a "man of God."

19.1–18: Elijah at the mountain of God. 1–3: Elijah's violence against the prophets of Baal provokes Jezebel's violence against him, and he flees until he reaches Beer-sheba, at the southern border of Judah. **4–8:** He goes

a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." [5] Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." [6] He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. [7] The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." [8] He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. [9] At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" [10] He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

[11] He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; [12] and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. [13] When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" [14] He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." [15] Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. [16] Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. [17] Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. [18] Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

[19] So he set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him,

to the *wilderness*, the place of death, but again the LORD miraculously nourishes him (see 17.6) and orders him to take a long journey to Mount *Horeb*, an alternate name, especially in Deuteronomy, for Mount Sinai. **4:** Like Jonah (Jon 4.8), Elijah wants to die. In v. 3 he fled for his life, but now he thinks that he is no better than his forefathers who died in the wilderness. **5–6:** He is again miraculously fed, this time by a divine messenger. **8:** Here and in what follows Elijah is depicted as a new Moses. The mention of the *forty days and forty nights* recalls Moses's sojourn on the mountain of God (see, e.g., Deut 9.9; 10.10). **9–14:** Elijah's encounter with the LORD takes place at the cave where Moses had stood to meet the God of Israel (Ex 33.21–23). The encounter is framed by Elijah's statement that he has been *zealous* for the LORD, that is, enthusiastic and exclusive in devotion to the LORD. The same word, sometimes translated "jealous," is used to describe God in Ex 20.5 and elsewhere. **10–13:** This unexpected divine manifestation may be a critique of the idea that God has to reveal himself spectacularly by *wind*, *earthquake,* and *fire* (see Ex 19.16–18; Deut 4.36; 1 Kings 18.38). Here God comes to Elijah in *sheer silence*, in a barely audible whisper. The author of this narrative thus presents a theological counter to the previous Carmel narrative. **15–18:** The order given to Elijah to *anoint Hazael as king over Aram* (see 2 Kings 8.7–15), *Jehu as king over Israel* (2 Kings 9.1–10), and the prophet *Elisha* as his successor (2 Kings 2.9–14) looks ahead to the following narratives. Anointing of kings by a prophet is common; a prophet anointing another prophet is unique. Elisha rather than Elijah will anoint Hazael and Jehu. **15:** *Wilderness of Damascus*, missing in the LXX, probably refers to the desert east of the Sea of Galilee. **17:** The narratives about Elisha and Jehu differ from this divine oracle, and no text tells of Elisha killing those who escaped Jehu's massacre.

19.19–21: Elisha becomes Elijah's servant and successor. Elisha is the first of the three persons mentioned in vv. 15–18 to enter the scene. **19:** *Twelve yoke of oxen,* likely an allusion to the twelve tribes of Israel. *Threw his mantle over him*, a symbolic act, transferring Elijah's power and abilities to his successor; cf. 2 Kings 8.7–15.

and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. 20 He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." Then Elijah[a] said to him, "Go back again; for what have I done to you?" 21 He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

20 King Ben-hadad of Aram gathered all his army together; thirty-two kings were with him, along with horses and chariots. He marched against Samaria, laid siege to it, and attacked it. 2 Then he sent messengers into the city to King Ahab of Israel, and said to him: "Thus says Ben-hadad: 3 Your silver and gold are mine; your fairest wives and children also are mine." 4 The king of Israel answered, "As you say, my lord, O king, I am yours, and all that I have." 5 The messengers came again and said: "Thus says Ben-hadad: I sent to you, saying, 'Deliver to me your silver and gold, your wives and children'; 6 nevertheless I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants, and lay hands on whatever pleases them,[b] and take it away."

7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, "Look now! See how this man is seeking trouble; for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not refuse him." 8 Then all the elders and all the people said to him, "Do not listen or consent." 9 So he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, "Tell my lord the king: All that you first demanded of your servant I will do; but this thing I cannot do." The messengers left and brought him word again. 10 Ben-hadad sent to him and said, "The gods do so to me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria will provide a handful for each of the people who follow me." 11 The king of Israel answered, "Tell him: One who puts on armor should not brag like one who takes it off." 12 When Ben-hadad heard this message—now he had been drinking with the kings in the booths—he said to his men, "Take your positions!" And they took their positions against the city.

13 Then a certain prophet came up to King Ahab of Israel and said, "Thus says the Lord, Have you seen all this great multitude? Look, I will give it into your hand today; and you shall know that I am the Lord." 14 Ahab said, "By whom?" He said, "Thus says the Lord, By the young men who serve the district governors." Then he said, "Who shall begin the battle?" He answered, "You." 15 Then he mustered the young men who served the district governors, two hundred thirty-two; after them he mustered all the people of Israel, seven thousand.

16 They went out at noon, while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the booths, he and the thirty-two kings allied with him. 17 The young men who served the district governors went out first. Ben-hadad had sent out scouts,[c] and they reported to him, "Men have come out from Samaria." 18 He said, "If they have come out for peace, take them alive; if they have come out for war, take them alive."

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *you*
[c] Heb lacks *scouts*

21: The burning of the yoke symbolizes Elisha's break with his former life.

20.1–43: Wars between Israel and Aram. Elijah does not appear in this narrative, and Ahab is mentioned by name only in vv. 2,13–14, which may indicate this story originally belonged to a later time, perhaps that of the Jehu dynasty. **1–12:** *Ben-hadad* may be the same mentioned in 15.18. Here he is the head of an impressive alliance of thirty-two kings (likely an exaggeration, as are other numbers in this chapter). He besieges Samaria and tries to convince the king of Israel to become his vassal. **11:** Ahab quotes a military aphorism meaning that the battle is not won until it is over. **13–15:** Through an anonymous prophet, the Lord announces to the king of Israel that he give victory against the Arameans. **14–15:** The victory will be achieved through *young men,* unmarried soldiers, attendants of the district officers. *District* (Heb "medinah"), a word normally used of the provinces of the Persian Empire (e.g., Ezra 2.1; Dan 8.2). *Seven thousand* recalls the same number in 19.18. **16–22:** Attacking at an unexpected time, at *noon*, when the besiegers were relaxing and even *drunk*, the Israelite army defeats the

19 But these had already come out of the
city: the young men who served the district
governors, and the army that followed them.
20 Each killed his man; the Arameans fled and
Israel pursued them, but King Ben-hadad of
Aram escaped on a horse with the cavalry.
21 The king of Israel went out, attacked the
horses and chariots, and defeated the Ara-
means with a great slaughter.

22 Then the prophet approached the king
of Israel and said to him, "Come, strengthen
yourself, and consider well what you have
to do; for in the spring the king of Aram will
come up against you."

23 The servants of the king of Aram
said to him, "Their gods are gods of the
hills, and so they were stronger than we;
but let us fight against them in the plain,
and surely we shall be stronger than they.
24 Also do this: remove the kings, each
from his post, and put commanders in
place of them; 25 and muster an army like
the army that you have lost, horse for
horse, and chariot for chariot; then we will
fight against them in the plain, and surely
we shall be stronger than they." He heeded
their voice, and did so.

26 In the spring Ben-hadad mustered the
Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight
against Israel. 27 After the Israelites had
been mustered and provisioned, they went
out to engage them; the people of Israel
encamped opposite them like two little
flocks of goats, while the Arameans filled
the country. 28 A man of God approached
and said to the king of Israel, "Thus says
the LORD: Because the Arameans have said,
'The LORD is a god of the hills but he is not
a god of the valleys,' therefore I will give
all this great multitude into your hand, and
you shall know that I am the LORD." 29 They
encamped opposite one another seven days.
Then on the seventh day the battle began;
the Israelites killed one hundred thousand
Aramean foot soldiers in one day. 30 The rest
fled into the city of Aphek; and the wall fell
on twenty-seven thousand men that were
left.

Ben-hadad also fled, and entered the city
to hide. 31 His servants said to him, "Look,
we have heard that the kings of the house of
Israel are merciful kings; let us put sackcloth
around our waists and ropes on our heads,
and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he
will spare your life." 32 So they tied sack-
cloth around their waists, put ropes on their
heads, went to the king of Israel, and said,
"Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let
me live.' " And he said, "Is he still alive? He
is my brother." 33 Now the men were watch-
ing for an omen; they quickly took it up
from him and said, "Yes, Ben-hadad is your
brother." Then he said, "Go and bring him."
So Ben-hadad came out to him; and he had
him come up into the chariot. 34 Ben-hadad[a]
said to him, "I will restore the towns that my
father took from your father; and you may
establish bazaars for yourself in Damascus, as
my father did in Samaria." The king of Israel
responded,[b] "I will let you go on those terms."
So he made a treaty with him and let him go.

35 At the command of the LORD a certain
member of a company of prophets[c] said to
another, "Strike me!" But the man refused to

[a] Heb *He*
[b] Heb lacks *The king of Israel responded*
[c] Heb *of the sons of the prophets*

Arameans. **22:** *The prophet* mentioned here is probably the same as in v. 13. **23–34:** A new war in the spring. **23:** *Their gods are gods of the hills,* or "their god is a god of the mountains." It is unclear whether the Arameans think that the Israelites worship several mountain gods, or only the LORD. **26–30:** The battle takes place at *Aphek*, just east of the Sea of Chinnereth. **28:** *A man of God,* better "the man of God," the prophet mentioned in vv. 13,22, who confirms the saying of the Arameans; see v. 23n. **29–30:** The outcome recalls the battle of Jericho in Josh 6: on the *seventh* day the Israelites win the battle, and the *wall* of Aphek, where the Arameans have fled, *falls* down. **30–34:** Ben-hadad has no other choice than to offer a treaty to the king of Israel. **32–33:** *Brother* here connotes an equal treaty partner. **34:** *Restore the towns that my father took,* no loss of territory is reported in the reign of Omri, Ahab's father. Possibly this is a reference to 15.20. *Bazaars* allow the Israelites free trade in Damascus. **35–43:** The Deuteronomistic historians criticize the treaty that the king of Israel concluded with Ben-hadad. A member of a prophetic guild, who pretends to have been wounded during the war, confounds the king with an invented case (like Nathan in 2 Sam 12.1–7) to denounce the king's action as contrary to God's will. Thus, a story

strike him. 36 Then he said to him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, as soon as you have left me, a lion will kill you." And when he had left him, a lion met him and killed him. 37 Then he found another man and said, "Strike me!" So the man hit him, striking and wounding him. 38 Then the prophet departed, and waited for the king along the road, disguising himself with a bandage over his eyes. 39 As the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the thick of the battle; then a soldier turned and brought a man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if he is missing, your life shall be given for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' 40 While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." The king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it." 41 Then he quickly took the bandage away from his eyes. The king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. 42 Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have let the man go whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.' " 43 The king of Israel set out toward home, resentful and sullen, and came to Samaria.

21 Later the following events took place: Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. 2 And Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house; I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." 3 But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance." 4 Ahab went home resentful and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him; for he had said, "I will not give you my ancestral inheritance." He lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and would not eat.

5 His wife Jezebel came to him and said, "Why are you so depressed that you will not eat?" 6 He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it'; but he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.' " 7 His wife Jezebel said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal; she sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who lived with Naboth in his city. 9 She wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the assembly; 10 seat two scoundrels opposite him, and have them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out, and stone him to death." 11 The men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. Just as it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, 12 they proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the assembly. 13 The two scoundrels came in and sat opposite him; and the scoundrels brought a charge against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city, and stoned him to death. 14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead."

15 As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Go, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." 16 As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab set out to go down to

that initially reflects favorably on Ahab ultimately condemns him. **36:** *A lion . . . killed him,* recalling the prophetic story in 13.24. **39:** *A talent of silver* (about 75 lb [34 kg]) was an exorbitant amount, beyond most people's reach. **42:** Cf. 1 Sam 15.

21.1–29: Naboth's vineyard. 1–4: *Naboth* of *Jezreel,* where Ahab had a winter palace (see 18.45n.), refuses to sell his land to the king, because he does not want to his clan to lose its property (cf. Lev 25.8–34; 1 Sam 8.14). The story, secondarily inserted here, interrupts the link between chs 20 and 22; in the LXX it follows ch 19. **5–14:** As elsewhere, Jezebel is here depicted negatively, as an active wife who usurps the role of her husband ; v. 25 ultimately blames Ahab's behavior on Jezebel. **10:** *Scoundrels,* lit., "sons of worthlessness." **15–16:** It is unclear why the king could now have access to his property; perhaps he could claim the possessions of a man who had

the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

17 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying: 18 Go down to meet King Ahab of Israel, who rules[a] in Samaria; he is now in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. 19 You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: Have you killed, and also taken possession?" You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood."

20 Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, 21 I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel; 22 and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin. 23 Also concerning Jezebel the LORD said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel.' 24 Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat."

25 (Indeed, there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD, urged on by his wife Jezebel. 26 He acted most abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD drove out before the Israelites.)

27 When Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his bare flesh; he fasted, lay in the sackcloth, and went about dejectedly. 28 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: 29 "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster on his house."

22 For three years Aram and Israel continued without war. 2 But in the third year King Jehoshaphat of Judah came down to the king of Israel. 3 The king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, yet we are doing nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram?" 4 He said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I am as you are; my people are your people, my horses are your horses."

5 But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "Inquire first for the word of the LORD." 6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred of them, and said to them, "Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" They said, "Go up; for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king." 7 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no other prophet of the LORD here of whom we may inquire?" 8 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one other by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies anything favorable about me, but only disaster." Jehoshaphat said, "Let the king not say such a thing." 9 Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, "Bring

[a] Heb *who is*

been condemned to death. **17–29:** Although Jezebel took the initiative to kill Naboth, the LORD sends Elijah to confront Ahab. **18:** According to this verse (see textual note *a*) the incident transpired in *Samaria* and not in Jezreel. **21:** See 14.10n. **23–24:** The absence of a proper burial place is one of the worst curses in the Bible (e.g., Deut 28.26; Jer 34.20) and other ancient texts. For Ahab's fate, see 22.37–38; for Jezebel's, see 2 Kings 9.33–35. **27–29:** Since Ahab adopts the traditional mourning rites, the punishment is transferred to his son Joram (see 2 Sam 12.13).

22.1–40: The campaign of Ramoth-gilead and the death of Ahab. 1–36: In this battle story, continuing ch 20, Ahab is mentioned by name only in v. 20 (see 20.1–43n.). **1–4:** The beginning of the story suggests that king *Jehoshaphat* of Judah (see vv. 41–50) is a vassal of the Israelite king, since he is obligated to participate in a war against the *king of Aram* to recapture *Ramoth-gilead* in Transjordan. **5–28:** The story about the prophetic counsel interrupts the battle report that is continued in v. 29. **7–9:** Jehoshaphat, sensing that the king's prophets are acting on his behalf, asks for an independent prophet of the LORD. *Micaiah son of Imlah*, a prophet of doom, is not the same as the prophet Micah of the book of that name. Surprisingly, the king of Israel does not mention

quickly Micaiah son of Imlah." [10] Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. [11] Zedekiah son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, "Thus says the LORD: With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are destroyed." [12] All the prophets were prophesying the same and saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."

[13] The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably." [14] But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak."

[15] When he had come to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" He answered him, "Go up and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king." [16] But the king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" [17] Then Micaiah[a] said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd; and the LORD said, 'These have no master; let each one go home in peace.'" [18] The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy anything favorable about me, but only disaster?"

[19] Then Micaiah[a] said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him to the right and to the left of him. [20] And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' Then one said one thing, and another said another, [21] until a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' [22] 'How?' the LORD asked him. He replied, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then the LORD[a] said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do it.' [23] So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has decreed disaster for you."

[24] Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah came up to Micaiah, slapped him on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?" [25] Micaiah replied, "You will find out on that day when you go in to hide in an inner chamber." [26] The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son, [27] and say, 'Thus says the king: Put this fellow in prison, and feed him on reduced rations of bread and water until I come in peace.'" [28] Micaiah said, "If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Hear, you peoples, all of you!"

[29] So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. [30] The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. [31] Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, "Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel." [32] When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is surely the king of Israel." So they turned to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out. [33] When the

[a] Heb *he*

the prophet Elijah in this context; this story was probably not part of the Elijah cycle. **10–16:** *Zedekiah* is the chief of the official court prophets. His symbolic action (*horns of iron*) predicts the king's victory; horns are symbols of power and strength. Prophets often perform symbolic actions, and Zedekiah's is similar to Hananiah's in Jer 28. Micaiah's first answer, repeating the favorable oracle, reflects either irony or fear of punishment (see v. 24). **17–18:** The second oracle describes a vision of a flock without a *shepherd*, namely the king, who in the ancient Near East was the shepherd of his people. **19–23:** Micaiah's second vision describes the heavenly court, legitimating his oracle of doom by suggesting he has access to the divine sphere. **22:** The *lying spirit* is a member of the divine council and plays a similar role as the satan in Job 1–2. **24–28:** The king is not impressed by this vision and prefers the majority view. **26:** Like Jeremiah (Jer 37.15), Micaiah is kept in prison, in the house of the *king's son*. **29–36:** The *disguise* of the king of Israel indicates that he lacks faith in victory and is trying to avert

captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. 34 But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate; so he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around, and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded." 35 The battle grew hot that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans, until at evening he died; the blood from the wound had flowed into the bottom of the chariot. 36 Then about sunset a shout went through the army, "Every man to his city, and every man to his country!"

37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; they buried the king in Samaria. 38 They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it,[a] according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken. 39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house that he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 40 So Ahab slept with his ancestors; and his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

41 Jehoshaphat son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of King Ahab of Israel. 42 Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. 43 He walked in all the way of his father Asa; he did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD; yet the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and offered incense on the high places. 44 Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.

45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his power that he showed, and how he waged war, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 46 The remnant of the male temple prostitutes who were still in the land in the days of his father Asa, he exterminated.

47 There was no king in Edom; a deputy was king. 48 Jehoshaphat made ships of the Tarshish type to go to Ophir for gold; but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber. 49 Then Ahaziah son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships," but Jehoshaphat was not willing. 50 Jehoshaphat slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his father David; his son Jehoram succeeded him.

51 Ahaziah son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of King Jehoshaphat of Judah; he reigned two years over Israel. 52 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and mother, and in the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. 53 He served Baal and worshiped him; he provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger, just as his father had done.

[a] Heb lacks *in it*

Micaiah's first vision, but he is killed despite his disguise. **37–40:** The conclusion of Ahab's reign is described in stereotypical expressions known from other kings, except for v. 38, which alludes to Elijah's prophecy in 21.19. The astonishing reference to the *prostitutes* bathing in his blood exceeds what Elijah announced. The text spoke perhaps originally of dogs and pigs (so LXX) before it was altered.

22.41–53: Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahaziah of Israel. 41–50: For the Deuteronomistic historians, Jehoshaphat (ca. 870–846 BCE) was a good king, except that he tolerated open-air sanctuaries. **46:** *Male temple prostitutes,* see 14.24n. **47–50:** Like Solomon, Jehoshaphat built *ships of the Tarshish type* in order to continue his ancestor's exotic expeditions, but he did not succeed; see 10.22n. **51–53:** This introduces the reign of the Israelite king *Ahaziah* (ca. 852–851 BCE), which is continued in 2 Kings 1. Originally, the two books of Kings were a single book (see Introduction).

2 KINGS

Second Kings is a continuation of First Kings, and the two originally formed one book, as they still do in the traditional Hebrew text. For an introduction to this work, see the Introduction to 1 Kings (pp. 493–95).

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

Second Kings starts during the short reign of Ahaziah king of Israel, with a formula ("after the death of Ahab") that recalls the openings of the preceding books of Joshua, Judges, and 2 Samuel. The book is divided thematically into two parts: chs 1–17 continue the synchronic history of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel until the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE; chs 18–25 relate the last century and a half of the Judean kingdom until the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple and the exile of 586. The first part contains several stories about the prophet Elisha (chs 2–8). After he is installed as Elijah's successor, he performs many miracles, several of which parallel tales told about Elijah in the first book of Kings. Although these stories follow the ones about Elijah, it is possible that the Elisha stories were written first, and Elijah was modeled after him, to prefigure his miracles. But he is also involved in high politics when he legitimates two coups d'état: he proclaims that Hazael will become king of Aram (8.7–15), and has Jehu anointed as king of Israel, to exterminate the house of Ahab (chs 9–10). In general, while Elijah fights the royal establishment, Elisha is sympathetic toward the northern kings.

The reign of queen Athaliah over Judah in ch 11 interrupts the Davidic dynasty, and is presented by the Deuteronomistic historians as illegitimate. The Davidic line continues with King Joash (ch 12), who escaped from Athaliah's massacre. Chapters 13–17 continue the parallel history of the two kingdoms, which is told from a clearly Judean perspective: the northern kings Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menachem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea are altogether bad kings, since they continue the "sin of Jeroboam" (see 1 Kings 12.30), venerating the LORD outside Jerusalem and worshiping other deities. Among the Judean kings, Jehoash, Amaziah, Azariah, and Jotham are evaluated positively, although they are criticized for tolerating the high places outside Jerusalem. The Judean king Ahaz, however, is presented as walking in the way of the kings of Israel. The fall of Israel related in 2 Kings 17 provides a long commentary in typical Deuteronomistic style, which indicates the reasons that led to the end of the Northern Kingdom and its transformation into an Assyrian province, but also hints ahead at the destruction of Judah (vv. 19–20).

The second part of 2 Kings (chs 18–25), which relates the story of the kingdom of Judah until its end, presents two kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, very positively. Hezekiah (chs 18–20) abolishes illegitimate religious practices in Jerusalem and in Judah; under his reign the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem fails because of the LORD's intervention. His son Manasseh (ch 21) is presented as the worst of all kings of Judah, although he reigned for fifty-five years. He is explicitly compared to the worst Israelite king, Ahab, reintroducing forbidden religious practices; one redactor even presents him as responsible for the later destruction of Jerusalem. He is succeeded by the wicked Amon, who is followed by Josiah, who undertakes a sweeping religious reform, making Jerusalem the only legitimate sanctuary for the worship of the LORD and destroying all symbols of unorthodox worship (chs 22–23). But Josiah is killed by the Egyptian king, and his four successors Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (chs 23–24) are judged negatively by the Deuteronomistic historians, employing with the same formula: "he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his father(s) had done." This hastens the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, who are presented as the tool of divine punishment (chs 24–25). The book ends with a short note about the release of the Judean king Jehoiachin from his Babylonian prison: he stays in Babylon but becomes a privileged guest at the table of the king of Babylon (25.27–30).

Thomas Römer

1 After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel.

[2] Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay injured; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury." [3] But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Get up, go to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?' [4] Now therefore thus says the LORD, 'You shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but you shall surely die.' " So Elijah went.

[5] The messengers returned to the king, who said to them, "Why have you returned?" [6] They answered him, "There came a man to meet us, who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him: Thus says the LORD: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but shall surely die.' " [7] He said to them, "What sort of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?" [8] They answered him, "A hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist." He said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

[9] Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.' " [10] But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

[11] Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty. He went up[a] and said to him, "O man of God, this is the king's order: Come down quickly!" [12] But Elijah answered them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

[13] Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. So the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and entreated him, "O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight. [14] Look, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight." [15] Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he set out and went down with him to the king, [16] and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron,—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word?—therefore you shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but you shall surely die."

[17] So he died according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. His brother,[b]

[a] Gk Compare verses 9, 13: Heb *He answered*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb lacks *His brother*

1.1–17: The encounter between King Ahaziah and the prophet Elijah. 1: The notice *After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel* also appears in 3.5, where it fits better. **2–9:** Ahaziah, who falls through the *lattice* on the flat roof of his house, on part of which was built the *upper chamber*, perhaps a bedroom, wants to consult a local manifestation of the god Baal and is confronted by the prophet Elijah. **2:** *Baal-zebub* means "lord of the flies"; the second word is probably a parody by the biblical writers on a more original "zebul" ("prince"; cf. 1 Kings 16.31n.; Mk 3.22 par.), which is also attested in Ugarit as a title of the deity Baal. *Ekron* is the northernmost of the Philistine cities, ca. 25 mi (40 km) west of Jerusalem. **3:** The *angel* (Heb "mal'ak," lit., "messenger") *of the LORD* is juxtaposed to Ahaziah's messengers. The word "mal'ak" may denote a human person or a supernatural being. **4–6:** The king's messengers receive their oracle not from Baal of Ekron, but from Elijah, who speaks in the name of the LORD and announces Ahaziah's death. **7–8:** The king identifies Elijah through his description as a *hairy man, with a leather belt*; cf. the description of John the Baptist (Mk 1.6 par.), who is sometimes understood as a manifestation of the prophet Elijah. **9–12:** Note the wordplay: when the officer harshly asks "the man of God" (Heb "'ish 'elohim") to descend, Elijah instead sends down "the fire of God" ("'esh 'elohim"). *Fire* is often a tool of divine punishment (e.g., Gen 19.24; Lev 10.2; Num 16.35). **13–16:** The third officer behaves respectfully and Elijah comes down, but his oracle predicting the king's death is not altered. **17–18:** The notice that *Jehoram*

The geography of the Elisha narratives, chs 1–14. The dashed line shows the approximate boundaries between Israel, Judah, and Philistia.

Jehoram succeeded him as king in the second year of King Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat of Judah, because Ahaziah had no son. [18] Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?

2 Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. [2] Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live,

of Israel becomes Ahaziah's successor in the second year of Jehoram of Judah disagrees with 3.1, where Jehoram of Israel becomes king in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat of Judah. This may reflect some textual or historical confusion because both kings had the same name. Alternatively, the king of Israel Jehoram, also ruled over his vassal kingdom of Judah, but this was not understood by the authors of Kings, who assumed that two kings by the same name ruled these kingdoms at more or less the same time.

2.1–18: Elisha succeeds Elijah. This section connects the narratives about Elijah and those about Elisha (see also 1 Kings 19.16,19–21). **1:** This verse anticipates v. 11. *Gilgal*, located between Jericho and the Jordan, is Elisha's home, according to 4.38. **2–6:** The *company of prophets* (see textual note *a,* on the next page) designates a prophetic community near Bethel that has been informed about Elijah's imminent ascension. The journey from

I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. 3 The company of prophets[a] who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."

4 Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. 5 The company of prophets[a] who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent."

6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. 7 Fifty men of the company of prophets[a] also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. 8 Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." 10 He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." 11 As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. 12 Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

13 He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

15 When the company of prophets[a] who were at Jericho saw him at a distance, they declared, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." They came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. 16 They said to him, "See now, we have fifty strong men among your servants; please let them go and seek your master; it may be that the spirit of the LORD has caught him up and thrown him down on some mountain or into some valley." He responded, "No, do not send them." 17 But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, "Send them." So they sent fifty men who searched for three days but did not find him. 18 When they came back to him (he had remained at Jericho), he said to them, "Did I not say to you, Do not go?"

19 Now the people of the city said to Elisha, "The location of this city is good, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the land is

[a] Heb *sons of the prophets*

Gilgal to Bethel and then back to Jericho is confusing. **7–8:** Elijah's *mantle,* already mentioned in 1 Kings 19.19. The parting of the waters of the Jordan recalls the crossing of that river by the Israelites under Joshua (Josh 3–4) and Moses's parting of the Sea of Reeds (Ex 14). **9–10:** Elisha is asking Elijah for a *double share of your spirit*, which according to Deut 21.17 was the share of the eldest son, who received twice as much as his brothers. With his request Elisha appears as Elijah's "eldest son" and successor. **11–12:** The *chariot of fire and horses* symbolize the divine army. Elijah goes to heaven in a *whirlwind*, or in a storm, which is one of the LORD's manifestations (e.g., Nah 1.3; Job 38.1; Ps 50.3) thereby integrating Elijah into the divine sphere. Such ascension is unique to Elijah in the Hebrew Bible and explains Elijah's importance in Jewish tradition (see Mal 4.5–6). Later Jewish tradition, based on Gen 5.23, ascribes a similar ascension to Enoch. The phrase *the chariots of Israel and its horsemen* may have been a title given to Elijah, suggesting that prophetic power equals the strength of cavalry; see also 13.14. **13–14:** Elisha's ability to repeat Elijah's parting of the water shows that he has received his master's spirit. **15–18:** The prophetic community near Jericho is aware that Elisha has become Elijah's successor, but they do not know that Elijah has been taken to heaven because only Elisha has seen what happened in the whirlwind.

2.19–25: Elisha's first miracles. These miracles demonstrate that Elisha can either bless or curse in the name of the LORD, and is a worthy successor to Elijah. **19–22:** He purifies an infected *spring* near Jericho, throwing salt

unfruitful." [20] He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. [21] Then he went to the spring of water and threw the salt into it, and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have made this water wholesome; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it." [22] So the water has been wholesome to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.

[23] He went up from there to Bethel; and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, "Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!" [24] When he turned around and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. [25] From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and then returned to Samaria.

3 In the eighteenth year of King Jehoshaphat of Judah, Jehoram son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria; he reigned twelve years. [2] He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, though not like his father and mother, for he removed the pillar of Baal that his father had made. [3] Nevertheless he clung to the sin of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to commit; he did not depart from it.

[4] Now King Mesha of Moab was a sheep breeder, who used to deliver to the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs, and the wool of one hundred thousand rams. [5] But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. [6] So King Jehoram marched out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel. [7] As he went he sent word to King Jehoshaphat of Judah, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me; will you go with me to battle against Moab?" He answered, "I will; I am with you, my people are your people, my horses are your horses." [8] Then he asked, "By which way shall we march?" Jehoram answered, "By the way of the wilderness of Edom."

[9] So the king of Israel, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom set out; and when they had made a roundabout march of seven days, there was no water for the army or for the animals that were with them. [10] Then the king of Israel said, "Alas! The LORD has summoned us, three kings, only to be handed over to Moab." [11] But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, through whom we may inquire of the LORD?" Then one of the servants of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah, is here." [12] Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

[13] Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What have I to do with you? Go to your father's

in it. *Salt* was considered to have cleansing and protective capacities. **22:** *To this day,* a formula often used in the Deuteronomistic History to explain a name or a situation that still existed at the time of the audience. **23–25:** A demonstration of the danger in behaving disrespectfully toward a man of God. **24:** *Forty-two boys,* "forty-two" is a number sometimes associated with death: Jehu kills forty-two victims (10.14), and the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* mentions forty-two judges of the dead. **25:** Elisha's journey to *Mount Carmel* recalls Elijah's victory there against the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18.19–40), and helps establish Elisha as a new Elijah.

3.1–27: Jehoram of Israel, Elisha and the war against Moab. 1: For the chronological problem see 1.17–18n. **2:** *The pillar of Baal*, which reflects Ahab's close relationship with Phoenicia, is not mentioned as part of Ahab's religious deviations in 1 Kings 16.31–33. **3:** The *sin of Jeroboam* designates illicit worship in sanctuaries outside of Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 12). **4–8:** The campaign against Moab echoes the war report of 1 Kings 22. *Jehoshaphat*, previously allied to Ahab, is now an ally, or even vassal, of Ahab's son (cf. v. 7; 1 Kings 22.4). **4–5:** *King Mesha of Moab* is also known from the Moabite Stone discovered in 1868, a stela with an inscription celebrating a victory of Mesha over Israel, which may be connected with the revolt mentioned here. It agrees with some, but not all of the details in the Bible. **5:** The numbers of animals are exaggerated, expressing the idea of total submission. **8:** The descent to *Edom* in the south is necessary because of Moabite fortifications in the north. **9:** The mention of *the king of Edom* may be inaccurate (see 1 Kings 22.47). **10–12:** Unlike the Israelite king, who is afraid that the LORD may have gathered the allies for their demise, the pious Judean king Jehoshaphat asks for a prophet of the LORD. The presence of prophets or diviners in army camps is well-attested in the ancient Near East. **11:** Elisha pouring *water on the hands of Elijah*, a gesture of deference, recalls his relationship to his prophetic predecessor. The mention of *water* also alludes to the water miracle that follows. **13–14:** Elisha represents the position of the

prophets or to your mother's." But the king of Israel said to him, "No; it is the LORD who has summoned us, three kings, only to be handed over to Moab." 14 Elisha said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, whom I serve, were it not that I have regard for King Jehoshaphat of Judah, I would give you neither a look nor a glance. 15 But get me a musician." And then, while the musician was playing, the power of the LORD came on him. 16 And he said, "Thus says the LORD, 'I will make this wadi full of pools.' 17 For thus says the LORD, 'You shall see neither wind nor rain, but the wadi shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, you, your cattle, and your animals.' 18 This is only a trifle in the sight of the LORD, for he will also hand Moab over to you. 19 You shall conquer every fortified city and every choice city; every good tree you shall fell, all springs of water you shall stop up, and every good piece of land you shall ruin with stones." 20 The next day, about the time of the morning offering, suddenly water began to flow from the direction of Edom, until the country was filled with water.

21 When all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, all who were able to put on armor, from the youngest to the oldest, were called out and were drawn up at the frontier. 22 When they rose early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, the Moabites saw the water opposite them as red as blood. 23 They said, "This is blood; the kings must have fought together, and killed one another. Now then, Moab, to the spoil!" 24 But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and attacked the Moabites, who fled before them; as they entered Moab they continued the attack.[a] 25 The cities they overturned, and on every good piece of land everyone threw a stone, until it was covered; every spring of water they stopped up, and every good tree they felled. Only at Kir-hareseth did the stone walls remain, until the slingers surrounded and attacked it. 26 When the king of Moab saw that the battle was going against him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through, opposite the king of Edom; but they could not. 27 Then he took his firstborn son who was to succeed him, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. And great wrath came upon Israel, so they withdrew from him and returned to their own land.

4 Now the wife of a member of the company of prophets[b] cried to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead; and you know that your servant feared the LORD, but a creditor has come to take my two children as slaves." 2 Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" She answered, "Your servant has nothing in the house, except a jar of oil." 3 He said, "Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not just a few. 4 Then go in, and shut the door behind you and your children, and start pouring

[a] Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *the sons of the prophets*

Judean authors of the book of Kings that only Judean kings are worthy of divine help. **15:** Music induced ecstasy through which the prophet prophesied (cf. 1 Sam 10.5–6). *The power of the LORD,* lit., "the hand of the LORD." **16–19:** Elisha predicts water and a (first) victory over Moab. **16:** *Pools,* or ditches. Groundwater can be obtained in a desert terrain by digging trenches, but according to Elisha's oracle the coming of water will be a miracle. **19:** Elisha's oracle about cutting down all trees contradicts the rules of warfare in Deut 20.19; this and other evidence suggests that the stories about Elijah and Elisha were originally an independent collection, and not written as part of the Deuteronomistic History. **22–23:** The red light of the rising sun on the water appears to the Moabites as the *blood* of the allies' armies. **24–25:** Large parts of the Moabite territory were destroyed, but not *Kir-hareseth* ("Fortress of the guard," modern Kerak). **26–27:** The king of Moab, seeing no chance to escape, sacrifices his *firstborn son* to his god Chemosh. The *great wrath* originally referred to the wrath of Chemosh, who responded positively to this human offering by decimating the Israelite army. The authors probably understood it as a kind of disgust that repelled the Israelites.

4.1–44: Further miracles by Elisha. Elisha is more of a miracle worker than Elijah; some miracles that are told of both belonged originally to the Elisha traditions. **1–7:** The oil miracle is similar to the story in 1 Kings 17.7–16. **1:** A widow of a member of the prophetic group over which Elisha apparently exercises leadership (the dead prophet is called *servant* of Elisha) is obliged to sell her *children as slaves* in order to pay her debts (see Ex 21.7;

into all these vessels; when each is full, set it aside." [5] So she left him and shut the door behind her and her children; they kept bringing vessels to her, and she kept pouring. [6] When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." But he said to her, "There are no more." Then the oil stopped flowing. [7] She came and told the man of God, and he said, "Go sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your children can live on the rest."

[8] One day Elisha was passing through Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to have a meal. So whenever he passed that way, he would stop there for a meal. [9] She said to her husband, "Look, I am sure that this man who regularly passes our way is a holy man of God. [10] Let us make a small roof chamber with walls, and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that he can stay there whenever he comes to us."

[11] One day when he came there, he went up to the chamber and lay down there. [12] He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call the Shunammite woman." When he had called her, she stood before him. [13] He said to him, "Say to her, Since you have taken all this trouble for us, what may be done for you? Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?" She answered, "I live among my own people." [14] He said, "What then may be done for her?" Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old." [15] He said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood at the door. [16] He said, "At this season, in due time, you shall embrace a son." She replied, "No, my lord, O man of God; do not deceive your servant."

[17] The woman conceived and bore a son at that season, in due time, as Elisha had declared to her.

[18] When the child was older, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. [19] He complained to his father, "Oh, my head, my head!" The father said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother." [20] He carried him and brought him to his mother; the child sat on her lap until noon, and he died. [21] She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, closed the door on him, and left. [22] Then she called to her husband, and said, "Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again." [23] He said, "Why go to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath." She said, "It will be all right." [24] Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Urge the animal on; do not hold back for me unless I tell you." [25] So she set out, and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi his servant, "Look, there is the Shunammite woman; [26] run at once to meet her, and say to her, Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is the child all right?" She answered, "It is all right." [27] When she came to the man of God at the mountain, she caught hold of his feet. Gehazi approached to push her away. But the man of God said, "Let her alone, for she is in bitter distress; the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me." [28] Then she said, "Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, Do not mislead me?" [29] He said to Gehazi, "Gird up your loins, and take my staff in your hand, and go. If you

Amos 2.6). **8–37:** The revival of the son of a wealthy (lit., "great") woman is likely the basis for the similar miracle told of Elijah (1 Kings 17.17–24). **8:** *Shunem,* a town in the Jezreel Valley ca. 10 mi (16 km) east of Megiddo. **9–17:** Elisha's visit to the house of a childless and aged couple and his promise of a son to be born to them because of their hospitality recalls Gen 18.1–15. The woman plays the active role in this story, while her husband is passive. **12:** *Gehazi* is Elisha's personal servant and mediator between him and the hosts. **13:** The woman's response is a polite refusal of Elisha's offer. **18–31:** After her son dies unexpectedly the mother travels to *Mount Carmel*, where Elisha resides (see v. 25). **21:** The placing of the dead son in the chamber that was reserved for Elisha can be understood either as a reproach to Elisha (see also v. 28) or as the preparation for Elisha's miracle. **23:** It was apparently the custom to consult prophets on holy days such as the *new moon* or *sabbath*. **24–25:** The story highlights the woman's initiative (she *saddled* and rode *the donkey*), in contrast to the behavior of her husband. **29–31:** The dispatch of Gehazi with Elisha's *staff* that has magical power (cf. Moses's staff in Ex 4.1–4; 17.8–13) was meant to allay the mother's impatience, since Gehazi is able to reach Shunem quicker than Elisha. In other ancient Near Eastern texts, prophets also send items that belong to them in order to accomplish a miracle. **32–37:** Gehazi's

meet anyone, give no greeting, and if anyone greets you, do not answer; and lay my staff on the face of the child." 30 Then the mother of the child said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave without you." So he rose up and followed her. 31 Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life. He came back to meet him and told him, "The child has not awakened."

32 When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. 33 So he went in and closed the door on the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. 34 Then he got up on the bed[a] and lay upon the child, putting his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and while he lay bent over him, the flesh of the child became warm. 35 He got down, walked once to and fro in the room, then got up again and bent over him; the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 36 Elisha[b] summoned Gehazi and said, "Call the Shunammite woman." So he called her. When she came to him, he said, "Take your son." 37 She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground; then she took her son and left.

38 When Elisha returned to Gilgal, there was a famine in the land. As the company of prophets was[c] sitting before him, he said to his servant, "Put the large pot on, and make some stew for the company of prophets."[d] 39 One of them went out into the field to gather herbs; he found a wild vine and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of stew, not knowing what they were. 40 They served some for the men to eat. But while they were eating the stew, they cried out, "O man of God, there is death in the pot!" They could not eat it. 41 He said, "Then bring some flour." He threw it into the pot, and said, "Serve the people and let them eat." And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

42 A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God: twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said, "Give it to the people and let them eat." 43 But his servant said, "How can I set this before a hundred people?" So he repeated, "Give it to the people and let them eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left.' " 44 He set it before them, they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the LORD.

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy.[e] 2 Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. 3 She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."[e] 4 So Naaman[b] went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. 5 And the

[a] Heb lacks *on the bed*
[b] Heb *he*
[c] Heb *sons of the prophets were*
[d] Heb *sons of the prophets*
[e] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

failure highlights the importance of Elisha's personal appearance and his success. **33:** Elisha's prayer to the LORD precedes his mysterious actions. **34–35:** Crouching over the boy's body suggests a magic ritual in which the properties of the living party were transferred to the dead. *The child sneezed seven times*, signifying that life had returned; seven is the number of perfection. **38–41:** Elisha again provides food, making a poisoned meal edible by adding some *flour*; cf. 2:19–22. **42–44:** Elisha's multiplication of food provides the pattern for the stories about Jesus doing the same in the Gospels. **42:** *Baal-shalishah*, located in the hills of Ephraim ca. 11 mi (18 km) southwest of Samaria, probably named after the god Baal, but everything happens according to the LORD's word.

5.1–27: Elisha heals an Aramean officer. 1: *Naaman,* a name meaning "gracious, handsome" which is attested in the ancient Near East as a proper name as well as an epithet of royal personages. His "leprosy" (see textual note *e*) was not contagious and did not exclude him from Aramean society, although it is ironic given his name. **3:** *The prophet who is in Samaria* refers to Elisha, here not associated with a prophetic community but living alone in Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom. **5–7:** Despite the excessive gifts (*ten talents*, ca. 340 kg

king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. 6 He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy."[a] 7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?[a] Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

8 But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." 9 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." 11 But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy![a] 12 Are not Abana[b] and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. 13 But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" 14 So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

15 Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant." 16 But he said, "As the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!" He urged him to accept, but he refused. 17 Then Naaman said, "If not, please let two mule-loads of earth be given to your servant; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god except the LORD. 18 But may the LORD pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the LORD pardon your servant on this one count." 19 He said to him, "Go in peace."

But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, 20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, "My master has let that Aramean Naaman off too lightly by not accepting from him what he offered. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something out of him." 21 So Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he jumped down from the chariot to meet him and said, "Is everything all right?" 22 He replied, "Yes, but my master has sent me to say, 'Two members of a company of prophets[c] have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim; please give them a talent of silver and two changes of

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain
[b] Another reading is *Amana*
[c] Heb *sons of the prophets*

[755 lb], *of silver* and *six thousand shekels,* ca. 70 kg [150 lb], *of gold*), the Israelite king suspects that the Aramean king is seeking an occasion for war. **10:** *Seven times,* see 4.35n. **12:** *Abanah* (see textual note *b*) and *Pharpar* are rivers south of Damascus. **13:** *Father,* a title of respect for a superior. *Servants,* both the maidservant of Naaman's wife and Naaman's servants, play decisive roles in their master's healing. **14–15:** After his healing, Naaman expresses his belief that the LORD is not only the God of Israel, but of *all the earth* (cf. Josh 2.11). **16–17:** In order to worship the LORD outside of Israel, Naaman wants to take with him Israelite *earth* (lit., "soil") reflecting the traditional idea that the LORD is the national god of Israel. **18:** After Naaman's conversion, he cannot offend his king who venerates the deity *Rimmon,* so he will only pretend to worship this false god. The vocalization Rimmon (which means "pomegranate") may be a parody of the name of the Aramean weather-god (Hadad-)Ramman ("the Thunderer"). **19–27:** Although Elisha had refused any payment (v. 16), his servant *Gehazi* (the name

clothing.' " [23] Naaman said, "Please accept two talents." He urged him, and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and gave them to two of his servants, who carried them in front of Gehazi.[a] [24] When he came to the citadel, he took the bags[b] from them, and stored them inside; he dismissed the men, and they left.

[25] He went in and stood before his master; and Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" He answered, "Your servant has not gone anywhere at all." [26] But he said to him, "Did I not go with you in spirit when someone left his chariot to meet you? Is this a time to accept money and to accept clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves? [27] Therefore the leprosy[c] of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants forever." So he left his presence leprous,[c] as white as snow.

6 Now the company of prophets[d] said to Elisha, "As you see, the place where we live under your charge is too small for us. [2] Let us go to the Jordan, and let us collect logs there, one for each of us, and build a place there for us to live." He answered, "Do so." [3] Then one of them said, "Please come with your servants." And he answered, "I will." [4] So he went with them. When they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. [5] But as one was felling a log, his ax head fell into the water; he cried out, "Alas, master! It was borrowed." [6] Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float. [7] He said, "Pick it up." So he reached out his hand and took it.

[8] Once when the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he took counsel with his officers. He said, "At such and such a place shall be my camp." [9] But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, "Take care not to pass this place, because the Arameans are going down there." [10] The king of Israel sent word to the place of which the man of God spoke. More than once or twice he warned such a place[e] so that it was on the alert.

[11] The mind of the king of Aram was greatly perturbed because of this; he called his officers and said to them, "Now tell me who among us sides with the king of Israel?" [12] Then one of his officers said, "No one, my lord king. It is Elisha, the prophet in Israel, who tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber." [13] He said, "Go and find where he is; I will send and seize him." He was told, "He is in Dothan." [14] So he sent horses and chariots there and a great army; they came by night, and surrounded the city.

[15] When an attendant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. His servant said, "Alas, master! What shall we do?" [16] He replied, "Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than there are with them." [17] Then Elisha prayed: "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. [18] When the

[a] Heb *him*
[b] Heb lacks *the bags*
[c] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain
[d] Heb *sons of the prophets*
[e] Heb *warned it*

may mean "goggle-eyed") is eager for profit and is punished for that. **27:** Gehazi, who pursued profit from the healed Naaman, is now afflicted with his disease. *Leprous, as white as snow,* Miriam, who had criticized Moses (Num 12.10) was punished similarly.

6.1–7: Elisha makes iron float. Another miracle story that illustrates the prophetic community's dependence on its master. It follows the story about Naaman's healing because of its location near the Jordan River. **5:** *It was borrowed,* the community could not afford to have its own ax, so Elisha's help is vital.

6.8–23: Elisha and the Aramean invasion. 8: *At war* probably refers to border raids as in 5.2. Neither the name of *the king of Aram* nor that of the king of Israel is mentioned, suggesting the episode's legendary character. **12:** *Bedchamber*, the most intimate part of the royal palace. **13:** Now Elisha is in *Dothan* (see Gen 37.17), located ca. 11 mi (18 km) north of Samaria. It is close to a mountain road on which the Arameans could attack from the north. **15–23:** The two scenes are connected by the motif of blindness. **15–17:** When the LORD opens

Arameans[a] came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, "Strike this people, please, with blindness." So he struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked. 19 Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, and this is not the city; follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he led them to Samaria.

20 As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, open the eyes of these men so that they may see." The LORD opened their eyes, and they saw that they were inside Samaria. 21 When the king of Israel saw them he said to Elisha, "Father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" 22 He answered, "No! Did you capture with your sword and your bow those whom you want to kill? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink; and let them go to their master." 23 So he prepared for them a great feast; after they ate and drank, he sent them on their way, and they went to their master. And the Arameans no longer came raiding into the land of Israel.

24 Some time later King Ben-hadad of Aram mustered his entire army; he marched against Samaria and laid siege to it. 25 As the siege continued, famine in Samaria became so great that a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver. 26 Now as the king of Israel was walking on the city wall, a woman cried out to him, "Help, my lord king!" 27 He said, "No! Let the LORD help you. How can I help you? From the threshing floor or from the wine press?" 28 But then the king asked her, "What is your complaint?" She answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give up your son; we will eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' 29 So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son and we will eat him.' But she has hidden her son." 30 When the king heard the words of the woman he tore his clothes—now since he was walking on the city wall, the people could see that he had sackcloth on his body underneath— 31 and he said, "So may God do to me, and more, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat stays on his shoulders today." 32 So he dispatched a man from his presence.

Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. Before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the elders, "Are you aware that this murderer has sent someone to take off my head? When the messenger comes, see that you shut the door and hold it closed against him. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" 33 While he was still speaking with them, the king[b] came down to him and said, "This trouble is from the LORD! Why should I hope in the LORD any longer?" **7** 1 But Elisha said, "Hear the word of the LORD: thus says the LORD, Tomorrow about this time a measure of choice meal shall be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria." 2 Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned said to the man of God, "Even if the LORD were to make windows in the sky,

[a] Heb *they*
[b] See 7.2: Heb *messenger*

the eyes of Elisha's servant, he sees the celestial army, *horses and chariots of fire* (see 2.11–12n.). *The mountain* probably refers to the hill on which Dothan was located. **18–23:** When the LORD opens the eyes of the Arameans they discover that they have been captured and led to Samaria. **21:** *Father*, see 5.13n. **22:** Elisha insists on generous treatment of the Aramean prisoners.

6.24–7.20: Elisha and the siege of Samaria. This story, which relates a second siege of the capital of the Northern Kingdom (for the first, see 1 Kings 20.1) by Ben-hadad of Aram, incorporates several originally independent episodes. **24–30:** Two examples illustrate the severity of the famine during the siege. **25:** First, the exorbitant prices for the little remaining, barely edible food: *eighty shekels of silver* (2 lb [900 gr]) for *a donkey's head*; *five shekels* (ca. 2 oz [57 gr]) for a *kab* (ca 1.1 qt [1.3 L] *of dove's dung* (perhaps a nickname for inedible seeds). **26–29:** Second, women eating their children. Cannibalism is mentioned as a consequence of siege elsewhere in the Bible (see Deut 28.53–57; Ezek 5.10; Lam 2.20; 4.10) and in Mesopotamian documents. **30–31:** The Israelite king, wearing *sackcloth* as a sign of humiliation and repentance, sees no way to help his people, and seeks vengeance on the prophet Elisha, who should have intervened in such a situation. **6.32–7.2:** Elisha, however, is under the protection of the local elders (v. 32) and announces that the following day food will be available in Samaria at normal prices. **7.1:** *A measure* (Heb "se'ah"), ca. 7 qt (7.7 L). **2:** *Windows in the heavens*, cf. Gen 7.11; 8.2;

could such a thing happen?" But he said, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat from it."

3 Now there were four leprous[a] men outside the city gate, who said to one another, "Why should we sit here until we die? 4 If we say, 'Let us enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; but if we sit here, we shall also die. Therefore, let us desert to the Aramean camp; if they spare our lives, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." 5 So they arose at twilight to go to the Aramean camp; but when they came to the edge of the Aramean camp, there was no one there at all. 6 For the Lord had caused the Aramean army to hear the sound of chariots, and of horses, the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to fight against us." 7 So they fled away in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys leaving the camp just as it was, and fled for their lives. 8 When these leprous[a] men had come to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent, ate and drank, carried off silver, gold, and clothing, and went and hid them. Then they came back, entered another tent, carried off things from it, and went and hid them.

9 Then they said to one another, "What we are doing is wrong. This is a day of good news; if we are silent and wait until the morning light, we will be found guilty; therefore let us go and tell the king's household." 10 So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, "We went to the Aramean camp, but there was no one to be seen or heard there, nothing but the horses tied, the donkeys tied, and the tents as they were." 11 Then the gatekeepers called out and proclaimed it to the king's household. 12 The king got up in the night, and said to his servants, "I will tell you what the Arameans have prepared against us. They know that we are starving; so they have left the camp to hide themselves in the open country, thinking, 'When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive and get into the city.' " 13 One of his servants said, "Let some men take five of the remaining horses, since those left here will suffer the fate of the whole multitude of Israel that have perished already;[b] let us send and find out." 14 So they took two mounted men, and the king sent them after the Aramean army, saying, "Go and find out." 15 So they went after them as far as the Jordan; the whole way was littered with garments and equipment that the Arameans had thrown away in their haste. So the messengers returned, and told the king.

16 Then the people went out, and plundered the camp of the Arameans. So a measure of choice meal was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD. 17 Now the king had appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate; the people trampled him to death in the gate, just as the man of God had said when the king came down to him. 18 For when the man of God had said to the king, "Two measures of barley shall be sold for a shekel, and a measure of choice meal for a shekel, about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria," 19 the captain had answered the man of God, "Even if the LORD were to make windows in the sky, could such a thing happen?" And he had answered, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat from it." 20 It did indeed happen to him; the people trampled him to death in the gate.

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

[b] Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

Mal 3.10. **3–5:** The *four leprous men* are ritually impure so they have to reside outside the city (see Lev 13.46). Deserting to the Arameans, they find their camp empty. **6–7:** The LORD has made the Arameans hear the sound of a great army, which they interpreted as the armies of the *Hittites* and the *Egyptians*, frequent rivals for control of the Levant. **8–20:** Punishment for not believing in the divine word. **18–19:** The verbatim repetition of Elisha's oracle and the answer of the skeptical officer in vv. 1–2 shows again that the prophetic word has been fulfilled. **20:** Standing at the gate of Samaria where he had asserted that no food would be available, the officer is trampled to death, probably in the scramble to acquire food.

8 Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, "Get up and go with your household, and settle wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and it will come on the land for seven years." 2 So the woman got up and did according to the word of the man of God; she went with her household and settled in the land of the Philistines seven years. 3 At the end of the seven years, when the woman returned from the land of the Philistines, she set out to appeal to the king for her house and her land. 4 Now the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done." 5 While he was telling the king how Elisha had restored a dead person to life, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and her land. Gehazi said, "My lord king, here is the woman, and here is her son whom Elisha restored to life." 6 When the king questioned the woman, she told him. So the king appointed an official for her, saying, "Restore all that was hers, together with all the revenue of the fields from the day that she left the land until now."

7 Elisha went to Damascus while King Ben-hadad of Aram was ill. When it was told him, "The man of God has come here," 8 the king said to Hazael, "Take a present with you and go to meet the man of God. Inquire of the LORD through him, whether I shall recover from this illness." 9 So Hazael went to meet him, taking a present with him, all kinds of goods of Damascus, forty camel loads. When he entered and stood before him, he said, "Your son King Ben-hadad of Aram has sent me to you, saying, 'Shall I recover from this illness?' " 10 Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover'; but the LORD has shown me that he shall certainly die." 11 He fixed his gaze and stared at him, until he was ashamed. Then the man of God wept. 12 Hazael asked, "Why does my lord weep?" He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the people of Israel; you will set their fortresses on fire, you will kill their young men with the sword, dash in pieces their little ones, and rip up their pregnant women." 13 Hazael said, "What is your servant, who is a mere dog, that he should do this great thing?" Elisha answered, "The LORD has shown me that you are to be king over Aram." 14 Then he left Elisha, and went to his master Ben-hadad,[a] who said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" And he answered, "He told me that you would certainly recover." 15 But the next day he took the bed-cover and dipped it in water and spread it over the king's face, until he died. And Hazael succeeded him.

16 In the fifth year of King Joram son of Ahab of Israel,[b] Jehoram son of King Jehoshaphat of Judah began to reign. 17 He was

[a] Heb lacks *Ben-hadad*

[b] Gk Syr: Heb adds *Jehoshaphat being king of Judah,*

8.1–6: Elisha saves the life of the Shunammite woman. A sequel to the story of 4.8–37 related to the preceding one by the theme of famine. **1–3:** The woman's long absence (*seven years*) makes her lose her estate; it may have become crown property, or confiscated by a neighbor. **4–6:** Her appeal to the king succeeds because of her close relationship with Elisha. **5:** The mediator of her appeal is Gehazi, Elisha's servant, not the prophet himself.

8.7–15: Elisha and the Aramean kings Ben-hadad and Hazael. This story is difficult to understand, in part because of later redactors who adjusted it to 1 Kings 19.15–18, where Elijah is told to anoint Hazael king of Aram. **7–10:** Hazael has been sent by his master, the king Ben-hadad, to *inquire of the LORD* about his illness (cf. 1.2); cf. the similar recognition of the LORD's power by Arameans in ch 5. Elisha's answer deliberately misleads the Aramean king: Hazael should tell the king that he will recover (see v. 14), but in fact he will die through Hazael's hands (v. 15). The older story probably reported only an oracle of healing, and the killing of the king was originally at Hazael's own initiative. Hazael's usurpation is also mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions where he is called "son of a nobody." **9:** The Aramean king presents himself as Elisha's *son*, an expression of deference. **11–15:** Elisha foresees the sufferings and cruelties that Hazael will inflict on Israel, which are not explicitly related in the Bible (but see 10.32; 13.3,22; 15.16n.; Am 1.3–4). **13:** *A mere dog*, a deferential self-designation. Elisha does not anoint Hazael but only reveals that he will be king. **15:** *Bed-cover*, the translation of this word is uncertain. This verse probably refers to Hazael's murdering Ben-hadad by suffocation, though it might also refer to an attempt to lower the king's fever with cool compresses.

8.16–29: Jehoram and Ahaziah of Judah. Both these Judean kings are evaluated negatively. **16–24:** *Jehoram* or

thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18 He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. 19 Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah, for the sake of his servant David, since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his descendants forever.

20 In his days Edom revolted against the rule of Judah, and set up a king of their own. 21 Then Joram crossed over to Zair with all his chariots. He set out by night and attacked the Edomites and their chariot commanders who had surrounded him;[a] but his army fled home. 22 So Edom has been in revolt against the rule of Judah to this day. Libnah also revolted at the same time. 23 Now the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 24 So Joram slept with his ancestors, and was buried with them in the city of David; his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

25 In the twelfth year of King Joram son of Ahab of Israel, Ahaziah son of King Jehoram of Judah began to reign. 26 Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel. 27 He also walked in the way of the house of Ahab, doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done, for he was son-in-law to the house of Ahab.

28 He went with Joram son of Ahab to wage war against King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead, where the Arameans wounded Joram. 29 King Joram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramah, when he fought against King Hazael of Aram. King Ahaziah son of Jehoram of Judah went down to see Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was wounded.

9 Then the prophet Elisha called a member of the company of prophets[b] and said to him, "Gird up your loins; take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead. 2 When you arrive, look there for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi; go in and get him to leave his companions, and take him into an inner chamber. 3 Then take the flask of oil, pour it on his head, and say, 'Thus says the LORD: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee; do not linger."

4 So the young man, the young prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead. 5 He arrived while the commanders of the army were in council, and he announced, "I have a message for you, commander." "For which one of us?" asked Jehu. "For you, commander." 6 So Jehu[c] got up and went inside; the young man poured the

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *sons of the prophets*
[c] Heb *he*

Joram (see vv. 21,23–24), who reigned ca. 851–843 BCE, had to face revolts from *Edom* and *Libnah* (vv. 20–22), a border town next to Philistine territory and perhaps never really part of Judah. **19:** The Deuteronomistic historians' expression *a lamp* to David (see 1 Kings 11.35n.; 15.4) refers to the promise of an eternal dynasty to David in 2 Sam 7. **25:** *Ahaziah* (ca. 843–842 BCE) was murdered by Jehu (9.27) after reigning one year; cf. 9.29n. **26:** *Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri*, lit., "daughter of Omri." Scholars disagree about whether this queen of Judah (ch 11) was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 17.31; 2 Kings 8.18) or of Omri, Ahab's father. **27:** After the typical Deuteronomistic negative evaluation of this king, the usual concluding formula is missing. Instead a redactor added a short passage that anticipates 9.14–15. **28–29:** *Ramoth-gilead,* a border city between the Israelite and Aramean territories, the site of an earlier military confrontation between Israel and Aram (in 1 Kings 22.29–36). *Jezreel,* a winter residence of the Omride kings. The report about the wounded Joram of Israel who needs to recover from his battle-wounds introduces the following account of Jehu's revolt.

9.1–10.36: Jehu's revolt and reign. The long account of Jehu's revolt describes the end of the Omride dynasty. The authors of Kings have a mixed opinion of Jehu: they approve of his attempt to eradicate Baal worship in the Northern Kingdom, but since he is a northern king, who is worshiping outside of Jerusalem, they are obliged to condemn him. **9.1–9:** The anointing of Jehu, fulfilling the divine order given to Elijah in 1 Kings 19.16, is performed by a member of Elisha's prophetic group. **2:** The name *Jehu* (in 1 Kings 16.1 a prophet's name) corresponds to Jehu's religious conviction; it means: "The LORD is God." His father's name, *Jehoshaphat,* also refers to the god of Israel ("The LORD will judge"); *Nimshi* probably means "weasel." It is unusual for the name

oil on his head, saying to him, "Thus says the LORD the God of Israel: I anoint you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel. 7 You shall strike down the house of your master Ahab, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD. 8 For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; I will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. 9 I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah. 10 The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and no one shall bury her." Then he opened the door and fled.

11 When Jehu came back to his master's officers, they said to him, "Is everything all right? Why did that madman come to you?" He answered them, "You know the sort and how they babble." 12 They said, "Liar! Come on, tell us!" So he said, "This is just what he said to me: 'Thus says the LORD, I anoint you king over Israel.' " 13 Then hurriedly they all took their cloaks and spread them for him on the bare[a] steps; and they blew the trumpet, and proclaimed, "Jehu is king."

14 Thus Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. Joram with all Israel had been on guard at Ramoth-gilead against King Hazael of Aram; 15 but King Joram had returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that the Arameans had inflicted on him, when he fought against King Hazael of Aram. So Jehu said, "If this is your wish, then let no one slip out of the city to go and tell the news in Jezreel." 16 Then Jehu mounted his chariot and went to Jezreel, where Joram was lying ill. King Ahaziah of Judah had come down to visit Joram.

17 In Jezreel, the sentinel standing on the tower spied the company of Jehu arriving, and said, "I see a company." Joram said, "Take a horseman; send him to meet them, and let him say, 'Is it peace?' " 18 So the horseman went to meet him; he said, "Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?' " Jehu responded, "What have you to do with peace? Fall in behind me." The sentinel reported, saying, "The messenger reached them, but he is not coming back." 19 Then he sent out a second horseman, who came to them and said, "Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?' " Jehu answered, "What have you to do with peace? Fall in behind me." 20 Again the sentinel reported, "He reached them, but he is not coming back. It looks like the driving of Jehu son of Nimshi; for he drives like a maniac."

21 Joram said, "Get ready." And they got his chariot ready. Then King Joram of Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah set out, each in his chariot, and went to meet Jehu; they met him at the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. 22 When Joram saw Jehu, he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" He answered, "What peace can there be, so long as the many whoredoms and sorceries of your mother Jezebel continue?" 23 Then Joram reined about and fled, saying to Ahaziah, "Treason, Ahaziah!" 24 Jehu drew his bow with all his strength, and shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced his heart; and he sank in his chariot. 25 Jehu said to his aide Bidkar, "Lift him out, and throw him on the plot of ground belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember, when you and I rode side by side behind his father Ahab how the LORD uttered this oracle against him: 26 'For the blood of Naboth and for the blood of his children that I saw yesterday, says the LORD, I swear I will repay you on this very plot of ground.' Now therefore lift him out and throw him on the plot of ground, in accordance with the word of the LORD."

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

of the grandfather to be mentioned; it was probably included to avoid confusion with Jehoshaphat of Judah, or it is the name of Jehu's clan. **7–10:** See 1 Kings 14.10–11; 21.21–24. **7:** *Jezebel,* see 1 Kings 16.31n. **8:** *Every male*, lit., "whoever urinates against a wall" (see 1 Kings 14.10; 16.11; 21.21). **11–13:** Jehu's anointing was secret, as was Saul's (1 Sam 9.27–10.1), but it immediately becomes public. **11:** *Madman*, a demeaning reference to the apparently well-known prophet, referring to his wild and ecstatic behavior. **13:** *They blew the trumpet*, see 1 Kings 1.34. On the spreading of garments under Jehu's feet, cf. Mt 21.8 par. **14–15:** Jehu's coup takes place during the situation described in 8.28–29. **20:** *Like a maniac,* better "with madness," using a word from the same root as "madman" in v. 11. **21:** The kings meet Jehu at the former *property of Naboth*. They both belong to Ahab's family, and their end will start at the site of Ahab and Jezebel's hideous act (see 1 Kings 21). **22:** *Whoredom*, a metaphor

27 When King Ahaziah of Judah saw this,
he fled in the direction of Beth-haggan. Jehu
pursued him, saying, "Shoot him also!" And
they shot him[a] in the chariot at the ascent
to Gur, which is by Ibleam. Then he fled to
Megiddo, and died there. 28 His officers car-
ried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried
him in his tomb with his ancestors in the city
of David.

29 In the eleventh year of Joram son
of Ahab, Ahaziah began to reign over
Judah.

30 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel
heard of it; she painted her eyes, and adorned
her head, and looked out of the window.
31 As Jehu entered the gate, she said, "Is it
peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?" 32 He
looked up to the window and said, "Who is
on my side? Who?" Two or three eunuchs
looked out at him. 33 He said, "Throw her
down." So they threw her down; some of
her blood spattered on the wall and on the
horses, which trampled on her. 34 Then he
went in and ate and drank; he said, "See to
that cursed woman and bury her; for she is
a king's daughter." 35 But when they went to
bury her, they found no more of her than
the skull and the feet and the palms of her
hands. 36 When they came back and told him,
he said, "This is the word of the LORD, which
he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite,
'In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat
the flesh of Jezebel; 37 the corpse of Jezebel
shall be like dung on the field in the terri-
tory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is
Jezebel.'"

10 Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters and sent
them to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel,[b] to
the elders, and to the guardians of the sons
of[c] Ahab, saying, 2 "Since your master's sons
are with you and you have at your disposal
chariots and horses, a fortified city, and
weapons, 3 select the son of your master who
is the best qualified, set him on his father's
throne, and fight for your master's house."
4 But they were utterly terrified and said,
"Look, two kings could not withstand him;
how then can we stand?" 5 So the steward of
the palace, and the governor of the city, along
with the elders and the guardians, sent word
to Jehu: "We are your servants; we will do
anything you say. We will not make anyone
king; do whatever you think right." 6 Then he
wrote them a second letter, saying, "If you
are on my side, and if you are ready to obey
me, take the heads of your master's sons and
come to me at Jezreel tomorrow at this time."
Now the king's sons, seventy persons, were
with the leaders of the city, who were charged
with their upbringing. 7 When the letter
reached them, they took the king's sons and
killed them, seventy persons; they put their
heads in baskets and sent them to him at
Jezreel. 8 When the messenger came and told
him, "They have brought the heads of the
king's sons," he said, "Lay them in two heaps
at the entrance of the gate until the morning."

[a] Syr Vg Compare Gk: Heb lacks *and they shot him*
[b] Or *of the city*; Vg Compare Gk
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *of the sons of*

for describing the worship of other deities; *sorceries*, forbidden magical and other religious practices (see Deut 18.9–13). **27:** Ahaziah's death was motivated by his relation to Joram (he was either his nephew or his cousin; see 8.26n.). *Beth-haggan*, modern Jenin, ca. 10 mi (16 km) south of Jezreel; *Ibleam* is nearby, at the southern end of the Jezreel valley. **28:** Ahaziah is killed in *Megiddo* (ca. 12 mi [19 km] northwest of Ibleam), as King Josiah will be (see 23.29–30); both kings are *carried in a chariot to Jerusalem* to be buried there. **29:** The report about the beginning of Ahaziah's reign is probably a correction of 8.25, placed here to mark two different scenes in the narrative: v. 28 is about Jerusalem, while the following scene is in Samaria. **30:** Jezebel appears as "woman at the window," a frequent motif in ancient Near Eastern art, representing prostitutes or fertility goddesses and suggesting sexual availability. **31:** She identifies Jehu with *Zimri*, who killed King Baasha (1 Kings 16.9–20), but reigned only a week. **32–33:** Jezebel is killed by the *eunuchs* (or "officials") who were at her service. **36–37:** The fulfillment of Elijah's oracle in 1 Kings 21.23. **10.1–11:** Jehu massacres the remnant of the house of Ahab. **1:** *Seventy sons*, seventy is a round number in the Bible (see, e.g., Judg 8.30; Deut 10.22) and in many other texts from the ancient Near East. It is unclear why Jehu should write letters to the governors or *rulers of Jezreel*, since he is already in the city (9.30). LXX suggests "Samaria" instead of "Jezreel" (see textual note *b*). **8:** Jehu's order to lay the heads of the slaughtered members of the royal family *in two heaps at the entrance of the gate* is also attested

9 Then in the morning when he went out,
he stood and said to all the people, "You are
innocent. It was I who conspired against my
master and killed him; but who struck down
all these? 10 Know then that there shall fall
to the earth nothing of the word of the LORD,
which the LORD spoke concerning the house
of Ahab; for the LORD has done what he said
through his servant Elijah." 11 So Jehu killed
all who were left of the house of Ahab in Jez-
reel, all his leaders, close friends, and priests,
until he left him no survivor.

12 Then he set out and went to Samaria.
On the way, when he was at Beth-eked of
the Shepherds, 13 Jehu met relatives of King
Ahaziah of Judah and said, "Who are you?"
They answered, "We are kin of Ahaziah; we
have come down to visit the royal princes
and the sons of the queen mother." 14 He said,
"Take them alive." They took them alive, and
slaughtered them at the pit of Beth-eked,
forty-two in all; he spared none of them.

15 When he left there, he met Jehonadab
son of Rechab coming to meet him; he greet-
ed him, and said to him, "Is your heart as
true to mine as mine is to yours?"[a] Jehonadab
answered, "It is." Jehu said,[b] "If it is, give me
your hand." So he gave him his hand. Jehu
took him up with him into the chariot. 16 He
said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the
LORD." So he[c] had him ride in his chariot.
17 When he came to Samaria, he killed all who
were left to Ahab in Samaria, until he had
wiped them out, according to the word of the
LORD that he spoke to Elijah.

18 Then Jehu assembled all the people
and said to them, "Ahab offered Baal small
service; but Jehu will offer much more. 19 Now
therefore summon to me all the prophets of
Baal, all his worshipers, and all his priests; let
none be missing, for I have a great sacrifice
to offer to Baal; whoever is missing shall
not live." But Jehu was acting with cunning
in order to destroy the worshipers of Baal.
20 Jehu decreed, "Sanctify a solemn assembly
for Baal." So they proclaimed it. 21 Jehu sent
word throughout all Israel; all the worshipers
of Baal came, so that there was no one left
who did not come. They entered the temple
of Baal, until the temple of Baal was filled
from wall to wall. 22 He said to the keeper of
the wardrobe, "Bring out the vestments for
all the worshipers of Baal." So he brought out
the vestments for them. 23 Then Jehu entered
the temple of Baal with Jehonadab son of
Rechab; he said to the worshipers of Baal,
"Search and see that there is no worshiper of
the LORD here among you, but only worship-
ers of Baal." 24 Then they proceeded to offer
sacrifices and burnt offerings.

Now Jehu had stationed eighty men out-
side, saying, "Whoever allows any of those to
escape whom I deliver into your hands shall
forfeit his life." 25 As soon as he had finished
presenting the burnt offering, Jehu said to the
guards and to the officers, "Come in and kill
them; let no one escape." So they put them to
the sword. The guards and the officers threw
them out, and then went into the citadel of
the temple of Baal. 26 They brought out the
pillar[d] that was in the temple of Baal, and
burned it. 27 Then they demolished the pillar
of Baal, and destroyed the temple of Baal, and
made it a latrine to this day.

28 Thus Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel.
29 But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins

[a] Gk: Heb *Is it right with your heart, as my heart is with your heart?*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *Jehu said*
[c] Gk Syr Tg: Heb *they*
[d] Gk Vg Syr Tg: Heb *pillars*

in Assyrian warfare. It was meant to frighten the population and to encourage it to collaborate with the usurper. **10:** Such a reference to a former prophetic oracle (1 Kings 21.21–24) is typical of the Deuteronomistic historians in Kings (see also v. 17). **12–14:** Jehu's slaughtering continues with the relatives of the Judean king. **12:** *Beth-eked*, an unidentified place, apparently a gathering-place for shepherds. **13:** *The queen mother*, Jezebel is the only queen in the Northern Kingdom with title, which designates an influential position. **14:** *Forty-two*, see 2.24n. **15–17:** *Jehonadab son of Rechab* is mentioned in Jer 35 as the founder of a small religious group committed to a lifestyle that rejected urban culture. Here he is portrayed as an ally of Jehu. **16:** *Chariot*, Heb "rekeb," recalling the name Rechab ("rekab"). Jehonadab was perhaps a charioteer, like Jehu (see 9.25). **18–27:** Jehu's massacre of all worshipers of Baal surpasses even Elijah's killing of the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18.40. **27:** Perhaps a variant tradition of v. 26. **28–31:** The evaluation of Jehu by the Deuteronomistic historians is ambivalent. Like David, he

of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to commit—the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan. 30 The LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in carrying out what I consider right, and in accordance with all that was in my heart have dealt with the house of Ahab, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." 31 But Jehu was not careful to follow the law of the LORD the God of Israel with all his heart; he did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he caused Israel to commit.

32 In those days the LORD began to trim off parts of Israel. Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel: 33 from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the Wadi Arnon, that is, Gilead and Bashan. 34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, all that he did, and all his power, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 35 So Jehu slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz succeeded him. 36 The time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.

11 Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead, she set about to destroy all the royal family. 2 But Jehosheba, King Joram's daughter, Ahaziah's sister, took Joash son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's children who were about to be killed; she put[a] him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus she[b] hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not killed; 3 he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the LORD, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

4 But in the seventh year Jehoiada summoned the captains of the Carites and of the guards and had them come to him in the house of the LORD. He made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the LORD; then he showed them the king's son. 5 He commanded them, "This is what you are to do: one-third of you, those who go off duty on the sabbath and guard the king's house 6 (another third being at the gate Sur and a third at the gate behind the guards), shall guard the palace; 7 and your two divisions that come on duty in force on the sabbath and guard the house of the LORD[c] 8 shall surround the king, each with weapons in hand; and whoever approaches the ranks is to be killed. Be with the king in his comings and goings."

9 The captains did according to all that the priest Jehoiada commanded; each brought his men who were to go off duty on the sabbath, with those who were to come on duty on the sabbath, and came to the priest Jehoiada. 10 The priest delivered to the captains the spears and shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of the LORD; 11 the guards stood, every

[a] With 2 Chr 22.11: Heb lacks *she put*
[b] Gk Syr Vg Compare 2 Chr 22.11: Heb *they*
[c] Heb *the LORD to the king*

receives a dynastic promise, but limited to the fourth generation. But Jehu's worship of the LORD was wrong, because he venerated him outside of Jerusalem, continuing *the sins of Jeroboam* (see 1 Kings 12). **32–33:** During Jehu's reign, the Northern Kingdom declined and Jehu eventually lost Israel's Transjordanian territory to the Arameans. An Assyrian stele reports that Jehu had become a vassal of King Shalmaneser III (ruled ca. 859–824 BCE), a fact not mentioned in the Bible. **34–36:** With the exception of his coup, very little of the *twenty-eight years* of Jehu's reign (ca. 842–814 BCE) is described.

11.1–21: The reign of Athaliah in Judah. The reign of Athaliah (ca. 842–836 BCE), Ahaziah's mother, interrupts the Davidic line, since she is from the north (see 8.26n.). For Deuteronomistic historians, she was an illegitimate ruler; therefore her reign lacks the typical introductory and concluding formulas. Athaliah's name means "the LORD is exalted," but the biblical authors accuse her of sponsoring Baal worship (see v. 18). **1–3:** Like Jehu in the north, Athaliah tries to massacre all potential heirs to the throne, but one member of the royal family escapes (for the same literary motif see Judg 9.5). **2–3:** Young *Joash* was hidden by Ahaziah's sister *Jehosheba in the house of the LORD* for six years; this suggests that Jehosheba was the wife of the priest Jehoiada (see also 2 Chr 22.11). **4:** *Jehoiada* organizes the rebellion in the *seventh year,* perhaps a symbolic number. The *Carites* (Carians) are either a royal bodyguard from Cilicia or the same as the Cherethites (1 Kings 1.38). **5–8:** The details of the deployment of the troops are unclear. Apparently three companies should stand at different strategic positions (the location of

man with his weapons in his hand, from the south side of the house to the north side of the house, around the altar and the house, to guard the king on every side. 12 Then he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the covenant;[a] they proclaimed him king, and anointed him; they clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!"

13 When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she went into the house of the LORD to the people; 14 when she looked, there was the king standing by the pillar, according to custom, with the captains and the trumpeters beside the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!" 15 Then the priest Jehoiada commanded the captains who were set over the army, "Bring her out between the ranks, and kill with the sword anyone who follows her." For the priest said, "Let her not be killed in the house of the LORD." 16 So they laid hands on her; she went through the horses' entrance to the king's house, and there she was put to death.

17 Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people, that they should be the LORD's people; also between the king and the people. 18 Then all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, before the altars. The priest posted guards over the house of the LORD. 19 He took the captains, the Carites, the guards, and all the people of the land; then they brought the king down from the house of the LORD, marching through the gate of the guards to the king's house. He took his seat on the throne of the kings. 20 So all the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been killed with the sword at the king's house.

21[b] Jehoash[c] was seven years old when he began to reign.

12 In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash began to reign; he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2 Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all his days, because the priest Jehoiada instructed him. 3 Nevertheless the high places were not taken away; the people continued to sacrifice and make offerings on the high places.

4 Jehoash said to the priests, "All the money offered as sacred donations that is brought

[a] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[b] Ch 12.1 in Heb
[c] Another spelling is *Joash*; see verse 19

the *gate Sur* is unknown), and two other groups (or two of the three previous ones) should protect the new king. **12:** *Crown,* or diadem, cf. 2 Sam 1.10, a sign of royalty; see also Ps 89.40. The *covenant* (Heb "'edut," lit., "testimony") may refer to a list of regulations for the conduct of kingship (like Deut 17.18–20), or may refer to jewels or other royal insignia. *Long live the king,* cf. 1 Kings 1.25. **14:** *Pillar*, or podium, a place of royal appearance (see 23.3); 2 Chr 23.13 interprets this as the pillars Jachin and Boaz (see 1 Kings 7.21) at the Temple entrance. The *people of the land* designates here, as elsewhere in the book of Kings, the rural aristocracy that intervened in critical situations in order to defend the continuity of the Davidic dynasty. **16:** *The horses' entrance*, the Horse Gate mentioned in Jer 31.40; Neh 3.28. **17–20:** The threefold *covenant between the LORD and the king and people* mediated by a priest has become necessary because Athaliah's reign had interrupted the Davidic succession. The covenant reflects the renewal of the Davidic dynasty as chosen by God and accepted by the people (see 2 Sam 5.3). **18:** *The house of Baal*, the only biblical reference to a temple of Baal in Jerusalem; there is no other mention of Athaliah being a fervent worshiper of Baal. The Baal priest *Mattan* appears only here and in the parallel account in 2 Chr 23.17. **20:** Contrary to v. 16, where Athaliah is killed on her way to palace, v. 20 reports that she was actually murdered in the palace itself; this shows that the narrative was composed in several stages. **20:** Joash was *seven years* old when he started to reign, foreshadowing Josiah, who begins to rule at the age of eight years (see 23.1).

12.1–21: The reign of Jehoash (Joash), king of Judah (ca. 836–798 BCE). **1:** In the Deuteronomistic introduction, Jehoash is said to have ruled *forty* years. This may be a symbolic number, and may include the six years of Athaliah. **2–3:** For the Deuteronomistic historians, Jehoash was a good king, although he tolerated worship of the LORD in places other than the Temple in Jerusalem. **4–16:** The repair of the Temple foreshadows King Josiah's repairs (see 22.3–7). **4:** *Money . . . sacred donations,* money that replaced the traditional sacrifices (see Lev 27.1–8).

into the house of the LORD, the money for which each person is assessed—the money from the assessment of persons—and the money from the voluntary offerings brought into the house of the LORD, 5 let the priests receive from each of the donors; and let them repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered." 6 But by the twenty-third year of King Jehoash the priests had made no repairs on the house. 7 Therefore King Jehoash summoned the priest Jehoiada with the other priests and said to them, "Why are you not repairing the house? Now therefore do not accept any more money from your donors but hand it over for the repair of the house." 8 So the priests agreed that they would neither accept more money from the people nor repair the house.

9 Then the priest Jehoiada took a chest, made a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar on the right side as one entered the house of the LORD; the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD. 10 Whenever they saw that there was a great deal of money in the chest, the king's secretary and the high priest went up, counted the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and tied it up in bags. 11 They would give the money that was weighed out into the hands of the workers who had the oversight of the house of the LORD; then they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders who worked on the house of the LORD, 12 to the masons and the stonecutters, as well as to buy timber and quarried stone for making repairs on the house of the LORD, as well as for any outlay for repairs of the house. 13 But for the house of the LORD no basins of silver, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, or any vessels of gold, or of silver, were made from the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, 14 for that was given to the workers who were repairing the house of the LORD with it. 15 They did not ask an accounting from those into whose hand they delivered the money to pay out to the workers, for they dealt honestly. 16 The money from the guilt offerings and the money from the sin offerings was not brought into the house of the LORD; it belonged to the priests.

17 At that time King Hazael of Aram went up, fought against Gath, and took it. But when Hazael set his face to go up against Jerusalem, 18 King Jehoash of Judah took all the votive gifts that Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his ancestors, the kings of Judah, had dedicated, as well as his own votive gifts, all the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent these to King Hazael of Aram. Then Hazael withdrew from Jerusalem.

19 Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 20 His servants arose, devised a conspiracy, and killed Joash in the house of Millo, on the way that goes down to Silla. 21 It was Jozacar son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer, his servants, who struck him down, so that he died. He was buried with his ancestors in the city of David; then his son Amaziah succeeded him.

6–8: The priests were unwilling to spend the money they received to repair the Temple. **6:** *The twenty-third year*, one of the few instances in the books of Kings where a specific date is given. **7–8:** During this year Joash decides to repair the Temple, and removes the priest formerly responsible for similar work. **9–12:** The priest Jehoiada is now centralizing and supervising the money for the restoration, which is now given directly to the craftsmen, as does the priest Hilkiah in 22.4–6. **10:** *High priest*, this title is used only from the Persian period onward, when this episode may have been composed. **13:** The meaning of the verse is unclear. It may refer to lack of adequate silver, causing a very modest restoration, or that the Temple vessels should be paid for by rich donors. **16:** There was apparently some dispute about the silver, which belonged directly to the priests (see Lev 7.7–10). **17–18:** After his campaigns in Israel (see 10.32–33), Hazael of Aram is now attacking *Gath* on the Philistine coast and *Jerusalem*. Since he was more interested in controlling the trade routes in the south than in occupying the capital of Judah, he accepts the tribute that Jehoash is immediately willing to pay. **19–21:** The parallel account in 2 Chr 24.24–27, which depicts Joash more negatively than Kings, gives a different explanation of the death of Joash. **20:** *Millo*, see 1 Kings 9.15n. **21:** *Jozacar* . . . and *Jehozabad*, NRSV follows the LXX. In the MT both murderers are named Jehozabad. The identification of Joash's murderers is a later addition.

13 In the twenty-third year of King Joash son of Ahaziah of Judah, Jehoahaz son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria; he reigned seventeen years. 2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin; he did not depart from them. 3 The anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that he gave them repeatedly into the hand of King Hazael of Aram, then into the hand of Ben-hadad son of Hazael. 4 But Jehoahaz entreated the LORD, and the LORD heeded him; for he saw the oppression of Israel, how the king of Aram oppressed them. 5 Therefore the LORD gave Israel a savior, so that they escaped from the hand of the Arameans; and the people of Israel lived in their homes as formerly. 6 Nevertheless they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, which he caused Israel to sin, but walked[a] in them; the sacred pole[b] also remained in Samaria. 7 So Jehoahaz was left with an army of not more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Aram had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing. 8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz and all that he did, including his might, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 9 So Jehoahaz slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in Samaria; then his son Joash succeeded him.

10 In the thirty-seventh year of King Joash of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz began to reign over Israel in Samaria; he reigned sixteen years. 11 He also did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin, but he walked in them. 12 Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, as well as the might with which he fought against King Amaziah of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 13 So Joash slept with his ancestors, and Jeroboam sat upon his throne; Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

14 Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die, King Joash of Israel went down to him, and wept before him, crying, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" 15 Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows"; so he took a bow and arrows. 16 Then he said to the king of Israel, "Draw the bow"; and he drew it. Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. 17 Then he said, "Open the window eastward"; and he opened it. Elisha said, "Shoot"; and he shot. Then he said, "The LORD's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram! For you shall fight the Arameans in Aphek until you have made an end of them." 18 He continued, "Take the arrows"; and he took them. He said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground with them"; he struck three times, and stopped. 19 Then the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Aram until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Aram only three times."

20 So Elisha died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the

[a] Gk Syr Tg Vg: Heb *he walked*
[b] Heb *Asherah*

13.1–25: Jehoahaz and Jehoash (Joash) of Israel and the death of Elisha. The chronological data in chs 13–15 are confusing and do not allow for a coherent reconstruction; all dates are approximate. **1–9:** Jehoahaz (ca. 817–800 BCE), evaluated as a bad king who nevertheless has the LORD on his side, faces renewed Aramean oppression. **5:** The identity of the *savior* sent by God is not specified; possibilities include Elisha; the Assyrian king, who fought the Arameans; and Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz. **6:** *Sacred pole* (Heb "'asherah"), a symbol of the goddess Asherah, whom Jehu's son continued to worship, as well as the LORD. **7–8:** As in the book of Judges (e.g., 2.18; 3.9,15), the sending of a savior does not provoke a return to the LORD; therefore the Israelite *army* is drastically reduced. **10–21:** Little information is given about *Jehoash*, whose name is identical to that of his Judean colleague. His rule (ca. 800–784 BCE) provides the context for the story about Elisha's death. **11–13:** The concluding formula of his reign appears here and is repeated in 14.15–16. Some LXX manuscripts omit these verses. **14:** *Elisha* has not been mentioned since the anointing of Jehu, some fifty years earlier (9.1–3). *Chariots of Israel . . .* , see 2.11–12n. **15–19:** Just before his death Elisha has the king perform two symbolic actions, which foretell his incomplete victory against the Arameans. *Arrows* were used in the ancient Near East for divination; see Ezek 21.21. **16:** Elisha lays his hands on the king's hands as a magical gesture through which Elisha's power passes to him. **17:** *Aphek*, see 1 Kings 20.26n. **20–21:** Even after his death, Elisha is still able to perform a miracle.

land in the spring of the year. 21 As a man was being buried, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha; as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life and stood on his feet.

22 Now King Hazael of Aram oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23 But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them; he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them; nor has he banished them from his presence until now.

24 When King Hazael of Aram died, his son Ben-hadad succeeded him. 25 Then Jehoash son of Jehoahaz took again from Ben-hadad son of Hazael the towns that he had taken from his father Jehoahaz in war. Three times Joash defeated him and recovered the towns of Israel.

14 In the second year of King Joash son of Joahaz of Israel, King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, began to reign. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. 3 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like his ancestor David; in all things he did as his father Joash had done. 4 But the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. 5 As soon as the royal power was firmly in his hand he killed his servants who had murdered his father the king. 6 But he did not put to death the children of the murderers; according to what is written in the book of the law of Moses, where the LORD commanded, "The parents shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the parents; but all shall be put to death for their own sins."

7 He killed ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and took Sela by storm; he called it Jokthe-el, which is its name to this day.

8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." 9 King Jehoash of Israel sent word to King Amaziah of Judah, "A thornbush on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for a wife'; but a wild animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thornbush. 10 You have indeed defeated Edom, and your heart has lifted you up. Be content with your glory, and stay at home; for why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?"

11 But Amaziah would not listen. So King Jehoash of Israel went up; he and King Amaziah of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah. 12 Judah was defeated by Israel; everyone fled home. 13 King Jehoash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah son of Jehoash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh; he came to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, a

This anecdote reflects the veneration of the dead Elisha as a miracle worker. **22–23:** These verses return to the reign of Jehoahaz; they were inserted by a later redactor to connect with vv. 4–5, and they give another reason for God's help against the Arameans: his *covenant* with the patriarchs. **24–25:** A reference to the encounter between Elisha and Jehoahaz, stating that his son Jehoash defeated the Arameans *three times* (see v. 19).

14.1–29: Amaziah of Judah and Jeroboam (II) of Israel. 1–22: Amaziah, ca. 798–769 BCE. waged war against Edom and Israel and was severely defeated by the Israelite king. **1–6:** At the beginning of his reign, Amaziah executes the conspirators who had murdered his father. Described as a bad king, he nevertheless follows the Deuteronomic law. **6:** See Deut 24.16. This is the only quotation in 1–2 Kings of a law from the Pentateuch. The sparing of the sons of a murderer in Deut 24 forbids the common practice of blood revenge. **7–14:** After a successful campaign against the Edomites, Amaziah is defeated by the much stronger king of Israel. **7:** *Ten thousand*, a symbolic and exaggerated number. The *Valley of Salt* (see 2 Sam 8.13) probably refers to the area south of the Dead Sea. *Sela* ("rock") is a common noun, which is also employed as a proper name to designate several rocky places, including the capital of Edom; here it is renamed *Jokthe-el* (perhaps meaning "God supports"), the name of a town in Judah (Josh 15.38). **9:** Cf. Judg 9.7–15. **11:** *Beth-shemesh*, ca. 16 mi (25 km) west of Jerusalem, a city that Israel and Judah both claimed as belonging to their territory. **13:** *From the Ephraim Gate,* the main gate in the north, *to the Corner Gate,* in the northwest corner, a distance of *four hundred cubits*, ca. 583 ft (177 m).

distance of four hundred cubits. [14] He seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house, as well as hostages; then he returned to Samaria.

[15] Now the rest of the acts that Jehoash did, his might, and how he fought with King Amaziah of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? [16] Jehoash slept with his ancestors, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; then his son Jeroboam succeeded him.

[17] King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah lived fifteen years after the death of King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz of Israel. [18] Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? [19] They made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him to Lachish, and killed him there. [20] They brought him on horses; he was buried in Jerusalem with his ancestors in the city of David. [21] All the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king to succeed his father Amaziah. [22] He rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah, after King Amaziah[a] slept with his ancestors.

[23] In the fifteenth year of King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel began to reign in Samaria; he reigned forty-one years. [24] He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. [25] He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher. [26] For the LORD saw that the distress of Israel was very bitter; there was no one left, bond or free, and no one to help Israel. [27] But the LORD had not said that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Joash.

[28] Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he fought, and how he recovered for Israel Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? [29] Jeroboam slept with his ancestors, the kings of Israel; his son Zechariah succeeded him.

15 In the twenty-seventh year of King Jeroboam of Israel King Azariah son of Amaziah of Judah began to reign. [2] He was

[a] Heb *the king*

14: The deportation of the *vessels* from the Temple foreshadows its destruction and the deportation of its precious objects by the Babylonians in 25.14–15. **15–16:** These verses parallel 13.10–13. **19–22:** The notice about the conspiracy against Amaziah oddly comes after the concluding verses (vv. 17–18). The motivation for his assassination is not given. **19:** The king's unsuccessful flight to *Lachish*, Judah's second most important city, ca. 28 mi (45 km) southwest of Jerusalem, suggests that the conspirators controlled the capital. **21–22:** *The people of Judah* may also be translated as the "army of Judah," which would suggest that the king's young son *Azariah* (see 15.1–7) was brought to the throne by the military. Since he does not avenge the murder of his father he was perhaps himself implicated in the coup. **22:** Azariah continues to exercise control over Edom by reintegrating the port of *Elath* (see 1 Kings 9.26) into Judean territory. **23–29:** Jeroboam II, who had an exceptionally long reign (ca. 788–747 BCE), and who brought Israel to power and wealth, is treated very briefly in the book of Kings; the books of Hosea and Amos also refer to his rule and criticize the social injustice that typified his reign. **24–25:** Despite the negative assessment, Jeroboam is praised for achieving territorial expansion. *Lebo-hamath*, see 1 Kings 8.65n.; *Sea of the Arabah,* the Dead Sea. The prophecy to which this verse refers is not found elsewhere in the Bible and is attributed to *Jonah son of Amittai*, the protagonist of the book of Jonah (see Jon 1.1). *Gath-hepher,* in southern Galilee about 14 mi (23 km) northeast of Megiddo. **26:** That God sees Israel's *distress* recalls 13.4 as well as Ex 3.7; Deut 26.7. The idea that the LORD cares for Israel is at odds with the negative Deuteronomistic view of the Northern Kingdom. This positive depiction may be an attempt to explain Jeroboam II's very long and prosperous reign. **28:** Jeroboam *recovered … Damascus and Hamath*, this assertion of territorial expansion is puzzling, since neither city ever belonged to Israel; it reflects the idea that Jeroboam controlled some Aramean territory.

15.1–7: Azariah of Judah. Also called Uzziah, which may be his throne name, this Judean king is presented positively but very briefly. Some of his long reign (ca. 792–740 BCE) included a coregency with his son Jotham.

sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 3 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. 4 Nevertheless the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and made offerings on the high places. 5 The LORD struck the king, so that he was leprous[a] to the day of his death, and lived in a separate house. Jotham the king's son was in charge of the palace, governing the people of the land. 6 Now the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 7 Azariah slept with his ancestors; they buried him with his ancestors in the city of David; his son Jotham succeeded him.

8 In the thirty-eighth year of King Azariah of Judah, Zechariah son of Jeroboam reigned over Israel in Samaria six months. 9 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his ancestors had done. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. 10 Shallum son of Jabesh conspired against him, and struck him down in public and killed him, and reigned in place of him. 11 Now the rest of the deeds of Zechariah are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 12 This was the promise of the LORD that he gave to Jehu, "Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation." And so it happened.

13 Shallum son of Jabesh began to reign in the thirty-ninth year of King Uzziah of Judah; he reigned one month in Samaria. 14 Then Menahem son of Gadi came up from Tirzah and came to Samaria; he struck down Shallum son of Jabesh in Samaria and killed him; he reigned in place of him. 15 Now the rest of the deeds of Shallum, including the conspiracy that he made, are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 16 At that time Menahem sacked Tiphsah, all who were in it and its territory from Tirzah on; because they did not open it to him, he sacked it. He ripped open all the pregnant women in it.

17 In the thirty-ninth year of King Azariah of Judah, Menahem son of Gadi began to reign over Israel; he reigned ten years in Samaria. 18 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart all his days from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. 19 King Pul of Assyria came against the land; Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, so that he might help him confirm his hold on the royal power. 20 Menahem exacted the money from Israel, that is, from all the wealthy, fifty shekels of silver from each one, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and did not stay there in the land. 21 Now the rest of the deeds of Menahem, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 22 Menahem slept with his ancestors, and his son Pekahiah succeeded him.

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

5: He was struck with a skin disease (*leprous*, see textual note *a*), and due to his ritual impurity had to live in a *separate house*, in quarantine, and had to hand over regency to his son *Jotham* during his lifetime, who had the title of a "royal steward" (*in charge of the palace*). **7:** 2 Chr 26.23 revises the idea that Azariah, with his serious skin disease, could be *buried with his ancestors* in the royal cemetery.

15.8–31: Israel's last kings. 8–12: The assassination of *Zechariah* after a brief reign (ca. 747 BCE) is presented as the fulfillment of God's oracle that Jehu's dynasty would last four generations (see 10.30). **13–16:** *Shallum*, Zechariah's murderer, holds power for only *one month* (747 BCE), when he is killed by *Menahem*. **14:** *Tirzah,* the place where Menahem organized his coup, was the former capital of the Northern Kingdom; see 1 Kings 14.17–18n. **16:** This verse, which stands between the concluding formula of Shallum's reign and the beginning of Menahem's rule, reports Menahem's battle against *Tiphsah*, a city that is probably to be identified, as suggested by the LXX, with Tappuah, ca. 9 mi (15 km) south of Shechem. *He ripped open all the pregnant women*, such horrific action was common in ancient Near Eastern warfare (see 8.12; Am 1.13). **17–22:** *Menahem* (ca. 747–737 BCE) had to submit to the Assyrians. **19:** *King Pul,* an abbreviation of part of the name of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (see v. 29), who ruled ca. 745–727 BCE and firmly established Assyrian domination in the west. *A thousand talents of silver*, ca. 75,000 lb (34,000 kg), certainly an exaggeration. **20:** *Fifty shekels,* ca. 20 oz (570 gr).

23 In the fiftieth year of King Azariah of
Judah, Pekahiah son of Menahem began to
reign over Israel in Samaria; he reigned two
years. 24 He did what was evil in the sight of
the LORD; he did not turn away from the sins
of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused
Israel to sin. 25 Pekah son of Remaliah, his
captain, conspired against him with fifty of
the Gileadites, and attacked him in Samaria,
in the citadel of the palace along with Argob
and Arieh; he killed him, and reigned in place
of him. 26 Now the rest of the deeds of Peka-
hiah, and all that he did, are written in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel.
27 In the fifty-second year of King Aza-
riah of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah began
to reign over Israel in Samaria; he reigned
twenty years. 28 He did what was evil in the
sight of the LORD; he did not depart from
the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he
caused Israel to sin.
29 In the days of King Pekah of Israel, King
Tiglath-pileser of Assyria came and captured
Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh,
Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of
Naphtali; and he carried the people captive
to Assyria. 30 Then Hoshea son of Elah made
a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah,
attacked him, and killed him; he reigned in
place of him, in the twentieth year of Jotham
son of Uzziah. 31 Now the rest of the acts of
Pekah, and all that he did, are written in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel.
32 In the second year of King Pekah son of
Remaliah of Israel, King Jotham son of Uzziah
of Judah began to reign. 33 He was twenty-five
years old when he began to reign and reigned
sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's
name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. 34 He
did what was right in the sight of the LORD,
just as his father Uzziah had done. 35 Never-
theless the high places were not removed; the
people still sacrificed and made offerings on
the high places. He built the upper gate of the
house of the LORD. 36 Now the rest of the acts
of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not
written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings
of Judah? 37 In those days the LORD began to
send King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of
Remaliah against Judah. 38 Jotham slept with
his ancestors, and was buried with his ances-
tors in the city of David, his ancestor; his son
Ahaz succeeded him.

16 In the seventeenth year of Pekah son
of Remaliah, King Ahaz son of Jotham
of Judah began to reign. 2 Ahaz was twenty
years old when he began to reign; he reigned
sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do
what was right in the sight of the LORD his
God, as his ancestor David had done, 3 but
he walked in the way of the kings of Israel.
He even made his son pass through fire,

23–26: *Pekahiah* (737–735 BCE), Menahem's successor, is also the victim of conspiracy, which illustrates the chaotic situation. His murderer, *Pekah*, has a shortened form of the same name. **25:** The usurper is supported by fifty *Gileadites*, which suggests that the usurper himself was a Gileadite, from Transjordan. *Argob and Arieh* may be names of outstanding warriors or place names transferred from v. 29; another view is that these are the names of two sphinxlike statues ("the eagle and the lion") at the entrance of the palace. **27–31:** Pekah's reign presents several problems, and some scholars wonder if Pekahiah and Pekah are the same person. A twenty-year reign for Pekah does not fit with the chronological system. **29:** The localities mentioned here probably refer to different campaigns of *Tiglath-pileser* III. Important territories in the north and the east of Israel were transformed into Assyrian provinces, and some of the population was deported to Assyria. This is the first recorded exile of parts of the Israelite population. **30:** According to Assyrian sources, the Assyrians supported Hoshea's conspiracy against Pekah. *In the twentieth year of Jotham* is inconsistent with 16.1.

15.32–16.20: Jotham and Ahaz, kings of Judah. 15.32–38: Jotham (ca. 759–743 BCE) had already been exercising power in Judah during his father's illness (15.5). It is difficult to know exactly when he began to rule alone. **33:** His mother *Jerusha* ("the inherited one") was a *daughter of Zadok*, which may indicate priestly lineage; see 1 Kings 1.38–39; 2 Sam 8.17. **35:** *He built the upper gate*, this may be a new construction or a rebuilding of a formerly damaged gate (see 14.13–14); the upper gate is also mentioned in Ezek 9.2. **37:** The attacks by the kings *Rezin of Aram and Pekah* of Israel (see 16.5–9) are the context of Isa 7–9. **16.1–20:** Ahaz (ca. 743/735–727/715 BCE; the exact chronology of his reign is unclear) is described as one of Judah's worst kings. **3:** He is compared to the northern kings and accused of making *his son* ("sons" in 2 Chr 28.3 and some LXX manuscripts) *pass through fire*, which may allude to human sacrifice, especially in the context of military crises (see 3.27; Jer. 7.31; 19.5; cf.

according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. 4 He sacrificed and made offerings on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

5 Then King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel came up to wage war on Jerusalem; they besieged Ahaz but could not conquer him. 6 At that time the king of Edom[a] recovered Elath for Edom,[b] and drove the Judeans from Elath; and the Edomites came to Elath, where they live to this day. 7 Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up, and rescue me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me." 8 Ahaz also took the silver and gold found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. 9 The king of Assyria listened to him; the king of Assyria marched up against Damascus, and took it, carrying its people captive to Kir; then he killed Rezin.

10 When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, he saw the altar that was at Damascus. King Ahaz sent to the priest Uriah a model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details. 11 The priest Uriah built the altar; in accordance with all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, just so did the priest Uriah build it, before King Ahaz arrived from Damascus. 12 When the king came from Damascus, the king viewed the altar. Then the king drew near to the altar, went up on it, 13 and offered his burnt offering and his grain offering, poured his drink offering, and dashed the blood of his offerings of well-being against the altar. 14 The bronze altar that was before the LORD he removed from the front of the house, from the place between his altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of his altar. 15 King Ahaz commanded the priest Uriah, saying, "Upon the great altar offer the morning burnt offering, and the evening grain offering, and the king's burnt offering, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offering; then dash against it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice; but the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by." 16 The priest Uriah did everything that King Ahaz commanded.

17 Then King Ahaz cut off the frames of the stands, and removed the laver from them; he removed the sea from the bronze oxen that were under it, and put it on a pediment of stone. 18 The covered portal for use on the sabbath that had been built inside the palace, and the outer entrance for the king he removed from[c] the house of the LORD. He did this because of the king of Assyria. 19 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 20 Ahaz slept with his ancestors, and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David; his son Hezekiah succeeded him.

[a] Cn: Heb *King Rezin of Aram*
[b] Cn: Heb *Aram*
[c] Cn: Heb lacks *from*

Lev 18.21; Jer 32.35). **5–9:** *Rezin* and *Pekah* attacked Ahaz to convince him to join an anti-Assyrian coalition. This conflict is often called the "Syro-Ephraimite War." **6:** During this military crisis Ahaz loses *Elath* (see 14.22) to the *Edomites*. **7–8:** Like Menahem of Israel (15.20), Ahaz becomes a vassal of the Assyrian king *Tiglath-pileser*. **9:** Tiglath-pileser defeats the hostile coalition and deports the population of *Damascus* to *Kir* (location unknown; its name means "city" or "wall"), which according to Am 9.7 is the original Aramean homeland. **10–11:** The Aramean-style altar is built by *the priest Uriah*, also mentioned as a supporter of the prophet Isaiah in Isa 8.2. **15:** The old bronze altar will now serve *to inquire by*, for divination (such as reading the entrails of animals sacrificed); see also 2 Chr 28.23. **17:** Ahaz removes precious elements of the Temple furnishings, like the *bronze oxen* supporting the *sea* (1 Kings 7.23–29). **18:** *The covered portal for use on the sabbath,* meaning of Hebrew uncertain. *Because of the king of Assyria* suggests that Ahaz removed all the objects mentioned in vv. 17–18 in order to pay tribute to his suzerain.

17 In the twelfth year of King Ahaz of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel; he reigned nine years. [2] He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, yet not like the kings of Israel who were before him. [3] King Shalmaneser of Assyria came up against him; Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute. [4] But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to King So of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; therefore the king of Assyria confined him and imprisoned him.

[5] Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria; for three years he besieged it. [6] In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria; he carried the Israelites away to Assyria. He placed them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

[7] This occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They had worshiped other gods [8] and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had introduced.[a] [9] The people of Israel secretly did things that were not right against the LORD their God. They built for themselves high places at all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city; [10] they set up for themselves pillars and sacred poles[b] on every high hill and under every green tree; [11] there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. They did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger; [12] they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this." [13] Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law that I commanded your ancestors and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets." [14] They would not listen but were stubborn, as their ancestors had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. [15] They despised his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their ancestors, and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false; they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do as they did. [16] They rejected all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves cast images of two calves; they made a sacred pole,[c] worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. [17] They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire; they used divination and augury; and they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. [18] Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah alone.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *Asherim*
[c] Heb *Asherah*

17.1–41: The end of the kingdom of Israel. 1–4: *Hoshea*, the last king of Israel (ca. 732–722 BCE) is not considered as bad as his predecessors, probably because of his anti-Assyrian politics. Although at the beginning of his reign he is a loyal vassal of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V (ca. 727–722 BCE), the successor of Tiglath-pileser, later he tries to find Egyptian support against the Assyrians. **4:** *King So of Egypt*: No Pharaoh with this name is known; *So* could be a reference to the Egyptian town of Sais, or an incorrect transcription of the Egyptian word for "king." Hoshea was *confined and imprisoned* before the Assyrian campaign against Samaria. **5–6:** Samaria was taken in 722 BCE, and parts of the population deported to *Halah*, a city and province in northwestern Mesopotamia. The river *Habor* is a tributary of the Euphrates and is called here t*he river of Gozan.* Israelite personal names are found in Assyrian documents from this region. Other exiles are brought to *the cities of the Medes* farther east. This list is repeated in 18.11. **7–23:** This passage is a theological commentary composed of several layers, explaining the reasons for the collapse of Israel. The main reason for the catastrophe, according to the Deuteronomistic historians, is the worship of other gods and the rejection of the LORD and his messengers, the prophets. **16–17:** For the *two calves,* see 1 Kings 12.28–30; *sacred pole,* a symbol of the goddess Asherah, see 13.6n. The veneration of the *host of heaven* (the planets and stars) and the practice of *divination and augury*

19 Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. 20 The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel; he punished them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had banished them from his presence.

21 When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king. Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. 22 The people of Israel continued in all the sins that Jeroboam committed; they did not depart from them 23 until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had foretold through all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.

24 The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samaria, and settled in its cities. 25 When they first settled there, they did not worship the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. 26 So the king of Assyria was told, "The nations that you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the god of the land; therefore he has sent lions among them; they are killing them, because they do not know the law of the god of the land." 27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, "Send there one of the priests whom you carried away from there; let him[a] go and live there, and teach them the law of the god of the land." 28 So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel; he taught them how they should worship the LORD.

29 But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the people of Samaria had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived; 30 the people of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the people of Cuth made Nergal, the people of Hamath made Ashima; 31 the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. 32 They also worshiped the LORD and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. 33 So they worshiped the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. 34 To this day they continue to practice their former customs.

They do not worship the LORD and they do not follow the statutes or the ordinances or the law or the commandment that the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel. 35 The LORD had made a covenant with them and commanded them, "You shall not worship other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, 36 but you shall worship the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt

[a] Syr Vg: Heb *them*

will reappear under the reign of the Judean king Manasseh (21.3–6). *Pass through fire*, see 16.3n. **19:** *Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD,* an exilic addition informing the reader that Judah will ultimately have the same destiny as Israel. **21–23:** A summary of the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel from the Deuteronomistic perspective. **23:** *So Israel was exiled . . . until this day,* probably the original conclusion to the chapter. **24:** Assyrian policy was to mix conquered populations. These populations are said to come from *Babylon*; *Cuthah,* ca. 12 mi (20 km) northeast of Babylon; *Avva*, probably close to *Hamath* on the Orontes; and *Sepharvaim*, probably also in Syria. See also 18.34; 19.13. **26–27:** A lion plague convinces the Assyrian king (who remains anonymous) to send back to Samaria an exiled priest of the LORD. The anecdote explains why the worship of the LORD continued in Samaria after the fall of the Northern Kingdom. **28:** After the destruction of Samaria, *Bethel* continued to be an important religious center for the inhabitants of the former kingdom of Israel (see 1 Kings 12.29–30). **29–40:** This late passage denounces a syncretistic religion of the "people of Samaria" (now the name of the Assyrian province that replaced the former Northern Kingdom), who will later be called "Samaritans." **30–31:** *Nergal* was the Babylonian god of the underworld; *Nibhaz and Tartak* are Elamite divinities; little is known about the other deities mentioned. **32:** The LORD was also worshiped and had his own religious personnel beside these other deities. **33–40:** This worship of the LORD is disqualified because those people do

with great power and with an outstretched arm; you shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice. 37 The statutes and the ordinances and the law and the commandment that he wrote for you, you shall always be careful to observe. You shall not worship other gods; 38 you shall not forget the covenant that I have made with you. You shall not worship other gods, 39 but you shall worship the LORD your God; he will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies." 40 They would not listen, however, but they continued to practice their former custom.

41 So these nations worshiped the LORD, but also served their carved images; to this day their children and their children's children continue to do as their ancestors did.

18 In the third year of King Hoshea son of Elah of Israel, Hezekiah son of King Ahaz of Judah began to reign. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi daughter of Zechariah. 3 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD just as his ancestor David had done. 4 He removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole.[a] He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it; it was called Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the LORD the God of Israel; so that there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah after him, or among those who were before him. 6 For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following him but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses. 7 The LORD was with him; wherever he went, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. 8 He attacked the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

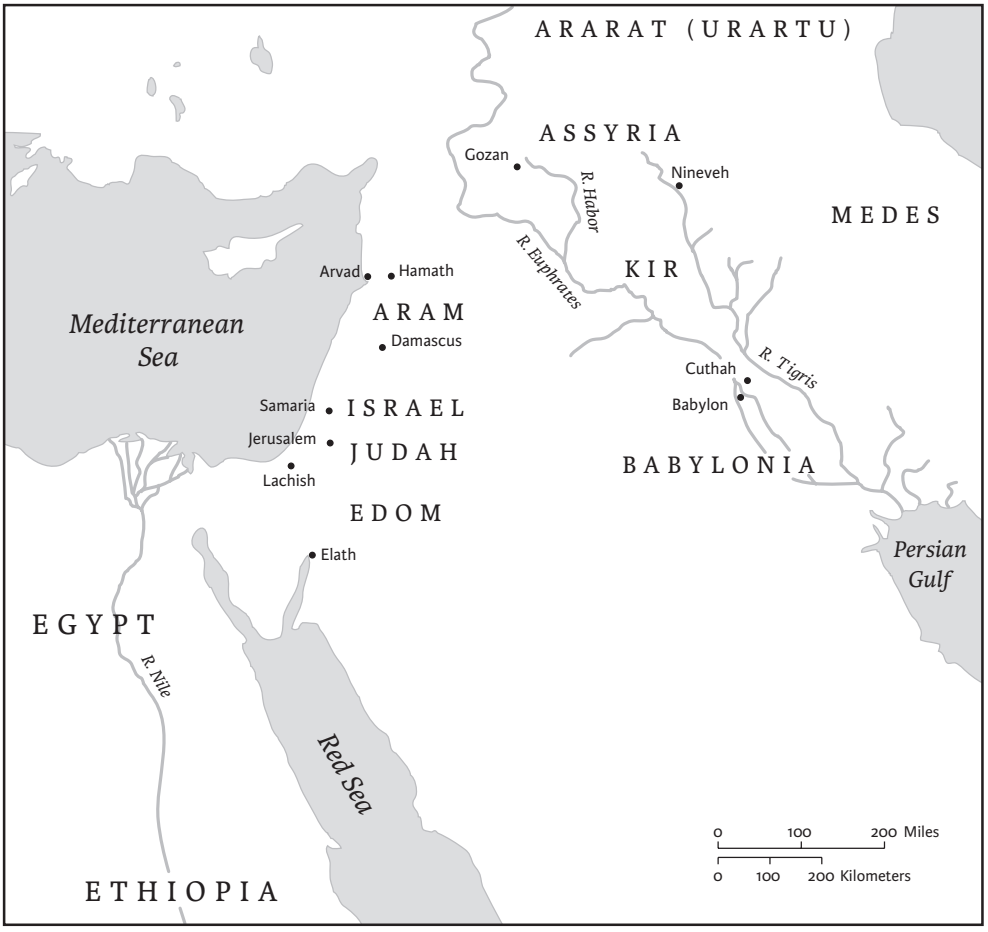
9 In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of King Hoshea son of Elah of Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria came up against Samaria, besieged it, 10 and at the end of three years, took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of King Hoshea of Israel, Samaria was taken. 11 The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria, settled them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 12 because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant—all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; they neither listened nor obeyed.

13 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. 14 King Hezekiah of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I

[a] Heb *Asherah*

not follow the divine commandments of the book of Deuteronomy or of the Pentateuch. **41:** This concluding verse resumes v. 33 and introduces the anti-Samaritan polemics into the reader's present (*to this day*).

18.1–19.37: King Hezekiah and the siege of Jerusalem. Together with David and Josiah, Hezekiah is one of the most praised kings. The exact chronology of his reign is unclear (ca. 727/715–698/687 BCE are the most widely accepted possibilities; perhaps he began as coregent in 729, and began to reign alone in 715). The decisive event of his reign is the Assyrian campaign against Judah and the siege of Jerusalem, an event also described in Assyrian sources. **1–6:** In the introduction, Hezekiah is described as a religious reformer. **4:** He is the first Judean king to remove the *high places*, which had existed in Judah since the beginnings of the monarchy. He also removed from the Temple the *sacred pole*, a symbol of the goddess Asherah, who had been venerated as a consort of the LORD. *Nehushtan*, a bronze serpent associated with Moses (see Num 21.1–9), which may be linked to Egyptian worship of a snake goddess. **5:** This verse ranks Hezekiah even higher than Josiah (but see 23.25) and David. **7–18:** Hezekiah's revolt against the Assyrians provokes the siege of Jerusalem in 701 by King Sennacherib (ruled ca. 705–681 BCE). The narrative in 18.13–20.19 appears with some differences in Isa 36–39. **8:** The attack on Philistine cities that were under Assyrian control was the beginning of Hezekiah's attempt to regain independence. **9–12:** The summary of the fall of Samaria (see 17.1–6) is background to the siege of Jerusalem. **13–16:** In this source, Hezekiah submits immediately to the Assyrian king, promising that he would be a loyal vassal, and paying a tribute for which he has to plunder the Temple. Assyrian texts support this account. **14:** *Lachish* (see 14.19n.) had become the Assyrian headquarters. The Assyrian victory over Lachish



Chs 15–21: Assyria and Israel and Judah.

will bear." The king of Assyria demanded of King Hezekiah of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. [15] Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. [16] At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the doorposts that King Hezekiah of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria. [17] The king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They went up and came to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway to the Fuller's Field. [18] When they called for the king, there came out to them Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebnah the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder.

and the deportation of its population are depicted in wall reliefs from the palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh. **17:** Despite the payment of tribute the Assyrian king attacks Jerusalem. This discrepancy with vv. 13–16 may indicate that this verse starts an alternative version, or several alternative versions, of the Assyrian siege. The *Tartan* (chief commander), the highest person after the king, the *Rabsaris* (lit., "chief eunuch"), often in charge of military duties, and the *Rabshakeh* (lit., "chief butler") are all high Assyrian officials. Only the *Rabshakeh* plays a role in the following narrative. *The upper pool . . .*, see Isa 7.3n. **18:** The three Assyrians are met by three high

19 The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to
Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the
king of Assyria: On what do you base this
confidence of yours? 20 Do you think that
mere words are strategy and power for war?
On whom do you now rely, that you have
rebelled against me? 21 See, you are rely-
ing now on Egypt, that broken reed of a
staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone
who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of
Egypt to all who rely on him. 22 But if you
say to me, 'We rely on the LORD our God,'
is it not he whose high places and altars
Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and
to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this
altar in Jerusalem'? 23 Come now, make a
wager with my master the king of Assyria:
I will give you two thousand horses, if
you are able on your part to set riders on
them. 24 How then can you repulse a single
captain among the least of my master's
servants, when you rely on Egypt for
chariots and for horsemen? 25 Moreover,
is it without the LORD that I have come up
against this place to destroy it? The LORD
said to me, Go up against this land, and
destroy it."

26 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and
Shebnah, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh,
"Please speak to your servants in the Aramaic
language, for we understand it; do not speak
to us in the language of Judah within the
hearing of the people who are on the wall."
27 But the Rabshakeh said to them, "Has my
master sent me to speak these words to your
master and to you, and not to the people
sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you
to eat their own dung and to drink their own
urine?"

28 Then the Rabshakeh stood and called
out in a loud voice in the language of Judah,
"Hear the word of the great king, the king
of Assyria! 29 Thus says the king: 'Do not
let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be
able to deliver you out of my hand. 30 Do
not let Hezekiah make you rely on the LORD
by saying, The LORD will surely deliver us,
and this city will not be given into the hand
of the king of Assyria.' 31 Do not listen to
Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria:
'Make your peace with me and come out
to me; then every one of you will eat from
your own vine and your own fig tree, and
drink water from your own cistern, 32 until I
come and take you away to a land like your
own land, a land of grain and wine, a land
of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil
and honey, that you may live and not die.
Do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads
you by saying, The LORD will deliver us.
33 Has any of the gods of the nations ever
delivered its land out of the hand of the
king of Assyria? 34 Where are the gods of
Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of
Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they
delivered Samaria out of my hand? 35 Who
among all the gods of the countries have
delivered their countries out of my hand,
that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out
of my hand?' "

36 But the people were silent and answered
him not a word, for the king's command was,
"Do not answer him." 37 Then Eliakim son of
Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and
Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph,
the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their
clothes torn and told him the words of the
Rabshakeh.

Judean officials (for the titles see 1 Kings 4.1–6n.). **19–25:** The Rabshakeh's speech (almost certainly a literary construction, but it may have some basis in reality) is an example of psychological warfare in the first millennium BCE. In the first part of this speech the Assyrian official alludes, quite remarkably, to Hezekiah's reform (v. 22) and claims that the LORD is in fact on the Assyrian side (v. 25). **26–27:** A transition between the two parts of the Rabshakeh's speech. The Judean officials do not want him to speak in Hebrew (*the language of Judah*), but in *Aramaic*, the principal language of diplomacy in the Assyrian empire, which was not understood by the ordinary people. **27:** *Eat their own dung*, a crude description of the consequences of a long siege. **28–35:** Now the Rabshakeh insists on the impotence of Hezekiah and the LORD, claiming that no god of any country was able so far to resist the Assyrians and their gods (v. 33). **32:** An ironic play with the theme of the promised and prosperous land, see Deut 8.7–9. **34:** A list of cities conquered by the Assyrians; see 17.24n. *Arpad*, the capital of an Aramean state, which had joined an anti-Assyrian coalition. **36–37:** The people and the officials do not react to these words. The action now moves to Hezekiah. **37:** *Clothes torn* (see also 19.1), an act of mourning.

19 When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. [2] And he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. [3] They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. [4] It may be that the LORD your God heard all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left." [5] When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, [6] Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. [7] I myself will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.' "

[8] The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. [9] When the king[a] heard concerning King Tirhakah of Ethiopia,[b] "See, he has set out to fight against you," he sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying, [10] "Thus shall you speak to King Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. [11] See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered? [12] Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? [13] Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?"

[14] Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; then Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. [15] And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: "O LORD the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. [16] Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. [17] Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, [18] and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods but the work of human hands—wood and stone—and so they were destroyed. [19] So now, O LORD our God, save us, I pray you, from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone."

[20] Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I have heard your prayer to me about King Sennacherib of Assyria. [21] This is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him:

She despises you, she scorns you—
virgin daughter Zion;

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

19.1–7: Hezekiah consults the prophet *Isaiah* who announces to the king's messengers an oracle of salvation. **6:** *Do not be afraid*, a common opening of ancient Near Eastern military oracles of victory (e.g., Josh 10.8). **7:** The LORD will put a *spirit* into the mind of the Assyrian king in order to entice him, ultimately, to his death (cf. 1 Kings 22.20–23). **8–9:** The apparent withdrawal of the Assyrian army at this stage seems odd; vv. 8–9 may belong to a different source than the surrounding verses. **8:** *Libnah*, see 8.22n. **9:** *Tirhakah of Ethiopia* became ruler of Egypt in 689 BCE and was only a young boy during the siege of Jerusalem in 701; this suggests that this section is not historically accurate. **10–13:** The second message repeats the arguments of 18.32–35. **14:** Hezekiah is informed of this by a *letter*, a small scroll that he could *spread* out. **15–19:** Hezekiah's prayer depicts him as a pious king who affirms that the LORD is the only true God. **15:** *Cherubim*: see 1 Kings 6.23–28. **18:** *Have hurled their gods into fire*, the Assyrians did indeed capture and sometimes destroy divine statues, but not by burning them, but by breaking them into pieces. The description of these gods as *work of human hands* recalls the polemics against idols in Second Isaiah, an exilic composition. **20–34:** A second prophecy of Isaiah brings God's response to

she tosses her head—behind your back,
daughter Jerusalem.

22 "Whom have you mocked and reviled?
Against whom have you raised your voice
and haughtily lifted your eyes?
Against the Holy One of Israel!
23 By your messengers you have mocked the Lord,
and you have said, 'With my many chariots
I have gone up the heights of the mountains,
to the far recesses of Lebanon;
I felled its tallest cedars,
its choicest cypresses;
I entered its farthest retreat,
its densest forest.
24 I dug wells
and drank foreign waters,
I dried up with the sole of my foot
all the streams of Egypt.'

25 "Have you not heard
that I determined it long ago?
I planned from days of old
what now I bring to pass,
that you should make fortified cities
crash into heaps of ruins,
26 while their inhabitants, shorn of strength,
are dismayed and confounded;
they have become like plants of the field
and like tender grass,
like grass on the housetops,
blighted before it is grown.

27 "But I know your rising[a] and your sitting,
your going out and coming in,
and your raging against me.
28 Because you have raged against me
and your arrogance has come to my ears,
I will put my hook in your nose
and my bit in your mouth;
I will turn you back on the way
by which you came.

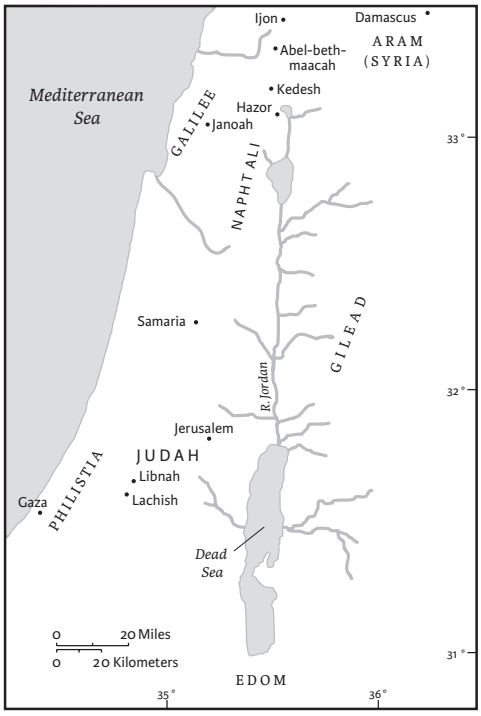
29 "And this shall be the sign for you: This year you shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that; then in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 30 The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; 31 for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

32 "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it. 33 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the LORD. 34 For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David."

35 That very night the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. 36 Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. 37 As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped

[a] Gk Compare Isa 37.27 Q Ms: MT lacks *rising*

Hezekiah's prayer. **21–28:** An oracle in the form of a mocking song against Sennacherib. **21:** *Virgin daughter Zion,* both Israelite and foreign cities are often represented as female, especially in poetry. **28:** *I will put my hook in your nose,* one way that the Assyrians humiliated vassals and prisoners; here the LORD does this to Assyria. **29–31:** The second response is directed to Hezekiah. The theme of a *sign* is often linked with the prophet Isaiah (e.g., 20.9; Isa 7.11; 8.1), as is the theme of a surviving *remnant* (e.g., Isa 10.21–22). **32–34:** The LORD reaffirms that he will *defend* Jerusalem, which is his home and the capital city of the kingdom ruled by the dynasty founded by David, his *servant*; see 20.6; Ps 132.11,13–18. **35–37:** The prophetic word is fulfilled, and the Assyrian army abandons the siege. **35:** The LORD's *angel* striking Israel's enemies recalls Ex 12. *One hundred eighty-five thousand*, an exaggerated number emphasizing the strength of the Assyrian army and the LORD's greater power. **37:** The assassination of Sennacherib by his sons while worshiping the otherwise unknown god *Nisroch* in approximately 681 BCE, twenty years later, is partially corroborated by Babylonian documents, which mention only one son. His successor *Esar-haddon* ruled ca. 681–669 BCE. *Ararat* (Urartu) is modern Armenia.



Chs 18–20: Places associated with Sennacherib's invasion of Judah.

into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.

20 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover." [2] Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD: [3] "Remember now, O LORD, I implore you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." Hezekiah wept bitterly. [4] Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: [5] "Turn back, and say to Hezekiah prince of my people, Thus says the LORD, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; indeed, I will heal you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. [6] I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake." [7] Then Isaiah said, "Bring a lump of figs. Let them take it and apply it to the boil, so that he may recover."

[8] Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD on the third day?" [9] Isaiah said, "This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he has promised: the shadow has now advanced ten intervals; shall it retreat ten intervals?" [10] Hezekiah answered, "It is normal for the shadow to lengthen ten intervals; rather let the shadow retreat ten intervals." [11] The prophet Isaiah cried to the LORD; and he brought the shadow back the ten intervals, by which the sun[a] had declined on the dial of Ahaz.

[12] At that time King Merodach-baladan son of Baladan of Babylon sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. [13] Hezekiah welcomed them;[b] he showed them all his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his armory, all that was found in his storehouses; there was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them. [14] Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say? From where did they come to you?" Hezekiah answered,

[a] Syr See Isa 38.8 and Tg: Heb *it*
[b] Gk Vg Syr: Heb *When Hezekiah heard about them*

20.1–21: Isaiah heals Hezekiah and announces the Babylonian exile. The last story about Hezekiah brings some ambiguity to his portrait because his actions appear to hasten the end of Judah. Its placement here is theological, since chronologically such an event could have transpired only before the siege of Jerusalem in 701, narrated in the preceding two chapters. **1–7:** Struck with a life-threatening illness, Hezekiah's prays and receives a favorable response through Isaiah. **7:** Isaiah also has medical skills and heals the king's disease with a *fig*-poultice. **8–11:** *The dial of Ahaz*, lit., "the steps of Ahaz." The expression may allude to an otherwise unknown construction with steps, perhaps used as a sanctuary for the Assyrian sun-god and as a sundial. **12–15:** The strange episode about a Babylonian embassy recalls the visit of the queen of Sheba to Solomon and thus establishes a parallel between Hezekiah and Solomon. **12:** *Merodach-baladan,* ruled 721–710 BCE, and then briefly

"They have come from a far country, from Babylon." 15 He said, "What have they seen in your house?" Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them."

16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: 17 Days are coming when all that is in your house, and that which your ancestors have stored up until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the LORD. 18 Some of your own sons who are born to you shall be taken away; they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." 19 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?"

20 The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah, all his power, how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 21 Hezekiah slept with his ancestors; and his son Manasseh succeeded him.

21 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. 2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, following the abominable practices of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. 3 For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he erected altars for Baal, made a sacred pole,[a] as King Ahab of Israel had done, worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4 He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put my name." 5 He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6 He made his son pass through fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. 7 The carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever; 8 I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander any more out of the land that I gave to their ancestors, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them." 9 But they did not listen; Manasseh misled them to do more evil than the nations had done that the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.

10 The LORD said by his servants the prophets, 11 "Because King Manasseh of Judah has committed these abominations, has done things more wicked than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has caused Judah also to sin with his idols; 12 therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such evil that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. 13 I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line for Samaria, and the plummet for the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. 14 I will cast off the remnant of my heritage, and give them into the hand of their enemies;

[a] Heb *Asherah*

in 703 (see Isa 39.1). **16–19:** Isaiah's oracle interprets the embassy negatively: he predicts the deportation of the Temple's treasures to Babylon, anticipating chs 24–25. **19:** *Why not,* Hezekiah receives the oracle ambiguously. **20–21:** The short conclusion of Hezekiah's reign mentions a pool and a conduit; cf. 2 Chr 32.30. The so-called "Hezekiah's Tunnel" (the Siloam Tunnel) is still extant near the city of David in Jerusalem.

21.1–26: The reigns of Manasseh and Amon. 1–18: For the Deuteronomistic historians, Manasseh is the worst of all Judean kings and is explicitly compared to the northern king Ahab (v. 3). **2–16:** Although he had a long reign (698/687–642 BCE), the only thing we are told about him is his religious counterreform, in which he reintroduces the worship of other deities, as well as the carved image of goddess Asherah, into the Temple (see v. 7; 18.4n.). The long enumeration of his religious failures shows that Manasseh contravened many important laws of the book of Deuteronomy, especially human sacrifices and different magical practices (v. 2, Deut 18.9; vv. 3,7, Deut 16.21; v. 5, Deut 17.3; v. 6, Deut 18.10–11; v. 16, Deut 19.10). **10–15:** In this anonymous prophetic oracle, added by a later redactor, Manasseh is presented as the main culprit responsible for the fall of Jerusalem and the exile. **11:** *Amorites,* traditional inhabitants of the land of Canaan before the Israelites' arrival. **13:** Jerusalem will therefore be assessed by the divine architect (cf. Isa 34.11; Lam 2.8; Am 7.7–9), and, like a dangerous building,

they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies, 15 because they have done what is evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger, since the day their ancestors came out of Egypt, even to this day."

16 Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he caused Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, all that he did, and the sin that he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 18 Manasseh slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza. His son Amon succeeded him.

19 Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. 20 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. 21 He walked in all the way in which his father walked, served the idols that his father served, and worshiped them; 22 he abandoned the LORD, the God of his ancestors, and did not walk in the way of the LORD. 23 The servants of Amon conspired against him, and killed the king in his house. 24 But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and the people of the land made his son Josiah king in place of him. 25 Now the rest of the acts of Amon that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 26 He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza; then his son Josiah succeeded him.

22 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. 2 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

3 In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the LORD, saying, 4 "Go up to the high priest Hilkiah, and have him count the entire sum of the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people; 5 let it be given into the hand of the workers who have the oversight of the house of the LORD; let them give it to the workers who are at the house of the LORD, repairing the house, 6 that is, to the carpenters, to the builders, to

condemned. It will be emptied of all that is in it, wiped clean like a dish after a meal. This divine judgment parallels those on Samaria (ch 17; Am 7.7–9) and on *the house of Ahab* (1 Kings 21.21–22; 2 Kings 9–10). **17–18:** Manasseh's long reign was likely a peaceful time because he dealt more successfully with the Assyrians than had Hezekiah; in Assyrian texts he is a loyal vassal. But the Deuteronomistic historians are not interested in these aspects or in any other accomplishments during his reign. **18:** *Garden of Uzza,* see also v. 26; its precise location and significance are debated. **19–26:** *Amon*'s short reign (ca. 641–640 BCE) ended with his murder by his court officials. His name, also that of an Egyptian deity, may indicate that he submitted to the Egyptians, who fought against the Assyrians for the control of the Levant. The only other information about his reign concerns his problematic religious activities: he continued the syncretism of his father. **23:** The reasons for the conspiracy against him are not clear. **24:** *The people of the land* (see 11.14n.), probably some of the free landowners, opposed the rebellion and put Amon's son Josiah on the throne.

22.1–23.30: Josiah's reign and reform. For the authors of the book of Kings, Josiah (ca. 640–609 BCE) is the perfect king, a new David, and also a new Moses and a new Joshua. In contrast to Hezekiah, Josiah is presented entirely positively. He launches a religious, political, and economic reform and declares the Temple in Jerusalem to be the only legitimate place to worship the LORD. The account of his reign contains two different narratives, which are intermingled: the discovery of the "book of the law," and the religious reform. Nonbiblical sources also describe how the discovery of a supposedly ancient text during temple repair is used to support a king's actions. **22.1:** Because Josiah was *eight years old* when he came to the throne, Judah was first governed by high officials, probably those mentioned in the following narrative. **2:** *He did not turn aside to the right or to the left,* see, e.g., Deut 5.32; 17.20; Josh 1.7. **3–10:** The report about Josiah repairing the Temple recalls 12.10–16, on which it is probably based. **3–4:** *Shaphan* was a high official, ancestor of an important family of civil servants at the Judean court (see Jer 36). *Hilkiah* (probably not to be identified with the father of the prophet Jeremiah) is the

Important cities in Judah in the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE.

the masons; and let them use it to buy timber and quarried stone to repair the house. 7 But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly."

8 The high priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." When Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, he read it. 9 Then Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workers who have oversight of the house of the LORD." 10 Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "The priest Hilkiah has given me a book." Shaphan then read it aloud to the king.

11 When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. 12 Then the king commanded the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary, and the king's servant Asaiah, saying, 13 "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

14 So the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. 15 She declared to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, 16 Thus says the LORD, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. 17 Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. 18 But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, 19 because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the LORD. 20 Therefore, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place." They took the message back to the king.

23 Then the king directed that all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem should be gathered to him. 2 The king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him went all the people of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. 3 The king stood by the pillar and

high priest, an anachronistic expression (see 12.10n.). **8–10:** The *book*, which reaches the king through Shaphan and Hilkiah, is generally thought to be some form of the book of Deuteronomy. **8:** The discovery of the book interrupts the restoration account (v. 7 was originally followed by v. 9), suggesting that the account of the book's discovery was inserted at a later stage. **11:** The king's reaction of despair and repentance (*he tore his clothes*) makes sense as a reaction to curses like Deut 28.61; 29.21. **12–13:** The king's consultation of a prophetess through high officials seems surprising, since he already understood what the book was about. **14:** *The prophetess Huldah* was married to a Temple or court officer, the *keeper of the wardrobe* (see 10.22) and she lived in the *Second Quarter*, which refers to a new quarter west of the city of David built when Jerusalem expanded at the end of the eighth or during the seventh century BCE. **15–18:** Huldah's word confirms the oracle of the unnamed prophets in 21.10–15 and also recalls of oracles of the prophet Jeremiah (see also Jer 19.14–15). **19–20:** Her oracle concerning Josiah is inconsistent with what is reported later, since the king did not die *in peace* but was killed by the Egyptian king (23.29). Her prophecy could be understood in the sense that Josiah would be spared the agony of Judah's destruction and exile; alternatively, it was penned before Josiah's death. **23.1–3:** The king himself reads the book to *all the people* and renews the covenant with the LORD. This ceremony begins the religious reforms, described in vv. 4–20. **4–6:** All symbols and statues of other deities are removed from the Temple and

made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant.

4 The king commanded the high priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second order, and the guardians of the threshold, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. 5 He deposed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to make offerings in the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who made offerings to Baal, to the sun, the moon, the constellations, and all the host of the heavens. 6 He brought out the image of[a] Asherah from the house of the LORD, outside Jerusalem, to the Wadi Kidron, burned it at the Wadi Kidron, beat it to dust and threw the dust of it upon the graves of the common people. 7 He broke down the houses of the male temple prostitutes that were in the house of the LORD, where the women did weaving for Asherah. 8 He brought all the priests out of the towns of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had made offerings, from Geba to Beer-sheba; he broke down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on the left at the gate of the city. 9 The priests of the high places, however, did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but ate unleavened bread among their kindred. 10 He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to Molech. 11 He removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of the eunuch Nathan-melech, which was in the precincts;[b] then he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. 12 The altars on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars that Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, he pulled down from there and broke in pieces, and threw the rubble into the Wadi Kidron. 13 The king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of Destruction, which King Solomon of Israel had built for Astarte the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 14 He broke the pillars in pieces, cut down the sacred poles,[c] and covered the sites with human bones.

15 Moreover, the altar at Bethel, the high place erected by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin—he pulled down that altar along with the high place. He burned the high place, crushing it to dust; he also burned the sacred pole.[d] 16 As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs there on the mount; and he sent

[a] Heb lacks *image of*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Heb *Asherim*
[d] Heb *Asherah*

destroyed. **4:** The *Kidron* area, the valley to the east of the city of David, was used as a burial and burning place (v. 6; see 1 Kings 15.13). *Host of the heavens*, see 17.16–17n. **7–9:** Actions against the religious personnel. **7:** *Male temple prostitutes,* see 1 Kings 22.46n. **8:** The *priests* of the local sanctuaries outside Jerusalem (*the towns of Judah*) were expelled and the sanctuaries were defiled, so that they could no longer be used for the worship of the LORD. *Geba,* ca. 6 mi (10 km) north of Jerusalem, in Benjamin, which may indicate that the Benjaminite territory had become part of the kingdom of Judah. **9:** The priests of the *high places* (1 Kings 3.2–4) were not integrated into the personnel of the Temple in Jerusalem. **10–14:** Further destructions are reported. **10:** *Topheth*, a place used for human sacrifices (see Jer 7.31). *Molech*, either the name of a foreign god (1 Kings 11.7) or an epithet for Baal, formed by combining the vowels of the word for "shame" (Heb "boshet") with the consonants of the word for "king" ("melek"); often associated with human sacrifice (see 16.3n.) **11:** *Precincts* (see textual note *b*), a Persian word, indicating this passage was written or edited during the Persian period. **13:** See 1 Kings 11.5–8n. *Mount of Destruction* (Heb "har hammashḥit"), probably a sarcastic wordplay on "mount of oil" ("har hamishḥah"), since the worship of other deities was practiced at the Mount of Olives. **14:** The sites were covered *with human bones* (see also vv. 16,20) in order to make them ritually impure. **15–20:** The destruction of the

and took the bones out of the tombs, and burned them on the altar, and defiled it, according to the word of the LORD that the man of God proclaimed,[a] when Jeroboam stood by the altar at the festival; he turned and looked up at the tomb of the man of God who had predicted these things. 17 Then he said, "What is that monument that I see?" The people of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and predicted these things that you have done against the altar at Bethel." 18 He said, "Let him rest; let no one move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came out of Samaria. 19 Moreover, Josiah removed all the shrines of the high places that were in the towns of Samaria, which kings of Israel had made, provoking the LORD to anger; he did to them just as he had done at Bethel. 20 He slaughtered on the altars all the priests of the high places who were there, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

21 The king commanded all the people, "Keep the passover to the LORD your God as prescribed in this book of the covenant." 22 No such passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, even during all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah; 23 but in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.

24 Moreover Josiah put away the mediums, wizards, teraphim,[b] idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he established the words of the law that were written in the book that the priest Hilkiah had found in the house of the LORD. 25 Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

26 Still the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. 27 The LORD said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel; and I will reject this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there."

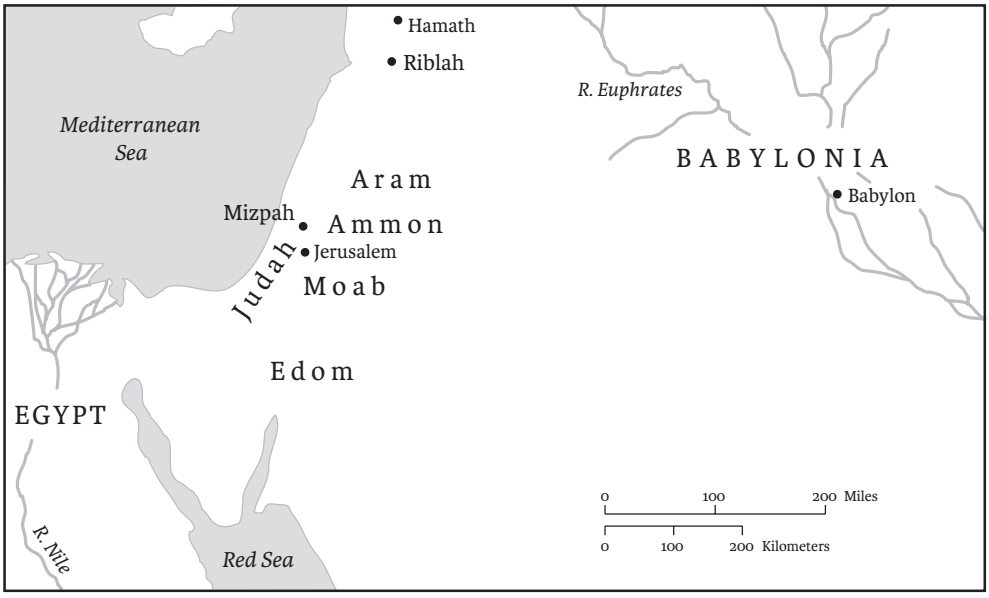
28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 29 In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him; but when Pharaoh Neco met him at Megiddo, he killed him. 30 His servants carried him dead in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. The people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in place of his father.

31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his ancestors had done. 33 Pharaoh Neco confined him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and imposed tribute on the land of

[a] Gk: Heb *proclaimed, who had predicted these things*
[b] Or *household gods*

sanctuary of *Bethel* puts an end to the "sin of Jeroboam" (1 Kings 12.29–30). **17–18:** Cf. 1 Kings 13.2,30–31. **21–23:** In celebrating the Passover according to the stipulations of Deut 16.1–8, Josiah not only surpasses Hezekiah in faithfulness to the LORD, but even David himself, for such a Passover had not been observed *since the days of the judges*. **24–25:** Further praise of Josiah: he was the only king who turned to the LORD *with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might,* a quotation of Deut 6.4–5. **26–27:** But even Josiah cannot stop the divine punishment, here seen as provoked by *Manasseh*. **28–30:** The laconic report of Josiah's death at *Megiddo* (like Ahaziah in 9.27–28) in 609 BCE does not fully explain why he was killed by Pharaoh *Neco* (who ruled 610–595 BCE). Either Josiah wanted to prevent Neco from supporting Assyria in its struggle against Babylon, or he had already (perhaps like his father; see 19.21–26n.) become a vassal of the Egyptian king, who considered him to be disloyal.

23.30–25.30: The end of Judah. The last four kings offer a jarring contrast to Josiah and are all judged with the same negative formula (23.32,37; 24.9,19), but no details about their religious faults are given. **30–33:** *Jehoahaz*, anointed by *the people of the land* (see 11.14n.), ruled for *three* months in 609 BCE. He was unacceptable to *Neco*, for a short time Judah's new overlord, who deported him temporarily to *Riblah,* an important town in



Chs 24–25: Babylon and Judah in the early sixth century BCE.

one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. [34] Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away; he came to Egypt, and died there. [35] Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land in order to meet Pharaoh's demand for money. He exacted the silver and the gold from the people of the land, from all according to their assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Neco.

[36] Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. [37] He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as all his ancestors had done.

24 In his days King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up; Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. [2] The LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, bands of the Arameans, bands of the Moabites, and bands of the Ammonites; he sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets. [3] Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, for all that he had committed, [4] and also for the innocent blood that he had shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to pardon.

[5] Now the rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? [6] So Jehoiakim slept with his ancestors; then his son Jehoiachin succeeded him. [7] The king of Egypt did not come again out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken over all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Wadi of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

[8] Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months in

northern Syria, which later became headquarters of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (25.6). **34–35:** When making *Eliakim* the new king, Neco changes his name to *Jehoiakim*. This name contains the short form of the name of Yahweh, the god of Israel, perhaps reflecting that Neco respected that the LORD was the god of Judah. **36–37:** *Jehoiakim* reigned ca. 608–597 BCE. **24.1:** He initially submits to *King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon* (605–562 BCE), who had defeated the Assyrians in 605, but then he rebels. **2–7:** This rebellion provoked even more military pressure from the neighbors of Judah. **3–4:** *Sins of Manasseh,* see 23.26–27. **8–17:** *Jehoiachin* has to pay the price

Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. 9 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his father had done.

10 At that time the servants of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11 King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it; 12 King Jehoiachin of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon, himself, his mother, his servants, his officers, and his palace officials. The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign.

13 He carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the LORD, which King Solomon of Israel had made, all this as the LORD had foretold. 14 He carried away all Jerusalem, all the officials, all the warriors, ten thousand captives, all the artisans and the smiths; no one remained, except the poorest people of the land. 15 He carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon; the king's mother, the king's wives, his officials, and the elite of the land, he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 The king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valor, seven thousand, the artisans and the smiths, one thousand, all of them strong and fit for war. 17 The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 19 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. 20 Indeed, Jerusalem and Judah so angered the LORD that he expelled them from his presence.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of
25 Babylon. 1 And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it; they built siegeworks against it all around. 2 So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 3 On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine became so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. 4 Then a breach was made in the city wall;[a] the king with all the soldiers fled[b] by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. They went in the direction of the Arabah. 5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; all his army was scattered, deserting him. 6 Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, who passed sentence on him. 7 They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah; they bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon.

8 In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—which was the nine-

[a] Heb lacks *wall*

[b] Gk Compare Jer 39.4; 52.7: Heb lacks *the king* and lacks *fled*

for his father's rebellion: a siege of Jerusalem in 597 BCE, only three months into his reign, and his exile to Babylon with members of his court. **12:** Jehoiachin's quick surrender avoids the destruction of Jerusalem. **13:** The Temple and the palace treasures are usually the primary target for spoil. **14–16:** The numbers of the deported population differ from those given in Jer 52; instead of *ten thousand*, Jer 52.28 has 3,023. **17:** The Babylonian king establishes Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, as king and changes his name to Zedekiah. **18–20:** *Zedekiah* is the last Judean ruler (597–586 BCE), but was perhaps considered by some, who thought that Jehoiachin was the last legitimate Davidic monarch, as a governor, rather than as a king. His rebellion provokes the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Judean kingdom. **25.1–30:** Most of ch 25 is also found, with variations, in Jer 52. **1–7:** The result of Zedekiah's disloyal behavior, most likely an alliance with Egypt, was another siege of Jerusalem. **4–5:** The king tries to flee with the soldiers (his bodyguard) and is captured *in the plains of Jericho*. The place of Israel's first victory when conquering the land (Josh 6) now becomes a place of defeat. **6–7:** His breaking of the loyalty oath is sanctioned with harsh punishment. His sons are killed in order to exterminate the Davidic dynasty. *Riblah*, see 23.33n. **8–12:** *Nebuzaradan*, a high Babylonian officer, whose title means literally "chief of the butchers," destroys the Temple, the palace, and the city and its walls. He also organizes a second

teenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. 9 He burned the house of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. 10 All the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. 11 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon—all the rest of the population. 12 But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil.

13 The bronze pillars that were in the house of the LORD, as well as the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried the bronze to Babylon. 14 They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the dishes for incense, and all the bronze vessels used in the temple service, 15 as well as the firepans and the basins. What was made of gold the captain of the guard took away for the gold, and what was made of silver, for the silver. 16 As for the two pillars, the one sea, and the stands, which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weighing. 17 The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and on it was a bronze capital; the height of the capital was three cubits; latticework and pomegranates, all of bronze, were on the capital all around. The second pillar had the same, with the latticework.

18 The captain of the guard took the chief priest Seraiah, the second priest Zephaniah, and the three guardians of the threshold; 19 from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the soldiers, and five men of the king's council who were found in the city; the secretary who was the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city. 20 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. 21 The king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah went into exile out of its land.

22 He appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan as governor over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had left. 23 Now when all the captains of the forces and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came with their men to Gedaliah at Mizpah, namely, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite. 24 Gedaliah swore to them and their men, saying, "Do not be afraid because of the Chaldean officials; live in the land, serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you." 25 But in the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men; they struck down Gedaliah so that he died, along with the Judeans and Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. 26 Then all the people, high and low,[a] and the captains of the forces set out and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

[a] Or *young and old*

deportation to Babylon, although some Judahites remain behind. **13–17:** The authors take great interest in the detailed description of the deported Temple furnishings (see 1 Kings 7.15–51). **18–21:** Some of the royal officials are executed at *Riblah*, probably because they belonged to the anti-Babylonian party. **21:** *So Judah went into exile out of its land*, perhaps the original conclusion of the book of Kings. **22–26:** The episode of Gedaliah's appointment as a governor and his assassination by the nationalistic party is related in greater detail in Jer 40–43. **22:** *Gedaliah* is the grandson of Josiah's secretary Shaphan (23.12). **23:** *Mizpah*, ca. 7 mi (2 km) north of Jerusalem became the administrative center during Babylonian occupation. **25:** *Ishmael*, who kills Gedaliah, is said to be member of *the royal family*. He fails, however, to reestablish the Davidic dynasty. **26:** The remaining people fled to *Egypt*. This conclusion, with a descent to Egypt, seems to wipe out Israel's whole history, which started with

[27] In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison; [28] he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the other seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. [29] So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes. Every day of his life he dined regularly in the king's presence. [30] For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion every day, as long as he lived.

the Exodus out of Egypt and now ends with a return to Egypt. **27–30:** This epilogue relates the rehabilitation of Jehoiachin under the Babylonian king *Evil-merodach* (Amel-marduk, 562–560 BCE), This event is sometimes understood as reflecting a faint hope for the renewal of the Davidic dynasty. What happens to Jehoiachin recalls such heroes of Diaspora narratives as Joseph, Mordecai, and Daniel: all are exiles who are liberated from prison (see Gen 41.40; Dan 2.48; Esth 10.3) and become part of the court of the foreign king. The accession to new status is symbolized by the changing of clothes (see Gen 41.24; Dan 5.29; Esth 6.10–11). Jehoiachin could therefore symbolize all the Jews who accepted that their "exile" had become "Diaspora," a place outside the land of Israel, where they could live their lives.

1 CHRONICLES

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

Like the books of Samuel and Kings, Chronicles was originally one book. It was probably first divided by the Greek translators, perhaps because of its length. The break between the two books, however, comes at a natural point, with the notice of the death of King David at the end of 1 Chronicles, and the account of the reign of his successor Solomon at the beginning of 2 Chronicles.

The title given to the book by the early rabbis, "the book of the events of the days" (Heb *seper dibre hayyamim*), suggests that the book is a historical writing, addressing past events in chronological order; the same phrase is used often in Kings (e.g., 1 Kings 14.19) for a different work, one of the sources of the books of Kings. The name of Chronicles in the ancient Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, the Septuagint, is "*Paraleipomena,*" meaning "the things left out"; this name suggests that Chronicles records the events left out of earlier biblical history. These understandings of Chronicles are contested by modern scholars. It was the church father Jerome's description of the book as a "chronicle," a summary of (divine) history, that has left the book with its current title.

In printed Jewish Bibles, Chronicles is the last book in the third and final division of the canon, the Writings ("Ketubim"), although in some manuscripts it occurs earlier, either as the first of the Writings, or before Ezra-Nehemiah, that is, in chronological order. In Christian Bibles, Chronicles is one of the Historical Books and follows the books of Kings, which it largely parallels.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE OF COMPOSITION

Most likely the book's anonymous author lived in Jerusalem and had great familiarity with the Temple and its assorted traditions. Since the book of Ezra begins where Chronicles ends, with the decree of the Persian king Cyrus the Great that allowed the exiled Jews to return home from wherever they had been dispersed throughout Cyrus's kingdom and to rebuild the Temple (538 BCE), some scholars have suggested that Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah, had a single author or editor. Most other scholars think that the linguistic, thematic, and historiographic differences between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah are too great to posit a common author. In this view, which is followed here, the Chronicler's work, which begins with the first person (Adam) and ends with Cyrus's summons to the exiled Jews to return home (2 Chr 36.21–23), should be separated from the Ezra-Nehemiah. Hence, in the following pages, "the Chronicler" designates the author of Chronicles.

The Chronicler wrote after much of the Hebrew Bible had already been written, and he draws extensively upon this rich literary tradition. The dependence of Chronicles upon Genesis is evident in the genealogies (1 Chr 1–9); the dependence upon Samuel is clear in the narration of Saul's demise and David's reign (1 Chr 10–29); and the dependence upon Kings is unmistakable in the narration of Solomon and the Judahite kingdom (2 Chr 1–36). Although a few scholars think that the authors of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles drew from a common source, it makes more sense to hold that the Chronicler selectively drew from an earlier and shorter version of Samuel-Kings. The Chronicler's work is also informed by a variety of other biblical texts. Citations from or allusions to the Torah/Pentateuch and the books of Joshua, Judges, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Psalms, and Ruth all appear in Chronicles. Scholars generally agree that the Chronicler also had access to sources that did not become part of the Bible, but their nature and extent are disputed. Given that Chronicles borrows from earlier biblical writings, most prominently an older and shorter version of Samuel-Kings (with many additions, deletions, and changes), readers may find it helpful to read Chronicles on its own terms as a distinctive literary work, but also to compare its presentation with that of the biblical texts from which it draws.

It is difficult to date Chronicles precisely, beyond noting that it must be postexilic, since it ends with Cyrus's decree. A range of over three hundred and fifty years, from the late sixth to the mid-second century BCE, has been suggested for its initial composition. A date in the late fourth century seems most plausible, because that would account for the author's references to other biblical writings, the mention of people who likely lived in the fourth century (1 Chr 3.22–24), and the literary features within the work that anticipate similar features in Jewish Hellenistic writings. Yet, there are no specific references, no absolute synchronisms, and no nonbiblical citations that definitively date the book to a given decade or quarter-century.

STRUCTURE, CONTENTS, AND INTERPRETATION

Chronicles has three major sections: the genealogies (1 Chr 1–9), the history of the United Monarchy (1 Chr 10–2 Chr 9), and the history of the Judahite monarchy (2 Chr 10–36). The first section, which forms the introduction to the work, begins with Adam (1 Chr 1), but focuses upon the identity, interrelationships, and location of Israel's many tribes (1 Chr 2–9). In traditional societies such genealogies explain and justify the place and function of various individuals, groups, and institutions. In the case of 1 Chr 1–8, the Chronicler stresses the ties between Israel and the land. The very scope and structure of the Chronicler's genealogical system underscore the indivisibility of Israel. Within this larger structure, Judah, Levi, and Benjamin receive by far the most extensive genealogies, reflecting the Chronicler's view that these three tribes are critical to preserving Israel's distinctive legacy. The list of those Jews who returned from exile (1 Chr 9) concludes these chapters by highlighting the continuity between earlier Israel and postexilic Judah (the Persian province of Yehud). In the second section, after briefly addressing and condemning the reign of Saul, focusing only on his demise (1 Chr 10), the Chronicler devotes most of his attention to the highly successful reigns of David (1 Chr 11–29) and Solomon (2 Chr 1–9), which clearly represent a high point of the history. The rest of the book relates the emergence, continuation, and fall of the kingdom of Judah (2 Chr 10–36). Because Chronicles begins with the first person (Adam) and ends with the aftermath of the Babylonian exile (2 Chr 36), it forms a parallel story of Israel's past—albeit much shorter, more focused, and written later—to the story of Israel's past found in Genesis through Kings.

It is no accident that the Chronicler places David and Solomon's achievements at the center of the history of his people. The author thereby underscores the prominence of those Israelite institutions he believed developed, were consolidated, or were transformed during this period—the priesthood, descended from Aaron; the Levites in all their responsibilities as singers, teachers, administrators, and ancillaries to the priests; the Davidic dynasty; and, last but not least, the Temple itself. These institutions remained fundamentally central to his audience. Compared with the golden age of the United Monarchy, the age of the much smaller Judahite kingdom marks a significant contrast.

Following the death of Solomon and the ascension of his son Rehoboam, the ten northern tribes seceded from southern rule (2 Chr 11.1–17). Whereas the author of Kings follows the course of both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms, the Chronicler concentrates on the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, who make up the Southern Kingdom of Judah (2 Chr 11.5–6,12,13–17,23). In Chronicles the course of the Judahite monarchy is characterized by both defeats and successes. The Chronicler consistently documents the achievements of Judah's best kings—Abijah (2 Chr 13.2–21), Asa (2 Chr 14.1–6; 15.8–15), Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 17.1–9; 19.4–11), Hezekiah (2 Chr 29–31), and Josiah (2 Chr 34.1–7)—to institute reforms, reunite the people, and recover lost territories. Major regressions occur in the reigns of Ahaz (2 Chr 28), Manasseh (2 Chr 33.1–11), and the final kings of Judah (2 Chr 36.1–13). In depicting their history, the Chronicler is largely dependent on Kings, but as the episode concerning Manasseh's repentance and restoration (2 Chr 33.12–19; cf. 2 Kings 21.1–16) demonstrates, he may revise these sources to fit his theology, making both major and minor changes, as well as many corrections, additions, and deletions.

Throughout the work, God sends prophets to warn monarchs, leaders, and people alike about the consequences of their actions, imploring them to repent. Whereas in Kings, prophets are often a fixture of life in the Northern Kingdom (e.g., Elijah and Elisha) and are rarer in the life of the Southern Kingdom (Isaiah being a notable exception), in Chronicles prophets and prophetic figures, such as Shemaiah (2 Chr 12.5–6), Azariah (2 Chr 15.1–7), Hanani (2 Chr 16.7–9), Jehu (2 Chr 19.2–3) and Zechariah (2 Chr 24.20), appear in the reign of virtually every significant southern king. That the Chronicler drew from nonbiblical sources when depicting some of these otherwise unattested prophetic figures is possible, but it seems likely that he freely created others to fit his theological conception of the past. In this way, the Chronicler stresses that Moses's promise that the LORD would create a prophetic succession, patterned after the prophetic ministry of Moses himself (Deut 18.15–22), was fulfilled in the history of Judah. In his commentary on the defeat and exile of the Southern Kingdom, the Chronicler adds that Judah was exiled only after the LORD sent a steady supply of prophets to stir the people and priestly leaders to reform, but their warnings went unheeded (2 Chr 36.14–16).

Both Kings and Chronicles end by describing the Babylonian invasion and exile in the sixth century BCE, but Chronicles also includes Cyrus's decree allowing the exiles to return to Judah (2 Chr 36.22–23), offering a clearer hope for the future than the conclusion of Kings. In this way Chronicles contains and relativizes the tremendous tragedy of the Babylonian deportations soberly depicted in 2 Kings 24–25. Thus Chronicles, with its

positive ending and emphasis on the power of repentance and rebuilding, is more optimistic than the history of Samuel-Kings, which it has rewritten, supplemented, and corrected. As the beginning of Chronicles introduces the people of Israel and charts their emergence in the land, the ending of the book anticipates their return.

Gary N. Knoppers

1 Adam, Seth, Enosh; [2] Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared; [3] Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech; [4] Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

[5] The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. [6] The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Diphath,[a] and Togarmah. [7] The descendants of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.[b]

[8] The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. [9] The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. [10] Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first to be a mighty one on the earth.

[11] Egypt became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, [12] Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from whom the Philistines come.[c]

[13] Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, [14] and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, [15] the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, [16] the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

[17] The descendants of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, Aram, Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech.[d] [18] Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. [19] To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg (for in his days the earth was divided), and the name of his brother Joktan. [20] Joktan became the father

[a] Gen 10.3 *Ripath*; See Gk Vg
[b] Gen 10.4 *Dodanim*; See Syr Vg
[c] Heb *Casluhim, from which the Philistines come, Caphtorim*; See Am 9.7, Jer 47.4
[d] *Mash* in Gen 10.23

1.1–2.2: From the first person to Israel: a universal genealogy. Drawing upon numerous lineages in Genesis, the author traces the development of and interrelationships among a variety of nations, ending with Israel—the focal point of his interest. **1–4:** The ten names represent ten generations, beginning with Adam and ending with Noah. The Chronicler's tally is a marvel of condensation, having been culled from the much longer and more detailed narrative lineage of Adam in Gen 5.1–32. **4:** Each of Noah's three sons can be associated with a relatively large geographic area: Shem (peoples to the east of ancient Israel); Ham (peoples to the south and southwest); Japheth (peoples to the north and west). Although most modern scholars believe that Canaan was ethnically and linguistically Semitic, and thus should be descended from Shem, in the Bible Canaan is descended from Ham, perhaps reflecting Canaan's long political relationship to Egypt.

1.5–23: Descendants of Noah. These verses are largely drawn from Gen 10.1–29, the "Table of Nations," which enumerates some seventy descendants of Noah's sons, symbolizing seventy peoples of the world. This creates both a genealogical tree and map by which all the world's nations are related to each other through a common ancestor, Noah. See map on p. 23. **5–7:** The sons of Japheth represent Anatolia (modern Turkey—e.g., Togarmah, Tubal, Meshech), including Greek settlements (Javan) and islands in the Mediterranean Sea, such as Elishah (Cyprus), Kittim (Caphtor and other isles), and Rodanim (Rhodes). **5:** Ham's children represent peoples and areas in the Egyptian political sphere: Cush to the south of Egypt (Sudan or Ethiopia), Egypt, Put to the west (Libya), and Canaan to the north. **11–16:** These lists of Egypt's and Canaan's descendants closely follow Gen 10.13–18. **12:** *Philistines,* see Jer 47.4; Am 9.7. **13–15:** The sons of Canaan inhabit Sidon (the Phoenician coast) and include the traditional inhabitants of the land of Canaan (*Heth* [the Hittites] and those in v. 14), and those of coastal (*Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites*) and inland (*Hamathites*) Syria. **17:** Located in ancient Iran and Mesopotamia (*Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad*), Asia Minor (*Lud* and *Meshech*), Syria (*Aram*); others cannot be identified. **17–18:** Although in v. 8 Canaan is descended from Ham, Eber, after whom the Hebrews (gentilic "'ibri") are named, is a descendant of Shem, indicating Israelite feelings of kinship to the Semitic peoples of the east. **19:** *The earth was divided,* the Hebrew puns on Peleg's name, which is derived from a verb meaning "to divide, split." **20:** *Joktan*'s descendants inhabit the Arabian peninsula.

of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,
21 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 22 Ebal, Abimael,
Sheba, 23 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these
were the descendants of Joktan.

24 Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah; 25 Eber,
Peleg, Reu; 26 Serug, Nahor, Terah; 27 Abram,
that is, Abraham.

28 The sons of Abraham: Isaac and
Ishmael. 29 These are their genealogies:
the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; and
Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 30 Mishma, Dumah,
Massa, Hadad, Tema, 31 Jetur, Naphish, and
Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael.
32 The sons of Keturah, Abraham's concu-
bine: she bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan,
Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of
Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan. 33 The sons of
Midian: Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and
Eldaah. All these were the descendants of
Keturah.

34 Abraham became the father of Isaac.
The sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel. 35 The sons
of Esau: Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and
Korah. 36 The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar,
Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek.
37 The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Sham-
mah, and Mizzah.

38 The sons of Seir: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon,
Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. 39 The sons
of Lotan: Hori and Homam; and Lotan's sister
was Timna. 40 The sons of Shobal: Alian,
Manahath, Ebal, Shephi, and Onam. The
sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. 41 The sons of
Anah: Dishon. The sons of Dishon: Hamran,
Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. 42 The sons of
Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Jaakan.[a] The sons
of Dishan:[b] Uz and Aran.

43 These are the kings who reigned in the
land of Edom before any king reigned over
the Israelites: Bela son of Beor, whose city
was called Dinhabah. 44 When Bela died,
Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah succeeded
him. 45 When Jobab died, Husham of the
land of the Temanites succeeded him.
46 When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad,
who defeated Midian in the country of
Moab, succeeded him; and the name of his
city was Avith. 47 When Hadad died, Sam-
lah of Masrekah succeeded him. 48 When
Samlah died, Shaul[c] of Rehoboth on the
Euphrates succeeded him. 49 When Shaul[c]
died, Baal-hanan son of Achbor succeeded
him. 50 When Baal-hanan died, Hadad suc-
ceeded him; the name of his city was Pai,
and his wife's name Mehetabel daughter
of Matred, daughter of Me-zahab. 51 And
Hadad died.

The clans[d] of Edom were: clans[d] Timna,
Aliah,[e] Jetheth, 52 Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,
53 Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, 54 Magdiel, and
Iram; these are the clans[d] of Edom.

[a] Or *and Akan*; See Gen 36.27
[b] See 1.38: Heb *Dishon*
[c] Or *Saul*
[d] Or *chiefs*
[e] Or *Alvah*; See Gen 36.40

1.24–27: Shem's genealogy is extracted from Gen 11.10–26. **27:** *Abram,* this begins the second major unit in the Chronicler's universal genealogy; the first was dominated by the descendants of Noah (1 Chr 1.4b–23). **28:** For *Isaac and Ishmael,* the Chronicler fashions a very brief genealogy from narrative materials in Genesis (16.11; 17.18–19; 25.9); their mothers, Sarah and Hagar, are not mentioned. Ishmael is associated with the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula and northwestern Arabia (Gen 16.10–12; 17.20; 21.13), as are the descendants of Keturah (vv. 32–33). **29–31:** Drawn from the Ishmaelite genealogy in Gen 25.12–18. **32–33:** In the source text (Gen 25.1–13), *Keturah* appears as Abraham's third wife, taken sometime after the death of Sarah (Gen 25.1–3). The Chronicler's reference to her as a secondary wife (NRSV *concubine*) may be based on his reading of Gen 25.1–2 in light of Gen 25.5–6; it also clarifies that the primary line of Abraham of interest to the author continues via Isaac. **34–37:** The genealogy of Abraham draws upon Gen 25.19–26 and Gen 36.2–14. The Chronicler always refers to Jacob as *Israel* (see Gen 32.22–32), signaling an unbreakable bond between the patriarch's many descendants and the eponymous ancestor himself. **34**: *Esau*, as befitting Israel's closest relative, receives a significant allocation of coverage. **38–42:** *The sons of Seir,* abridged and adapted from Gen 36.20–28. **43–54:** The lists of Edomite monarchs (1.43–51a) and Edomite chieftains (1.51b–54) are adapted and slightly abridged from Gen 36.31–39 and Gen 36.40–43, respectively. The Chronicler presents the history of Edom, Israel's neighbor to the southeast, in capsule form up to the time of the inception of the Israelite monarchy, the beginning of his own narrative history

2 These are the sons of Israel: Reuben,
Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun,
2 Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and
Asher. 3 The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, and
Shelah; these three the Canaanite woman
Bath-shua bore to him. Now Er, Judah's
firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD,
and he put him to death. 4 His daughter-in-
law Tamar also bore him Perez and Zerah.
Judah had five sons in all.

5 The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul.
6 The sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan, Heman,
Calcol, and Dara,[a] five in all. 7 The sons of
Carmi: Achar, the troubler of Israel, who
transgressed in the matter of the devoted
thing; 8 and Ethan's son was Azariah.

9 The sons of Hezron, who were born to
him: Jerahmeel, Ram, and Chelubai. 10 Ram
became the father of Amminadab, and Am-
minadab became the father of Nahshon,
prince of the sons of Judah. 11 Nahshon
became the father of Salma, Salma of Boaz,
12 Boaz of Obed, Obed of Jesse. 13 Jesse became
the father of Eliab his firstborn, Abinadab
the second, Shimea the third, 14 Nethanel the
fourth, Raddai the fifth, 15 Ozem the sixth,
David the seventh; 16 and their sisters were
Zeruiah and Abigail. The sons of Zeruiah:
Abishai, Joab, and Asahel, three. 17 Abigail
bore Amasa, and the father of Amasa was
Jether the Ishmaelite.

18 Caleb son of Hezron had children by his
wife Azubah, and by Jerioth; these were her
sons: Jesher, Shobab, and Ardon. 19 When
Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath, who
bore him Hur. 20 Hur became the father of
Uri, and Uri became the father of Bezalel.

21 Afterward Hezron went in to the
daughter of Machir father of Gilead, whom
he married when he was sixty years old; and
she bore him Segub; 22 and Segub became the
father of Jair, who had twenty-three towns
in the land of Gilead. 23 But Geshur and Aram
took from them Havvoth-jair, Kenath and its
villages, sixty towns. All these were descen-
dants of Machir, father of Gilead. 24 After the
death of Hezron, in Caleb-ephrathah, Abijah
wife of Hezron bore him Ashhur, father of
Tekoa.

25 The sons of Jerahmeel, the firstborn
of Hezron: Ram his firstborn, Bunah, Oren,
Ozem, and Ahijah. 26 Jerahmeel also had
another wife, whose name was Atarah;
she was the mother of Onam. 27 The sons
of Ram, the firstborn of Jerahmeel: Maaz,
Jamin, and Eker. 28 The sons of Onam: Sham-
mai and Jada. The sons of Shammai: Nadab
and Abishur. 29 The name of Abishur's wife
was Abihail, and she bore him Ahban and

[a] Or *Darda*; Compare Syr Tg some Gk Mss; See 1 Kings 4.31

(ch 10). **2.1–2:** This list of Israel's descendants is the natural continuation of the progeny of Abraham (1.28–33) and Isaac (1.34–37) and serves as the introduction to the lineages of Israel's many sons, which follows in 2.3–9.1. The order of the sons is largely arranged according to mother—Leah (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun); Rachel (Joseph, Benjamin); Bilhah (Dan, Naphtali); and Zilpah (Gad, Asher).

2.3–4.23: The descendants of Judah. The Chronicler first offers a long genealogy of Judah, demonstrating Judah's centrality; beginning with Judah is especially striking because Reuben is mentioned first in 2.1. **2.4:** *Daughter-in-law,* an allusion to the sexual relationship between Judah and Tamar (Gen 38.12–26). Having earlier referred to the Canaanite status of Bath-shua (v. 3; cf. Gen 38.1–5), the Chronicler presents another unusual feature of Judah's lineage, which did not disqualify it from preeminence. **6–8:** Drawn from two sources: Josh 7.1 (2.6a,7) and 1 Kings 4.31 (2.6b). **7:** *Achar,* called Achan in Josh 7, but cf. Josh 7.24–26. **10:** *Amminadab,* as the father of Nahshon, see Num 2.3. **11:** Taken from Ruth 4.20–21. **13–17:** The lineages of Jesse's sons and daughters have been drawn, in part, from 1 Sam 16.1–23; 17.1–51; 2 Sam 2.18. **18–20:** The descendants of Caleb are a major interest of the Chronicler, taking up a sizable portion of Judah's lineages (2.18–20,42–50a,50b–55; 4.1–7). This may be because the Chronicler is correcting a tradition reflected in some earlier sources that suggest that he was a Kenizzite (e.g., Num 32.12), and thus not part of Israel. **21:** *Machir* is sometimes associated with Manasseh, most often as Manasseh's son (Gen 50.23; Num 32.39–40; Deut 3.14–15; cf. Judg 5.14). The connection with Manasseh is affirmed in 7.14–17. **22–23:** The subject shifts back to Hezron, last mentioned in v. 9. **22:** *Jair* is a son of Manasseh in Num 32.41 and Deut 3.14, but he appears here as the grandson of Hezron. **24:** *Father of Tekoa,* Tekoa in earlier books is the name of a Judean city, but in genealogies, ethnic and geographic dimensions of names can overlap. **25–41:** Both the genealogy of Jerahmeel (vv. 25–33), the firstborn of Hezron (vv.

Molid. 30 The sons of Nadab: Seled and Appaim; and Seled died childless. 31 The son[a] of Appaim: Ishi. The son[a] of Ishi: Sheshan. The son[a] of Sheshan: Ahlai. 32 The sons of Jada, Shammai's brother: Jether and Jonathan; and Jether died childless. 33 The sons of Jonathan: Peleth and Zaza. These were the descendants of Jerahmeel. 34 Now Sheshan had no sons, only daughters; but Sheshan had an Egyptian slave, whose name was Jarha. 35 So Sheshan gave his daughter in marriage to his slave Jarha; and she bore him Attai. 36 Attai became the father of Nathan, and Nathan of Zabad. 37 Zabad became the father of Ephlal, and Ephlal of Obed. 38 Obed became the father of Jehu, and Jehu of Azariah. 39 Azariah became the father of Helez, and Helez of Eleasah. 40 Eleasah became the father of Sismai, and Sismai of Shallum. 41 Shallum became the father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah of Elishama.

42 The sons of Caleb brother of Jerahmeel: Mesha[b] his firstborn, who was father of Ziph. The sons of Mareshah father of Hebron. 43 The sons of Hebron: Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema. 44 Shema became father of Raham, father of Jorkeam; and Rekem became the father of Shammai. 45 The son of Shammai: Maon; and Maon was the father of Beth-zur. 46 Ephah also, Caleb's concubine, bore Haran, Moza, and Gazez; and Haran became the father of Gazez. 47 The sons of Jahdai: Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaaph. 48 Maacah, Caleb's concubine, bore Sheber and Tirhanah. 49 She also bore Shaaph father of Madmannah, Sheva father of Machbenah and father of Gibea; and the daughter of Caleb was Achsah. 50 These were the descendants of Caleb.

The sons[c] of Hur the firstborn of Ephrathah: Shobal father of Kiriath-jearim, 51 Salma father of Bethlehem, and Hareph father of Beth-gader. 52 Shobal father of Kiriath-jearim had other sons: Haroeh, half of the Menuhoth. 53 And the families of Kiriath-jearim: the Ithrites, the Puthites, the Shumathites, and the Mishraites; from these came the Zorathites and the Eshtaolites. 54 The sons of Salma: Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atroth-beth-joab, and half of the Manahathites, the Zorites. 55 The families also of the scribes that lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, father of the house of Rechab.

3 These are the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: the firstborn Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelite; the second Daniel, by Abigail the Carmelite; 2 the third Absalom, son of Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur; the fourth Adonijah, son of Haggith; 3 the fifth Shephatiah, by Abital; the sixth Ithream, by his wife Eglah; 4 six were born to him in Hebron, where he reigned for seven years and six months. And he reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem. 5 These were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, four by Bath-shua, daughter of Ammiel; 6 then Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, 7 Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, 8 Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. 9 All these were David's sons, besides the sons of the concubines; and Tamar was their sister.

10 The descendants of Solomon: Rehoboam, Abijah his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat

[a] Heb *sons*
[b] Gk reads *Mareshah*
[c] Gk Vg: Heb *son*

9,25) and the genealogy of Sheshan (vv. 34–41) are unique to Chronicles. **42–50:** The second of the genealogies for Caleb's descendants (see vv. 18–20n.). Many of the names listed also occur in the Judahite town list of Josh 15. **50b–55:** Largely without parallel, this genealogy reverts to the line of Hur (v. 19). Each of Hur's three sons is depicted as a founder (*father*) of a town. The *Kenites* (Num 24.20–22; Judg 4.11,17–21; 5.24–27; 1 Sam 15.6; 30.29), who ultimately descend from their eponymous ancestor, Cain (Gen 4.1–25), are here included as part of the tribe of Judah.

3.1–24: The descendants of David. 1–9: Some names of David's sons, and their order, are different in the MT of 2 Samuel. **1–3:** These verses are based on 2 Sam 3.2–4. David's lineage follows naturally 2.9–17, which enumerates the descendants of Ram, including David and the children of David's two sisters Zeruiah and Abigail. **4:** This verse draws upon and reworks 2 Sam 5.5. Consistent with David's rule over all Israel in chs 11–29, the writer omits the distinction between Israel and Judah found in his source. **5–9:** These verses are largely dependent upon 2 Sam 5.13–16. **10–14:** A fifteen-generation genealogy from Solomon to Josiah, noting only the Davidic

his son, [11] Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, [12] Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, [13] Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, [14] Amon his son, Josiah his son. [15] The sons of Josiah: Johanan the firstborn, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. [16] The descendants of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son; [17] and the sons of Jeconiah, the captive: Shealtiel his son, [18] Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah; [19] The sons of Pedaiah: Zerubbabel and Shimei; and the sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam and Hananiah, and Shelomith was their sister; [20] and Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-hesed, five. [21] The sons of Hananiah: Pelatiah and Jeshaiah, his son[a] Rephaiah, his son[a] Arnan, his son[a] Obadiah, his son[a] Shecaniah. [22] The son[b] of Shecaniah: Shemaiah. And the sons of Shemaiah: Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat, six. [23] The sons of Neariah: Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam, three. [24] The sons of Elioenai: Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani, seven.

4 The sons of Judah: Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal. [2] Reaiah son of Shobal became the father of Jahath, and Jahath became the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the families of the Zorathites. [3] These were the sons[c] of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazzelelponi, [4] and Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These were the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah, the father of Bethlehem. [5] Ashhur father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah; [6] Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni, and Haahashtari.[d] These were the sons of Naarah. [7] The sons of Helah: Zereth, Izhar,[e] and Ethnan. [8] Koz became the father of Anub, Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel son of Harum. [9] Jabez was honored more than his brothers; and his mother named him Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." [10] Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!" And God granted what he asked. [11] Chelub the brother of Shuhah became the father of Mehir, who was the father of Eshton. [12] Eshton became the father of Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahash. These are the men of Recah. [13] The sons of Kenaz: Othniel and Seraiah; and the sons of Othniel: Hathath and Meonothai.[f] [14] Meonothai became the father of Ophrah; and Seraiah became the father of Joab father of Ge-harashim,[g] so-called because they were artisans. [15] The sons of Caleb son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah, and Naam; and the son[b] of Elah: Kenaz. [16] The sons of Jehallelel: Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel. [17] The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Epher, and Jalon. These are the sons of Bithiah, daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered married;[h] and she conceived and bore[i] Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah father of Eshtemoa. [18] And his Judean

[a] Gk Compare Syr Vg: Heb *sons of*
[b] Heb *sons*
[c] Gk Compare Vg: Heb *the father*
[d] Or *Ahashtari*
[e] Another reading is *Zohar*
[f] Gk Vg: Heb lacks *and Meonothai*
[g] That is *Valley of artisans*
[h] The clause: *These are . . . married* is transposed from verse 18
[i] Heb lacks *and bore*

king in each generation. **15–18:** A largely unparalleled genealogy from Josiah to Pedaiah. The second half of ch 3 gives special attention to Josiah and his various offspring. **18:** *Shenazzar,* some identify him with Sheshbazzar of Ezra 1.8, who led a group of early returnees from exile. **19–24:** The list of Davidic descendants from *Pedaiah* to *the sons of Elioenai* is unique to the Chronicler and likely reflects aspirations for a renewed Davidic monarchy in the postexilic period. **19:** *Zerubbabel* was a leader of the postexilic Judean community in the late sixth century BCE; see, e.g., Ezra 3.2; Hag 1.1. **22:** *Hattush* returned from exile in Babylon (Ezra 8.2).

4.1–23: Descendants of Judah. In contrast to the largely linear genealogy of David (ch 3), this chapter describes several unconnected branches of Judeans. It also narrates several short anecdotes about individual Judeans (e.g., vv. 9–10,23). As in other genealogies, names of individuals here occur as place names elsewhere (see 2.24n.). **1:** The sequence *Perez . . . Shobal* signifies a line of descent; these persons are not brothers. **4b–7:** Return to the genealogy of Caleb; see 2.18–20n. **9–10:** There is a wordplay in Hebrew: "ya'bets" (Jabez), "'otseb"

wife bore Jered father of Gedor, Heber father of Soco, and Jekuthiel father of Zanoah.
19 The sons of the wife of Hodiah, the sister of Naham, were the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and Eshtemoa the Maacathite.
20 The sons of Shimon: Amnon, Rinnah, Benhanan, and Tilon. The sons of Ishi: Zoheth and Ben-zoheth. 21 The sons of Shelah son of Judah: Er father of Lecah, Laadah father of Mareshah, and the families of the guild of linen workers at Beth-ashbea; 22 and Jokim, and the men of Cozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who married into Moab but returned to Lehem[a] (now the records[b] are ancient).
23 These were the potters and inhabitants of Netaim and Gederah; they lived there with the king in his service.

24 The sons of Simeon: Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, Shaul;[c] 25 Shallum was his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son. 26 The sons of Mishma: Hammuel his son, Zaccur his son, Shimei his son. 27 Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers did not have many children, nor did all their family multiply like the Judeans. 28 They lived in Beer-sheba, Moladah, Hazar-shual, 29 Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, 30 Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, 31 Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susim, Beth-biri, and Shaaraim. These were their towns until David became king. 32 And their villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan, five towns, 33 along with all their villages that were around these towns as far as Baal. These were their settlements. And they kept a genealogical record.

34 Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah, 35 Joel, Jehu son of Joshibiah son of Seraiah son of Asiel, 36 Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, 37 Ziza son of Shiphi son of Allon son of Jedaiah son of Shimri son of Shemaiah—
38 these mentioned by name were leaders in their families, and their clans increased greatly. 39 They journeyed to the entrance of Gedor, to the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks, 40 where they found rich, good pasture, and the land was very broad, quiet, and peaceful; for the former inhabitants there belonged to Ham. 41 These, registered by name, came in the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, and attacked their tents and the Meunim who were found there, and exterminated them to this day, and settled in their place, because there was pasture there for their flocks. 42 And some of them, five hundred men of the Simeonites, went to Mount Seir, having as their leaders Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, sons of Ishi;
43 they destroyed the remnant of the Amalekites that had escaped, and they have lived there to this day.

5 The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. (He was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the

[a] Vg Compare Gk: Heb *and Jashubi-lahem*
[b] Or *matters*
[c] Or *Saul*

(pain), and "'otsbi" (harm). **21:** In referring to Shelah, the text returns to the original sons of Judah (2.3–4). **22:** *Married into Moab,* the Chronicler again posits some close links between Judah and its neighbors (1 Chr 2.3–5, 34–41; 3.1–2; 4.18). Possible links may be hinted at in Ezra 2.6; 8.4; 10.30. Intermarriage with Moabites in the postexilic period is also attested (Ezra 9.1; Neh 13.23; Ruth), but in contrast to Chronicles, in Ezra and Nehemiah such marriages are banned.

4.24–43: The descendants of Simeon. Here too, the Chronicler punctuates his genealogical prologue with anecdotes about geography, migrations, and wars (vv. 27–33,38–43). The genealogy of Simeon immediately follows that of its neighbor, Judah. **24–27:** The lineage of Simeon is traced through his son Shaul. The names listed in v. 24 (Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul) are derived from Gen 46.10; Ex 6.15; and esp. Num 26.12–14. The rest of the genealogy (vv. 26–27) is unique to the Chronicler. **28–33:** Taken, with some changes, from Josh 19.2–8. **33–43:** A list of Simeonite leaders (v. 38) is followed by a description of the expansion of the tribe demographically and geographically. The ruthlessness displayed by the Simeonites recalls the intemperate behavior of their eponymous ancestor (Gen 34.25–29; 49.5–7). **41:** *Hezekiah,* see 2 Chr 29–32.

5.1–10: The descendants of Reuben. Reuben was firstborn (Gen 29.31–30.21; 35.23–26; 46.8–9; Ex 1.2; 6.14; Num 26.5; Ezek 48.31–35), but he does not appear first in the Chronicler's genealogies, having been displaced by Judah. **1:** *Joseph,* firstborn of Rachel, rather than Reuben, firstborn of Leah, attained the birthright because

birthright; [2] though Judah became prominent among his brothers and a ruler came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph.)
[3] The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. [4] The sons of Joel: Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, [5] Micah his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son, [6] Beerah his son, whom King Tilgath-pilneser of Assyria carried away into exile; he was a chieftain of the Reubenites. [7] And his kindred by their families, when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned: the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, [8] and Bela son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of Joel, who lived in Aroer, as far as Nebo and Baal-meon. [9] He also lived to the east as far as the beginning of the desert this side of the Euphrates, because their cattle had multiplied in the land of Gilead.
[10] And in the days of Saul they made war on the Hagrites, who fell by their hand; and they lived in their tents throughout all the region east of Gilead.

[11] The sons of Gad lived beside them in the land of Bashan as far as Salecah: [12] Joel the chief, Shapham the second, Janai, and Shaphat in Bashan. [13] And their kindred according to their clans: Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia, and Eber, seven. [14] These were the sons of Abihail son of Huri, son of Jaroah, son of Gilead, son of Michael, son of Jeshishai, son of Jahdo, son of Buz; [15] Ahi son of Abdiel, son of Guni, was chief in their clan; [16] and they lived in Gilead, in Bashan and in its towns, and in all the pasture lands of Sharon to their limits. [17] All of these were enrolled by genealogies in the days of King Jotham of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam of Israel.

[18] The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had valiant warriors, who carried shield and sword, and drew the bow, expert in war, forty-four thousand seven hundred sixty, ready for service. [19] They made war on the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab; [20] and when they received help against them, the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried to God in the battle, and he granted their entreaty because they trusted in him. [21] They captured their livestock: fifty thousand of their camels, two hundred fifty thousand sheep, two thousand donkeys, and one hundred thousand captives. [22] Many fell slain, because the war was of God. And they lived in their territory until the exile.

[23] The members of the half-tribe of Manasseh lived in the land; they were very

Reuben had sexual relations with Jacob's concubine Bilhah (Gen 35.22; 49.4). **2:** *A ruler came from him,* the writer alludes to David's kingship, which eventually encompassed all twelve tribes (28.4; 1 Sam 13.14; 25.30; Mic 5.2). **3:** The Chronicler derives this list from Num 26.5–6. *Carmi* is one of the Reubenite clans with possible ties to Judah (Gen 46.9; Ex 6.14; Num 26.6; Josh 7.1,18,24,26; 1 Chr 2.7; 4.1). **6:** In contrast to Kings, which largely loses its concentration upon individual tribes in its coverage of the dual monarchies, the Chronicler maintains a continuous interest in the fate of individual tribes, because each group within Israel is an integral part of a greater whole. *Tilgath-pilneser,* the Chronicler's spelling (5.26; 2 Chr 28.20) of Tiglath-pileser (III), King of Assyria (745–727 BCE); cf. 2 Kings 15.29. **9:** In this case, *Gilead* refers to the territory east of the Jordan, which is south of the Jabbok and north of the Arnon. There is some overlap with Gad's territorial holdings in Josh 13. **10:** *The days of Saul,* who was the first king of Israel, according to biblical tradition, in the late eleventh century BCE.

5.11–17: The descendants of Gad. Like the Reubenites, the Gadites were located east of the Jordan River. **16:** *pasture land,* better the belt of land or open space outside a town or a sanctuary. *Sharon* refers here not to the (coastal) Sharon plain, the common designation of Sharon in the Bible, but to the town of Sharon in Transjordan, also mentioned in the Moabite Mesha inscription (line 13). **17:** *King Jotham of Judah* (759–743 BCE) and *King Jeroboam* (II) *of Israel* (788–747 BCE).

5.18–22: The wars of the Transjordan tribes. In some traditions (Num 32.1–42; Deut 3.12–16; 29.6–7; Josh 13.8–31) and once elsewhere in Chronicles (1 Chr 12.38), Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh are treated as a single entity. They join forces, share a common muster, partake in the spoils gained by fighting a collective enemy, and experience a common fate (vv. 22,25–26). The number *forty-four thousand seven hundred sixty* (v. 18) is notable for its specificity, not for its magnitude. Assigning huge, normally well-rounded, numbers to armies is one means by which the Chronicler creates a heroic legacy for what to him is Israel's classical past.

5.23–24: The descendants of Half-Manasseh. This part of the tribe of Manasseh was located east of the Jordan River, to the north of Gad.

numerous from Bashan to Baal-hermon, Senir, and Mount Hermon. 24 These were the heads of their clans: Epher,[a] Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty warriors, famous men, heads of their clans. 25 But they transgressed against the God of their ancestors, and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. 26 So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of King Pul of Assyria, the spirit of King Tilgath-pilneser of Assyria, and he carried them away, namely, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river Gozan, to this day.

6 [b] The sons of Levi: Gershom,[c] Kohath, and Merari. 2 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 3 The children of Amram: Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 4 Eleazar became the father of Phinehas, Phinehas of Abishua, 5 Abishua of Bukki, Bukki of Uzzi, 6 Uzzi of Zerahiah, Zerahiah of Meraioth, 7 Meraioth of Amariah, Amariah of Ahitub, 8 Ahitub of Zadok, Zadok of Ahimaaz, 9 Ahimaaz of Azariah, Azariah of Johanan, 10 and Johanan of Azariah (it was he who served as priest in the house that Solomon built in Jerusalem). 11 Azariah became the father of Amariah, Amariah of Ahitub, 12 Ahitub of Zadok, Zadok of Shallum, 13 Shallum of Hilkiah, Hilkiah of Azariah, 14 Azariah of Seraiah, Seraiah of Jehozadak; 15 and Jehozadak went into exile when the LORD sent Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

16[d] The sons of Levi: Gershom, Kohath, and Merari. 17 These are the names of the sons of Gershom: Libni and Shimei. 18 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their ancestry. 20 Of Gershom: Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, 21 Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeatherai his son. 22 The sons of Kohath: Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, 23 Elkanah his son, Ebiasaph his son, Assir his son, 24 Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziah his son, and Shaul his son. 25 The sons of Elkanah: Amasai and Ahimoth, 26 Elkanah his son, Zophai his son, Nahath his son, 27 Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son. 28 The sons of Samuel:

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *and Epher*
[b] Ch 5.27 in Heb
[c] Heb *Gershon,* variant of *Gershom*; See 6.16
[d] Ch 6.1 in Heb

5.25–26: The exile of the Transjordanian tribes. The campaigns of 733–732 BCE by *Tilgath-pilneser* III (also known as *Pul*), were primarily directed against King Rezin of Damascus, but also resulted in the capture of nearby Gilead and Galilee (2 Kings 15.29). The list of sites in v. 26 is borrowed, however, from 2 Kings 17.6 (parallel 2 Kings 18.11), which details the destinations of the later northern Israelite deportees in the Assyrian exile of 722 BCE.

6.1–81: The descendants of Levi take center stage in the genealogies of Chronicles. For the Chronicler, the Levites are second in importance only to the Judeans, so their genealogy is especially long and detailed. As with other tribes, attention is paid to issues of identity and location: who the Levites are (vv. 1–53) and where they live (vv. 54–81). **1–15:** A priestly line is traced from Levi in the ancestral period (cf. Gen 46.11; Ex 6.16–25; Num 3.17–20) all the way to Jehozadak (v. 15), who was taken to Babylon in the exile of 586 BCE (2 Kings 25.18–21; 1 Chr 5.41). **8:** Scholars debate the origin of David's main priest *Zadok,* with some suggesting that he was originally Canaanite; this genealogy in Chronicles is the first source to explicitly connect him to the line of Aaron and Levi. Twelve generations of priests precede Zadok and twelve generations of priests succeed him, hence the era of Zadok, which coincides with the construction of the Temple, marks the halfway point between the ancestral era and the exile. **10:** *Azariah,* cf. 1 Kings 4.2. **14:** *Seraiah,* see 2 Kings 25.18. **16–48:** Lineages for three major groups within the Levites—the Gershonites, the Kohathites, and the Merarites (vv. 16–30)—preface lineages of levitical singers from the same three groups (vv. 31–48). Levitical choirs are an intrinsic component of the Chronicler's system of worship, appearing some thirty times in his history. The genealogies thus are not simply antiquarian, but justify the institutions of postexilic Judah. 22: *Korah,* one of the descendants of Kohath (v. 16), is the eponymous ancestor of a guild of levitical musicians, the Korahites, who figure prominently in several Psalm superscriptions (Ps 42–49, 84–85, 87–88). **28:** *Samuel,* cf. 1 Sam 1.1; 8.2.

The Levitical towns according to 1 Chr 6:54-80. Cities of refuge are highlighted with a star. The tribal boundaries are shown by a dashed line.

Joel[a] his firstborn, the second Abijah.[b] 29 The sons of Merari: Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzzah his son, 30 Shimea his son, Haggiah his son, and Asaiah his son.

31 These are the men whom David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark came to rest there. 32 They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem; and they performed their service in due order. 33 These are the men who served; and their sons were: Of the Kohathites: Heman, the singer, son of Joel, son of Samuel, 34 son of Elkanah, son of Jeroham, son of Eliel, son of Toah, 35 son of Zuph, son of Elkanah, son of Mahath, son of Amasai, 36 son of Elkanah, son of Joel, son of Azariah, son of Zephaniah, 37 son of Tahath, son of Assir, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, 38 son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, son of Israel; 39 and his brother Asaph, who stood on his right, namely, Asaph son of Berechiah, son of Shimea, 40 son of Michael, son of Baaseiah, son of Malchijah, 41 son of Ethni, son of Zerah, son of Adaiah, 42 son of Ethan, son of Zimmah, son of Shimei, 43 son of Jahath, son of Gershom, son of Levi. 44 On the left were their kindred the sons of Merari: Ethan son of Kishi, son of Abdi, son of Malluch, 45 son of Hashabiah, son of Amaziah, son of Hilkiah, 46 son of Amzi, son of Bani, son of Shemer, 47 son of Mahli, son of Mushi, son of Merari, son of Levi; 48 and their kindred the Levites were appointed for all the service of the tabernacle of the house of God.

49 But Aaron and his sons made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense, doing all the work of the most holy place, to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. 50 These are the sons of Aaron: Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, 51 Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, 52 Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, 53 Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

54 These are their dwelling places according to their settlements within their borders: to the sons of Aaron of the families of Kohathites—for the lot fell to them first— 55 to them they gave Hebron in the land of Judah and its surrounding pasture lands, 56 but the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb son of Jephunneh. 57 To the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of refuge: Hebron, Libnah with its pasture lands, Jattir, Eshtemoa with its pasture

[a] Gk Syr Compare verse 33 and 1 Sam 8.2: Heb lacks *Joel*

[b] Heb reads *Vashni, and Abijah* for *the second Abijah,* taking *the second* as a proper name

31–32: Referring back to the three levitical clans, the writer summarizes the duties of the Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites adopted during the United Monarchy of David and Solomon, the time in which the Temple was built. Three specific descendants—Asaph from Gershon (vv. 39–43), Heman from Kohath (vv. 33–38), and Ethan from Merari (vv. 44–47)—took on official roles in the state religion. **33:** *Heman,* "Asaph" (v. 39), and "Ethan" (v. 42) represent three classes or guilds of singers. Because David's reign is definitive for the levitical singers, the patronyms Asaph, Heman, and Ethan serve as organizing principles for them (2 Chr 5.12; 29.14; 35.15). The same figures appear in Psalm superscriptions: Asaph (Pss 50; 73–83), Heman (Ps 88), Ethan (Ps 89)—and are thus associated with the hymnody of ancient Israel. **44:** *Ethan* represents the Merarites (6.18,29; 15.17), but in many other instances Jeduthun serves this role (16.41; 25.1,3,6; 2 Chr 5.12; 29.14; 35.15). **49–53:** The Aaronic priests officiate within the sanctuary and make offerings (23.30–32; Ex 38–42; 30.1–10; Lev 8.1–9.24; 18.8–20; Ezek 44.13). **49:** *The most holy place* (lit., "holy of holies") is the exclusive responsibility of the priests (Ex 26.33–34; Num 18.1–5; Ezek 44.15–16; 2 Chr 5.11; 29.7). Other members of the tribe of Levi may serve as Temple staff, but the priests alone officiate at the inner sanctuary. *To make atonement for Israel* refers to the Day of Atonement ritual of Lev 16. This festival, mentioned only in Priestly sources in the Torah/Pentateuch, probably became especially significant during the time of the Chronicler. **54–81:** The list of levitical towns is drawn from a shorter text than the current version of Josh 21.3–42, **55–60:** The location of Aaronide settlements is limited to the traditional domains of three tribes: Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. On *pasture lands,* see 5.16n. **57:** The creation of *cities of refuge* or asylum was demanded in Deuteronomic (Deut 4.41–43; 19.1–13) and Priestly law (Num 35.6–15,25–28,32). Most, if not all, of the towns designated for asylum (Josh 20.7–8) doubled as levitical settlements.

lands, [58] Hilen[a] with its pasture lands, Debir with its pasture lands, [59] Ashan with its pasture lands, and Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands. [60] From the tribe of Benjamin, Geba with its pasture lands, Alemeth with its pasture lands, and Anathoth with its pasture lands. All their towns throughout their families were thirteen.

[61] To the rest of the Kohathites were given by lot out of the family of the tribe, out of the half-tribe, the half of Manasseh, ten towns. [62] To the Gershomites according to their families were allotted thirteen towns out of the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh in Bashan. [63] To the Merarites according to their families were allotted twelve towns out of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun. [64] So the people of Israel gave the Levites the towns with their pasture lands. [65] They also gave them by lot out of the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin these towns that are mentioned by name.

[66] And some of the families of the sons of Kohath had towns of their territory out of the tribe of Ephraim. [67] They were given the cities of refuge: Shechem with its pasture lands in the hill country of Ephraim, Gezer with its pasture lands, [68] Jokmeam with its pasture lands, Beth-horon with its pasture lands, [69] Aijalon with its pasture lands, Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; [70] and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Aner with its pasture lands, and Bileam with its pasture lands, for the rest of the families of the Kohathites.

[71] To the Gershomites: out of the half-tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan with its pasture lands and Ashtaroth with its pasture lands; [72] and out of the tribe of Issachar: Kedesh with its pasture lands, Daberath[b] with its pasture lands, [73] Ramoth with its pasture lands, and Anem with its pasture lands; [74] out of the tribe of Asher: Mashal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture lands, [75] Hukok with its pasture lands, and Rehob with its pasture lands; [76] and out of the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee with its pasture lands, Hammon with its pasture lands, and Kiriathaim with its pasture lands. [77] To the rest of the Merarites out of the tribe of Zebulun: Rimmono with its pasture lands, Tabor with its pasture lands, [78] and across the Jordan from Jericho, on the east side of the Jordan, out of the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the steppe with its pasture lands, Jahzah with its pasture lands, [79] Kedemoth with its pasture lands, and Mephaath with its pasture lands; [80] and out of the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead with its pasture lands, Mahanaim with its pasture lands, [81] Heshbon with its pasture lands, and Jazer with its pasture lands.

7 The sons[c] of Issachar: Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron, four. [2] The sons of Tola: Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, and Shemuel, heads of their ancestral houses, namely of Tola, mighty warriors of their generations, their number in the days of David being twenty-two thousand six hundred. [3] The son[d] of Uzzi: Izrahiah. And the sons of Izrahiah: Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Isshiah, five, all of them chiefs; [4] and along with them, by their generations, according to their ancestral houses, were units of the fighting force, thirty-six thousand, for they had many wives and sons. [5] Their kindred belonging to all the families of Issachar were in all eighty-seven thousand mighty warriors, enrolled by genealogy.

[6] The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, and Jediael, three. [7] The sons of Bela: Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri, five, heads of ancestral houses, mighty warriors; and their enrollment by genealogies was twenty-two thousand thirty-four. [8] The sons of Becher: Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth. All these were the sons of Becher; [9] and their enrollment by genealogies, according to their generations, as heads of their ancestral houses, mighty warriors, was

[a] Other readings *Hilez, Holon*; See Josh 21.15
[b] Or *Dobrath*
[c] Syr Compare Vg: Heb *And to the sons*
[d] Heb *sons*

7.1–5: The descendants of Issachar. Issachar's progeny are traced through his eldest son Tola (Gen 46.13; Num 26.23–25; Judg 5.15). As in some other genealogies (4.42–43; 5.7–10,18–22; 7.9–12,40), large numbers, growth, and military prowess are stressed.

7.6–12: The descendants of Benjamin. A genealogy of Zebulun may be missing here (Gen 46.17–27; Num

twenty thousand two hundred. 10 The sons of Jediael: Bilhan. And the sons of Bilhan: Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar. 11 All these were the sons of Jediael according to the heads of their ancestral houses, mighty warriors, seventeen thousand two hundred, ready for service in war. 12 And Shuppim and Huppim were the sons of Ir, Hushim the son[a] of Aher.

13 The descendants of Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shallum, the descendants of Bilhah.

14 The sons of Manasseh: Asriel, whom his Aramean concubine bore; she bore Machir the father of Gilead. 15 And Machir took a wife for Huppim and for Shuppim. The name of his sister was Maacah. And the name of the second was Zelophehad; and Zelophehad had daughters. 16 Maacah the wife of Machir bore a son, and she named him Peresh; the name of his brother was Sheresh; and his sons were Ulam and Rekem. 17 The son[a] of Ulam: Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead son of Machir, son of Manasseh. 18 And his sister Hammolecheth bore Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah. 19 The sons of Shemida were Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam.

20 The sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah, and Bered his son, Tahath his son, Eleadah his son, Tahath his son, 21 Zabad his son, Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and Elead. Now the people of Gath, who were born in the land, killed them, because they came down to raid their cattle. 22 And their father Ephraim mourned many days, and his brothers came to comfort him. 23 Ephraim[b] went in to his wife, and she conceived and bore a son; and he named him Beriah, because disaster[c] had befallen his house. 24 His daughter was Sheerah, who built both Lower and Upper Beth-horon, and Uzzen-sheerah. 25 Rephah was his son, Resheph his son, Telah his son, Tahan his son, 26 Ladan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son, 27 Nun[d] his son, Joshua his son. 28 Their possessions and settlements were Bethel and its towns, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer and its towns, Shechem and its towns, as far as Ayyah and its towns; 29 also along the borders of the Manassites, Beth-shean and its towns, Taanach and its towns, Megiddo and its towns, Dor and its towns. In these lived the sons of Joseph son of Israel.

30 The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah. 31 The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel, who was the father of Birzaith. 32 Heber became the father of Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham, and their sister Shua. 33 The sons of Japhlet: Pasach, Bimhal, and Ashvath. These are the sons of Japhlet. 34 The sons of Shemer: Ahi, Rohgah, Hubbah, and Aram. 35 The sons of Helem[e] his brother: Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal. 36 The sons of Zophah: Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, 37 Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah,

[a] Heb *sons*
[b] Heb *He*
[c] Heb *beraah*
[d] Here spelled *Non*; see Ex 33.11
[e] Or *Hotham*; see 7.32

26.23–50), as another genealogy of Benjamin is found in 8.1–40. **12:** Some commentators emend *sons of Ir* to "sons of Dan" on the supposition that this verse contains a fragment of the apparently missing genealogy of Dan (Gen 46.13; Num 26.42; Judg 5.17).

7.13: The descendants of Naphtali. As in Gen 46.23–25, *Bilhah* is the mother of *Naphtali* (where she is also the mother of Dan).

7.14–19: The descendants of Manasseh (cf. Num 26.29–34). For the progeny of Manasseh east of the Jordan, see 5.23–24. **15:** On the daughters of *Zelophehad,* see Num 27.1–11; 36.1–12; Josh 17.3.

7.20–29: The descendants of Ephraim. Because earlier tradition (Gen 48.8–22; Deut 33.17) posits a close relationship between the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim, the Chronicler treats them sequentially and considers their settlements (vv. 28–29; cf. Josh 16–18) together. **21–24:** In depicting Ephraim, his wife, and his sons living in the land, this short tale conflicts with Genesis (chs 41–50; cf. Ex 12.40) in which Ephraim is born in Egypt and never enters the land. Here too (1 Chr 2.21–22, 24, 42–43; 4.41; 5.11, 23; 6.54), the Chronicler emphasizes Israel's long-term connection to the land. **27:** *Joshua,* the hero of the book of Joshua; see Josh 1.1; 24.29–30.

7.30–40: The descendants of Asher. The genealogy may be compared with Gen 46.17 and Num 26.44–47, but much of its information is unparalleled elsewhere in the Bible.

Ithran, and Beera. 38 The sons of Jether: Jephunneh, Pispa, and Ara. 39 The sons of Ulla: Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia. 40 All of these were men of Asher, heads of ancestral houses, select mighty warriors, chief of the princes. Their number enrolled by genealogies, for service in war, was twenty-six thousand men.

8 Benjamin became the father of Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, Aharah the third, 2 Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. 3 And Bela had sons: Addar, Gera, Abihud,[a] 4 Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, 5 Gera, Shephuphan, and Huram. 6 These are the sons of Ehud (they were heads of ancestral houses of the inhabitants of Geba, and they were carried into exile to Manahath): 7 Naaman,[b] Ahijah, and Gera, that is, Heglam,[c] who became the father of Uzza and Ahihud. 8 And Shaharaim had sons in the country of Moab after he had sent away his wives Hushim and Baara. 9 He had sons by his wife Hodesh: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, 10 Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah. These were his sons, heads of ancestral houses. 11 He also had sons by Hushim: Abitub and Elpaal. 12 The sons of Elpaal: Eber, Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod with its towns, 13 and Beriah and Shema (they were heads of ancestral houses of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who put to flight the inhabitants of Gath); 14 and Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth. 15 Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, 16 Michael, Ishpah, and Joha were sons of Beriah. 17 Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber, 18 Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab were the sons of Elpaal. 19 Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, 20 Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, 21 Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath were the sons of Shimei. 22 Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, 23 Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, 24 Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah, 25 Iphdeiah, and Penuel were the sons of Shashak. 26 Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, 27 Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri were the sons of Jeroham. 28 These were the heads of ancestral houses, according to their generations, chiefs. These lived in Jerusalem.

29 Jeiel[d] the father of Gibeon lived in Gibeon, and the name of his wife was Maacah. 30 His firstborn son: Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal,[e] Nadab, 31 Gedor, Ahio, Zecher, 32 and Mikloth, who became the father of Shimeah. Now these also lived opposite their kindred in Jerusalem, with their kindred. 33 Ner became the father of Kish, Kish of Saul,[f] Saul[f] of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal; 34 and the son of Jonathan was Meribbaal; and Merib-baal became the father of Micah. 35 The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz. 36 Ahaz became the father of Jehoaddah; and Jehoaddah became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; Zimri became the father of Moza. 37 Moza became the father of Binea; Raphah was his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. 38 Azel had six sons, and these are their names: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan; all these were the sons of Azel. 39 The sons of his brother Eshek: Ulam his firstborn, Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third. 40 The sons of Ulam were mighty warriors, archers, having many children and grandchildren, one hundred fifty. All these were Benjaminites.

9 So all Israel was enrolled by genealogies; and these are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel. And Judah was taken into

[a] Or *father of Ehud*; see 8.6
[b] Heb *and Naaman*
[c] Or *he carried them into exile*
[d] Compare 9.35: Heb lacks *Jeiel*
[e] Gk Ms adds N*er*; Compare 8.33 and 9.36
[f] Or *Shaul*

8.1–9.1: The descendants of Benjamin. Another genealogy, fuller than that in 7.6–12. Along with Judah and Levi, Benjamin receives substantial attention from the Chronicler. The great coverage these three tribes receive reflects both the author's interests and circumstances in postexilic Judah, into which major sections of Benjamin were incorporated. The author's great interest in Benjamin is also reflected in the lists (1 Chr 12.2–7) and narrative portions of the Chronicler's work (2 Chr 11.1,3,12,23), which argue that Benjaminites were early supporters of David and that Benjamin was always an integral part of the kingdom of Judah. **8.33–40: The** genealogy of Saul (see 10.1–14n.) is followed for eleven generations (cf. 9.39–44). **33–34:** *Esh-baal* and *Merib-baal* are probably earlier forms of "Ishbosheth" (2 Sam 2.8) and "Mephibosheth" (2 Sam 4.4). **9.1:** The reference to genealogical registrations concludes the Chronicler's introductions to Israel's twelve tribes, begun in 2.1–2. In the Chronicler's theology, the exile marks an important dividing line between monarchic Israel and Judah in the Persian period, when he was writing. *Unfaithfulness* is a Priestly term, and its use here, as the cause for exile,

exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. 2 Now the first to live again in their possessions in their towns were Israelites, priests, Levites, and temple servants.

3 And some of the people of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh lived in Jerusalem: 4 Uthai son of Ammihud, son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani, from the sons of Perez son of Judah. 5 And of the Shilonites: Asaiah the firstborn, and his sons. 6 Of the sons of Zerah: Jeuel and their kin, six hundred ninety. 7 Of the Benjaminites: Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Hodaviah, son of Hassenuah, 8 Ibneiah son of Jeroham, Elah son of Uzzi, son of Michri, and Meshullam son of Shephatiah, son of Reuel, son of Ibnijah; 9 and their kindred according to their generations, nine hundred fifty-six. All these were heads of families according to their ancestral houses.

10 Of the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jachin, 11 and Azariah son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the chief officer of the house of God; 12 and Adaiah son of Jeroham, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah, and Maasai son of Adiel, son of Jahzerah, son of Meshullam, son of Meshillemith, son of Immer; 13 besides their kindred, heads of their ancestral houses, one thousand seven hundred sixty, qualified for the work of the service of the house of God.

14 Of the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari; 15 and Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah son of Mica, son of Zichri, son of Asaph; 16 and Obadiah son of Shemaiah, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah son of Asa, son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites.

17 The gatekeepers were: Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman; and their kindred Shallum was the chief, 18 stationed previously in the king's gate on the east side. These were the gatekeepers of the camp of the Levites. 19 Shallum son of Kore, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, and his kindred of his ancestral house, the Korahites, were in charge of the work of the service, guardians of the thresholds of the tent, as their ancestors had been in charge of the camp of the LORD, guardians of the entrance. 20 And Phinehas son of Eleazar was chief over them in former times; the LORD was with him. 21 Zechariah son of Meshelemiah was gatekeeper at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 22 All these, who were chosen as gatekeepers at the thresholds, were two hundred twelve. They were enrolled by genealogies in their villages. David and the seer Samuel established them in their office of trust. 23 So they and their descendants were in charge of the gates of the house of the LORD, that is, the house of the tent, as guards. 24 The gatekeepers were on the four sides, east, west, north, and south; 25 and their kindred who were in their villages were obliged to come in every seven days, in turn, to be with them; 26 for the four chief gatekeepers, who were Levites, were in charge of the chambers and the treasures of the house of God. 27 And they would spend the night near the house of God; for on them lay the duty of watching, and they had charge of opening it every morning.

28 Some of them had charge of the utensils of service, for they were required to count them when they were brought in and taken out. 29 Others of them were appointed over the furniture, and over all the holy utensils, also over the choice flour, the wine, the oil,

reflects the significance of Priestly tradition to this author. The same term is also used in 1 Chr 10.13 (the death of Saul) and 2 Chr 36.14 (the exile of Judah).

9.2–34: The genealogies of Jerusalem families in postexilic Judah. This first section of this passage (vv. 2–18) is partially paralleled in Neh 11.3–19. By mentioning these families, officials, and their interrelationships, the author establishes links between the Israel of old (outlined in chs 2–8) and the Jerusalem community of his own time. **3:** The detail of people of *Ephraim and Manasseh* living in Jerusalem is not found in Nehemiah, and reflects the Chronicler's interest in all of Israel. **10–11:** The list of priests should be read in light of the preexilic succession of priests found in 6.1–15. **17–34:** The list of levitical gatekeepers and singers, as well as the description of their duties, is unparalleled in the list of Neh 11. The passage illustrates the Chronicler's interest in continuity by insisting that the arrangements David (and here Samuel, v. 22) made on their behalf (chs 15–17; 26) were followed when the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon. The gatekeepers perform multiple functions: not only guard duty, but also administration and even baking. **20:** *Phinehas,* cf. Num 25.11–13.

the incense, and the spices. [30] Others, of the sons of the priests, prepared the mixing of the spices, [31] and Mattithiah, one of the Levites, the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, was in charge of making the flat cakes. [32] Also some of their kindred of the Kohathites had charge of the rows of bread, to prepare them for each sabbath.

[33] Now these are the singers, the heads of ancestral houses of the Levites, living in the chambers of the temple free from other service, for they were on duty day and night. [34] These were heads of ancestral houses of the Levites, according to their generations; these leaders lived in Jerusalem.

[35] In Gibeon lived the father of Gibeon, Jeiel, and the name of his wife was Maacah. [36] His firstborn son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, [37] Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth; [38] and Mikloth became the father of Shimeam; and these also lived opposite their kindred in Jerusalem, with their kindred. [39] Ner became the father of Kish, Kish of Saul, Saul of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal; [40] and the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal; and Merib-baal became the father of Micah. [41] The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tahrea, and Ahaz;[a] [42] and Ahaz became the father of Jarah, and Jarah of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri became the father of Moza. [43] Moza became the father of Binea; and Rephaiah was his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. [44] Azel had six sons, and these are their names: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan; these were the sons of Azel.

10 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. [2] The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, sons of Saul. [3] The battle pressed hard on Saul; and the archers found him, and he was wounded by the archers. [4] Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, so that these uncircumcised may not come and make sport of me." But his armor-bearer was unwilling, for he was terrified. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it. [5] When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died. [6] Thus Saul died; he and his three sons and all his house died together. [7] When all the men of Israel who were in the valley saw that the army[b] had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their towns and fled; and the Philistines came and occupied them.

[8] The next day when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. [9] They stripped him and took his head and his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to their idols and to the people. [10] They put his armor in the temple of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. [11] But when all Jabesh-gilead heard everything that the

[a] Compare 8.35: Heb lacks *and Ahaz*
[b] Heb *they*

32: *Rows of bread,* cf. Lev 24.5–9. **35–44:** A transition, repeating the genealogy of Saul from 8.29–38 to introduce the first king of the United Monarchy (10.1–14).

10.1–14: The demise of Saul (cf. 1 Sam 31.1–13). Of the many incidents in Saul's career, the Chronicler presents only the last—the story of Saul's death, assuming that the reader is generally familiar with the earlier part of the story from 1 Samuel. **13–14:** The evaluation of Saul's reign—the Chronicler's own addition—plays on both the Heb roots "m'l" ("to be unfaithful, disobedient"; see 9.1n.) and "drsh" ("to seek out, consult"), which are key terms in Chronicles. Saul dies because of his infidelity, even consulting a necromancer (1 Sam 28.3,7–25). Consultation with mediums to obtain contact with the dead is forbidden in legal texts (Lev 19.31; 20.6,27; Deut 18.11) and condemned in at least one prophetic text (Isa 8.18–19). This addition typifies the work of the Chronicler, who often searches his sources to find a clear theological cause for national disaster. **4–5:** *Uncircumcised,* unlike most of their contemporaries in the Near East, the Philistines did not practice male circumcision. *Fell on his sword,* suicide is infrequent, but not condemned, in the Bible; see 2 Sam 17.23; 1 Kings 16.18; and, in the New Testament, Mt 27.5. **6:** *All his house died,* an exaggeration, ignoring the continuing genealogy of Saul (cf. 8.33–40; 9.39–44). **10:** *Dagon,* a Canaanite god of grain, adopted by the Philistines as one of their principal deities. **11–12:** *Jabesh-gilead,* in 1 Sam 11, Saul is acclaimed king after his rescue of this city east of the Jordan from

Philistines had done to Saul, [12] all the valiant warriors got up and took away the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh. Then they buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

[13] So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD; moreover, he had consulted a medium, seeking guidance, [14] and did not seek guidance from the LORD. Therefore the LORD[a] put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

11 Then all Israel gathered together to David at Hebron and said, "See, we are your bone and flesh. [2] For some time now, even while Saul was king, it was you who commanded the army of Israel. The LORD your God said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over my people Israel." [3] So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD. And they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel.

[4] David and all Israel marched to Jerusalem, that is Jebus, where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. [5] The inhabitants of Jebus said to David, "You will not come in here." Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, now the city of David. [6] David had said, "Whoever attacks the Jebusites first shall be chief and commander." And Joab son of Zeruiah went up first, so he became chief. [7] David resided in the stronghold; therefore it was called the city of David. [8] He built the city all around, from the Millo in complete circuit; and Joab repaired the rest of the city. [9] And David became greater and greater, for the LORD of hosts was with him.

[10] Now these are the chiefs of David's warriors, who gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel. [11] This is an account of David's mighty warriors: Jashobeam, son of Hachmoni,[b] was chief of the Three;[c] he wielded his spear against three hundred whom he killed at one time.

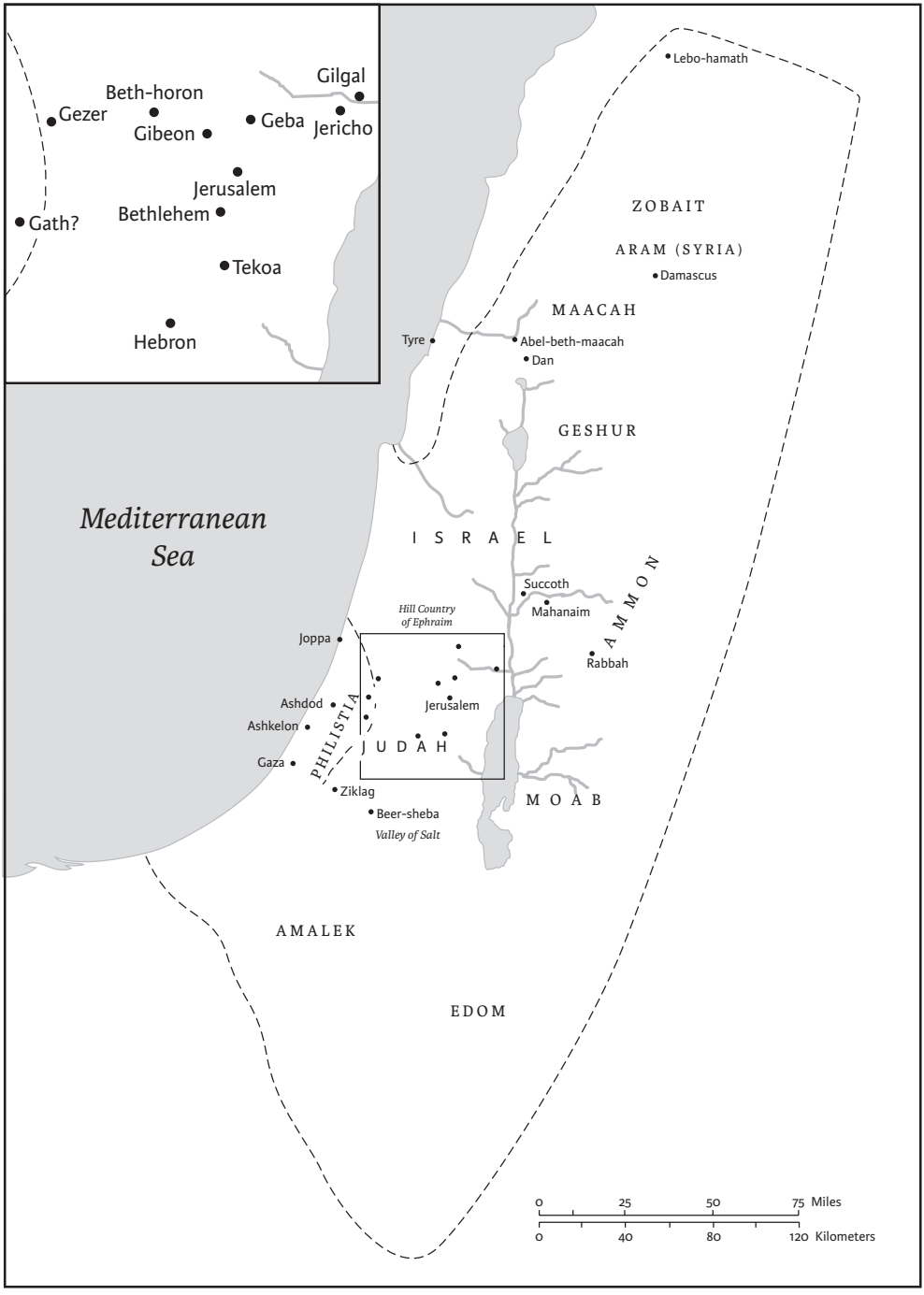
[12] And next to him among the three warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo, the Ahohite. [13] He was with David at Pas-dammim when the Philistines were gathered there for battle. There was a plot of ground full of barley. Now the people had fled from the Philistines, [14] but he and David took their stand in the middle of the plot, defended it, and killed the Philistines; and the LORD saved them by a great victory.

[15] Three of the thirty chiefs went down to the rock to David at the cave of Adullam, while the army of Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim. [16] David was then in the stronghold; and the garrison of the

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Or *a Hachmonite*
[c] Compare 2 Sam 23.8: Heb *Thirty* or *captains*

Ammonite oppression. **14:** *Did not seek guidance from the LORD*; **in contrast see 1 Sam 28.6.** *Turned the kingdom over*: As elsewhere in Chronicles, the choice of kings belongs to God (e.g., 28.2–5; 29.10–12).

11.1–47: The impressive beginnings of David's reign. David does not seek out the kingship; the Israelites gathered together to make him king (v. 1). Pan-Israelite assemblies are regular occurrences in Chronicles (13.2; 2 Chr 15.9; 20.4; 23.2; 24.5; 25.5; 32.4,6). In this case, the consequences are clear: David immediately becomes king over all of Israel's tribes. In 2 Samuel David first becomes king over two tribes and only after considerable struggle becomes king over the northern tribes as well (2 Sam 2–5), but this information, which casts doubt on the greatness of David, is omitted by the Chronicler. **4–9:** David, leading *all Israel* (v. 4; cf. 2 Sam 5.6), captures Jerusalem as his first public act upon being made king. Such reorganizing of chronology typifies the Chronicler. By situating the capture of Jerusalem (abridged from 2 Sam 5.6–10) at this point in the narrative, the author underscores the primacy of Jerusalem. **6:** *Joab* became the head of the army (see 18.15); his role in the capture of Jerusalem is not reported in 2 Sam 5 (cf. v. 8, another mention of Joab not in 2 Sam). **8:** David's building projects consisted essentially of a palace and fortifications in Jerusalem. The Chronicler attributes more building activity to David than do the authors of 2 Samuel (2 Sam 5.9,11; 7.2; 1 Chr 17.1; 2 Chr 2.2). *Millo,* probably "fill" for artificial terraces. **10–47:** The list of *the chiefs of David's warriors* largely follows an appendix to 2 Samuel (23.8–39). It is moved here, early in David's reign, to illustrate the consolidation of David's kingship, namely that Israel's call



The kingdom of David according to 1 Chronicles.

Philistines was then at Bethlehem. 17 David said longingly, "O that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!" 18 Then the Three broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and they brought it to David. But David would not drink of it; he poured it out to the LORD, 19 and said, "My God forbid that I should do this. Can I drink the blood of these men? For at the risk of their lives they brought it." Therefore he would not drink it. The three warriors did these things.

20 Now Abishai,[a] the brother of Joab, was chief of the Thirty.[b] With his spear he fought against three hundred and killed them, and won a name beside the Three. 21 He was the most renowned[c] of the Thirty,[b] and became their commander; but he did not attain to the Three.

22 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant man[d] of Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds; he struck down two sons of[e] Ariel of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. 23 And he killed an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits tall. The Egyptian had in his hand a spear like a weaver's beam; but Benaiah went against him with a staff, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. 24 Such were the things Benaiah son of Jehoiada did, and he won a name beside the three warriors. 25 He was renowned among the Thirty, but he did not attain to the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

26 The warriors of the armies were Asahel brother of Joab, Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem, 27 Shammoth of Harod,[f] Helez the Pelonite, 28 Ira son of Ikkesh of Tekoa, Abiezer of Anathoth, 29 Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite, 30 Maharai of Netophah, Heled son of Baanah of Netophah, 31 Ithai son of Ribai of Gibeah of the Benjaminites, Benaiah of Pirathon, 32 Hurai of the wadis of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, 33 Azmaveth of Baharum, Eliahba of Shaalbon, 34 Hashem[g] the Gizonite, Jonathan son of Shagee the Hararite, 35 Ahiam son of Sachar the Hararite, Eliphal son of Ur, 36 Hepher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, 37 Hezro of Carmel, Naarai son of Ezbai, 38 Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar son of Hagri, 39 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai of Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruiah, 40 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, 41 Uriah the Hittite, Zabad son of Ahlai, 42 Adina son of Shiza the Reubenite, a leader of the Reubenites, and thirty with him, 43 Hanan son of Maacah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, 44 Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jeiel sons of Hotham the Aroerite, 45 Jediael son of Shimri, and his brother Joha the Tizite, 46 Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai and Joshaviah sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, 47 Eliel, and Obed, and Jaasiel the Mezobaite.

12 The following are those who came to David at Ziklag, while he could not move about freely because of Saul son of Kish; they were among the mighty warriors who helped him in war. 2 They were archers,

[a] Gk Vg Tg Compare 2 Sam 23.18: Heb *Abshai*
[b] Syr: Heb *Three*
[c] Compare 2 Sam 23.19: Heb *more renowned among the two*
[d] Syr: Heb *the son of a valiant man*
[e] See 2 Sam 23.20: Heb lacks *sons of*
[f] Compare 2 Sam 23.25: Heb *the Harorite*
[g] Compare Gk and 2 Sam 23.32: Heb *the sons of Hashem*

to David to serve as king is followed by a visible demonstration of military support from various commanders, *together with all Israel* (v. 10). Little is otherwise known about these heroes. **18:** *He poured it out to the LORD* as a libation (1 Sam 7.6; Jer 44.16–18); such water libations became especially important in the later Second Temple period, especially in connection with the festival of booths (Sukkot). **41a:** *Uriah,* the only reference in Chronicles to the man known in 2 Sam 11–12 as the husband of Bathsheba before David. **41b–47:** These verses are unparalleled in 2 Sam 23.8–39.

12.1–40: David's national prestige and power grow. Warriors from Benjamin (vv. 1–8), Gad (vv. 9–16), Benjamin and Judah (vv. 17–19), and Manasseh (vv. 20–23) rally to David, consolidating his rule. This is set during an early stage of David's career (v. 1), suggesting that the Benjaminites defected to David while Saul was still alive (cf. 2 Sam 2.12–32). This material has few parallels in 2 Samuel, and scholars debate whether it is based on sources or is an imaginative composition of the Chronicler. **1:** *Ziklag,* see 1 Sam 27.6; 30. **2:** Cf. Judg 20.16.

and could shoot arrows and sling stones with either the right hand or the left; they were Benjaminites, Saul's kindred. 3 The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, both sons of Shemaah of Gibeah; also Jeziel and Pelet sons of Azmaveth; Beracah, Jehu of Anathoth, 4 Ishmaiah of Gibeon, a warrior among the Thirty and a leader over the Thirty; Jeremiah,[a] Jahaziel, Johanan, Jozabad of Gederah, 5 Eluzai,[b] Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, Shephatiah the Haruphite; 6 Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korahites; 7 and Joelah and Zebadiah, sons of Jeroham of Gedor.

8 From the Gadites there went over to David at the stronghold in the wilderness mighty and experienced warriors, expert with shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and who were swift as gazelles on the mountains: 9 Ezer the chief, Obadiah second, Eliab third, 10 Mishmannah fourth, Jeremiah fifth, 11 Attai sixth, Eliel seventh, 12 Johanan eighth, Elzabad ninth, 13 Jeremiah tenth, Machbannai eleventh. 14 These Gadites were officers of the army, the least equal to a hundred and the greatest to a thousand. 15 These are the men who crossed the Jordan in the first month, when it was overflowing all its banks, and put to flight all those in the valleys, to the east and to the west.

16 Some Benjaminites and Judahites came to the stronghold to David. 17 David went out to meet them and said to them, "If you have come to me in friendship, to help me, then my heart will be knit to you; but if you have come to betray me to my adversaries, though my hands have done no wrong, then may the God of our ancestors see and give judgment." 18 Then the spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the Thirty, and he said,

"We are yours, O David;
and with you, O son of Jesse!
Peace, peace to you,
and peace to the one who helps you!
For your God is the one who helps
you."

Then David received them, and made them officers of his troops.

19 Some of the Manassites deserted to David when he came with the Philistines for the battle against Saul. (Yet he did not help them, for the rulers of the Philistines took counsel and sent him away, saying, "He will desert to his master Saul at the cost of our heads.") 20 As he went to Ziklag these Manassites deserted to him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, chiefs of the thousands in Manasseh. 21 They helped David against the band of raiders,[c] for they were all warriors and commanders in the army. 22 Indeed from day to day people kept coming to David to help him, until there was a great army, like an army of God.

23 These are the numbers of the divisions of the armed troops who came to David in Hebron to turn the kingdom of Saul over to him, according to the word of the LORD. 24 The people of Judah bearing shield and spear numbered six thousand eight hundred armed troops. 25 Of the Simeonites, mighty warriors, seven thousand one hundred. 26 Of the Levites four thousand six hundred. 27 Jehoiada, leader of the house of Aaron, and with him three thousand

[a] Heb verse 5
[b] Heb verse 6
[c] Or *as officers of his troops*

8: *Like . . . lions,* cf. Deut 33.20. **15:** *The first month,* in the spring. **18:** *The spirit came upon,* lit., "a spirit clothed"; this type of ad hoc prophecy typifies Chronicles (2 Chr 15.1; 20.14; 24.20; cf. Judg 6.34). The acclamation of Amasai, *peace, peace to you,* contrasts with the anti-David sentiment sometimes found in 2 Samuel (e.g., 2 Sam 20.1). Because of the divine support for David, those who support David may also be blessed. The language is reminiscent of the blessing bestowed on Abram (Gen 12.3) except that there is no curse. **19–20:** *The battle against Saul,* mentioned in ch 10. The Chronicler here summarizes 1 Sam 29.1–30.1. **22:** *An army* (lit., "camp") *of God,* either expressing the superlative (i.e., "a very great army"), or referring to the heavenly armies (e.g., see Deut 33.2; Josh 5.14). **23:** *In Hebron,* see 11.1. **23–39a:** The beginning of v. 23, *these are the numbers,* introduces a long stylized list (vv. 25–38) of David's armed forces. The tribal muster, totaling thirteen, is the most complete tally of the Israelite tribes in the Bible. The active allegiance shown by Israelite military officials to David accords with divine will and results in a smooth transfer of power (10.14; 11.3,10). The heroic portrayal of intertribal

seven hundred. [28] Zadok, a young warrior, and twenty-two commanders from his own ancestral house. [29] Of the Benjaminites, the kindred of Saul, three thousand, of whom the majority had continued to keep their allegiance to the house of Saul. [30] Of the Ephraimites, twenty thousand eight hundred, mighty warriors, notables in their ancestral houses. [31] Of the half-tribe of Manasseh, eighteen thousand, who were expressly named to come and make David king. [32] Of Issachar, those who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, two hundred chiefs, and all their kindred under their command. [33] Of Zebulun, fifty thousand seasoned troops, equipped for battle with all the weapons of war, to help David[a] with singleness of purpose. [34] Of Naphtali, a thousand commanders, with whom there were thirty-seven thousand armed with shield and spear. [35] Of the Danites, twenty-eight thousand six hundred equipped for battle. [36] Of Asher, forty thousand seasoned troops ready for battle. [37] Of the Reubenites and Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh from beyond the Jordan, one hundred twenty thousand armed with all the weapons of war.

[38] All these, warriors arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with full intent to make David king over all Israel; likewise all the rest of Israel were of a single mind to make David king. [39] They were there with David for three days, eating and drinking, for their kindred had provided for them. [40] And also their neighbors, from as far away as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, came bringing food on donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen—abundant provisions of meal, cakes of figs, clusters of raisins, wine, oil, oxen, and sheep, for there was joy in Israel.

13 David consulted with the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, with every leader. [2] David said to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you, and if it is the will of the LORD our God, let us send abroad to our kindred who remain in all the land of Israel, including the priests and Levites in the cities that have pasture lands, that they may come together to us. [3] Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us; for we did not turn to it in the days of Saul." [4] The whole assembly agreed to do so, for the thing pleased all the people.

[5] So David assembled all Israel from the Shihor of Egypt to Lebo-hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim. [6] And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, that is, to Kiriath-jearim, which belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, the LORD, who is enthroned on the cherubim, which is called by his[b] name. [7] They carried the ark of God on a new cart, from the house of Abinadab, and Uzzah and Ahio[c] were driving the cart. [8] David and all Israel were dancing before God with all their might, with song and lyres and harps and tambourines and cymbals and trumpets.

[a] Gk: Heb lacks *David*
[b] Heb lacks *his*
[c] Or *and his brother*

solidarity (v. 38) contrasts with the tribal disorganization and civil strife found in Judges. **28:** *Zadok, a young warrior,* probably to be identified as the priest who served with Abiathar at the court of David (6.8,53; 15.11; 2 Sam 8.17) and who subsequently enjoyed Solomon's exclusive patronage following Solomon's purge of Abiathar (1 Kings 2.35; cf. 29.22). **39–40:** Elaborate feasts, like the one celebrated by David and representatives from the various Israelite tribes, punctuate high points in Israelite and Judean history (15.25–16.3; 29.20–22; 2 Chr 7.8–10; 20.27–28; 29.30–36; 30.21–27) and also play a crucial role in Esther, also from the Persian period. This nationwide celebration concludes the initial phase of David's reign. **40:** *Cakes,* clumps of dried *figs.*

13.1–14: David and the ark, Part 1. Having been firmly and unanimously established as king, David leads all Israel in the attempt to retrieve a national symbol of Israel's religion and bring it to the new capital. **2:** The Chronicler's Levites live at various sites within Israel's tribal territories (6.54–81). Because this priestly tribe is an essential component of Israel, and Israel's most sacred symbol must be transferred properly to Jerusalem, the Chronicler adds to his source (2 Sam 6.2–11) participation of the priests and Levites, along with an emphasis on all Israel. **3:** No reference is made to the capture of the ark by the Philistines (cf. 1 Sam 4.11–7.1); here its neglect is implicitly another example of Saul's unfaithfulness (see 10.13–14). **5:** *From the Shihor of Egypt* (probably the easternmost branch of the Nile) *to Lebo-hamath* (in Syria), the idealized northern and southern limits of Israel (cf. 2 Chr 7.8). **6:** *The ark,* a portable box, was a unifying religious symbol in the premonarchic period (Josh 3.1–17; 4.1–18; 1 Sam 4.1–7.1). According to Ex 25.10–21; 37.1–9, its construction was ordained by God and implemented

9 When they came to the threshing floor
of Chidon, Uzzah put out his hand to hold
the ark, for the oxen shook it. 10 The anger
of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; he
struck him down because he put out his
hand to the ark; and he died there before
God. 11 David was angry because the LORD
had burst out against Uzzah; so that place is
called Perez-uzzah[a] to this day. 12 David was
afraid of God that day; he said, "How can I
bring the ark of God into my care?" 13 So Da-
vid did not take the ark into his care into the
city of David; he took it instead to the house
of Obed-edom the Gittite. 14 The ark of God
remained with the household of Obed-edom
in his house three months, and the LORD
blessed the household of Obed-edom and all
that he had.

14 King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers
to David, along with cedar logs, and
masons and carpenters to build a house for
him. 2 David then perceived that the LORD had
established him as king over Israel, and that
his kingdom was highly exalted for the sake
of his people Israel.

3 David took more wives in Jerusalem,
and David became the father of more sons
and daughters. 4 These are the names of the
children whom he had in Jerusalem: Sham-
mua, Shobab, and Nathan; Solomon, 5 Ibhar,
Elishua, and Elpelet; 6 Nogah, Nepheg, and
Japhia; 7 Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

8 When the Philistines heard that David
had been anointed king over all Israel, all
the Philistines went up in search of David;
and David heard of it and went out against
them. 9 Now the Philistines had come and
made a raid in the valley of Rephaim. 10 David
inquired of God, "Shall I go up against the
Philistines? Will you give them into my
hand?" The LORD said to him, "Go up, and I
will give them into your hand." 11 So he went
up to Baal-perazim, and David defeated
them there. David said, "God has burst
out[b] against my enemies by my hand, like a
bursting flood." Therefore that place is called
Baal-perazim.[c] 12 They abandoned their gods
there, and at David's command they were
burned.

13 Once again the Philistines made a raid
in the valley. 14 When David again inquired
of God, God said to him, "You shall not go
up after them; go around and come on them
opposite the balsam trees. 15 When you hear
the sound of marching in the tops of the bal-
sam trees, then go out to battle; for God has
gone out before you to strike down the army
of the Philistines." 16 David did as God had
commanded him, and they struck down the
Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer. 17 The

[a] That is *Bursting Out Against Uzzah*
[b] Heb *paraz*
[c] That is *Lord of Bursting Out*

by Moses. *Enthroned on the cherubim,* see 1 Sam 4.4n. **11:** *Burst out,* see textual note *b.* **13:** The *city of David* refers to Mount Zion, the section of Jerusalem fortified by David and renamed in his honor (11.7). Chronicles mentions two different individuals with the name *Obed-edom*, both of whom were Levites: one a gatekeeper (15.18,24) and the other a musician (15.21; 16.5; 26.4–8). **14:** The blessing on Obed-edom's house hints that the setback suffered by David is only temporary.

14.1–7: David's success in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam 5.11–16). According to 1 Kings 5.15–26 (cf. 2 Chr 2.2–15), Hiram (called Huram in Chronicles, probably due to scribal error) had very good relations with David. The link between blessings for David and blessings for Israel anticipates Nathan's dynastic oracle (17.1–17). **3:** Accumulating wives and progeny is consistently a positive sign of divine blessing in Chronicles (25.5; 26.4–5; 2 Chr 11.18–23; 13.21; 14.3–7). For David's sons, see 3.1–9.

14.8–17: Philistine attacks (cf. 2 Sam 5.17–25). If the mishandling of the ark (13.9–11) represented an internal challenge to the establishment of Jerusalem's worship, the Philistine aggressions were an external threat to the viability of David's rule. The two narratives detailing David's exploits against the Philistines are replete with "holy-war" phraseology, reflecting the notion that the LORD fights on behalf of his people and secures victory for them (Ex 14.4,18; Josh 11.2,24; Judg 3.28; 4.7,17; 18.10; 20.28; 1 Sam 14.12,23; 23.4). **12:** In 2 Sam 5.21, David carries these images home. In having the images consigned to fire, the Chronicler has David act in accordance with Deuteronomic law (Deut 7.25; 12.3). **16:** *From Gibeon to Gezer,* about 18 mi (28 km), a limited area. **17: Added to his source, the Chronicler notes** that David's international respect derives from divine blessing (2 Chr 9.5–8,23; 17.10; 26.8,15; 32.23).

fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD brought the fear of him on all nations.

15 David[a] built houses for himself in the city of David, and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. [2] Then David commanded that no one but the Levites were to carry the ark of God, for the LORD had chosen them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister to him forever. [3] David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to its place, which he had prepared for it. [4] Then David gathered together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites: [5] of the sons of Kohath, Uriel the chief, with one hundred twenty of his kindred; [6] of the sons of Merari, Asaiah the chief, with two hundred twenty of his kindred; [7] of the sons of Gershom, Joel the chief, with one hundred thirty of his kindred; [8] of the sons of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the chief, with two hundred of his kindred; [9] of the sons of Hebron, Eliel the chief, with eighty of his kindred; [10] of the sons of Uzziel, Amminadab the chief, with one hundred twelve of his kindred.

[11] David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. [12] He said to them, "You are the heads of families of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your kindred, so that you may bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it. [13] Because you did not carry it the first time,[b] the LORD our God burst out against us, because we did not give it proper care." [14] So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. [15] And the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.

[16] David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their kindred as the singers to play on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise loud sounds of joy. [17] So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; and of his kindred Asaph son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari, their kindred, Ethan son of Kushaiah; [18] and with them their kindred of the second order, Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu,

[a] Heb *He*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

15.1–16.3: David and the ark, Part 2. Having been successful in war and blessed by God, David turns his attention again to the matter of the ark. In the ancient Near East successful kings were expected to honor the deities who led them by supporting and endowing places of worship. Much of chs 15–16, which supplements material from 2 Sam 6 with original material concerning the Levites, elaborates on this very point. **15.1:** The houses David builds for himself most likely refer to domiciles in addition to the palace built by Huram of Tyre (14.1). David's construction activity establishes a positive pattern for other kings to follow (2 Chr 11.5–12; 14.6; 26.2; 32.27–30). **2:** David's command that *no one but the Levites* carry the ark responds to Uzzah's unfortunate death (13.10) through the lens of the Priestly material (Num 4.4–15; 7.9), the implication being that the proper personnel had not been involved in the first attempt to bring the ark into the City of David (v. 13). The following verses detail what personnel and actions David deems necessary to install the ark successfully. **3:** The reference to a *place* for the ark of God implies a sacred precinct or sanctuary (Deut 12.5,11; 14.23–25; 15.20; Josh 9.27; 1 Chr 21.22,25; 2 Chr 3.1). **11:** The two priests *Zadok and Abiathar* appear together during the first part of the reign of David (15.29,35; 18.16; 19.11; 20.25). Each of these priests headed or represented major priestly houses. See further 6.8n. **13:** The Chronicler plays on Hebrew roots "prts," "to break out" (13.3,11; 14.11; 15.13) and "drsh," "to seek." The earlier attempt to redress neglect of the ark—"for we did not seek (drsh) it in the days of Saul" (13.3)—was brought to a swift end by the divine outbreak (*burst out*, Heb "prts"; 13.10–11) against Uzzah. As later events made clear (distinctively in Chronicles), the problem was not Israel's communal decision "to seek" the ark, but the manner in which the people involved handled the arrangements. In the new attempt David insists on the intimate involvement of the priests and Levites to rectify the deficiency. **15:** *On their shoulders with the poles,* the Chronicler asserts that the law of Moses was followed (Num 7.9). **16:** *Musical instruments* figure prominently in the Chronicler's ritual liturgies (16.42; 2 Chr 5.13; 7.6; 23.13; 34.12). In some texts the instruments are associated with David himself (2 Chr 29.24,26–27; Neh 12.36; cf. Am 6.5). Though David could not build the Temple (ch 17; 2 Sam 7), the Chronicler emphasizes here and elsewhere that David initiated the project, in this case by establishing the guilds of levitical Temple musicians. **18:** Many of these musicians are mentioned again

and Mikneiah, and the gatekeepers Obed-edom and Jeiel. 19 The singers Heman, Asaph, and Ethan were to sound bronze cymbals; 20 Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah were to play harps according to Alamoth; 21 but Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel, and Azaziah were to lead with lyres according to the Sheminith. 22 Chenaniah, leader of the Levites in music, was to direct the music, for he understood it. 23 Berechiah and Elkanah were to be gatekeepers for the ark. 24 Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, were to blow the trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-edom and Jehiah also were to be gatekeepers for the ark.

25 So David and the elders of Israel, and the commanders of the thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-edom with rejoicing. 26 And because God helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams. 27 David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as also were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the leader of the music of the singers; and David wore a linen ephod. 28 So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, to the sound of the horn, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres.

29 As the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing; and she despised him in her heart.

16 They brought in the ark of God, and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and they offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before God. 2 When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD; 3 and he distributed to every person in Israel—man and woman alike—to each a loaf of bread, a portion of meat,[a] and a cake of raisins.

4 He appointed certain of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel. 5 Asaph was the chief, and second to him Zechariah, Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel, with harps and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cymbals, 6 and the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel were to blow trumpets regularly, before the ark of the covenant of God.

7 Then on that day David first appointed the singing of praises to the LORD by Asaph and his kindred.

8 O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
9 Sing to him, sing praises to him,
tell of all his wonderful works.
10 Glory in his holy name;

[a] Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

in vv. 20–21 and 16.5–6. **20–21:** *Alamoth* and *Sheminith* are obscure musical terms found in Psalms (6.1; 12.1; 46.1). **19:** *Heman, Asaph,* and *Ethan,* see 6.33n. **25–28:** The Chronicler rewrites 2 Sam 6.12–15 to underscore the broad support for David's campaign to complete the transfer of the ark. The elaborate apparel worn by the Levites in Chronicles contrasts markedly with that depicted in Samuel (see Ex 28.6–14,39–43; Sir 45.8). **27:** *Robe of fine linen*: Against the scantily clad David of 2 Sam 6.20, the fully clothed David of Chronicles wears a priestly vestment, as befitting one leading a ritual procession (Ex 28.6–14, 39–43; Sir 45:8).

15.29–16.3: Michal and all Israel. A significant abridgment of 2 Sam 6.16–23, omitting the details of how Michal mocked David. **16.3:** *Cake,* a clump of dried *raisins.*

16.4–43: Staffing the national sanctuaries. With the ark successfully elevated to the place David prepared for it, David designates certain Levites and priests to officiate there. He also staffs the tabernacle at the *high place* in Gibeon (vv. 39–42). **7–36:** The *praises* David instructs the Levites to sing are a medley of extracts, with some variations, from the Psalms: vv. 8–22, cf. Ps 105.1–15; vv. 23–33, cf. Ps 96; vv. 34–36, cf. Ps 106.1,47–48. By the period of the Chronicler, several forms of the book of Psalms probably already existed as liturgical collections, and possibly was already attributed to David. The combination of excerpts drawn from established psalms effectively creates a new composition, differing from any one of the psalms that served as the hymn's

let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
11 Seek the LORD and his strength,
seek his presence continually.
12 Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,
13 O offspring of his servant Israel,[a]
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

14 He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
15 Remember his covenant forever,
the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
16 the covenant that he made with Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
17 which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
18 saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance."

19 When they were few in number,
of little account, and strangers in the land,[b]
20 wandering from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another people,
21 he allowed no one to oppress them;
he rebuked kings on their account,
22 saying, "Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm."

23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Tell of his salvation from day to day.
24 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.
25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
26 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
27 Honor and majesty are before him;
strength and joy are in his place.

28 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
29 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come before him.
Worship the LORD in holy splendor;
30 tremble before him, all the earth.
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice,
and let them say among the nations,
"The LORD is king!"
32 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
let the field exult, and everything in it.
33 Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy
before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth.
34 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.

35 Say also:
"Save us, O God of our salvation,
and gather and rescue us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name,
and glory in your praise.
36 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting."
Then all the people said "Amen!" and praised the LORD.
37 David left Asaph and his kinsfolk there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister regularly before the ark as each day required, 38 and also Obed-edom and his[c]

[a] Another reading is *Abraham* (compare Ps 105.6)
[b] Heb *in it*
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *their*

sources. **37–43:** David provides for both the ark in Jerusalem and the tabernacle at Gibeon. The Chronicler does not deem the Gibeon shrine to be inherently illicit because only after the construction of the long-awaited Temple will worship outside Jerusalem be prohibited (2 Chr 1.3–6; 5.5). The sacrifices performed at Gibeon by Zadok and his priests accorded with *all that is written in the law of the LORD* (v. 40). Like the newly dedicated ministry of praise associated with the ark in Jerusalem, the Gibeon precinct has its own singers and musicians, authorized to praise God (v. 42). Two guilds of singers, represented by Heman and Jeduthun, serve at Gibeon,

sixty-eight kinsfolk; while Obed-edom son of Jeduthun and Hosah were to be gatekeepers. 39 And he left the priest Zadok and his kindred the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that was at Gibeon, 40 to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly, morning and evening, according to all that is written in the law of the LORD that he commanded Israel. 41 With them were Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest of those chosen and expressly named to render thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever. 42 Heman and Jeduthun had with them trumpets and cymbals for the music, and instruments for sacred song. The sons of Jeduthun were appointed to the gate.

43 Then all the people departed to their homes, and David went home to bless his household.

17 Now when David settled in his house, David said to the prophet Nathan, "I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent." 2 Nathan said to David, "Do all that you have in mind, for God is with you."

3 But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying: 4 Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: You shall not build me a house to live in. 5 For I have not lived in a house since the day I brought out Israel to this very day, but I have lived in a tent and a tabernacle.[a] 6 Wherever I have moved about among all Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people, saying, Why have you not built me a house of cedar? 7 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people Israel; 8 and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies before you; and I will make for you a name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 9 I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall wear them down no more, as they did formerly, 10 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will subdue all your enemies.

Moreover I declare to you that the LORD will build you a house. 11 When your days are fulfilled to go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. 12 He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. 13 I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, 14 but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever. 15 In accordance with all these words and all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

[a] Gk 2 Sam 7.6: Heb *but I have been from tent to tent and from tabernacle*

while the third guild of singers, represented by Asaph (v. 37) serves in Jerusalem. **43:** Taken from 2 Sam 6.19–20, a continuation of v. 3.

17.1–15: The promises to David (cf. 2 Sam 7.1–16). *Under a tent,* see Ex 26.1–2,7; Num 4.21–28. **2:** Nathan here is offering his personal opinion, which is corrected by God in the revelation that follows. David's lack of suitability for this project is explained only later, in 22.7–10. **5:** After the Exodus, Israel's system of worship was mobile. The roving nature of God's presence with Israel was consistent with the mobility of Israel itself. **8–9:** The Chronicler, like the Deuteronomist (1 Kings 5.17–18), associates national stability and peace with the establishment of a permanent sanctuary in the land. In this manner, Nathan's oracle points forward to the reign of Solomon, which according to biblical texts was an unprecedented age of peace, prosperity, and international prestige (1 Kings 4.20; 5.4; 8.66; 1 Chr 22.9,18; 2 Chr 1.7–18; 8.1–9,31). **10:** In speaking of the LORD building a house for David, the text develops a wordplay on the different connotations of Heb "bayit" ("house/palace," "temple," "dynasty"). **13:** *I will be a father to him,* a formula of adoption (2 Sam 7.14; Ps 2.7–8; Isa 9.6; cf. Ps 89.26). *I will not take my steadfast love (*Heb "ḥesed,"*) from him,* the oracle stresses divine loyalty to such an extent that the guarantee of succession is not predicated upon the loyalty of the sons. In fact, the second part of 2 Sam 7.14, which stresses that the individual Davidic king may be punished for wrongdoing, is lacking here, further highlighting the Chronicler's positive vision of Davidic kingship. **14:** *In my kingdom forever,* God manifests his kingship through the kingdom of David and his heirs (17.14; 28.5; 29.11; 2 Chr 13.8; cf. 2 Sam 7.16).

16 Then King David went in and sat before
the LORD, and said, "Who am I, O LORD God,
and what is my house, that you have brought
me thus far? 17 And even this was a small
thing in your sight, O God; you have also
spoken of your servant's house for a great
while to come. You regard me as someone of
high rank,[a] O LORD God! 18 And what more
can David say to you for honoring your
servant? You know your servant. 19 For your
servant's sake, O LORD, and according to your
own heart, you have done all these great
deeds, making known all these great things.
20 There is no one like you, O LORD, and there
is no God besides you, according to all that
we have heard with our ears. 21 Who is like
your people Israel, one nation on the earth
whom God went to redeem to be his people,
making for yourself a name for great and
terrible things, in driving out nations before
your people whom you redeemed from
Egypt? 22 And you made your people Israel
to be your people forever; and you, O LORD,
became their God.

23 "And now, O LORD, as for the word that
you have spoken concerning your servant
and concerning his house, let it be estab-
lished forever, and do as you have promised.
24 Thus your name will be established and
magnified forever in the saying, 'The LORD
of hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel's God';
and the house of your servant David will be
established in your presence. 25 For you, my
God, have revealed to your servant that you
will build a house for him; therefore your
servant has found it possible to pray before
you. 26 And now, O LORD, you are God, and
you have promised this good thing to your
servant; 27 therefore may it please you to
bless the house of your servant, that it may
continue forever before you. For you, O LORD,
have blessed and are blessed[b] forever."

18 Some time afterward, David attacked
the Philistines and subdued them; he
took Gath and its villages from the Philis-
tines.

2 He defeated Moab, and the Moabites
became subject to David and brought tribute.

3 David also struck down King Hadadezer
of Zobah, toward Hamath,[a] as he went to
set up a monument at the river Euphrates.
4 David took from him one thousand chariots,
seven thousand cavalry, and twenty thou-
sand foot soldiers. David hamstrung all the
chariot horses, but left one hundred of them.
5 When the Arameans of Damascus came to
help King Hadadezer of Zobah, David killed
twenty-two thousand Arameans. 6 Then
David put garrisons[c] in Aram of Damascus;
and the Arameans became subject to David,
and brought tribute. The LORD gave victory to
David wherever he went. 7 David took the gold
shields that were carried by the servants of
Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.
8 From Tibhath and from Cun, cities of Had-
adezer, David took a vast quantity of bronze;
with it Solomon made the bronze sea and the
pillars and the vessels of bronze.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *and it is blessed*
[c] Gk Vg 2 Sam 8.6 Compare Syr: Heb lacks *garrisons*

17.16–27: David's prayer (cf. 2 Sam 7.17–29). **21:** God's incomparability and unique status are linked to Israel's unique status. **23–24:** David's only petitions focus on the promises directed toward his dynasty (cf. vv. 8b–14).

18.1–20.8: The kingdom expanded. A new phase in David's reign begins, one dominated by foreign military campaigns. David's success in war is evident in all directions: to the west against the Philistines (18.1; 20.4–8), to the southeast against Edom (18.12–13), to the east against Moab (18.2) and Ammon (19.1–19; 20.1–3), and to the northeast against a variety of Aramean states (18.3–8; 19.6–19). (See map on p. 593.) In this way, David uses the fulfillment of one of Nathan's promises—the subjugation of all his enemies—to lay the foundations for the fulfillment of another—the construction of a temple by David's son. The juxtaposition suggests that David's hands were bloodied by war, so he could not build the Temple, as made clear in 22.7–10. **18.1–13** (cf. 2 Sam 8.1–14). **5:** *The Arameans of Damascus,* the defeat of one state by an invading power could upset the balance of power in the entire region, especially affecting neighboring states of the defeated kingdom. **7–11:** It was customary for pious kings in the ancient world to dedicate war spoils to the temples of the deities who granted them victory. In this instance, David's plunder, which according to 2 Sam 8.7 was merely brought to Jerusalem, is incorporated into the Temple built by Solomon (1 Kings 7.13–47; 2 Chr 3.15–4.22; Josephus, *Ant.* 7.106). **8:** *Tibhath*

9 When King Tou of Hamath heard that
David had defeated the whole army of King
Hadadezer of Zobah, 10 he sent his son
Hadoram to King David, to greet him and
to congratulate him, because he had fought
against Hadadezer and defeated him. Now
Hadadezer had often been at war with Tou.
He sent all sorts of articles of gold, of silver,
and of bronze; 11 these also King David dedi-
cated to the LORD, together with the silver
and gold that he had carried off from all the
nations, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites,
the Philistines, and Amalek.

12 Abishai son of Zeruiah killed eighteen
thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. 13 He
put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites
became subject to David. And the LORD gave
victory to David wherever he went.

14 So David reigned over all Israel; and he
administered justice and equity to all his peo-
ple. 15 Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army;
Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder;
16 Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of
Abiathar were priests; Shavsha was secre-
tary; 17 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the
Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's
sons were the chief officials in the service of
the king.

19 Some time afterward, King Nahash of
the Ammonites died, and his son suc-
ceeded him. 2 David said, "I will deal loyally
with Hanun son of Nahash, for his father
dealt loyally with me." So David sent mes-
sengers to console him concerning his father.
When David's servants came to Hanun in the
land of the Ammonites, to console him, 3 the
officials of the Ammonites said to Hanun,
"Do you think, because David has sent con-
solers to you, that he is honoring your father?
Have not his servants come to you to search
and to overthrow and to spy out the land?"
4 So Hanun seized David's servants, shaved
them, cut off their garments in the middle at
their hips, and sent them away; 5 and they de-
parted. When David was told about the men,
he sent messengers to them, for they felt
greatly humiliated. The king said, "Remain
at Jericho until your beards have grown, and
then return."

6 When the Ammonites saw that they had
made themselves odious to David, Hanun
and the Ammonites sent a thousand talents
of silver to hire chariots and cavalry from
Mesopotamia, from Aram-maacah and from
Zobah. 7 They hired thirty-two thousand
chariots and the king of Maacah with his
army, who came and camped before Medeba.
And the Ammonites were mustered from
their cities and came to battle. 8 When David
heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of
the warriors. 9 The Ammonites came out and
drew up in battle array at the entrance of the
city, and the kings who had come were by
themselves in the open country.

10 When Joab saw that the line of battle was
set against him both in front and in the rear,
he chose some of the picked men of Israel
and arrayed them against the Arameans;
11 the rest of his troops he put in the charge of
his brother Abishai, and they were arrayed
against the Ammonites. 12 He said, "If the Ara-
means are too strong for me, then you shall
help me; but if the Ammonites are too strong
for you, then I will help you. 13 Be strong, and
let us be courageous for our people and for
the cities of our God; and may the LORD do

and *Cun* occur only here in the Bible; their exact locations are uncertain. **9:** *Tou,* Toi in 2 Sam 8.9. **12:** In 2 Sam 8.13 this victory is attributed to David himself. **14–17 (cf.** 2 Sam 8.15–18): The list of officials reflects the growth of the bureaucracy as the kingdom expanded. **16:** *Ahimelech* probably became one of David's priests as the replacement for his father Abiathar (15.11). **17:** David honors priestly custom in which only descendants of Aaron could become priests (1 Chr 6.3–15, 49–53) by employing his sons as high-ranking officials in his cabinet instead of as priests (2 Sam 8.18); two other kings make use of princes in managing state affairs (2 Chr 11.22–23; 21.3).

19.1–19: War against Ammon and Aram (cf. 2 Sam 10.1–19). 1: The death of a king could usher in a period of instability and uncertainty for his people. Because international arrangements were made between the leaders of nations, and not between the nations themselves, the death of a leader could signal the end of such agreements. **3:** *To spy out the land,* to Hanun's counselors, David's string of victories against the Philistines, Moabites, Edomites, and Arameans establish an imperialistic pattern that they could ignore only at their own peril. **5:** The quarantine furnishes David's aides with the requisite time to recover and regain their dignity. **6:** A talent weighed ca. 75 lb (34 kg). **7:** *Medeba,* ca. 20 mi (30 km) south-southwest of the Ammonite capital of Rabbah, is

what seems good to him." [14] So Joab and the troops who were with him advanced toward the Arameans for battle; and they fled before him. [15] When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, Joab's brother, and entered the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.

[16] But when the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they sent messengers and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the Euphrates, with Shophach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head. [17] When David was informed, he gathered all Israel together, crossed the Jordan, came to them, and drew up his forces against them. When David set the battle in array against the Arameans, they fought with him. [18] The Arameans fled before Israel; and David killed seven thousand Aramean charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers, and also killed Shophach the commander of their army. [19] When the servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with David, and became subject to him. So the Arameans were not willing to help the Ammonites any more.

20 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, Joab led out the army, ravaged the country of the Ammonites, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Joab attacked Rabbah, and overthrew it. [2] David took the crown of Milcom[a] from his head; he found that it weighed a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on David's head. He also brought out the booty of the city, a very great amount. [3] He brought out the people who were in it, and set them to work[b] with saws and iron picks and axes.[c] Thus David did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

[4] After this, war broke out with the Philistines at Gezer; then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, who was one of the descendants of the giants; and the Philistines were subdued. [5] Again there was war with the Philistines; and Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. [6] Again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great size, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; he also was descended from the giants. [7] When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him. [8] These were descended from the giants in Gath; they fell by the hand of David and his servants.

21 Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to count the people of

[a] Gk Vg See 1 Kings 11.5, 33: MT *of their king*
[b] Compare 2 Sam 12.31: Heb *and he sawed*
[c] Compare 2 Sam 12.31: Heb *saws*

not mentioned in 2 Sam 10. **16:** *The Euphrates,* lit., "the river." In biblical narratives, "the river" usually designates the Euphrates (e.g., Gen 2.14; 15.18; Deut 1.7; 2 Kings 23.29; 24.7; 1 Chr 5.9), but the Jordan and the Yarmuk are also possibilities. **19:** The new balance of power in the region, tilted in Israel's favor, leaves the Ammonites isolated from their former allies. The victories of Joab and David succeed in disrupting the traditional military ties between the Ammonites and the Arameans. **20.1–3:** Verse 1 is taken from 2 Sam 11.1, while vv. 2–3 are taken from 2 Sam 12.26a,30–31. In Samuel the reference to David's staying in Jerusalem provides the background to the troubling story of David's affair with Bathsheba. But in Chronicles, the same notice is incidental, providing an explanation of David's whereabouts. The Chronicler omits completely the stories of David's liaison with Bathsheba and its aftermath (2 Sam 11.2–12.25), which casts David in a negative light, though he retains the frame of that story. **2:** *Milcom* was the national deity of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11.5,7,33; 2 Kings 23.13). *Talent,* see 19.6n. **4–8 (cf. 2 Sam 21.1–22):** The final exploits of David and his soldiers. The stories in 2 Sam 13–20 about the rape of Tamar, Absalom's rebellion, the execution of Saul's descendants, and the disaffection of the northern tribes, which also cast David in a negative light, do not appear in Chronicles. **5:** The text may harmonize two different claims found in Samuel: In 1 Sam 17.50 David kills the Philistine giant, identified earlier as Goliath of Gath (1 Sam 17.4), but in 2 Sam 21.19 Elhanan kills Goliath the Gittite. By having Elhanan kill the brother of Goliath the Gittite, and not Goliath himself, the Chronicler partially accommodates both claims.

21.1–22.1: David the repentant sinner (The Chronicler recasts and supplements 2 Sam 24). How David responds to adversity of his own making becomes paradigmatic for errant kings to follow (2 Chr 12.1–8; 33.1–13)

Israel. 2 So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, "Go, number Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, and bring me a report, so that I may know their number." 3 But Joab said, "May the LORD increase the number of his people a hundredfold! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord's servants? Why then should my lord require this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?" 4 But the king's word prevailed against Joab. So Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came back to Jerusalem. 5 Joab gave the total count of the people to David. In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and in Judah four hundred seventy thousand who drew the sword. 6 But he did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab.

7 But God was displeased with this thing, and he struck Israel. 8 David said to God, "I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. But now, I pray you, take away the guilt of your servant; for I have done very foolishly." 9 The LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying, 10 "Go and say to David, 'Thus says the LORD: Three things I offer you; choose one of them, so that I may do it to you.'" 11 So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Take your choice: 12 either three years of famine; or three months of devastation by your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes you; or three days of the sword of the LORD, pestilence on the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.' Now decide what answer I shall return to the one who sent me." 13 Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is very great; but let me not fall into human hands."

14 So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel; and seventy thousand persons fell in Israel. 15 And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but when he was about to destroy it, the LORD took note and relented concerning the calamity; he said to the destroying angel, "Enough! Stay your hand." The angel of the LORD was then standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 16 David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces. 17 And David said to God, "Was it not I who gave the command to count the people? It is I who have sinned and done very wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Let your hand, I pray, O LORD my God, be against me and against my father's house; but do not let your people be plagued!"

18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to tell David that he should go up and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 19 So David went up following Gad's instructions, which he had spoken in the name of the LORD. 20 Ornan turned and saw the angel; and while his four sons who were with him hid themselves, Ornan continued to thresh wheat. 21 As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David; he went out from the threshing floor, and did obeisance to David with his face to the ground. 22 David said to Ornan, "Give me the site of the threshing floor that I may build on it an altar to the LORD—give it to me at its full price—so that the plague may be averted from the people." 23 Then Ornan said to David,

The guilt of David is pronounced in Chronicles (vv. 1–7), in which Joab warns David that it is sinful to count Israel in a casual fashion (cf. Ex 31.11–16); but so are his repentance and his efforts to intercede on behalf of Israel (vv. 8–17). David is thus forewarned before he is punished, reflecting a major tendency of the Chronicler. **21.1:** *Satan* (Heb "satan") should be translated as "an adversary" rather than "Satan" (cf. 2 Sam 24.1; see 1 Kings 5.4; Job 1.6n.; Zech 3.1n.). Significantly, it replaces "the anger of the LORD" of 2 Sam 24.1. Having just experienced a string of impressive military victories against the Ammonites, Syrians, and Philistines (chs 18–20), David uncritically falls prey to the designs of one of his opponents. **2:** *From Beer-sheba to Dan,* the southern and northern limits of Israel. **5:** The total is lower in 2 Sam 24.9, but the number for Judah is higher there. In both texts the figures are highly improbable. **8:** *Take away,* better "transfer," as in 2 Sam 12.13. In both cases, the sin of David is transferred elsewhere. **15:** *Ornan,* called Araunah in 2 Sam 24. *Jebusite,* an inhabitant of Jerusalem before David's conquest. **17:** Along with the authors of Deut 7.9–10; 24.16; Jer 31.28–30; Ezek 18; 33.12–20, David argues for limiting the

"Take it; and let my lord the king do what seems good to him; see, I present the oxen for burnt offerings, and the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for a grain offering. I give it all." [24] But King David said to Ornan, "No; I will buy them for the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing." [25] So David paid Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the site. [26] David built there an altar to the LORD and presented burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. He called upon the LORD, and he answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. [27] Then the LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.

[28] At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he made his sacrifices there. [29] For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time in the high place at Gibeon; [30] but David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

22 [1] Then David said, "Here shall be the house of the LORD God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel."

[2] David gave orders to gather together the aliens who were residing in the land of Israel, and he set stonecutters to prepare dressed stones for building the house of God. [3] David also provided great stores of iron for nails for the doors of the gates and for clamps, as well as bronze in quantities beyond weighing, [4] and cedar logs without number—for the Sidonians and Tyrians brought great quantities of cedar to David. [5] For David said, "My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorified throughout all lands; I will therefore make preparation for it." So David provided materials in great quantity before his death.

[6] Then he called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the LORD, the God of Israel. [7] David said to Solomon, "My son, I had planned to build a house to the name of the LORD my God. [8] But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood in my sight on the earth. [9] See, a son shall be born to you; he shall be a man of peace. I will give him peace from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon,[a] and I will give peace[b] and quiet to Israel in his days. [10] He shall build a house for my name. He shall be a son to me, and I will be a father to him, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever.' [11] Now, my son, the LORD be with you, so that you may succeed in building the house of the LORD your God, as he has spoken concerning you. [12] Only, may the LORD grant

[a] Heb *Shelomoh*
[b] Heb *shalom*

scope of divinely administered punishment of humans to the guilty parties themselves. **25:** *Six hundred shekels,* ca. 15 lb (7 kg); in 2 Sam 24.24 it is "fifty shekels." **26:** The addition of a divine confirmation by fire of David's sacrifices (cf. Lev 9.24; 1 Kings 18.36–39), legitimates David's altar as an enduring fixture in Israelite worship. **22.1:** David ratifies the divine action (21.26–27) by declaring the site to be the home of the future Temple. Here and elsewhere (2 Chr 3.1), the Chronicler shows unusual interest in offering explanations why the Temple was built on its current site. At the time the Chronicler wrote, a rival Samarian temple to the God of Israel stood upon the ancient site of Mount Gerizim. See Deut 11.29–30; 27.4, 11–13.

22.2–19: David prepares for the construction of the Temple. David wants the future Temple to be *"famous and glorified throughout all lands";* palace-temple complexes communicated the power of a god and his king to the god(s), populace, vassals, and foreign emissaries. But Solomon is *"young and inexperienced,"* so David undertakes the preparations himself. Of David's many sons (see 3.1–9; 14.3–7), Solomon was one of the youngest. **2:** *Aliens*, the Chronicler consistently insists that no Israelites were employed as laborers to build the Jerusalem Temple (2 Chr 2.17–18n.). **7–16:** This learned passage, which quotes from the dynastic promise (ch 17; cf. 2 Sam 7) and other texts, explains David's inability to build the Temple, suggesting that only Solomon (Heb "shelomoh"), understood as a man of peace ("shalom"), may build it, an issue not addressed by the books of Samuel and Kings. David, however, both here and in the following chapters, does much preparation for the project. **8:** *Much blood*, probably referring to David's various wars, or perhaps to the plague (1 Chr 21.11–14). **12:** *Law of the LORD*,

you discretion and understanding, so that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the LORD your God. 13 Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD commanded Moses for Israel. Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed. 14 With great pains I have provided for the house of the LORD one hundred thousand talents of gold, one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond weighing, for there is so much of it; timber and stone too I have provided. To these you must add more. 15 You have an abundance of workers: stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and all kinds of artisans without number, skilled in working 16 gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Now begin the work, and the LORD be with you."

17 David also commanded all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon, saying, 18 "Is not the LORD your God with you? Has he not given you peace on every side? For he has delivered the inhabitants of the land into my hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD and his people. 19 Now set your mind and heart to seek the LORD your God. Go and build the sanctuary of the LORD God so that the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the holy vessels of God may be brought into a house built for the name of the LORD."

23 When David was old and full of days, he made his son Solomon king over Israel.

2 David assembled all the leaders of Israel and the priests and the Levites. 3 The Levites, thirty years old and upward, were counted, and the total was thirty-eight thousand. 4 "Twenty-four thousand of these," David said, "shall have charge of the work in the house of the LORD, six thousand shall be officers and judges, 5 four thousand gatekeepers, and four thousand shall offer praises to the LORD with the instruments that I have made for praise." 6 And David organized them in divisions corresponding to the sons of Levi: Gershon,[a] Kohath, and Merari.

7 The sons of Gershon[b] were Ladan and Shimei. 8 The sons of Ladan: Jehiel the chief, Zetham, and Joel, three. 9 The sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziel, and Haran, three. These were the heads of families of Ladan. 10 And the sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina, Jeush, and Beriah. These four were the sons of Shimei. 11 Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second; but Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons, so they were enrolled as a single family.

[a] Or *Gershom*; See 1 Chr 6.1, note, and 23.15
[b] Vg Compare Gk Syr: Heb *to the Gershonite*

consistent with the emphasis on the Torah in Chronicles, David informs his divinely designated successor that his success is predicated on Torah observance. **14:** *One hundred thousand talents of gold* and *one million talents of silver,* the point is not realism but extravagance; a talent weighed ca. 75 lb (34 kg). David's gifts are deliberately excessive. **17–19:** Following the norms of Deut 12.8–14, only when peace is established may the Temple be built. **18:** *Inhabitants of the land*, i.e., the Canaanites (Num 32.22,29; Josh 2.24; 18.1; 23.3–5,9–13; 24.11,18).

23.1–32: Establishing a national administration. David attains a venerable stage in his life (v. 1), "*full of days,*" much like Abraham (Gen 25.8), Isaac (Gen 35.29), and Job (42.17) before him. He begins preparing for his death and the reign of his son by convening his administrative leadership. This transition is smooth, in contrast to 2 Sam 15–1 Kings 2, much of which the Chronicler omits. The Chronicler will eventually return to the issue of Solomon's accession, but his first priority is to detail David's appointment of and instructions to "*the leaders of Israel, the priests, and the Levites*" (v. 2), who will help Solomon to succeed in his various tasks, especially completing the Temple. The summit of select leaders forms the background of David's major administrative initiatives, outlined in the narratives and the lists of 23.3–27.34. In Chronicles the unity of purpose exhibited by the father-son combination of David and Solomon proves critical to establishing the United Monarchy as a highlight of Israelite history. **5:** The divisions and responsibilities of the gatekeepers are outlined in ch 26. **6:** The tripartite segmentation of the Levites in vv. 6–23 follows the earlier Priestly sources (Ex 6.16–19; Num 3.17–39; cf. 1 Chr 6.1,16–47). **7–23:** The planning for the Temple, and the centralized worship that it represents, leads to the establishment of a system of divisions or courses among the Levites and priests. Each division was to work its appointed turn in rotation until a round was completed and a new round was begun. Although attributed to David's initiative, this development, unattested in preexilic texts, is known only in the Second Temple period (see also Lk 1.5). Thus, here the Chronicler is legitimating worship as he knew it (or ideally wished to

12 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four. 13 The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart to consecrate the most holy things, so that he and his sons forever should make offerings before the LORD, and minister to him and pronounce blessings in his name forever; 14 but as for Moses the man of God, his sons were to be reckoned among the tribe of Levi. 15 The sons of Moses: Gershom and Eliezer. 16 The sons of Gershom: Shebuel the chief. 17 The sons of Eliezer: Rehabiah the chief; Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very numerous. 18 The sons of Izhar: Shelomith the chief. 19 The sons of Hebron: Jeriah the chief, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. 20 The sons of Uzziel: Micah the chief and Isshiah the second.

21 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish. 22 Eleazar died having no sons, but only daughters; their kindred, the sons of Kish, married them. 23 The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth, three.

24 These were the sons of Levi by their ancestral houses, the heads of families as they were enrolled according to the number of the names of the individuals from twenty years old and upward who were to do the work for the service of the house of the LORD. 25 For David said, "The LORD, the God of Israel, has given rest to his people; and he resides in Jerusalem forever. 26 And so the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the things for its service"— 27 for according to the last words of David these were the number of the Levites from twenty years old and upward— 28 "but their duty shall be to assist the descendants of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, having the care of the courts and the chambers, the cleansing of all that is holy, and any work for the service of the house of God; 29 to assist also with the rows of bread, the choice flour for the grain offering, the wafers of unleavened bread, the baked offering, the offering mixed with oil, and all measures of quantity or size. 30 And they shall stand every morning, thanking and praising the LORD, and likewise at evening, 31 and whenever burnt offerings are offered to the LORD on sabbaths, new moons, and appointed festivals, according to the number required of them, regularly before the LORD. 32 Thus they shall keep charge of the tent of meeting and the sanctuary, and shall attend the descendants of Aaron, their kindred, for the service of the house of the LORD."

24 The divisions of the descendants of Aaron were these. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 2 But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no sons; so Eleazar and Ithamar became the priests. 3 Along with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, David organized them according to the appointed duties in their service. 4 Since more chief men were found among the sons of Eleazar than among the sons of Ithamar, they organized them under sixteen heads of ancestral houses of the sons of Eleazar, and eight of the sons of Ithamar. 5 They organized them by lot, all alike, for there were officers of the sanctuary and officers of God among both the sons of Eleazar and the sons of Ithamar. 6 The scribe Shemaiah

know it) by attributing the system of courses to David. **13:** The mandate for the sons of Aaron to *make offerings before the LORD* is detailed in a number of contexts (Ex 29.38–42; 30.1–10; Lev 8.1–9.24; 18.8–20). **18:** Although included in the earlier genealogy (6.37), the line of Korah is not mentioned here; this is probably connected with the tradition of Korah's rebellion narrated in Num 16. **25–32:** The levitical job descriptions of earlier biblical texts (Num 1.53; 3.7–8; 8.15, 21–23; 16:9; 18:4, 6, 21) are revised in light of the move toward one permanent, stationary sanctuary. **28:** The Heb means "stand at the side of," rather than *to assist* the descendants of Aaron. In Chronicles the Levites and the priests have different but complementary responsibilities (see also Neh 12.45). **29:** *Rows of bread,* cf. Lev 25.4–9; 2 Chr 13.11. **30–31:** The Levites are to praise the LORD *whenever burnt offerings are offered* by the priests (16.4,7–38; 23.5). This contrasts with some descriptions of tabernacle worship in the Torah/Pentateuch, which depict a sanctuary of silence.

24.1–19: David's priestly appointments. David organizes the priests into twenty-four divisions, which cast lots for places. The priestly consolidation into twenty-four courses is echoed in later rabbinic sources (*t. Ta'anit* 4.2; *y. Ta'anit* 4.2, 67d). **3:** *The sons of Eleazar, and . . . Ithamar* represent the two major priestly families (15.11;

son of Nethanel, a Levite, recorded them in the presence of the king, and the officers, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech son of Abiathar, and the heads of ancestral houses of the priests and of the Levites; one ancestral house being chosen for Eleazar and one chosen for Ithamar.

7 The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, 8 the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, 9 the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, 10 the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, 11 the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, 12 the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, 13 the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, 14 the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, 15 the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzez, 16 the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, 17 the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul, 18 the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. 19 These had as their appointed duty in their service to enter the house of the LORD according to the procedure established for them by their ancestor Aaron, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

20 And of the rest of the sons of Levi: of the sons of Amram, Shubael; of the sons of Shubael, Jehdeiah. 21 Of Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, Isshiah the chief. 22 Of the Izharites, Shelomoth; of the sons of Shelomoth, Jahath. 23 The sons of Hebron:[a] Jeriah the chief,[b] Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. 24 The sons of Uzziel, Micah; of the sons of Micah, Shamir. 25 The brother of Micah, Isshiah; of the sons of Isshiah, Zechariah. 26 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Jaaziah: Beno.[c] 27 The sons of Merari: of Jaaziah, Beno,[c] Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri. 28 Of Mahli: Eleazar, who had no sons. 29 Of Kish, the sons of Kish: Jerahmeel. 30 The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth. These were the sons of the Levites according to their ancestral houses. 31 These also cast lots corresponding to their kindred, the descendants of Aaron, in the presence of King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of ancestral houses of the priests and of the Levites, the chief as well as the youngest brother.

25 David and the officers of the army also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals. The list of those who did the work and of their duties was: 2 Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asarelah, sons of Asaph, under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king. 3 Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiah, Shimei,[d] Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with the lyre in thanksgiving and praise to the LORD. 4 Of Heman, the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth. 5 All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer, according to the promise of God to exalt him; for God had given Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. 6 They were all under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the order of the king. 7 They and their kindred, who were trained in singing to the LORD, all of whom were skillful,

[a] See 23.19: Heb lacks *Hebron*
[b] See 23.19: Heb lacks *the chief*
[c] Or *his son:* Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] One Ms: Gk: MT lacks *Shimei*

18.16–17; 25.1; cf. 2 Sam 8.16–18). **20–31:** This list of Levites overlaps with that of 23.7–23. **31:** The Levites rotate by courses just as the priests do.

25.1–31: The singers. Speaking of the singers as being "*set apart*" (v. 1) establishes a parallelism between David's choice and investiture of the singers, the Levites, and the priests (cf. 23.13; Num 8.14; 16.9,21; Deut 10.8; Ezra 10.8,16). On *the sons of Asaph, Heman,* and *Jeduthun,* see 6.33,44n. The allusion to music and song as a kind of prophecy (vv. 1–3; 2 Kings 3.15) is striking and may be connected to the later tradition, attested in a Psalms scroll at Qumran (11QPsa) of David as a prophet who composed the psalms through divine inspiration. **1:** The *officers of the army,* as part of David's governmental apparatus, have a say in the establishment of courses for

numbered two hundred eighty-eight. [8] And they cast lots for their duties, small and great, teacher and pupil alike.

[9] The first lot fell for Asaph to Joseph; the second to Gedaliah, to him and his brothers and his sons, twelve; [10] the third to Zaccur, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [11] the fourth to Izri, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [12] the fifth to Nethaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [13] the sixth to Bukkiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [14] the seventh to Jesarelah,[a] his sons and his brothers, twelve; [15] the eighth to Jeshaiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [16] the ninth to Mattaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [17] the tenth to Shimei, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [18] the eleventh to Azarel, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [19] the twelfth to Hashabiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [20] to the thirteenth, Shubael, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [21] to the fourteenth, Mattithiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [22] to the fifteenth, to Jeremoth, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [23] to the sixteenth, to Hananiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [24] to the seventeenth, to Joshbekashah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [25] to the eighteenth, to Hanani, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [26] to the nineteenth, to Mallothi, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [27] to the twentieth, to Eliathah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [28] to the twenty-first, to Hothir, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [29] to the twenty-second, to Giddalti, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [30] to the twenty-third, to Mahazioth, his sons and his brothers, twelve; [31] to the twenty-fourth, to Romamti-ezer, his sons and his brothers, twelve.

26 As for the divisions of the gatekeepers: of the Korahites, Meshelemiah son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph.

[2] Meshelemiah had sons: Zechariah the firstborn, Jediael the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, [3] Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Eliehoenai the seventh. [4] Obed-edom had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sachar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, [5] Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peullethai the eighth; for God blessed him. [6] Also to his son Shemaiah sons were born who exercised authority in their ancestral houses, for they were men of great ability. [7] The sons of Shemaiah: Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad, whose brothers were able men, Elihu and Semachiah. [8] All these, sons of Obed-edom with their sons and brothers, were able men qualified for the service; sixty-two of Obed-edom. [9] Meshelemiah had sons and brothers, able men, eighteen. [10] Hosah, of the sons of Merari, had sons: Shimri the chief (for though he was not the firstborn, his father made him chief), [11] Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth: all the sons and brothers of Hosah totaled thirteen.

[12] These divisions of the gatekeepers, corresponding to their leaders, had duties, just as their kindred did, ministering in the house of the LORD; [13] and they cast lots by ancestral houses, small and great alike, for their gates. [14] The lot for the east fell to Shelemiah. They cast lots also for his son Zechariah, a prudent counselor, and his lot came out for the north. [15] Obed-edom's came out for the south, and to his sons was allotted the storehouse. [16] For Shuppim and Hosah it came out for the west, at the gate of Shallecheth on the ascending road. Guard corresponded to guard. [17] On

[a] Or *Asarelah*; see 25.2

the singers. **8:** As with the priests (24.5) and other Levites (24.31), a lottery is held to determine the twenty-four divisions for the singers.

26.1–19: The gatekeepers. Part of David's administrative organization involves the gatekeepers, whom the Chronicler counts as Levites (cf. Ezra 2.42,70; Neh 11.19). Sanctuary guards were active in David's earlier reign when David transported the ark (15.18,23–24; 16.38,42; 23.5). Along with performing guard duty, the gatekeepers open the Temple in the morning; administer the use of the vessels, including the holy utensils; take charge of the flour, wine, spices, and oil (9.17–32); and perform administrative service on behalf of the king (2 Chr 31.14; 34.13). **13:** Because a lottery was held to identify which family was to serve at which gate, the number of members within a particular family did not affect the process of selection, which was divinely determined. **16:** *Shuppim,* perhaps a scribal error, repeating the previous word. *Gate of Shallecheth,* the name occurs only here, and may also be a scribal error.

the east there were six Levites each day,[a]
on the north four each day, on the south
four each day, as well as two and two at the
storehouse; 18 and for the colonnade[b] on the
west there were four at the road and two at
the colonnade.[b] 19 These were the divisions of
the gatekeepers among the Korahites and the
sons of Merari.

20 And of the Levites, Ahijah had charge
of the treasuries of the house of God and the
treasuries of the dedicated gifts. 21 The sons
of Ladan, the sons of the Gershonites belong-
ing to Ladan, the heads of families belonging
to Ladan the Gershonite: Jehieli.[c]

22 The sons of Jehieli, Zetham and his
brother Joel, were in charge of the treasuries
of the house of the LORD. 23 Of the Amram-
ites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the
Uzzielites: 24 Shebuel son of Gershom, son
of Moses, was chief officer in charge of the
treasuries. 25 His brothers: from Eliezer were
his son Rehabiah, his son Jeshaiah, his son
Joram, his son Zichri, and his son Shelomoth.
26 This Shelomoth and his brothers were in
charge of all the treasuries of the dedicated
gifts that King David, and the heads of fami-
lies, and the officers of the thousands and the
hundreds, and the commanders of the army,
had dedicated. 27 From booty won in battles
they dedicated gifts for the maintenance of
the house of the LORD. 28 Also all that Samuel
the seer, and Saul son of Kish, and Abner son
of Ner, and Joab son of Zeruiah had dedi-
cated—all dedicated gifts were in the care of
Shelomoth[d] and his brothers.

29 Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons
were appointed to outside duties for Israel,
as officers and judges. 30 Of the Hebronites,
Hashabiah and his brothers, one thousand
seven hundred men of ability, had the over-
sight of Israel west of the Jordan for all the
work of the LORD and for the service of the
king. 31 Of the Hebronites, Jerijah was chief
of the Hebronites. (In the fortieth year of
David's reign search was made, of whatever
genealogy or family, and men of great ability
among them were found at Jazer in Gilead.)
32 King David appointed him and his brothers,
two thousand seven hundred men of ability,
heads of families, to have the oversight of the
Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of
the Manassites for everything pertaining to
God and for the affairs of the king.

27 This is the list of the people of Israel,
the heads of families, the commanders
of the thousands and the hundreds, and their
officers who served the king in all matters
concerning the divisions that came and went,
month after month throughout the year, each
division numbering twenty-four thousand:

2 Jashobeam son of Zabdiel was in charge
of the first division in the first month; in his
division were twenty-four thousand. 3 He
was a descendant of Perez, and was chief of
all the commanders of the army for the first
month. 4 Dodai the Ahohite was in charge of
the division of the second month; Mikloth
was the chief officer of his division. In his
division were twenty-four thousand. 5 The
third commander, for the third month, was
Benaiah son of the priest Jehoiada, as chief;
in his division were twenty-four thousand.
6 This is the Benaiah who was a mighty man
of the Thirty and in command of the Thirty;
his son Ammizabad was in charge of his

[a] Gk: Heb lacks *each day*
[b] Heb *parbar*: meaning uncertain
[c] The Hebrew text of verse 21 is confused
[d] Gk Compare 26.28: Heb *Shelomith*

26.20–32: Treasurers, regional officials, and judges. Israel's leadership makes the task of Solomon easier by endowing the Temple and organizing its finances. The Levites also take on broad responsibilities, such as "*oversight of Israel west of the Jordan*" as *officers and judges* (vv. 29–30; cf. 23.3–5; 2 Chr 17.2; 19.5). **31:** *Fortieth year,* i.e., David's last; see 29.27. **32:** The Persian-period distinction between matters pertaining to the king and matters pertaining to God, found only in Chronicles (26.30,32; 2 Chr 19.11) and Ezra (7.26), reflects how minority communities coped with centuries of foreign rule.

27.1–24: Military leaders. The orderly organization of the military, no less than the organization of the priests and the Levites, is part of David's legacy in Chronicles. The system established—twelve monthly relays of 24,000, each headed by a divisional leader (vv. 2–16)—reflects his standard administrative procedure (23.6–23; 24.1–19; 25.8–31; 26.1–12). **1:** *List,* Heb "mispar" may also be translated as "census" both here and in vv. 23–24 (cf. 23.3). **2–15:** Many of the names in this list are also found in 11.11–47; 2 Sam 23.8–39.

division.[a] 7 Asahel brother of Joab was fourth, for the fourth month, and his son Zebadiah after him; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 8 The fifth commander, for the fifth month, was Shamhuth, the Izrahite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 9 Sixth, for the sixth month, was Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 10 Seventh, for the seventh month, was Helez the Pelonite, of the Ephraimites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 11 Eighth, for the eighth month, was Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zerahites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 12 Ninth, for the ninth month, was Abiezer of Anathoth, a Benjaminite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 13 Tenth, for the tenth month, was Maharai of Netophah, of the Zerahites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 14 Eleventh, for the eleventh month, was Benaiah of Pirathon, of the Ephraimites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 15 Twelfth, for the twelfth month, was Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel; in his division were twenty-four thousand.

16 Over the tribes of Israel, for the Reubenites, Eliezer son of Zichri was chief officer; for the Simeonites, Shephatiah son of Maacah; 17 for Levi, Hashabiah son of Kemuel; for Aaron, Zadok; 18 for Judah, Elihu, one of David's brothers; for Issachar, Omri son of Michael; 19 for Zebulun, Ishmaiah son of Obadiah; for Naphtali, Jerimoth son of Azriel; 20 for the Ephraimites, Hoshea son of Azaziah; for the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel son of Pedaiah; 21 for the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo son of Zechariah; for Benjamin, Jaasiel son of Abner; 22 for Dan, Azarel son of Jeroham. These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel. 23 David did not count those below twenty years of age, for the LORD had promised to make Israel as numerous as the stars of heaven. 24 Joab son of Zeruiah began to count them, but did not finish; yet wrath came upon Israel for this, and the number was not entered into the account of the Annals of King David.

25 Over the king's treasuries was Azmaveth son of Adiel. Over the treasuries in the country, in the cities, in the villages and in the towers, was Jonathan son of Uzziah. 26 Over those who did the work of the field, tilling the soil, was Ezri son of Chelub. 27 Over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite. Over the produce of the vineyards for the wine cellars was Zabdi the Shiphmite. 28 Over the olive and sycamore trees in the Shephelah was Baal-hanan the Gederite. Over the stores of oil was Joash. 29 Over the herds that pastured in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite. Over the herds in the valleys was Shaphat son of Adlai. 30 Over the camels was Obil the Ishmaelite. Over the donkeys was Jehdeiah the Meronothite. Over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagrite. 31 All these were stewards of King David's property.

32 Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counselor, being a man of understanding and a scribe; Jehiel son of Hachmoni attended the king's sons. 33 Ahithophel was the king's counselor,

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *Ammizabad was his division*

16–22: By having each of the tribes include its own "chief officer" as a participant in the national government, the Chronicler integrates traditional tribal custom into a centralized monarchic system. Contrast 1 Kings 4.1–19, which does not appear in Chronicles. See 5.6n. **23:** The enumeration of twelve military divisions (288,000) leads the writer to explain why no general census of Israel is included (cf. Num 1.3,45). By counting Israelite males who were less than twenty years of age, David would be casting aspersions on the validity of one of God's solemn promises to Abraham (Gen 22.17). **24:** See ch 21.

27.25–32: Other administrators. The Davidic state is multifaceted. The king owns agricultural estates (v. 27), operates storehouses in both urban and rural areas for agricultural produce (vv. 27–28), and has an investment in, if not some control over, trade (v. 30). The king employs a variety of high officials who supervise his estates, fieldworkers, and storage facilities. The king also has advisers and officers (vv. 32–34) at his disposal. Some aspects of this complicated system may be anachronistic, but they are consistent with ancient Near Eastern royal practice, especially in the Persian period during which the emperor owned royal estates throughout the various regions of his empire. **30:** The *camels* and *donkeys* (or she-asses) are related directly not to agriculture, but to trade. Because the major trade routes of the ancient Near East passed through the region, trade was an important sector of the Israelite economy. **33:** On *Ahithophel* and *Hushai,* see 2 Sam 15.12,23–37.

and Hushai the Archite was the king's friend.
34 After Ahithophel came Jehoiada son of
Benaiah, and Abiathar. Joab was commander
of the king's army.

28 David assembled at Jerusalem all
the officials of Israel, the officials of
the tribes, the officers of the divisions that
served the king, the commanders of the
thousands, the commanders of the hundreds,
the stewards of all the property and cattle
of the king and his sons, together with the
palace officials, the mighty warriors, and all
the warriors. 2 Then King David rose to his
feet and said: "Hear me, my brothers and my
people. I had planned to build a house of rest
for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for
the footstool of our God; and I made prepara-
tions for building. 3 But God said to me, 'You
shall not build a house for my name, for you
are a warrior and have shed blood.' 4 Yet the
LORD God of Israel chose me from all my
ancestral house to be king over Israel forever;
for he chose Judah as leader, and in the house
of Judah my father's house, and among my
father's sons he took delight in making me
king over all Israel. 5 And of all my sons, for
the LORD has given me many, he has chosen
my son Solomon to sit upon the throne of the
kingdom of the LORD over Israel. 6 He said to
me, 'It is your son Solomon who shall build
my house and my courts, for I have chosen
him to be a son to me, and I will be a father to
him. 7 I will establish his kingdom forever if
he continues resolute in keeping my com-
mandments and my ordinances, as he is to-
day.' 8 Now therefore in the sight of all Israel,
the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing
of our God, observe and search out all the
commandments of the LORD your God; that
you may possess this good land, and leave it
for an inheritance to your children after you
forever.

9 "And you, my son Solomon, know the
God of your father, and serve him with single
mind and willing heart; for the LORD searches
every mind, and understands every plan and
thought. If you seek him, he will be found by
you; but if you forsake him, he will abandon
you forever. 10 Take heed now, for the LORD
has chosen you to build a house as the sanc-
tuary; be strong, and act."

11 Then David gave his son Solomon the
plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of
its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms,
and its inner chambers, and of the room for
the mercy seat;[a] 12 and the plan of all that
he had in mind: for the courts of the house
of the LORD, all the surrounding chambers,
the treasuries of the house of God, and the
treasuries for dedicated gifts; 13 for the divi-
sions of the priests and of the Levites, and all
the work of the service in the house of the
LORD; for all the vessels for the service in the
house of the LORD, 14 the weight of gold for all
golden vessels for each service, the weight of
silver vessels for each service, 15 the weight
of the golden lampstands and their lamps,
the weight of gold for each lampstand and its
lamps, the weight of silver for a lampstand
and its lamps, according to the use of each in
the service, 16 the weight of gold for each table
for the rows of bread, the silver for the silver
tables, 17 and pure gold for the forks, the ba-
sins, and the cups; for the golden bowls and
the weight of each; for the silver bowls and
the weight of each; 18 for the altar of incense
made of refined gold, and its weight; also his
plan for the golden chariot of the cherubim

[a] Or *the cover*

28.1–10: All Israel ratifies accession. Having concluded his administrative organization, David assembles a large national convocation to prepare the way for Solomon's rule. **1:** Assemblies are common in the Chronicler's history (13.5; 15.3; 2 Chr 5.2–3; 11.1; 20.26). In this case, David convokes all of his nation's dignitaries to Jerusalem to witness his charge to Solomon and to enlist their support for Solomon. **2:** On the ark as God's footstool, cf. Pss 99.5; 132.7. **3:** See 22.6–8. **4:** *Chose me,* in Chronicles the Levites (15.2; 2 Chr 29.11), the tribe of Judah, and more specifically David and Solomon are all elect of God. Emphasis on Solomon's divine election contrasts sharply with 1 Kings 1–2. **6–7:** Cf. 17.11–14; 22.9–10. **7:** The perdurability of Davidic kingship is contingent on Solomon's obedience (cf. 17.11; 1 Kings 3.14; 8.61; 9.4), which the duty to build the Temple exemplifies (v. 10). **8:** The addressee is Israel. Much like the authors of Deuteronomy (4.23–28; 28.58–64; 30.18), the Chronicler conditions Israel's possession of the land upon its obedience to God.

28.11–21: A plan for the Temple. Much as Moses received plans for the tabernacle (Ex 25.9), David has a

that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

19 "All this, in writing at the LORD's direction, he made clear to me—the plan of all the works."

20 David said further to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and act. Do not be afraid or dismayed; for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished. 21 Here are the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and with you in all the work will be every volunteer who has skill for any kind of service; also the officers and all the people will be wholly at your command."

29 King David said to the whole assembly, "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great; for the temple[a] will not be for mortals but for the LORD God. 2 So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones, and marble in abundance. 3 Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God: 4 three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the house, 5 and for all the work to be done by artisans, gold for the things of gold and silver for the things of silver. Who then will offer willingly, consecrating themselves today to the LORD?"

6 Then the leaders of ancestral houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, and the officers over the king's work. 7 They gave for the service of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. 8 Whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, into the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. 9 Then the people rejoiced because these had given willingly, for with single mind they had offered freely to the LORD; King David also rejoiced greatly.

10 Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. 11 Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. 12 Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. 13 And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

[a] Heb *fortress*

divinely composed written plan for the Temple (v. 19), which he presents to Solomon. **20:** The transition from David to Solomon is patterned after Moses and Joshua; note especially *Be strong and of good courage* (Deut 31.7; 31.23; Josh 1.6–18).

29.1–9: Endowments for the Temple. To explain his own copious preparations, David contrasts young Solomon's youthful vulnerability with the tremendous task that lies ahead (cf. 22.5). David's generosity sets the stage for Israel's leadership to show similar benevolence (vv. 6–9). There are parallels with Israel's gifts to the tabernacle (Ex 25.1–7; 35.4–9,20–29). **4:** *Talent,* **see 19.6n.** *Ophir,* probably in southern Arabia, was famous for its gold; see Isa 13.12. On the quantities, see 22.14n. **7:** The *daric* was a Persian coin, generally thought to be 0.3 oz (8.4 gr), minted sometime after 515 BCE (cf. Ezra 8.27).

29.10–19: David's farewell prayer. The Chronicler follows a paradigm in which final addresses are made by great leaders—Jacob (Gen 49.1–28), Moses (Deut 32.1–44,45–47; 33.1–29), Joshua (23.1–16; 24.1–28), Samuel (1 Sam 12.1–25), and David (2 Sam 23.1–7; 1 Kings 2.1–10). David's acclamation of the LORD's sovereignty (vv. 10–13) resonates with sentiments expressed earlier in the Psalm anthology (16.24–26) and with the prayer that he offered following Nathan's dynastic oracle (17.16–27). From David's point of view, all that he and the people

14 "But who am I, and what is my people,
that we should be able to make this freewill
offering? For all things come from you, and
of your own have we given you. 15 For we are
aliens and transients before you, as were all
our ancestors; our days on the earth are like
a shadow, and there is no hope. 16 O LORD
our God, all this abundance that we have
provided for building you a house for your
holy name comes from your hand and is all
your own. 17 I know, my God, that you search
the heart, and take pleasure in uprightness;
in the uprightness of my heart I have freely
offered all these things, and now I have seen
your people, who are present here, offering
freely and joyously to you. 18 O LORD, the God
of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors,
keep forever such purposes and thoughts
in the hearts of your people, and direct
their hearts toward you. 19 Grant to my son
Solomon that with single mind he may keep
your commandments, your decrees, and your
statutes, performing all of them, and that he
may build the temple[a] for which I have made
provision."

20 Then David said to the whole assembly,
"Bless the LORD your God." And all the assem-
bly blessed the LORD, the God of their ances-
tors, and bowed their heads and prostrated
themselves before the LORD and the king.
21 On the next day they offered sacrifices and
burnt offerings to the LORD, a thousand bulls,
a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with
their libations, and sacrifices in abundance
for all Israel; 22 and they ate and drank before
the LORD on that day with great joy.

They made David's son Solomon king a
second time; they anointed him as the LORD's
prince, and Zadok as priest. 23 Then Solomon
sat on the throne of the LORD, succeeding his
father David as king; he prospered, and all
Israel obeyed him. 24 All the leaders and the
mighty warriors, and also all the sons of King
David, pledged their allegiance to King Solo-
mon. 25 The LORD highly exalted Solomon in
the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him
such royal majesty as had not been on any
king before him in Israel.

26 Thus David son of Jesse reigned over
all Israel. 27 The period that he reigned over
Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years
in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusa-
lem. 28 He died in a good old age, full of days,
riches, and honor; and his son Solomon
succeeded him. 29 Now the acts of King David,
from first to last, are written in the records
of the seer Samuel, and in the records of the
prophet Nathan, and in the records of the
seer Gad, 30 with accounts of all his rule and
his might and of the events that befell him
and Israel and all the kingdoms of the earth.

[a] Heb *fortress*

donate to God ultimately stems from God himself (v. 14). Thus, following earlier biblical norms, these gifts serve as acknowledgments of God's sovereignty. **15:** *Aliens and transients*, cf. Lev 25.23.

29.20–30: David's death and the transition to Solomon. David's final blessing of Israel is coupled with the anointing of Solomon as his chosen successor. In contrast to Samuel and Kings, the transition is smooth and without incident. **21:** *Sacrifices in abundance* characterize great piety; see 2 Chr 5.6; 7.5; 35.7–9. **22:** Another all-Israelite feast (see 12.39n.). *A second time,* whereas David earlier designated Solomon king over Israel (23.1), all of Israel's leaders now publicly endorse Solomon's enthronement. **24:** Even *all the sons of King David* acclaim Solomon, a clear polemic against the account in Samuel-Kings (2 Sam 15.1–16.14; 1 Kings 1.9–10,25–26; 2.15). **25:** In *royal majesty* Solomon's reign is unparalleled, even more impressive than that of David (2 Chr 9.29–31n.). **27:** David's reign is dated to ca. 1005–965 BCE. **28:** David's security and longevity are marks of divine blessing (2 Chr 24.15; Deut 4.40; 5.16; Isa 52.10; 65.17–19). *Full of days,* see 23.1n. **29:** In the Chronicler's time, Judeans thought of the prophets not only as great figures from Israel's past but also authors of historical writings about that past. It is unclear if the sources mentioned in v. 29 and elsewhere are nonbiblical sources, refer to other sections of the Bible, or never existed. Some scholars believe that they are cited here as a way of justifying the Chronicler's history, which differs in significant ways from Kings. That David's reign is the subject of these three otherwise unknown accounts written by prophets during his reign is one more indication of the Chronicler's desire to enhance David's legacy.

2 CHRONICLES

Second Chronicles is a continuation of First Chronicles, and the two originally formed one book, as they still do in the traditional Hebrew text. (For an introduction to this work, see the Introduction to 1 Chronicles, pp. 583–85.) The organization of 2 Chronicles falls into two major parts: the reign of Solomon (chs 1–9) and the kingdom of Judah (chs 10–36). In Chronicles the tenure of Solomon represents the apex of Israelite history, a time of unprecedented glory, prosperity, and peace. If David's reign was highly successful because David consolidated Israel's international position and prepared for the long-awaited Temple, Solomon's reign was even more successful because he brought these plans to fruition. Accordingly, much space is devoted in chs 2–7 to the construction, furnishings, and dedication of this national edifice. As the home of the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle, the Temple represents the continuation and fulfilment of earlier Israelite religious institutions. The careful attention given to the Temple and its worship reflects the importance that the Chronicler ascribed to this institution in the postexilic era. For the author, the Temple is the divinely sanctioned place for both sacrifice and prayer (6.1–7.22). The stress on prayer is also present in the book of Kings, but not emphasized throughout the Judahite monarchy, as it is in Chronicles.

The Chronicler's account of the divided monarchy differs in many respects from that found in 1 and 2 Kings, even though he draws heavily from his version of Kings to write his own work. The writer ignores the independent history of the Northern Kingdom because he regards both the kingship and the sanctuaries of this new state as an affront to God (13.4–12). The choice not to recount the record of northern Israel also means that the stories of northern prophets such as Elijah and Elisha are not found in Chronicles. The author does add, however, much coverage to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, including a letter from Elijah to a southern king (2 Chr 21.12–15). Some of the material unique to Chronicles reflects well on the reigns of major Judahite monarchs, such as Asa (chs 14–16), Jehoshaphat (chs 17–20), Hezekiah (chs 29–32), and Josiah (chs 34–35). Throughout his presentation, the Chronicler exhibits a keen concern for all Israelite tribes. The Chronicler criticizes the Northern Kingdom and its monarchs, but he still considers the northern tribes as Israelite and shows a sustained interest in their contacts with Judah. In the latter part of its history, Judah lost ground to its enemies and was exiled from its land to Babylon (586 BCE). A major concern of the Chronicler is not only to trace this decline, but to explain it and to commend the reforms aimed at reversing it. On the whole, he presents a more optimistic version of this period than do the authors of Kings.

Gary N. Knoppers

1 Solomon son of David established himself in his kingdom; the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.

[2] Solomon summoned all Israel, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, the judges, and all the leaders of all Israel, the heads of families. [3] Then Solomon, and the whole assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for God's tent of meeting, which Moses the servant of

1.1–17: Solomon takes charge, journeys to Gibeon, and prospers. Solomon rules an Israel unified and unhampered by internal factions or strife. Solomon's legitimacy is stressed by repeated references to him as David's rightful successor and king by divine choice (1 Chr 17.11; 23.1; 28.6; 29.23–25; 2 Chr 1.1; 6.10; 7.17–18). The Chronicler presents the United Monarchy as the time when Israel's authoritative institutions took shape. The idealized presentation of David and Solomon effectively establishes a model by which later periods are judged. **1:** Solomon ruled ca. 968–928 BCE. When Solomon took office, he immediately *established himself in his kingdom* and enjoyed the LORD's blessings. There was no need to pacify, eliminate, or exile his domestic foes (contrast 1 Kings 1–2) because David had already consolidated support for Solomon (1 Chr 23–29). **2–13:** The support of military, local, and civil officials enables the nation to embark on major new initiatives in a harmonious fashion (1 Chr 11.1–3; 13.1–4; 23.1–2; 28.1; 29.1–25). In this case, the author transforms a story about Solomon's private pilgrimage to the high place at Gibeon (1 Kings 3.3–15) into a national pilgrimage, adding that the tent of meeting (see Ex 38–39) was located at Gibeon (1 Chr 16.39–42). This type of addition, which harmonizes a variety

the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there. 4 (But David had brought the ark of God up from Kiriath-jearim to the place that David had prepared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.) 5 Moreover the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made, was there in front of the tabernacle of the LORD. And Solomon and the assembly inquired at it. 6 Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

7 That night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I should give you." 8 Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to my father David, and have made me succeed him as king. 9 O LORD God, let your promise to my father David now be fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. 10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?" 11 God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king, 12 wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like." 13 So Solomon came from[a] the high place at Gibeon, from the tent of meeting, to Jerusalem. And he reigned over Israel.

14 Solomon gathered together chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. 15 The king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. 16 Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue; the king's traders received them from Kue at the prevailing price. 17 They imported from Egypt, and then exported, a chariot for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred fifty; so through them these were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

2 [b] Solomon decided to build a temple for the name of the LORD, and a royal palace for himself. 2 [c]Solomon conscripted seventy thousand laborers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country, with three thousand six hundred to oversee them.

3 Solomon sent word to King Huram of Tyre: "Once you dealt with my father David and sent him cedar to build himself a house

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *to*
[b] Ch 1.18 in Heb
[c] Ch 2.1 in Heb

of earlier texts, typifies Chronicles. **4:** See 1 Chr 13; 15. **5:** On *Bezalel* and the *bronze altar,* cf. Ex 27.1–8; 31.1; 1 Chr 2.20. The emphasis here is on continuity and the Jerusalem Temple as the realization of older ritual traditions. **11–12:** The divine gifts of unprecedented *wisdom and knowledge,* as well as *possessions, wealth* and *honor* set the tone and tenor of Solomon's reign. Nevertheless, the theme of Solomon's wisdom is not as pronounced in Chronicles as it is in Kings. **14–17:** These verses, drawn from 1 Kings 10.26–29, illustrate that God's promises to Solomon at Gibeon are being realized. The rearrangement of earlier sources is typical of the Chronicler. **15:** *The Shephelah,* the foothills between the coastal plain and the Judean hill country. **16:** *Kue,* in Cilicia, in southern Asia Minor. **17:** A *shekel* weighed about 0.4 oz (11.5 gr). The *kings of the Hittites* ruled over northern Syria; *Aram* was southern Syria.

2.1–18: Solomon prepares to build the Temple. As David's appointed successor, Solomon brings his father's hopes and designs to fruition by focusing much of his energy on constructing, equipping, and staffing the Temple. Like David, Solomon is a devoted patron of his nation's worship and makes this the first priority of his reign. **1–10:** These verses, largely drawn from 1 Kings 5.1–6,11, provide external confirmation of both Solomon's gifts and the plan to build a temple. Verses 4–5, however, have no source in Kings, and reflect later theological notions. **3:** *Huram* (called Hiram in 1 Kings) had been an ally of David (see 1 Chr 14.1n.), sending him materials to build his palace, but here he dispatches additional materials to those requested by Solomon, thus ensuring that the Temple construction more closely parallels that of the tabernacle (Ex 25.4–39.29). Chronicles transforms Huram (Hiram) from being an equal to Solomon in a bilateral treaty relationship (1 Kings 5.26) to being a loyal

to live in. [4] I am now about to build a house for the name of the LORD my God and dedicate it to him for offering fragrant incense before him, and for the regular offering of the rows of bread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed festivals of the LORD our God, as ordained forever for Israel. [5] The house that I am about to build will be great, for our God is greater than other gods. [6] But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him? Who am I to build a house for him, except as a place to make offerings before him? [7] So now send me an artisan skilled to work in gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and in purple, crimson, and blue fabrics, trained also in engraving, to join the skilled workers who are with me in Judah and Jerusalem, whom my father David provided. [8] Send me also cedar, cypress, and algum timber from Lebanon, for I know that your servants are skilled in cutting Lebanon timber. My servants will work with your servants [9] to prepare timber for me in abundance, for the house I am about to build will be great and wonderful. [10] I will provide for your servants, those who cut the timber, twenty thousand cors of crushed wheat, twenty thousand cors of barley, twenty thousand baths[a] of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil."

[11] Then King Huram of Tyre answered in a letter that he sent to Solomon, "Because the LORD loves his people he has made you king over them." [12] Huram also said, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, endowed with discretion and understanding, who will build a temple for the LORD, and a royal palace for himself.

[13] "I have dispatched Huram-abi, a skilled artisan, endowed with understanding, [14] the son of one of the Danite women, his father a Tyrian. He is trained to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, and wood, and in purple, blue, and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and to do all sorts of engraving and execute any design that may be assigned him, with your artisans, the artisans of my lord, your father David. [15] Now, as for the wheat, barley, oil, and wine, of which my lord has spoken, let him send them to his servants. [16] We will cut whatever timber you need from Lebanon, and bring it to you as rafts by sea to Joppa; you will take it up to Jerusalem."

[17] Then Solomon took a census of all the aliens who were residing in the land of Israel, after the census that his father David had taken; and there were found to be one hundred fifty-three thousand six hundred. [18] Seventy thousand of them he assigned as laborers, eighty thousand as stonecutters in the hill country, and three thousand six hundred as overseers to make the people work.

3 Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had designated, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. [2] He began to build on the second day of the second month of the fourth year of his reign. [3] These are Solomon's measurements[b] for building the house of God: the length, in

[a] A Hebrew measure of volume
[b] Syr: Heb *foundations*

client of Solomon. **4:** *Rows of bread,* see 1 Chr 9.32; Lev 24.5–9. *Burnt offerings,* see 1 Chr 16.40; Ex 29.38–42; Lev 6.20. **8:** *Algum* ("almug" in 1 Kings 10.11), an unidentified species of tree. **10:** A *cor* was about 6.5 bu (230 L); a *bath* about 6 gal (23 L). **11–12:** An elaborated version of 1 Kings 5.7. **13–16:** Cf. 1 Kings 7.13–14, where *Huram-abi* is called Hiram and hails from Naphtali. **17–18:** The census of *aliens* is a prelude to conscription for the Temple's construction (1 Kings 9.22). In Chronicles Solomon does not conscript Israelites to build the Temple and other public buildings as he does in 1 Kings 5.13–18; 12.4.

3.1–17: Temple construction (see plan on p. 629). A condensed and rewritten version of the author's source of 1 Kings 6; 7.15–22 (see also the notes there). **1:** Only here is *Mount Moriah,* the site of the binding of Isaac (Gen 22.2), explicitly identified with the Temple site. According to the Chronicler, it is also the location where David was instructed to build an altar to God (1 Chr 21.15–22.1) following his calamitous census (1 Chr 21.1–14). **3:** *House of God,* like the tabernacle described in Exodus, Solomon's Temple had three major sections, though some of these sections have different names: a "vestibule" (v. 4), a "nave" (vv. 4–5), and a "most holy place" (v. 8). Of these "the most holy place" was the most exclusive and sacred, but the "nave" (or sanctuary) was the largest

cubits of the old standard, was sixty cubits, and the width twenty cubits. 4 The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits long, across the width of the house;[a] and its height was one hundred twenty cubits. He overlaid it on the inside with pure gold. 5 The nave he lined with cypress, covered it with fine gold, and made palms and chains on it. 6 He adorned the house with settings of precious stones. The gold was gold from Parvaim. 7 So he lined the house with gold—its beams, its thresholds, its walls, and its doors; and he carved cherubim on the walls.

8 He made the most holy place; its length, corresponding to the width of the house, was twenty cubits, and its width was twenty cubits; he overlaid it with six hundred talents of fine gold. 9 The weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. He overlaid the upper chambers with gold.

10 In the most holy place he made two carved cherubim and overlaid[b] them with gold. 11 The wings of the cherubim together extended twenty cubits: one wing of the one, five cubits long, touched the wall of the house, and its other wing, five cubits long, touched the wing of the other cherub; 12 and of this cherub, one wing, five cubits long, touched the wall of the house, and the other wing, also five cubits long, was joined to the wing of the first cherub. 13 The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits; the cherubim[c] stood on their feet, facing the nave. 14 And Solomon[d] made the curtain of blue and purple and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and worked cherubim into it.

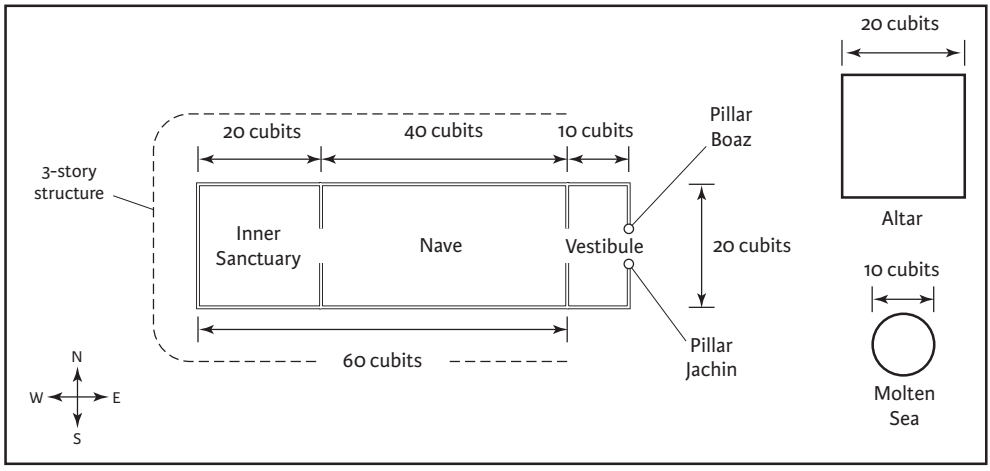
15 In front of the house he made two pillars thirty-five cubits high, with a capital of five cubits on the top of each. 16 He made encircling[e] chains and put them on the tops of the pillars; and he made one hundred pomegranates, and put them on the chains. 17 He set up the pillars in front of the temple, one on the right, the other on the left; the one on the right he called Jachin, and the one on the left, Boaz.

4 He made an altar of bronze, twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and ten cubits high. 2 Then he made the molten sea; it was round, ten cubits from rim to rim, and five cubits high. A line of thirty cubits would encircle it completely. 3 Under it were panels all around, each of ten cubits, surrounding the sea; there were two rows of panels, cast

[a] Compare 1 Kings 6.3: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *they overlaid*
[c] Heb *they*
[d] Heb *he*
[e] Cn: Heb *in the inner sanctuary*

and contained an incense altar, the "ten golden lampstands" (v. 7), and the "ten tables" (v. 8). Archaeology has uncovered several ancient Near Eastern parallels to the tripartite design depicted here. A *cubit* was about 18 in (45 cm); the cubit of *the old standard* may have been slightly longer. **4:** The *one hundred twenty cubits* height of the main part of the building dwarfs the thirty cubits height of Solomon's Temple in 1 Kings 6.2. **6:** *Parvaim,* location unknown. **8–9:** The Chronicler portrays Solomon, like David (1 Chr 29.1–5), as deliberately excessive in providing for the Temple. The figure of *six hundred talents of fine gold* is highly exaggerated, the equivalent of over 45,000 lb (20,000 kg). 1 Kings 6.19–22 simply speaks of "pure gold." **10–14:** Largely abridged from the author's version of 1 Kings 6.23–28. **10:** *Cherubim* were winged, sphinxlike creatures with human faces (cf. Gen 3.24; 1 Kings 6.23; Ezek 41.18–19). In the ancient Near East, kings were sometimes represented as sitting on a throne supported by cherubim. In this case, however, the "cherubim" symbolized the throne of the invisible LORD's reign in *the most holy place.* **14:** The reference to the *curtain* draws a parallel between the tabernacle (Ex 26.31) and the Temple. 1 Kings 6.31 instead mentions doors. The Chronicler often underscores the antiquity of the Jerusalem Temple by stressing the continuity between it and the tabernacle. **15–17:** On *Jachin* and *Boaz,* see 1 Kings 7.15–22n. **15:** *Pillars,* one pillar stood on each side of the Temple's entrance. Their height of *thirty-five cubits* is nearly double that in 1 Kings 7.15.

4.1–22: The Temple furnishings. Largely taken from 1 Kings 7.23–51 (omitting vv. 27–37). **1:** The reference to the *altar of bronze* may have been drawn from 1 Kings 8.64 (cf. 2 Kings 16.14). See also 2 Chr 1.5 and Ezek 43.13–17. **2–6:** *The molten sea*, made from cast bronze, rested upon a foundation of twelve oxen or bulls, which were traditionally associated with strength and fertility in ancient Canaan. Given that one bath measured approximately 6 gal (23 L), this Temple furnishing was of monumental size. 1 Kings 7.23–26 also describes the



The Temple of Solomon according to Second Chronicles

when it was cast. [4] It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; the sea was set on them. The hindquarters of each were toward the inside. [5] Its thickness was a handbreadth; its rim was made like the rim of a cup, like the flower of a lily; it held three thousand baths.[a] [6] He also made ten basins in which to wash, and set five on the right side, and five on the left. In these they were to rinse what was used for the burnt offering. The sea was for the priests to wash in.

[7] He made ten golden lampstands as prescribed, and set them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north. [8] He also made ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left. And he made one hundred basins of gold. [9] He made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court; he overlaid their doors with bronze. [10] He set the sea at the southeast corner of the house.

[11] And Huram made the pots, the shovels, and the basins. Thus Huram finished the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of God: [12] the two pillars, the bowls, and the two capitals on the top of the pillars; and the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the top of the pillars; [13] the four hundred pomegranates for the two latticeworks, two rows of pomegranates for each latticework, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars. [14] He made the stands, the basins on the stands, [15] the one sea, and the twelve oxen underneath it. [16] The pots, the shovels,

[a] A Hebrew measure of volume

molten sea, but does not mention that it was used for priestly ablutions. **4:** The *twelve oxen* supporting the molten sea are grouped in threes and face outward in each of the four directions of the compass. **6:** *Ten basins,* see 1 Kings 7.38–39. The tabernacle had only one basin (Ex 30.17). *To wash,* the explanation is not found in Kings. It has been drawn from the Priestly description of the tent of meeting (Ex 30.17–21). **7:** *Ten golden lampstands,* Chronicles, in conformity with Kings, mentions multiple lampstands in the Temple (1 Chr 28.15; 2 Chr 4.20 || 1 Kings 7.49). In contrast, the tabernacle has one lampstand (Ex 25.31–40; 31.8; Lev 24.1–4; Num 8.2–4). As "a statute forever throughout your generations" (Lev 24.3), the candelabrum's lamps were to burn every evening (Ex 25.37; 30.7–8; Lev 24.3; Num 8.2; 2 Chr 13.11). **8:** *Ten tables,* in contrast with the one table in the tabernacle (Ex 25.23–30; 26.35; Lev 24.5–9; 2 Chr 13.11) and the one table in the Temple in 1 Kings 7.48, the Chronicler's Temple had ten, suggesting that the Temple was a more magnificent and better-endowed edifice than the desert tabernacle. On these tables the "bread of the Presence" would be laid (v. 19). **9:** The reference to the *court of the priests* likely reflects the Temple of the Chronicler's own day in which the inner court (1 Kings 6.36; 7.12) was reserved for priests and the outer court was for laity, at least on some occasions (1 Chr 28.12; 2 Chr 7.7; 29.16; Neh 8.16). See also Ezekiel's restored temple (Ezek 41.15; 42.7–14; 44.19; 45.19; 46.1). **11:** *Huram,* see 2.13–16n. The

the forks, and all the equipment for these Huram-abi made of burnished bronze for King Solomon for the house of the LORD. 17 In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredah. 18 Solomon made all these things in great quantities, so that the weight of the bronze was not determined.

19 So Solomon made all the things that were in the house of God: the golden altar, the tables for the bread of the Presence, 20 the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold to burn before the inner sanctuary, as prescribed; 21 the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of purest gold; 22 the snuffers, basins, ladles, and firepans, of pure gold. As for the entrance to the temple: the inner doors to the most holy place and the doors of the nave of the temple were of gold.

5 Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of the LORD was finished. Solomon brought in the things that his father David had dedicated, and stored the silver, the gold, and all the vessels in the treasuries of the house of God.

2 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the people of Israel, in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. 3 And all the Israelites assembled before the king at the festival that is in the seventh month. 4 And all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites carried the ark. 5 So they brought up the ark, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. 6 King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be numbered or counted. 7 Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. 8 For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles. 9 The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside; they are there to this day. 10 There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant[a] with the people of Israel after they came out of Egypt.

11 Now when the priests came out of the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to their divisions), 12 all the levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kindred, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with one hundred twenty priests who were trumpeters. 13 It was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD,

"For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever,"

[a] Heb lacks *a covenant*

pots, the shovels, and the basins were employed in sacrificial rituals (Ex 27.3; 1 Kings 7.40). **17:** *Succoth and Zeredah* (1 Kings 7.46 "Zarethan") were towns east of the Jordan River. **19:** *Bread of the Presence,* see Ex 25.30; Lev 24.5–9.

5.1–14: The ark and the tent of meeting ascend into the Temple. These verses, except vv. 11b–13a, are largely drawn from 1 Kings 8.1–13. The incorporation of both the tabernacle and the ark into the Temple means that both of these older religious institutions find their fulfillment in the Jerusalem sanctuary. Like the authors of Deuteronomy (ch 12) and the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua–2 Kings), the Chronicler commends the centralization of Yahwistic worship and the abolition of all other sanctuaries. Sacrifices are to be carried out only at the Jerusalem Temple and prayers are to be offered at or toward this site (5.5–6.42), making the Temple the focal point of national life. **2:** On the importance of assemblies in Chronicles, see 1.2–13n. **4:** That the Levites carry the ark conforms to David's instructions (1 Chr 15.2) and Deuteronomic law (Deut 10.8). In 1 Kings 8.3, the "priests" do so. **10:** *Two tablets,* see Deut 10.1–5. *Horeb* is another name for Sinai. **11–13:** The Chronicler's addition to the Kings narrative points out that David's levitical and priestly arrangements (1 Chr 15–16; 25–26) were broadly implemented. *Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun,* see 1 Chr 6.33n.,44n. **13:** For the hymnic excerpt, see 7.3n. *Cloud,* see 1 Kings 8.10–11n.

the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, 14 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

6 Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would reside in thick darkness. 2 I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to reside in forever."

3 Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. 4 And he said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David, saying, 5 'Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any of the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, so that my name might be there, and I chose no one as ruler over my people Israel; 6 but I have chosen Jerusalem in order that my name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.' 7 My father David had it in mind to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. 8 But the LORD said to my father David, 'You did well to consider building a house for my name; 9 nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.' 10 Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise that he made; for I have succeeded my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. 11 There I have set the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with the people of Israel."

12 Then Solomon[a] stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands. 13 Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the court; and he stood on it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven. 14 He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant in steadfast love with your servants who walk before you with all their heart— 15 you who have kept for your servant, my father David, what you promised to him. Indeed, you promised with your mouth and this day have fulfilled with your hand. 16 Therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant, my father David, that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children keep to their way, to walk in my law as you have walked before me.' 17 Therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant David.

18 "But will God indeed reside with mortals on earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built! 19 Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O LORD my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you. 20 May your eyes be open day and night toward this house, the place where you promised to set your name, and may you heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. 21 And hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; may

[a] Heb *he*

6.1–42: Solomon's blessing and Temple dedication prayer. With the exception of vv. 13 and 41–42, this entire chapter is reproduced, with some significant modifications, from the author's version of 1 Kings 8.12–52. Solomon's public speeches situate the Temple's construction in Israel's national life—past, present, and future. **4–11:** In his blessing, Solomon praises God that a number of the promises to David (1 Chr 17.1–15) have been fulfilled. **12–40:** The pattern of divine fidelity recounted in Solomon's blessing becomes the occasion for Solomon to request that other divine promises be realized (vv. 14–17). The heart of the prayer of dedication (vv. 22–40) consists of seven petitions detailing a variety of predicaments in which the nation may find itself, including defeat by an enemy (vv. 24–25), drought (vv. 26–27), open pitched battles (vv. 34–35), and even exile (vv. 36–39). In each case Solomon prays that God might listen from his heavenly dwelling and be attentive to the prayers of his people. **13:** The *bronze platform* is found only here, perhaps reflecting the time of the Chronicler. **16:** *My law* (Heb "torah"), replacing "before me" of 1 Kings 8.25. This small change likely reflects the new importance of the

you hear from heaven your dwelling place; hear and forgive.

22 "If someone sins against another and is required to take an oath and comes and swears before your altar in this house, 23 may you hear from heaven, and act, and judge your servants, repaying the guilty by bringing their conduct on their own head, and vindicating those who are in the right by rewarding them in accordance with their righteousness.

24 "When your people Israel, having sinned against you, are defeated before an enemy but turn again to you, confess your name, pray and plead with you in this house, 25 may you hear from heaven, and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land that you gave to them and to their ancestors.

26 "When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this place, confess your name, and turn from their sin, because you punish them, 27 may you hear in heaven, forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send down rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

28 "If there is famine in the land, if there is plague, blight, mildew, locust, or caterpillar; if their enemies besiege them in any of the settlements of the lands; whatever suffering, whatever sickness there is; 29 whatever prayer, whatever plea from any individual or from all your people Israel, all knowing their own suffering and their own sorrows so that they stretch out their hands toward this house; 30 may you hear from heaven, your dwelling place, forgive, and render to all whose heart you know, according to all their ways, for only you know the human heart. 31 Thus may they fear you and walk in your ways all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our ancestors.

32 "Likewise when foreigners, who are not of your people Israel, come from a distant land because of your great name, and your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm, when they come and pray toward this house, 33 may you hear from heaven your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigners ask of you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.

34 "If your people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to you toward this city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, 35 then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause.

36 "If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to a land far or near; 37 then if they come to their senses in the land to which they have been taken captive, and repent, and plead with you in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, and have done wrong; we have acted wickedly'; 38 if they repent with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity, to which they were taken captive, and pray toward their land, which you gave to their ancestors, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, 39 then hear from heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their pleas, maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you. 40 Now, O my God, let your eyes be open and your ears attentive to prayer from this place.

41 "Now rise up, O LORD God, and go to
your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.
Let your priests, O LORD God, be clothed
with salvation,
and let your faithful rejoice in your
goodness.
42 O LORD God, do not reject your anointed
one.
Remember your steadfast love for your
servant David."

Torah-book in the postexilic community. **41–42:** Solomon's prayer of 1 Kings 8 is given a new conclusion from Ps 132.8–10, underscoring the Temple as a place of rest for God and the ark.

7 When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire
came down from heaven and consumed
the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and
the glory of the LORD filled the temple. 2 The
priests could not enter the house of the
LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the
LORD's house. 3 When all the people of Israel
saw the fire come down and the glory of the
LORD on the temple, they bowed down on
the pavement with their faces to the ground,
and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD,
saying,

"For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever."

4 Then the king and all the people offered
sacrifice before the LORD. 5 King Solomon of-
fered as a sacrifice twenty-two thousand oxen
and one hundred twenty thousand sheep.
So the king and all the people dedicated the
house of God. 6 The priests stood at their
posts; the Levites also, with the instruments
for music to the LORD that King David had
made for giving thanks to the LORD—for his
steadfast love endures forever—whenever
David offered praises by their ministry. Op-
posite them the priests sounded trumpets;
and all Israel stood.

7 Solomon consecrated the middle of the
court that was in front of the house of the
LORD; for there he offered the burnt offer-
ings and the fat of the offerings of well-being
because the bronze altar Solomon had made
could not hold the burnt offering and the
grain offering and the fat parts.

8 At that time Solomon held the festival
for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very
great congregation, from Lebo-hamath to the
Wadi of Egypt. 9 On the eighth day they held
a solemn assembly; for they had observed
the dedication of the altar seven days and
the festival seven days. 10 On the twenty-third
day of the seventh month he sent the people
away to their homes, joyful and in good
spirits because of the goodness that the LORD
had shown to David and to Solomon and to
his people Israel.

11 Thus Solomon finished the house of the
LORD and the king's house; all that Solomon
had planned to do in the house of the LORD
and in his own house he successfully accom-
plished.

12 Then the LORD appeared to Solomon
in the night and said to him: "I have heard
your prayer, and have chosen this place for
myself as a house of sacrifice. 13 When I shut
up the heavens so that there is no rain, or
command the locust to devour the land, or
send pestilence among my people, 14 if my
people who are called by my name humble
themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn
from their wicked ways, then I will hear from
heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal
their land. 15 Now my eyes will be open and
my ears attentive to the prayer that is made
in this place. 16 For now I have chosen and
consecrated this house so that my name may
be there forever; my eyes and my heart will
be there for all time. 17 As for you, if you walk

7.1–22: Divine consecration, national thanksgiving, and a warning. Both the Deuteronomist (1 Kings 9.1–9) and the Chronicler mention a divine response to Solomon's prayer (vv. 16–22), but the Chronicler also includes other material affirming both the Temple (vv. 1–3,11) and King Solomon's petitions (vv. 13–15). The divine response to Solomon therefore explicitly validates Jerusalem as the site of Israel's central sanctuary. **1:** The divine consecration of *the burnt offering and the sacrifices* by *fire,* not found in 1 Kings 8–9, dramatically legitimates the Jerusalem Temple as an enduring fixture of Israelite life (Lev 9.24; 1 Kings 18.36–39; 1 Chr 21.26). **3:** The people's liturgical refrain—*"For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever"*—also found in Ps 136 (and 1 Chr 16.34; 2 Chr 5.13; 7.6; 20.21; Ezra 3.11), was likely a significant element of the postexilic Temple liturgy. **7–8:** Taken in part from 1 Kings 8.65–66. *From Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt,* the northern and southern limits of Solomon's rule. *Lebo-hamath* is probably in the southern Orontes valley in Lebanon. *The Wadi of Egypt,* either the Wadi Besor or the Wadi el-Arish, both south of Gaza. See map on p. 601. **9–10:** The festivities last far longer than in 1 Kings 8.66, in which the Priestly legislation is not a consideration (cf. Lev 23.36; Num 29.35–38; Neh 8.18). Reflecting the Chronicler's knowledge of and commitment to Priestly law (not known to the original authors of Kings), the Chronicler brings the Temple proceedings into closer conformity with Priestly dictates. **13–14:** In this addition, alluding to Solomon's prayer in ch 6, the Temple is approved as an appropriate means of divine-human communications. Should king or people find themselves in distress, they may respond in four ways: *humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways.* For his part, the LORD will *hear from*

before me, as your father David walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, 18 then I will establish your royal throne, as I made covenant with your father David saying, 'You shall never lack a successor to rule over Israel.'

19 "But if you[a] turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, 20 then I will pluck you[b] up from the land that I have given you;[b] and this house, which I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 21 And regarding this house, now exalted, everyone passing by will be astonished, and say, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this house?' 22 Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the LORD the God of their ancestors who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore he has brought all this calamity upon them.' "

8 At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon had built the house of the LORD and his own house, 2 Solomon rebuilt the cities that Huram had given to him, and settled the people of Israel in them.

3 Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and captured it. 4 He built Tadmor in the wilderness and all the storage towns that he built in Hamath. 5 He also built Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities, with walls, gates, and bars, 6 and Baalath, as well as all Solomon's storage towns, and all the towns for his chariots, the towns for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build, in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. 7 All the people who were left of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of Israel, 8 from their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the people of Israel had not destroyed—these Solomon conscripted for forced labor, as is still the case today. 9 But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves for his work; they were soldiers, and his officers, the commanders of his chariotry and cavalry. 10 These were the chief officers of King Solomon, two hundred fifty of them, who exercised authority over the people.

11 Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, "My wife shall not live in the house of King David of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy."

12 Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built in front of the vestibule, 13 as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual festivals—the festival of

[a] The word *you* in this verse is plural
[b] Heb *them*

heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (v. 14). **19–22: Lightly rephrasing Kings,** Israel's possession of the land, as well as the longevity of the Temple itself, are keyed to national obedience (cf. 1 Chr 28.7).

8.1–18: Solomon the successful king. Following the Temple's dedication, Solomon advances his program of public works (vv. 3–6,11), continues his patronage of the nation's worship (vv. 12–15), employs the tribute from a foreign king to good advantage (v. 2; cf. 1 Kings 9.10–14), and engages in international trade (vv. 17–18). **2:** This reflects a remarkable reversal of the tradition recorded in 1 Kings 9.11–13, intimating continuing growth in Solomon's kingdom. **3:** An otherwise unattested campaign. Although in Chronicles Solomon (Heb "shelomoh") is a man of peace ("shalom"; 1 Chr 22.9), he here expands his kingdom through military means. No place named *Hamath-zobah* is known; elsewhere Hamath and Zobah are separate kingdoms in Syria. **4:** Solomon's control reaches to Syria. The system of twelve prefects and the districts they governed (1 Kings 4.7–19) is not found in Chronicles, possibly because these districts did not follow traditional tribal boundaries. *Tadmor* is later Palmyra, an important oasis in the desert ca. 140 mi (225 km) northeast of Damascus. Some Hebrew texts of 1 Kings 9.18 read "Tamar," a small town in Judah. **7–10:** Largely derived from 1 Kings 9.20–23. **7:** These are some of the traditional inhabitants of the land of Canaan; see Gen 15.20; Deut 20.17. **11:** Compare 1 Kings 3.1; 7.8; 9.24; Ezek 44.9. **13–15: Material written by the Chronicler emphasizes that** Solomon keeps the commandments of Moses in his offerings and keeps all of the ordinances of his father David in his appointments of priests and Levites

Chs 8–9: The kingdom of Solomon

unleavened bread, the festival of weeks, and the festival of booths. [14] According to the ordinance of his father David, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites for their offices of praise and ministry alongside the priests as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers in their divisions for the several gates; for so David the man of God had commanded. [15] They did not turn away from what the king had commanded the priests and Levites regarding anything at all, or regarding the treasuries.

[16] Thus all the work of Solomon was accomplished from[a] the day the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid until the house of the LORD was finished completely.

[17] Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the shore of the sea, in the land of Edom. [18] Huram sent him, in the care of his servants, ships and servants familiar with the sea. They went to Ophir, together with the servants of Solomon, and imported from there four hundred fifty talents of gold and brought it to King Solomon.

9 When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions, having a very great retinue and camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she discussed with him all that was on her mind. [2] Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from Solomon that he could not explain to her. [3] When the queen of Sheba had observed the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, [4] the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, and their clothing, his valets, and their clothing, and his burnt offerings[b] that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit left in her.

[5] So she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your accomplishments and of your wisdom, [6] but I did not believe the[c] reports until I came and my own eyes saw it. Not even half of the greatness of your wisdom had been told to me; you far surpass the report that I had heard. [7] Happy are your people! Happy are these your servants, who continually attend you and hear your wisdom! [8] Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne as king for the LORD your God. Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness." [9] Then she gave the king one hundred twenty talents of gold, a very great quantity of spices, and precious stones: there were no spices such as those that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

[10] Moreover the servants of Huram and the servants of Solomon who brought gold from Ophir brought algum wood and precious stones. [11] From the algum wood, the king made steps[d] for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, lyres also and harps for the singers; there never was seen the like of them before in the land of Judah.

[a] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *to*
[b] Gk Syr Vg 1 Kings 10.5: Heb *ascent*
[c] Heb *their*
[d] Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

(1 Chr 22.7–16; 28.6–10,20–21). **17–18:** Largely taken from 1 Kings 9.26–28. **17:** *Ezion-geber* and *Eloth* (Eilat) are at the northern tip of the west arm of *the sea* (the Red Sea). **18:** *Ophir,* see 1 Chr 29.4n.

9.1–31: Solomon in all of his glory. The earlier divine promise of unmatched wealth and wisdom (1.11–12) is realized. Solomon receives unprecedented international recognition (vv. 1–8,23–24), continues his endowments of palace and Temple (vv. 15–20), enjoys unsurpassed riches (vv. 22,27), shares in the benefits of international trade (vv. 10–11,13–14,21,28), and presides over a substantial kingdom (vv. 25–26). In Chronicles, the era of David and Solomon (the United Monarchy) is the epitome in the history of Israel, the model of unity, orthodoxy, and orthopraxis by which both earlier and later leaders, officials, and people will be judged (7.10; 11.17; 30.26; 35.3–4). **1–12:** Taken from 1 Kings 10.1–13. **1:** *Sheba* is in Arabia. **4:** *No more spirit left,* that is, she was breathless. **8:** Solomon sits on *his throne*, that is, the LORD's throne. The Chronicler (unlike the authors of Kings) draws a close link between God's kingdom, kingship, and throne and those of the two major kings of the United Monarchy—David and Solomon, who discharge their own responsibilities as well as those of God (1 Chr 17.14; 28.5; 29.11; 2 Chr 13.8). **9:** A *talent* weighed about 75 lb (34 kg). **11:** *Algum,* see 2.8n.

12 Meanwhile King Solomon granted the queen of Sheba every desire that she expressed, well beyond what she had brought to the king. Then she returned to her own land, with her servants.

13 The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred sixty-six talents of gold, 14 besides that which the traders and merchants brought; and all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land brought gold and silver to Solomon. 15 King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of beaten gold went into each large shield. 16 He made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three hundred shekels of gold went into each shield; and the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. 17 The king also made a great ivory throne, and overlaid it with pure gold. 18 The throne had six steps and a footstool of gold, which were attached to the throne, and on each side of the seat were arm rests and two lions standing beside the arm rests, 19 while twelve lions were standing, one on each end of a step on the six steps. The like of it was never made in any kingdom. 20 All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. 21 For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram; once every three years the ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.[a]

22 Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. 23 All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. 24 Every one of them brought a present, objects of silver and gold, garments, weaponry, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year. 25 Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. 26 He ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. 27 The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone, and cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. 28 Horses were imported for Solomon from Egypt and from all lands.

29 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the history of the prophet Nathan, and in the prophecy of

[a] Or *baboons*

13–28: Largely drawn from 1 Kings 10.14–28a. **15:** *Large shield*s, these ornamental objects of great value were later taken by King Shishak of Egypt during his campaign through parts of Canaan (12.9–11). **16:** *The House of the Forest of Lebanon,* perhaps named because of the extensive use of Lebanon cedar inside; it was part of the palace complex, which was probably located south of the Temple. Being most interested in the Temple, the Chronicler does not elaborate on the description and functions of this building (cf. 1 Kings 7.1–12). **17:** *Great ivory throne,* both Solomon's official seat and a symbol of his prestige, wealth, and power (cf. Ex 11.5; 2 Sam 3.10). **18:** *Footstool,* another royal symbol (cf. 1 Kings 10.18–20). The term is also used to represent defeated enemies (Ps 110.1), the ark (1 Chr 28.2), Zion (Lam 2.1), and the earth itself (Isa 66.1). **21:** *Tarshish,* probably Tarsus on the southern coast of Turkey, or perhaps Tartessus in southern Spain. The account in Chronicles must have been written some time after the reign of Darius I (522–486 BCE) during whose tenure a waterway was reportedly established between the Nile and the Red Sea. **25–29:** Cf. 1.14–16n. Verse 26 is drawn either from 1 Kings 4.21 or from the Hebrew source text underlying LXX 1 Kings 10:26a; Solomon is the dominant ruler of the region from northern Syria to the border of Egypt (cf. 7.8). **29:** *Nathan,* see 1 Chr 17.1–15; *Ahijah,* see 1 Kings 11.29–39; *Iddo* is not known apart from notices such as this (see 12.15; 13.22). **29–31:** Solomon's reign ends as it began with a unified nation under an exemplary king. Israel, unhampered by internal factions or strife, enjoys unparalleled glory. Solomon's tenure is untainted by sin or misadventure. Any information found in Kings that would tarnish Solomon's reputation has been omitted (1 Kings 9.11–16; 11.1–38). Solomon is not blamed for the later division of the kingdom (cf. 1 Kings 11.1–13,31–38). Because the Chronicler heightens the great benefit of Davidic-Solomonic leadership for the people, those who might deviate from this norm (10.3) will be suspect. It is a credit to Solomon that his reign, like that of David, is the subject of no less than three prophetic works. This is one indication of the high esteem in which prophets and writings associated with prophets were held in the postexilic period (see 1 Chr 29.29n.).

The divided monarchy, the geography of chs 10–12. The dashed line shows the approximate boundaries between Israel, Judah, and Philistia.

Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of the seer Iddo concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat? 30 Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. 31 Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him.

10 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. 2 When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it (for he was in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt. 3 They sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all Israel came and said to Rehoboam, 4 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you." 5 He said to them, "Come to

10.1–18: The difficult beginning to Rehoboam's reign (928–911 BCE). Compared with 1 Kings 12.1–24; 14.21–31, Chronicles almost doubles the amount of coverage devoted to *Rehoboam* and presents a much more complex narration of his reign (10.1–12.16). Rehoboam's accession is not characterized by the unanimity that both David (1 Chr 11) and Solomon (2 Chr 1) enjoyed. **1:** Rehoboam ascends to the throne and immediately finds himself thrust into a national assembly at *Shechem* bargaining for the future of his nation with disaffected representatives of the northern tribes (cf. 1 Kings 12.1–24). *Shechem,* in the Northern Kingdom, was located in the hill country of Ephraim between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. Its importance is reflected elsewhere in the Bible (Josh 8.30–35; 20.7; 17.7; 21.21; 24.1–28; 1 Kings 12.1–17; 1 Chr 6.52; 7.28). **2–3:** Jeroboam, the head of the northern

me again in three days." So the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the older men who had attended his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" 7 They answered him, "If you will be kind to this people and please them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever." 8 But he rejected the advice that the older men gave him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and now attended him. 9 He said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us'?" 10 The young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus should you speak to the people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must lighten it for us'; tell them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. 11 Now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.' "

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said, "Come to me again the third day." 13 The king answered them harshly. King Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older men; 14 he spoke to them in accordance with the advice of the young men, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions." 15 So the king did not listen to the people, because it was a turn of affairs brought about by God so that the LORD might fulfill his word, which he had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.

16 When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king,

"What share do we have in David?
We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.
Each of you to your tents, O Israel!
Look now to your own house, O David."

So all Israel departed to their tents. 17 But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who were living in the cities of Judah. 18 When King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor, the people of Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam hurriedly mounted his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

11 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled one hundred eighty thousand chosen troops of the house of Judah and Benjamin to fight against Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. 2 But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God: 3 Say to King Rehoboam of Judah, son of Solomon, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, 4 "Thus says the LORD: You shall not go up or fight against your kindred. Let everyone return home, for this thing is from me." So they heeded the word of the LORD and turned back from the expedition against Jeroboam.

5 Rehoboam resided in Jerusalem, and he built cities for defense in Judah. 6 He built up Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, 7 Beth-zur, Soco,

tribes (1 Kings 11.26–43), is both present and an active protagonist in the proceedings (also v. 12). In Chronicles both Jeroboam and Rehoboam are personally responsible for the events of the secession (13.4–12). **15:** *His word . . . by Ahijah,* see 1 Kings 11.29–39. Ultimately, according to both Kings and Chronicles, the division is a *turn of affairs* that could not have occurred without divine assent. This verse assumes familiarity on the part of the reader with 1 Kings 11.29–39, even though the Chronicler, by means of omissions, allusions, rearrangements, and additions, creates his own distinctive version of the division. **16:** In Chronicles, the northern Israelites' cry of secession (1 Kings 12.16) constitutes an abrupt about-face from the allegiance they had displayed since early in David's reign (1 Chr 12.1–40). Because the Chronicler views both the kingship and the worship of the northern realm as illegitimate, he—unlike the author of Kings—does not recount the independent history of the Northern Kingdom.

11.1–23: Rehoboam's recovery. The Chronicler enumerates in great detail the fidelity he ascribes to the first three years of Rehoboam's reign (11.17). The obedience before a prophet (11.1–4) and the fortification of various cities (vv. 5–12) are two steps in this process of renewal. **1–4:** Drawn from 1 Kings 12.21–24. **3:** The Chronicler does not restrict the use of *Israel* strictly to the northern tribes (cf. 2 Sam 2.9; 1 Kings 12.18,20). He also regularly uses *Israel* to refer to those Israelites who reside in *Judah and Benjamin.* **5–12:** These verses, unique to

Adullam, [8] Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, [9] Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, [10] Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, fortified cities that are in Judah and in Benjamin. [11] He made the fortresses strong, and put commanders in them, and stores of food, oil, and wine. [12] He also put large shields and spears in all the cities, and made them very strong. So he held Judah and Benjamin.

[13] The priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to him from all their territories. [14] The Levites had left their common lands and their holdings and had come to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons had prevented them from serving as priests of the LORD, [15] and had appointed his own priests for the high places, and for the goat-demons, and for the calves that he had made. [16] Those who had set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came after them from all the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. [17] They strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they made Rehoboam son of Solomon secure, for they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon.

[18] Rehoboam took as his wife Mahalath daughter of Jerimoth son of David, and of Abihail daughter of Eliab son of Jesse. [19] She bore him sons: Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham. [20] After her he took Maacah daughter of Absalom, who bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. [21] Rehoboam loved Maacah daughter of Absalom more than all his other wives and concubines (he took eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and became the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters). [22] Rehoboam appointed Abijah son of Maacah as chief prince among his brothers, for he intended to make him king. [23] He dealt wisely, and distributed some of his sons through all the districts of Judah and Benjamin, in all the fortified cities; he gave them abundant provisions, and found many wives for them.

12 When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he grew strong, he abandoned the law of the LORD, he and all Israel with him. [2] In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem [3] with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand cavalry. A countless army came with him from Egypt—Libyans, Sukkiim, and Ethiopians.[a] [4] He took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem. [5] Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and to the officers of Judah, who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, "Thus says the LORD: You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak." [6] Then the officers of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is in the right." [7] When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying: "They have humbled themselves; I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some de-

[a] Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

Chronicles, likely draw upon an unknown source. See map on p. 638. **13–17:** The wholesale exodus of priests and Levites from Israel to Judah (unattested in Kings) simultaneously strengthens Judah and indicts Jeroboam, who *prevented them from serving as priests of the LORD.* On Jeroboam's religious innovations, see 1 Kings 12.28; 13.33; 14.8–9. **15:** *High places,* **local open-air sanctuaries, often condemned as idolatrous.** *Goat-demons,* an obscure and polemical reference not found in the source text depicting Jeroboam's religious innovations (1 Kings 12.28). Worship of goat-demons is outlawed in Priestly legislation (Lev 17.7). **18–21:** Large families, including multiple royal wives, signify stature in Chronicles (1 Chr 14.3; 2 Chr 11.18–23; 13.21; 14.3–7; cf. Gen 1.28). **22–23:** Like his grandfather David (1 Chr 18.17), Rehoboam appoints his sons to positions in his administration.

12.1–16: National decline and a reprieve. After a short recovery (11.1–23), Rehoboam and Judah abandon *the law of the LORD* and therefore Egypt invades (cf. 1 Kings 14.25). The outlines of the Egyptian invasion are found in 1 Kings 14.25–28, but the Chronicler has elaborated them significantly, especially in his additions of vv. 1,2b–8, which suggest that the invasion was punishment for unfaithfulness. **2:** *Shishak* (Shoshenq I) ruled Egypt 945–924 BCE. **3:** *Sukkiim,* unknown. **5:** The prophet's speech, like many other biblical texts, invokes the principle of measure for measure: Those who abandon God will be abandoned by God. **6–8:** Because of their repentance (cf. 11.1–4), Rehoboam and the people stave off complete disaster. Hence, Rehoboam is the first of many kings to benefit from God's promises in response to Solomon's Temple prayer (7.12–15). The stress on repentance at

liverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. 8 Nevertheless they shall be his servants, so that they may know the difference between serving me and serving the kingdoms of other lands."

9 So King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took everything. He also took away the shields of gold that Solomon had made; 10 but King Rehoboam made in place of them shields of bronze, and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house. 11 Whenever the king went into the house of the LORD, the guard would come along bearing them, and would then bring them back to the guardroom. 12 Because he humbled himself the wrath of the LORD turned from him, so as not to destroy them completely; moreover, conditions were good in Judah.

13 So King Rehoboam established himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. 14 He did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.

15 Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of the prophet Shemaiah and of the seer Iddo, recorded by genealogy? There were continual wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. 16 Rehoboam slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David; and his son Abijah succeeded him.

13 In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah began to reign over Judah. 2 He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

Now there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. 3 Abijah engaged in battle, having an army of valiant warriors, four hundred thousand picked men; and Jeroboam drew up his line of battle against him with eight hundred thousand picked mighty warriors. 4 Then Abijah stood on the slope of Mount Zemaraim that is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel! 5 Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? 6 Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, a servant of Solomon son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord; 7 and certain

various times in Judah's history (2 Chr 12.5–12; 19.1–11; 25.5–13; 33.12–13) is largely absent from Kings. **13–16:** Cf. 1 Kings 14.21–24,29–31. **15:** *Iddo,* see 9.29n.

13.1–22: The successful reign of Abijah (911–908 BCE). In Chronicles, as opposed to 1 Kings 15.1–8, Abijah, whose name means "my (divine) father is Yah(weh)" (called Abijam in 1 Kings), is one of Judah's better monarchs. In a war against *Jeroboam and all Israel,* he defends the standards established by David and Solomon as normative for all Israelites. Much of the chapter is an original composition of the Chronicler, elaborating on 1 Kings 15.6. The fundamental principle illustrated through this narrative is "the people of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the LORD, the God of their ancestors" (v. 8). **2:** *Micaiah*. The Hebrew gives Abijah's mother a Yahwistic name (meaning "Who is like the LORD"), whereas the ancient versions name her "Maacah" in conformity with 1 Kings 15.2 and 2 Chr 11.20. **3:** Developing a theme of earlier "holy-war" narratives (Judg 7.2–8; 1 Sam 14.6; 17.45–47), the Chronicler here and elsewhere stresses that great numbers do not guarantee victory (14.7–14; 20.1–30; 24.24; cf. Zech 4.6). *Eight hundred thousand,* the Chronicler's numbers here and elsewhere are sometimes stupendous (e.g., 1 Chr 5.18; 23.3–5; 27.1–15; 2 Chr 14.8–9; 17.14–18; 25.5–6; 26.12–13; 28.6–8). Some scholars think that the Hebrew word for "thousand" refers simply to one military unit (see 1 Chr 13.1), meaning that the actual numbers involved would be far less. But the incredible numbers are more likely a literary convention or the Chronicler's embellishment to mark off Israel's classical past. The use of large, round numbers is also sometimes found in earlier biblical sources (e.g., 1 Kings 8.5,62–64). **4–5:** In speaking to *Jeroboam and all Israel* (the Northern Kingdom) of *the kingship over Israel* (the territory of all twelve tribes, called "the kingdom of the LORD" in v. 8; cf. 1 Chr 17.14; 28.5; 2 Chr 9.8n.) as belonging to the Davidic dynasty, Abijah plays on the different connotations of "Israel." The reference to *salt* indicates that the kingship that has been covenanted to David will be enduring (Lev 2.13; Num 18.19). **6–7:** Disunion occurred when Jeroboam and *worthless scoundrels*

worthless scoundrels gathered around him and defied Rehoboam son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and irresolute and could not withstand them.

8 "And now you think that you can withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David, because you are a great multitude and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made as gods for you. 9 Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the descendants of Aaron, and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes to be consecrated with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are no gods. 10 But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not abandoned him. We have priests ministering to the LORD who are descendants of Aaron, and Levites for their service. 11 They offer to the LORD every morning and every evening burnt offerings and fragrant incense, set out the rows of bread on the table of pure gold, and care for the golden lampstand so that its lamps may burn every evening; for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have abandoned him. 12 See, God is with us at our head, and his priests have their battle trumpets to sound the call to battle against you. O Israelites, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your ancestors; for you cannot succeed."

13 Jeroboam had sent an ambush around to come on them from behind; thus his troops[a] were in front of Judah, and the ambush was behind them. 14 When Judah turned, the battle was in front of them and behind them. They cried out to the LORD, and the priests blew the trumpets. 15 Then the people of Judah raised the battle shout. And when the people of Judah shouted, God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. 16 The Israelites fled before Judah, and God gave them into their hands. 17 Abijah and his army defeated them with great slaughter; five hundred thousand picked men of Israel fell slain. 18 Thus the Israelites were subdued at that time, and the people of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the LORD, the God of their ancestors. 19 Abijah pursued Jeroboam, and took cities from him: Bethel with its villages and Jeshanah with its villages and Ephron[b] with its villages. 20 Jeroboam did not recover his power in the days of Abijah; the LORD struck him down, and he died. 21 But Abijah grew strong. He took fourteen wives, and became the father of twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. 22 The rest of the acts of Abijah, his behavior and his deeds, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

14 [c] So Abijah slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in the city of David. His son Asa succeeded him. In his days the land had rest for ten years. 2 [d] Asa

[a] Heb *they*
[b] Another reading is *Ephrain*
[c] Ch 13.23 in Heb
[d] Ch 14.1 in Heb

exploited a young and inexperienced Rehoboam. This polemicizes against 1 Kings 11.11–13,29–38. **8–11:** Abijah's enumeration of the proper religious practices of Judah is heavily indebted to the descriptions of Temple worship during the United Monarchy (1 Chr 15–16; 23–29; 2 Chr 2–4) and the descriptions of tabernacle worship during the era of Moses (Ex 25.30–40; 29.1–9,38–42; 30.7–10; Lev 24.3–9; Num 8.2–4; 28.3–8). **19:** Judah recaptures some of the territory it presumably lost in the secession. The Chronicler commends Judean kings who exercise influence in the northern realm (15.8–9; 17.2; 30.5–12; 34.6–7,33). **20:** Here God himself struck Jeroboam *and he died;* cf. 1 Kings 14.19–20. **21:** See 11.18–21n. **22:** *Story,* Heb "midrash," which can also be translated as exposition, study, or "commentary" (24.27; cf. Sir 51.23). The reference thus designates a writing or commentary of *Iddo* (rather than an annalistic account) on the early monarchy. See also 9.29n.; 12.15.

14.1–15.19: Reforms, victory, and expansion: the first period of Asa's reign (908–867 BCE). The Chronicler's treatment of Asa (14.1–16.14), almost three times longer than that of 1 Kings 15.9–24, presents two distinct phases in Asa's reign: a long thirty-four-year period of fidelity and a short seven-year period of infidelity (16.1–12). The shorter text of Kings is supplemented significantly. Kings has a pattern of piety followed by lack of trust in God. The Chronicler subsumes elements of Kings to his retribution theology, creating a more detailed pattern of piety and its reward, then impiety and its punishment. Prophetic figures play a significant role in these elaborations. **14.1:** In Chronicles *rest* from war is a sign of divine blessing (1 Chr 17.8–9; 22.9; 2 Chr 14.6; 32.22). **2–8:** At the beginning of his reign Asa takes advantage of peaceful conditions to institute religious reforms

did what was good and right in the sight of the LORD his God. 3 He took away the foreign altars and the high places, broke down the pillars, hewed down the sacred poles,[a] 4 and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to keep the law and the commandment. 5 He also removed from all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars. And the kingdom had rest under him. 6 He built fortified cities in Judah while the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the LORD gave him peace. 7 He said to Judah, "Let us build these cities, and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars; the land is still ours because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought him, and he has given us peace on every side." So they built and prospered. 8 Asa had an army of three hundred thousand from Judah, armed with large shields and spears, and two hundred eighty thousand troops from Benjamin who carried shields and drew bows; all these were mighty warriors.

9 Zerah the Ethiopian[b] came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. 10 Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up their lines of battle in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. 11 Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is no difference for you between helping the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let no mortal prevail against you." 12 So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians[c] before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians[c] fled. 13 Asa and the army with him pursued them as far as Gerar, and the Ethiopians[c] fell until no one remained alive; for they were broken before the LORD and his army. The people of Judah[d] carried away a great quantity of booty. 14 They defeated all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD was on them. They plundered all the cities; for there was much plunder in them. 15 They also attacked the tents of those who had livestock,[e] and carried away sheep and goats in abundance, and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

15 The spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. 2 He went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you, while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you. 3 For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law; 4 but when in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them. 5 In those times it was not safe for anyone to go or come, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. 6 They were broken in pieces, nation against nation and city against city, for God troubled them with every sort of distress. 7 But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded."

[a] Heb *Asherim*
[b] Or *Nubian*; Heb *Cushite*
[c] Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*
[d] Heb *They*
[e] Meaning of Heb uncertain

(cf. 1 Kings 15.12–15) and embark on a series of public works. **5:** Recalling times of peace in Judges (3.11, 30; 5.31; 8.28), Chronicles attributes times of *rest* to divine blessing (2 Chr 13.23;23.21;20.30). **8–9:** On the large numbers, see 13.3n. **9–15:** Another "holy-war" narrative (cf. 13.2–20) in which an outnumbered Judah confronts a much more powerful foe (Zerah, who is otherwise unknown). In the midst of battle, Asa calls out to the LORD for deliverance in accordance with the petitions of Solomon's prayer (6.34–35). When king and people rely on God, they are able to achieve a major victory and take enormous booty (vv. 12–15). **9:** *Ethiopian,* lit., "Cushite." Cush was an area to the south of Egypt. Sudan, Nubia, and Ethiopia are all possibilities. **10:** *Mareshah,* ca. 25 mi (40 km) southwest of Jerusalem, one of the southern cities fortified by Rehoboam (see 11.5–10). See map on p. 638. **15.1–7:** The prophet Azariah (whose name means "the LORD has helped") appears only in this chapter. His oracle speaks of reciprocity in divine-human relations. *The LORD is with you, while you are with him* (15.2), the corollary of the measure-for-measure principle articulated earlier by Shemaiah (12.5). The prophet points to the chaos of the distant past, alluding to the times of the judges and other occasions of decline, and warns Asa about

8 When Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah son of Oded,[a] he took courage, and put away the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim. He repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD.[b] 9 He gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing as aliens with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. 10 They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. 11 They sacrificed to the LORD on that day, from the booty that they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. 12 They entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and with all their soul. 13 Whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. 14 They took an oath to the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with horns. 15 All Judah rejoiced over the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.

16 King Asa even removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother because she had made an abominable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the Wadi Kidron. 17 But the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was true all his days. 18 He brought into the house of God the votive gifts of his father and his own votive gifts—silver, gold, and utensils. 19 And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.

16 In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, King Baasha of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, to prevent anyone from going out or coming into the territory of[c] King Asa of Judah. 2 Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the LORD and the king's house, and sent them to King Ben-hadad of Aram, who resided in Damascus, saying, 3 "Let there be an alliance between me and you, like that between my father and your father; I am sending to you silver and gold; go, break your alliance with King Baasha of Israel, so that he may withdraw from me." 4 Ben-hadad listened to King Asa, and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel. They conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali. 5 When Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah, and let his work cease. 6 Then King Asa brought all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building, and with them he built up Geba and Mizpah.

7 At that time the seer Hanani came to King Asa of Judah, and said to him, "Because you relied on the king of Aram, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped you. 8 Were not

[a] Compare Syr Vg: Heb *the prophecy, the prophet Obed*
[b] Heb *the vestibule of the* LORD
[c] Heb lacks *the territory of*

the perils of abandoning God. **8–19:** In response to Azariah's admonitions, Asa initiates a covenant renewal (vv. 8–15; cf. Ex 19.3–8) and institutes further religious reforms (vv. 16–18; cf. 1 Kings 15.13–15). **9:** *From Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon.* Even though Simeon is located south of Judah, it is often counted among the northern tribes in earlier biblical literature (Gen 29.33; 34.25,30; 35.23; 46.10). That members of these tribes had defected to Asa is an indication of diving blessing. 19: *No more war.* In accordance with presenting this period as a time of divine favor, Chronicles corrects its source (1 Kings 15.16).

16.1–14: Asa's decline. The war with Baasha (cf. 1 Kings 15.16–22) marks a turning point in Asa's tenure because he enters an alliance with *Ben-hadad of Aram* to counter an invasion by *Baasha of Israel.* Even though Asa enters this treaty in self-defense, the Chronicler considers such alliances as compromising Judah's commitment to God, who can defend the powerless from the mighty (2 Chr 13.8; 14.10; 20.2–24; 32.7). Opposition to pacts with foreign powers is also found in earlier biblical literature (Deut 7.2; Hos 7.10–13; 8.9–10; Isa 20; 28.14–28; 30.1–5; Jer 2.14–19,33–37). **1:** *Ramah* was located just 6 mi (9 km) north of Jerusalem. **7–9:** The judgment oracle of *the seer Hanani* (apparently the father of the prophet Jehu; 19.2) heightens the disparity between the two

the Ethiopians[a] and the Libyans a huge army with exceedingly many chariots and cavalry? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the entire earth, to strengthen those whose heart is true to him. You have done foolishly in this; for from now on you will have wars." 10 Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in the stocks, in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties on some of the people at the same time.

11 The acts of Asa, from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe; yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians. 13 Then Asa slept with his ancestors, dying in the forty-first year of his reign. 14 They buried him in the tomb that he had hewn out for himself in the city of David. They laid him on a bier that had been filled with various kinds of spices prepared by the perfumer's art; and they made a very great fire in his honor.

17 His son Jehoshaphat succeeded him, and strengthened himself against Israel. 2 He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim that his father Asa had taken. 3 The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father;[b] he did not seek the Baals, 4 but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the ways of Israel. 5 Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand. All Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor. 6 His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD; and furthermore he removed the high places and the sacred poles[c] from Judah.

7 In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. 8 With them were the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah; and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram. 9 They taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the LORD with them; they went around through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.

10 The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands around Judah, and they did not make war against Jehoshaphat. 11 Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute; and the Arabs also brought him seven thousand seven hundred

[a] Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*
[b] Another reading is *his father David*
[c] Heb *Asherim*

periods of Asa's rule. Whereas Asa formerly relied on God and was able to defeat the vast armies of *Ethiopia* and *Libya* (14.7–14; 15.8), Asa's reliance on Ben-hadad is tantamount to nonreliance on the LORD (16.7). Ironically, Asa will now always be plagued by *wars* (cf. 1 Kings 15.16). **12:** The infirmity in Asa's feet (1 Kings 15.23) becomes another indication of Asa's unfaithfulness, because *in his disease he did not seek the LORD.* The comment that he relied on physicians reflects an ironic pun on Asa's name, which the Chronicler likely construed (based on Aramaic) as "healer" or "physician."

17.1–19: The promising beginning to the reign of Jehoshaphat (870–846 BCE). Both Kings and Chronicles commend Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22.43–44; 2 Chr 17.3–4; 20.32–33), but the Chronicler's depiction of Jehoshaphat's reign is much more extensive and includes major events not recorded in Kings. Scholars continue to debate whether these events were based on the additional sources that the Chronicler had or were freely composed. Most of the new material, such as Jehoshaphat's civil, military, and judicial reforms (17.1–19; 19.4–11) and his war against the eastern coalition (20.1–30), reflects well on Jehoshaphat. Upon taking office, Jehoshaphat immediately takes charge of his kingdom. As he institutes reforms, deploys troops, and fortifies cities, Jehoshaphat only grows stronger and more widely respected. Prophetic material concerning the northern prophet Elijah, which is embedded in Jehoshaphat's reign in Kings, is absent here. **2:** *Cities of Ephraim,* probably referring to 13.19; 15.8. **7–9:** Jehoshaphat initiates a campaign to educate the Judean people in *the book of the law of the LORD* (cf. Deut 17.18–20; 2 Kings 22.8–13) by sending officers, Levites, and priests throughout the cities of Judah. This addition reflects the growing importance in the postexilic era of the Torah-book, and of the Levites as teachers (see esp. Neh 8). **11:** Tribute from the nations is a sign of divine favor (1 Chr 18.6; 2 Chr 8.2; 9.1–9; 26.8).

rams and seven thousand seven hundred male goats. [12] Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built fortresses and storage cities in Judah. [13] He carried out great works in the cities of Judah. He had soldiers, mighty warriors, in Jerusalem. [14] This was the muster of them by ancestral houses: Of Judah, the commanders of the thousands: Adnah the commander, with three hundred thousand mighty warriors, [15] and next to him Jehohanan the commander, with two hundred eighty thousand, [16] and next to him Amasiah son of Zichri, a volunteer for the service of the LORD, with two hundred thousand mighty warriors. [17] Of Benjamin: Eliada, a mighty warrior, with two hundred thousand armed with bow and shield, [18] and next to him Jehozabad with one hundred eighty thousand armed for war. [19] These were in the service of the king, besides those whom the king had placed in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

18 Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor; and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab. [2] After some years he went down to Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered an abundance of sheep and oxen for him and for the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead. [3] King Ahab of Israel said to King Jehoshaphat of Judah, "Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?" He answered him, "I am with you, my people are your people. We will be with you in the war."

[4] But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "Inquire first for the word of the LORD." [5] Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred of them, and said to them, "Shall we go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" They said, "Go up; for God will give it into the hand of the king." [6] But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no other prophet of the LORD here of whom we may inquire?" [7] The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one other by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies anything favorable about me, but only disaster." Jehoshaphat said, "Let the king not say such a thing." [8] Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah." [9] Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes; and they were sitting at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. [10] Zedekiah son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, "Thus says the LORD: With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are destroyed." [11] All the prophets were prophesying the same and saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."

[12] The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably." [13] But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak."

[14] When he had come to the king, the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?" He answered, "Go up and triumph; they will be given into your hand." [15] But the king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the

14–18: On the large numbers, see 13.3n.

18.1–19.3: Jehoshaphat's first misstep. The Chronicler relates two shortcomings of Jehoshaphat, both involving his relations with northern Israel. The first involves Jehoshaphat's ill-fated treaty with the king of Israel, Ahab, in 1 Kings 22.1–40, which is reproduced with very few changes. **18.1:** Presumably this *marriage alliance* involved Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, and Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (21.6; 22.2; cf. 2 Kings 8.18). In the reign of Jehoshaphat's successors, the relationship with Ahab's dynasty becomes the conduit for Judah's royalty to adopt ill-advised and iniquitous policies (21.6; 22.3–5). **2:** The lavish feast, during which Ahab incites his Judean counterpart, does not appear in 1 Kings 22. **2–3:** *Ramoth-gilead* was an Israelite city in northern Jordan that had apparently been captured by the Arameans. **3:** *I am with you,* the Chronicler depicts Jehoshaphat as a willing and equal partner to his northern counterpart, Ahab. In 1 Kings 22.2–4, Jehoshaphat appears as the junior partner in the coalition. **10:** A symbolic action, as elsewhere in the prophetic repertoire.

name of the LORD?" [16] Then Micaiah[a] said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd; and the LORD said, 'These have no master; let each one go home in peace.' " [17] The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy anything favorable about me, but only disaster?"

[18] Then Micaiah[a] said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing to the right and to the left of him. [19] And the LORD said, 'Who will entice King Ahab of Israel, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' Then one said one thing, and another said another, [20] until a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' The LORD asked him, 'How?' [21] He replied, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then the LORD[a] said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do it.' [22] So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets; the LORD has decreed disaster for you."

[23] Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah came up to Micaiah, slapped him on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?" [24] Micaiah replied, "You will find out on that day when you go in to hide in an inner chamber." [25] The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; [26] and say, 'Thus says the king: Put this fellow in prison, and feed him on reduced rations of bread and water until I return in peace.' " [27] Micaiah said, "If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Hear, you peoples, all of you!"

[28] So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. [29] The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle. [30] Now the king of Aram had commanded the captains of his chariots, "Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel." [31] When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is the king of Israel." So they turned to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him. God drew them away from him, [32] for when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. [33] But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate; so he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around, and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded." [34] The battle grew hot that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening; then at sunset he died.

19 King Jehoshaphat of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. [2] Jehu son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. [3] Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the sacred poles[b] out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God."

[4] Jehoshaphat resided at Jerusalem; then he went out again among the people, from

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Heb *Asheroth*

18: The LORD is meeting with his heavenly council (see Job 1.6; 2.1; Ps 82.1), and the prophet is a witness to the proceedings (see Jer 23.18,22). **21–22:** The revelation that the prophets have received is itself false; cf. Deut 13.3. **31:** *The LORD helped him,* this phrase, which does not appear in 1 Kings 22, is added by the Chronicler to reinforce his theology: God, who is fair and compassionate (2 Chr 7.12–15), is in control of events.

19.1–20.30: In contrast to the previous Jehoshaphat material, this has no parallel in Kings. **19.1–3:** This rebuke by the prophet *Jehu son of Hanani* (see 16.7–9n.) chastises Jehoshaphat for entering into a coalition with Ahab of Israel (see ch 18). Jehoshaphat was disloyal to God in that he proposed to *help the wicked* and was loyal to *those who hate the LORD.* Fidelity to one precludes fidelity to the other.

19.4–11: Recovery and further reforms. Jehoshaphat returns to and develops policies he instituted at the beginning of his reign (17.1–19). The geographic scope of the restoration (v. 4) is extensive, reclaiming

Beer-sheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. 5 He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, 6 and said to the judges, "Consider what you are doing, for you judge not on behalf of human beings but on the LORD's behalf; he is with you in giving judgment. 7 Now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care what you do, for there is no perversion of justice with the LORD our God, or partiality, or taking of bribes."

8 Moreover in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem. 9 He charged them: "This is how you shall act: in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart; 10 whenever a case comes to you from your kindred who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or ordinances, then you shall instruct them, so that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come on you and your kindred. Do so, and you will not incur guilt. 11 See, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters; and the Levites will serve you as officers. Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the good!"

20 After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites,[a] came against Jehoshaphat for battle. 2 Messengers[b] came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,[c] from beyond the sea; already they are at Hazazon-tamar" (that is, En-gedi). 3 Jehoshaphat was afraid; he set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4 Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the towns of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

5 Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, 6 and said, "O LORD, God of our ancestors, are you not God in heaven? Do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In your hand are power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you. 7 Did you not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? 8 They have lived in it, and in it have built you a sanctuary for your name, saying, 9 'If disaster

[a] Compare 26.7: Heb *Ammonites*
[b] Heb *They*
[c] One Ms: MT *Aram*

Jehoshaphat's entire realm, including sections of the Northern Kingdom over which he held sway (17.1–2). Other texts depict the juridical responsibilities of monarchs (e.g., 2 Sam 8.15–18; 1 Kings 3.16–28), but only with Jehoshaphat in Chronicles do we find a full-blown judicial reform. He "appointed *judges . . . in all the fortified cities of Judah"* and established a court of appeals in the capital city of Jerusalem. Some see this as reflecting the creativity of the Chronicler, who derived this reform from the Heb word "shaphat," "to judge," in the king's name (cf. 16.12n.). **11:** The distinction between *matters of the LORD* and *the king's matters* is found only in Chronicles (1 Chr 26.30,32; 2 Chr 19.11) and Ezra (7.26), suggesting that the contours of this reform reflect Persian-period realities during which the Judeans were subject to a foreign king.

20.1–30: Dramatic triumph in holy war. Sometime after his judicial reformation, Jehoshaphat is confronted with an international crisis that threatens to overwhelm his people, the invasion of Judah (see v. 2) by a southeastern coalition of powers. **1:** *Meunites,* a textually difficult term. The Meunites, of disputed origin, are mentioned only in late biblical texts (1 Chr 4.41; 2 Chr 20.2; 26.7). The Meunites may have been a Transjordanian or Arabian group, or from one of several sites or areas called Maon (e.g., 1 Chr 2.45); see also Ezra 2.50 || Neh 7.52. **3–4:** Afraid, Jehoshaphat *set himself to seek the LORD* and proclaimed a national *fast* (cf. Judg 20.26 and 1 Sam 7.6; Jer 36.6,9; Zech 8.19; Joel 2.12; 2 Chr 1.5; 25.20). In resorting to Jerusalem, the people honor the divine directive given at Solomon's Temple dedication to seek the LORD in times of need (7.14). **6–12:** Jehoshaphat's prayer, which laments Judah's plight and solicits a divine response, recalls specific features of previous royal prayers (1 Chr 14.9,14; 29.10–19; 2 Chr 14.10–11). By contrasting divine omnipotence with human helplessness, the king lays the foundation for the petition that follows (v. 12). **7:** *Your friend,* lit., "your beloved"; see Isa 41.8. **8–9:** Echoing Solomon's prayer (see 6.28,34), Jehoshaphat's appeal is based on the existence of the Temple, the place

comes upon us, the sword, judgment,[a] or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house, and before you, for your name is in this house, and cry to you in our distress, and you will hear and save.' [10] See now, the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy— [11] they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession that you have given us to inherit. [12] O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

[13] Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. [14] Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the middle of the assembly. [15] He said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not fear or be dismayed at this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's. [16] Tomorrow go down against them; they will come up by the ascent of Ziz; you will find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel. [17] This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you."

[18] Then Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. [19] And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

[20] They rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God and you will be established; believe his prophets." [21] When he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy splendor, as they went before the army, saying,

"Give thanks to the LORD,
for his steadfast love endures forever."

[22] As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the Ammonites, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. [23] For the Ammonites and Moab attacked the inhabitants of Mount Seir, destroying them utterly; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.

[24] When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; they were corpses lying on the ground; no one had escaped. [25] When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take the booty from them, they found livestock[b] in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They spent three days taking the booty, because of its abundance. [26] On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the LORD; therefore that place has been called the Valley of Beracah[c] to this day. [27] Then all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat at their head, returned to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had enabled them to rejoice over their enemies. [28] They came to Jerusalem, with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the

[a] Or *the sword of judgment*
[b] Gk: Heb *among them*
[c] That is *Blessing*

where efficacious prayers could be offered (7.1–2,14). **11–12:** The very nations spared by the LORD when the Israelites entered the land (Deut 2.1–22) are now threatening Judah's existence within it. **14–17:** The levitical singer *Jahaziel* serves as a prophet and as the designate priest, as in other sacral wars (see Deut 20.2–4; 1 Chr 25.1–8). His assurance of victory, evoked as elsewhere by faith in God, quotes both Moses (Ex 14.13–14) and David (1 Sam 17.47). **16:** *Ziz . . . Jeruel,* occurring only here; precise locations unknown. **17:** The residents of Jerusalem and Judah are to play the role of onlookers. **20: See** Isa 7.9. **22–23:** The divine warrior throws Israel's enemies into a panic (cf. Judg 7.22; 1 Sam 14.20) so that they attack each other. **19.** *Korahites*, see 1 Chr 6.22n. **21:** *For his steadfast*

house of the LORD. 29 The fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. 30 And the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

31 So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. 32 He walked in the way of his father Asa and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. 33 Yet the high places were not removed; the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their ancestors.

34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, are written in the Annals of Jehu son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

35 After this King Jehoshaphat of Judah joined with King Ahaziah of Israel, who did wickedly. 36 He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish; they built the ships in Ezion-geber. 37 Then Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.

21 Jehoshaphat slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David; his son Jehoram succeeded him. 2 He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah; all these were the sons of King Jehoshaphat of Judah.[a] 3 Their father gave them many gifts, of silver, gold, and valuable possessions, together with fortified cities in Judah; but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram, because he was the firstborn. 4 When Jehoram had ascended the throne of his father and was established, he put all his brothers to the sword, and also some of the officials of Israel. 5 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 6 He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. 7 Yet the LORD would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant that he had made with David, and since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his descendants forever.

8 In his days Edom revolted against the rule of Judah and set up a king of their own. 9 Then Jehoram crossed over with his commanders and all his chariots. He set out by night and attacked the Edomites, who had surrounded him and his chariot commanders. 10 So Edom has been in revolt against the rule of Judah to this day. At that time Libnah also revolted against his rule, because he had forsaken the LORD, the God of his ancestors.

11 Moreover he made high places in the hill country of Judah, and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into unfaithfulness, and made

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *Israel*

love . . ., see 7.3n. **29:** As in other "holy wars," *the fear of God* descends upon *all the kingdoms of the countries* (Ex 15.14–16; Deut 2.25; 11.25; Josh 2.9,11,24; 5.1; 10.1–2; 1 Sam 4.7–8; 14.15; 1 Chr 14.7; 2 Chr 14.13).

20.31–37: Jehoshaphat's second misstep. Following the concluding notices to Jehoshaphat's reign (vv. 31–34; on *Jehu* see 16.7n.; cf. 1 Kings 22.41–45), the author narrates a failure. Again (18.1–19.3), a pact with Israel (vv. 35–37) marks a regression in Jehoshaphat's rule. Here, after the covenant is condemned by a prophet, "*the ships were wrecked*" (cf. 1 Kings 22.48–49). **36:** *Tarshish,* see 9.21n. *Ezion-geber* was a port city on the Red Sea.

21.1–20: Decline under Jehoram (851–843 BCE). Like the Elijah material, the Elisha material, found in Kings as part of the account of Jehoram's reign, is lacking in Chronicles. Jehoram appears as a more wicked king in Chronicles than in the briefer, but also negative, account of 2 Kings 8.16–24. He intensifies the pattern of close cooperation with the Northern Kingdom begun by his father (21.6; cf. 18.1–34; 20.35–37). **2–4:** Jehoram's *brothers,* who had possessions and administrative responsibilities in their own right (cf. 11.22–23n.), are eliminated by the new king. This story, not found in Kings, underscores the rule of Jehoram as a low point in the Judahite monarchy. **5–7:** The divine promises (1 Chr 17.1–15) restrain the exercise of divine wrath against *the house of David* (cf. 2 Kings 8.17–19). **7:** *Lamp,* perhaps better "fief" or "territorial dominion." The promises are interpreted as involving continued rule for David's descendants in Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 11.36). **8–10:** Largely taken from 2 Kings 8.20–22. **10:** The revolt of Libnah (see 2 Kings 8.22) is explained by the Chronicler as another

Judah go astray. 12 A letter came to him from the prophet Elijah, saying: "Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David: Because you have not walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or in the ways of King Asa of Judah, 13 but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into unfaithfulness, as the house of Ahab led Israel into unfaithfulness, and because you also have killed your brothers, members of your father's house, who were better than yourself, 14 see, the LORD will bring a great plague on your people, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, 15 and you yourself will have a severe sickness with a disease of your bowels, until your bowels come out, day after day, because of the disease."

16 The LORD aroused against Jehoram the anger of the Philistines and of the Arabs who are near the Ethiopians.[a] 17 They came up against Judah, invaded it, and carried away all the possessions they found that belonged to the king's house, along with his sons and his wives, so that no son was left to him except Jehoahaz, his youngest son.

18 After all this the LORD struck him in his bowels with an incurable disease. 19 In course of time, at the end of two years, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great agony. His people made no fire in his honor, like the fires made for his ancestors. 20 He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. He departed with no one's regret. They buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

22 The inhabitants of Jerusalem made his youngest son Ahaziah king as his successor; for the troops who came with the Arabs to the camp had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram reigned as king of Judah. 2 Ahaziah was forty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri. 3 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly. 4 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done; for after the death of his father they were his counselors, to his ruin. 5 He even followed their advice, and went with Jehoram son of King Ahab of Israel to make war against King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram, 6 and he returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that he had received at Ramah, when he fought King Hazael of Aram. And Ahaziah son of King Jehoram of Judah went

[a] Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

divine punishment. **12–15:** Elijah's letter, unparalleled in Kings, is remarkable. Elijah has not previously been mentioned in Chronicles and, according to the chronology in Kings, may have already ascended at this point. Furthermore, early prophecy was primarily oral; the use of a letter reflects the increasing significance of a written book-culture in the Chronicler's time. **16–17:** A foreign invasion plunders Judah and leaves Jehoram with only his youngest son still living in Jerusalem (cf. v. 14). *Ethiopians*, see 14.9n. **17:** *Jehoahaz*, see 22.1–9n. **18–19:** A fulfillment of Elijah's prediction (v. 15). *Disease*, cf. 16.12. *Fire,* cf. 16.14. **20:** *Not in the tombs of kings*. The lack of proper royal burial signifies a final criticism of Jehoram's legacy. Cf. 2 Kings 8.23–24.

22.1–9: The brief and ill-fated reign of Ahaziah (843–842 BCE). Following the premature death of Jehoram (21.18–20), the inhabitants of Jerusalem install young Ahaziah (also called Jehoahaz in 21.17) as king (v. 1), but this effort at restoration soon fails. The effects of Ahaziah's collaboration with the Northern Kingdom and emulation of northern practices threaten to topple both the Davidic dynasty and the traditional pattern of Temple worship in Jerusalem (23.18; 24.7). **2:** *Forty-two years,* more likely "twenty-two years," as in 2 Kings 8.26. Ahaziah's father died at age forty (21.20). **3–4:** The expansion of Ahaziah's evaluation in 2 Kings 8.27 draws attention to the intimate involvement of *the house of Ahab* from the Northern Kingdom in Judean royal affairs. Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab (18.1n.), son of Omri. Here too the Chronicler assumes familiarity with the book of Kings. **5–9:** The failure of the alliance with Joram (2 Kings 8.28–29), the death of Ahaziah's kinsmen (2 Kings 10.12–14), and the death of Ahaziah himself (2 Kings 9.27) leaves a vacuum in Davidic leadership (v. 9). In Chronicles Ahaziah's demise is attributed to divine purpose (v. 7a). On the anointing of Jehu and the assassination of Joram, see 2 Kings 9.1–26, which deals with Elisha and the Northern Kingdom, and thus has no parallel in Chronicles.

down to see Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

7 But it was ordained by God that the downfall of Ahaziah should come about through his going to visit Joram. For when he came there he went out with Jehoram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab. 8 When Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he met the officials of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's brothers, who attended Ahaziah, and he killed them. 9 He searched for Ahaziah, who was captured while hiding in Samaria and was brought to Jehu, and put to death. They buried him, for they said, "He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart." And the house of Ahaziah had no one able to rule the kingdom.

10 Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead, she set about to destroy all the royal family of the house of Judah. 11 But Jehoshabeath, the king's daughter, took Joash son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's children who were about to be killed; she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath, daughter of King Jehoram and wife of the priest Jehoiada—because she was a sister of Ahaziah—hid him from Athaliah, so that she did not kill him; 12 he remained with them six years, hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

23 But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage, and entered into a compact with the commanders of the hundreds, Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zichri. 2 They went around through Judah and gathered the Levites from all the towns of Judah, and the heads of families of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. 3 Then the whole assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. Jehoiada[a] said to them, "Here is the king's son! Let him reign, as the LORD promised concerning the sons of David. 4 This is what you are to do: one-third of you, priests and Levites, who come on duty on the sabbath, shall be gatekeepers, 5 one-third shall be at the king's house, and one-third at the Gate of the Foundation; and all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the LORD. 6 Do not let anyone enter the house of the LORD except the priests and ministering Levites; they may enter, for they are holy, but all the other[b] people shall observe the instructions of the LORD. 7 The Levites shall surround the king, each with his weapons in his hand; and whoever enters the house shall be killed. Stay with the king in his comings and goings."

8 The Levites and all Judah did according to all that the priest Jehoiada commanded; each brought his men, who were to come on duty on the sabbath, with those who were to go off duty on the sabbath; for the priest Jehoiada did not dismiss the divisions. 9 The priest Jehoiada delivered to the captains the spears and the large and small shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of God; 10 and he set all the people as a guard for the king, everyone with weapon in hand, from the south side of the house to the north side of the house, around the altar and the house. 11 Then he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the covenant;[c] they proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and

[a] Heb *He*
[b] Heb lacks *other*
[c] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

22.10–23.15: The tenure and fall of Athaliah. Athaliah's reign (842–836 BCE; cf. 2 Kings 11.1–16) marks the point of gravest threat in a long sequence of repeated blows to the Davidic dynasty. Her plan to eliminate all potential heirs is thwarted, however, by *Jehoshabeath, daughter of King Jehoram* (22.11–12; called Jehosheba in Kings). **23.1–7:** The first steps in the plot against Athaliah (2 Kings 11.4–8) are rewritten according to the Chronicler's characteristic interests in the Levites, priests, gatekeepers, the heads of the families of Israel, and the people at large (cf. 1 Chr 15–16; 23–27). From the outset, the coup is the work of all the people, not just select military officers. **1:** *Compact,* Heb "berit," usually translated "covenant." **3:** The restoration honors the enduring political standards bequeathed to Israel during the United Monarchy. A return to normalcy after a period of apostasy or upheaval includes the restoration of the Davidic dynasty (22.1; 23.20–21; 26.1; 33.25; 36.1). **7:** On the military dimension of levitical duties, see 1 Chr 26.1–19n. **11:** *The covenant,* Heb "'edut," probably a list of

his sons anointed him; and they shouted, "Long live the king!"

12 When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she went into the house of the LORD to the people; 13 and when she looked, there was the king standing by his pillar at the entrance, and the captains and the trumpeters beside the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and the singers with their musical instruments leading in the celebration. Athaliah tore her clothes, and cried, "Treason! Treason!" 14 Then the priest Jehoiada brought out the captains who were set over the army, saying to them, "Bring her out between the ranks; anyone who follows her is to be put to the sword." For the priest said, "Do not put her to death in the house of the LORD." 15 So they laid hands on her; she went into the entrance of the Horse Gate of the king's house, and there they put her to death.

16 Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they should be the LORD's people. 17 Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, in front of the altars. 18 Jehoiada assigned the care of the house of the LORD to the levitical priests whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the LORD, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. 19 He stationed the gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the LORD so that no one should enter who was in any way unclean. 20 And he took the captains, the nobles, the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and they brought the king down from the house of the LORD, marching through the upper gate to the king's house. They set the king on the royal throne. 21 So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been killed with the sword.

24 Joash was seven years old when he began to reign; he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; his mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2 Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of the priest Jehoiada. 3 Jehoiada got two wives for him, and he became the father of sons and daughters.

4 Some time afterward Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD. 5 He assembled the priests and the Levites and said to them, "Go out to the cities of Judah and gather money from all Israel to repair the house of your God, year by year; and see that you act quickly." But the Levites did not act quickly. 6 So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief, and said to him, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant of

divinely given laws. **13:** The *pillar,* probably Jachin or Boaz; see 3.15–17. On *the people of the land* see 2 Kings 11.14n.

23.16–21: The reformation of Jehoiada. This priest leads *the people* in undoing the damage inflicted by Athaliah and her predecessors (cf. 2 Kings 11.17–20). His efforts result in the destruction of the temple of the Canaanite god Baal, the reinstitution of proper personnel at the Temple, and the enthronement of young Joash. **16:** As in Asa's reign, a national covenant (Heb "berit") is made or renewed (15.8–19). **18–19:** These verses are an addition by the Chronicler in the middle of a narrative that otherwise largely follows Kings. They emphasize two issues that are key to the Chronicler: the role of *the law of Moses* and the role of *David* in organizing the Temple service. **21:** The *quiet* that descends on Jerusalem is a sign of divine blessing (1 Chr 4.40; 22.9; 2 Chr 14.1,6; 20.30).

24.1–27: The Temple restoration of Joash (836–798 BCE) and his later regression. Following and embellishing Kings, where the king's name is spelled Jehoash, the Chronicler devotes considerable attention to Joash's restoration of the Temple, but in contrast to his source, limits it to the life of the priest Jehoiada (cf. 2 Kings 12). After the good priest dies (vv. 15–16), Joash falls under the influence of his officers and backslides (vv. 17–22). He subsequently confronts a disastrous foreign invasion (vv. 23–24) and a successful conspiracy (vv. 25–26). **3:** On large families, see 11.18–21n. **4–14:** Joash expends great effort to rebuild the neglected Temple. He displays strong leadership in ensuring that the renovations proceed rapidly (vv. 5–6). The Chronicler, in an attempt to bolster the significance of the Temple, adds to his source, insisting that all donated funds were given with great enthusiasm (v. 10). **6:** *The tax levied by Moses,* see Ex 30.11–16; Lev 27.1–8.

the LORD, on[a] the congregation of Israel for the tent of the covenant?"[b] 7 For the children of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and had even used all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD for the Baals.

8 So the king gave command, and they made a chest, and set it outside the gate of the house of the LORD. 9 A proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to bring in for the LORD the tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel in the wilderness. 10 All the leaders and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until it was full. 11 Whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was a large amount of money in it, the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. So they did day after day, and collected money in abundance. 12 The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who had charge of the work of the house of the LORD, and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the LORD, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the LORD. 13 So those who were engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward at their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it. 14 When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money to the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the LORD, utensils for the service and for the burnt offerings, and ladles, and vessels of gold and silver. They offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD regularly all the days of Jehoiada.

15 But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died; he was one hundred thirty years old at his death. 16 And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and for God and his house.

17 Now after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and did obeisance to the king; then the king listened to them. 18 They abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and served the sacred poles[c] and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. 19 Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD; they testified against them, but they would not listen.

20 Then the spirit of God took possession of[d] Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada; he stood above the people and said to them, "Thus says God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has also forsaken you." 21 But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the LORD. 22 King Joash did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. As he was dying, he said, "May the LORD see and avenge!"

23 At the end of the year the army of Aram came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the officials of the people from among them, and sent all the booty they took to the king of Damascus. 24 Although the army of Aram had come with few men, the LORD delivered into their hand a very great army, because they had abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.

[a] Compare Vg: Heb *and*
[b] Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
[c] Heb *Asherim*
[d] Heb *clothed itself with*

7: *Children of Athaliah*. Another addition by the Chronicler, explaining the Temple's decrepit condition prior to Joash's reforms. **13–14:** The collections for Temple renovation are so successful that funds are left to fashion new *utensils, ladles,* and *vessels.* In this respect, the peoples' generosity recalls that displayed in the reign of David (1 Chr 29.11–19). **15–16:** The highly positive evaluation of the priest Jehoiada's tenure resembles those written about Judah's better kings; his unrealistically long life is a sign of divine favor. **17–22:** These episodes, not found in Kings, detail the extent of Joash's regression. They follow typical patterns of the Chronicler: apostasy, prophet's warning, lack of repentance, (a second warning,) and punishment. **20–21:** The assassination of the

25 When they had withdrawn, leaving him severely wounded, his servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son[a] of the priest Jehoiada, and they killed him on his bed. So he died; and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings. 26 Those who conspired against him were Zabad son of Shimeath the Ammonite, and Jehozabad son of Shimrith the Moabite. 27 Accounts of his sons, and of the many oracles against him, and of the rebuilding[b] of the house of God are written in the Commentary on the Book of the Kings. And his son Amaziah succeeded him.

25 Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 2 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not with a true heart. 3 As soon as the royal power was firmly in his hand he killed his servants who had murdered his father the king. 4 But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the law, in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, "The parents shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the parents; but all shall be put to death for their own sins."

5 Amaziah assembled the people of Judah, and set them by ancestral houses under commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He mustered those twenty years old and upward, and found that they were three hundred thousand picked troops fit for war, able to handle spear and shield. 6 He also hired one hundred thousand mighty warriors from Israel for one hundred talents of silver. 7 But a man of God came to him and said, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel—all these Ephraimites. 8 Rather, go by yourself and act; be strong in battle, or God will fling you down before the enemy; for God has power to help or to overthrow." 9 Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?" The man of God answered, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this." 10 Then Amaziah discharged the army that had come to him from Ephraim, letting them go home again. But they became very angry with Judah, and returned home in fierce anger.

11 Amaziah took courage, and led out his people; he went to the Valley of Salt, and struck down ten thousand men of Seir. 12 The people of Judah captured another ten thousand alive, took them to the top of Sela, and threw them down from the top of Sela, so that all of them were dashed to pieces. 13 But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, not letting them go with him to battle, fell on the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth-horon; they killed three thousand people in them, and took much booty.

14 Now after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up as his gods, and worshiped them, making offerings to them. 15 The LORD was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, "Why have you resorted to a people's gods who could not deliver their own people from

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *sons*
[b] Heb *founding*

prophet *Zechariah* is the work of both Joash and his officials. **25–26:** Joash himself falls victim to assassination in retaliation for the murder of Jehoiada's son(s) (v. 22; cf. 2 Kings 12.19–21). **27:** *Commentary,* see 13.22n.

25.1–28: The mixed record of Amaziah (789–769 BCE). The Chronicler expands the coverage devoted to Amaziah (2 Kings 14.2–14,17–20) through the addition of two sections (vv. 5–10 and vv. 12–16), each of which contains a prophetic figure. His reign is divided into two periods similar to other kings: In the first half of his tenure (vv. 1–13) Amaziah proves obedient to the prophetic word and enjoys success, while in the second half of his reign Amaziah engages in idolatry and suffers defeat (vv. 14–28). **3–4:** Amaziah avenges his father's death but does not violate Deut 24.16. **5–10:** The king's attempt, unparalleled in Kings, to supplement his country's muster by hiring Israelite mercenaries encounters a prophetic reprimand. **5–6:** On the large numbers, see 13.3n. A *hundred talents* weighed about 7,000 lb (3,400 kg). The Chronicler regards any military alliance, whether with foreign powers or with northern Israel, as illicit (see 16.1–14n.). **11–13:** The prophet's counsel of complete reliance on God results in Judah's victory (cf. 13.13–21; 14.7–14; 20.1–30), but the alienated mercenaries wreak some

your hand?" [16] But as he was speaking the king[a] said to him, "Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be put to death?" So the prophet stopped, but said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my advice."

[17] Then King Amaziah of Judah took counsel and sent to King Joash son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." [18] King Joash of Israel sent word to King Amaziah of Judah, "A thornbush on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for a wife'; but a wild animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thornbush. [19] You say, 'See, I have defeated Edom,' and your heart has lifted you up in boastfulness. Now stay at home; why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?"

[20] But Amaziah would not listen—it was God's doing, in order to hand them over, because they had sought the gods of Edom. [21] So King Joash of Israel went up; he and King Amaziah of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah. [22] Judah was defeated by Israel; everyone fled home. [23] King Joash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah, son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh; he brought him to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, a distance of four hundred cubits. [24] He seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God, and Obed-edom with them; he seized also the treasuries of the king's house, also hostages; then he returned to Samaria.

[25] King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, lived fifteen years after the death of King Joash son of Jehoahaz of Israel. [26] Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah, from first to last, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel? [27] From the time that Amaziah turned away from the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him to Lachish, and killed him there. [28] They brought him back on horses; he was buried with his ancestors in the city of David.

26 Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king to succeed his father Amaziah. [2] He rebuilt Eloth and restored it to Judah, after the king slept with his ancestors. [3] Uzziah was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. [4] He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. [5] He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.

[6] He went out and made war against the Philistines, and broke down the wall of Gath and the wall of Jabneh and the wall of Ashdod; he built cities in the territory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. [7] God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabs who lived in Gur-baal, and against the Meunites. [8] The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong. [9] Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem

[a] Heb *he*

havoc in Judah and Samaria. **20:** The second part of the verse is an expansion of the Chronicler's source (2 Kings 14.11), emphasizing that this was not a whim, but the fair punishment of God. **22–24:** Amaziah and his kingdom suffer further defeat and humiliation. As the people experience military loss, some destruction to Jerusalem, the plunder of the Temple and royal palace, and the capture of some of their soldiers as prisoners of war, they enter into a type of exilic situation (cf. 36.11–21) from which they need to be restored.

26.1–15: The builder and reformer, Uzziah (785–733 BCE). In Kings Uzziah (Azariah) is a minor figure (2 Kings 14.21–22; 15.1–7), but the much longer account in Chronicles presents this monarch as a major reformer whose fame extended all the way to Egypt (26.8). The additional material is of various types; some may be based on sources, while other pieces are likely composed by the Chronicler. **5:** The Chronicler links Uzziah's good conduct to the influence of Zechariah, an otherwise unattested prophet; cf. 24.22. **6–15:** Uzziah's achievements include territorial expansion, victory in war, rebuilding towns, and amassing a large, well-equipped army. Like David (1 Chr 27.25–31), Uzziah also enhances the condition of his royal estates. **7:** *Meunites,* see 20.2n.

at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the Angle, and fortified them. 10 He built towers in the wilderness and hewed out many cisterns, for he had large herds, both in the Shephelah and in the plain, and he had farmers and vinedressers in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil. 11 Moreover Uzziah had an army of soldiers, fit for war, in divisions according to the numbers in the muster made by the secretary Jeiel and the officer Maaseiah, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's commanders. 12 The whole number of the heads of ancestral houses of mighty warriors was two thousand six hundred. 13 Under their command was an army of three hundred seven thousand five hundred, who could make war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. 14 Uzziah provided for all the army the shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and stones for slinging. 15 In Jerusalem he set up machines, invented by skilled workers, on the towers and the corners for shooting arrows and large stones. And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped until he became strong.

16 But when he had become strong he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was false to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to make offering on the altar of incense. 17 But the priest Azariah went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor; 18 they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to make offering to the LORD, but for the priests the descendants of Aaron, who are consecrated to make offering. Go out of the sanctuary; for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God." 19 Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to make offering, and when he became angry with the priests a leprous[a] disease broke out on his forehead, in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense. 20 When the chief priest Azariah, and all the priests, looked at him, he was leprous[a] in his forehead. They hurried him out, and he himself hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. 21 King Uzziah was leprous[a] to the day of his death, and being leprous[a] lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the LORD. His son Jotham was in charge of the palace of the king, governing the people of the land.

22 Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz wrote. 23 Uzziah slept with his ancestors; they buried him near his ancestors in the burial field that belonged to the kings, for they said, "He is leprous."[a] His son Jotham succeeded him.

27 Jotham was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah daughter of Zadok. 2 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD just as his father Uzziah had done—only he did not invade the temple of the LORD. But the people still followed corrupt practices.

[a] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

12–13: On the large numbers, see 13.3n.

26.16–23: Uzziah's hubris. Having consolidated his rule and realm (1.1; 11.12; 17.1), Uzziah overreaches by encroaching upon the sacrificial duties of the priests. Most of this material is lacking in Kings, and it is likely a clever composition of the Chronicler, who imagined that the skin disease resulted from Uzzaih's assuming priestly prerogatives and entering the sanctuary with incense. Skin disease (NRSV *leprosy*; see textual note *a*) caused serious impurity (Lev 13–14), and thus Uzziah could never enter the Temple again. **16:** *False to the LORD*, lit., "acted faithlessly (Heb "m'l") against the LORD." **18:** *Go out of the sanctuary*. The priestly rebuke of the king for overstepping the bounds of royal prerogatives forewarns him of divine punishment to come. **21–23:** Except for the reference to Isaiah, this material is largely taken from 2 Kings 15.5–7. The attribution to Isaiah allows the Chronicler to lay claim to prophetic authority for at least some of the material in his narration of Uzziah's reign (cf. 1 Chr 29.29; 2 Chr 9.29; 13.22). **22:** *Isaiah*, on the prophets as authors of written works, see 1 Chr 29.29n. Uzziah appears in the introduction to Isaiah (1.1), but no Isaianic oracles focus on him.

27.1–9: The accomplishments of Jotham (759–743 BCE). As in Kings, Jotham is rated positively (2 Kings 15.32–38), but the Chronicler adds more material about his reign, especially about his public works and military might. The notice (2 Kings 15.37) of the LORD sending Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel against Judah is

3 He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD, and did extensive building on the wall of Ophel. 4 Moreover he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and forts and towers on the wooded hills. 5 He fought with the king of the Ammonites and prevailed against them. The Ammonites gave him that year one hundred talents of silver, ten thousand cors of wheat and ten thousand of barley. The Ammonites paid him the same amount in the second and the third years. 6 So Jotham became strong because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God. 7 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. 8 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. 9 Jotham slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in the city of David; and his son Ahaz succeeded him.

28 Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD, as his ancestor David had done, 2 but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made cast images for the Baals; 3 and he made offerings in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and made his sons pass through fire, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. 4 He sacrificed and made offerings on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

5 Therefore the LORD his God gave him into the hand of the king of Aram, who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with great slaughter. 6 Pekah son of Remaliah killed one hundred twenty thousand in Judah in one day, all of them valiant warriors, because they had abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors. 7 And Zichri, a mighty warrior of Ephraim, killed the king's son Maaseiah, Azrikam the commander of the palace, and Elkanah the next in authority to the king.

8 The people of Israel took captive two hundred thousand of their kin, women, sons, and daughters; they also took much booty from them and brought the booty to Samaria. 9 But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded; he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria, and said to them, "Because the LORD, the God of your ancestors, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have killed them in a rage that has reached up to heaven. 10 Now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. But what have you except sins against the LORD your God? 11 Now hear me, and send back the captives whom you have taken from your kindred, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you." 12 Moreover, certain chiefs of the Ephraimites, Azariah son of Johanan, Berechiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai, stood up against those who were coming from the war, 13 and said to them, "You shall not bring the captives in here, for you propose to bring on us guilt against the LORD in addition to our

omitted because it does not fit with the Chronicler's positive depiction of Jotham. **3:** *Ophel,* **part of Jerusalem's fortifications south of the Temple. 4:** Like Uzziah (26.6–10), Jotham does not confine his building initiatives to Jerusalem. He establishes towns in the hill country of Judah, and he builds fortresses and towers in the wooded areas. **5:** *Ammonites*, some scholars emend to "Meunites" (20.1n.), but no king of the Meunites is mentioned in other biblical texts. *Talent,* ca. 75 lb (34 kg); *cor,* ca. 6.5 bu (230 L).

28.1–27: Unending failure under Ahaz (ca. 743/753–727/715 BCE; the data are inconsistent). Unlike the reigns of almost all monarchs in Chronicles, the reign of Ahaz is one of unmitigated disaster. The reduction in territory and the loss in population due to death in war and deportations to foreign lands are unparalleled in the reign of any other Judahite king except the last, Zedekiah (36.11–21). The author selectively draws on 2 Kings 16, but his own presentation is substantially longer and different. Ahaz's refusal to turn from his wicked ways affords him the dubious distinction of being Judah's worst king (cf. 33.12–17). In Chronicles Judah never recovers completely either in territory or in population from the disasters experienced under Ahaz. **3:** *Pass through fire,* see 2 Kings 16.1–4n. **5–7:** The Chronicler directly attributes the onslaughts by Assyria and Israel (2 Kings 16.5) to divine retribution for Ahaz's religious transgressions (2 Kings 16.2–4; 2 Chr 28.2–4). Chronicles depicts two separate and distinct invasions, whereas 2 Kings 15.5–6 presents Syria and Israel as acting in consort. **8–15:** The people of Is-

present sins and guilt. For our guilt is already great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel." 14 So the warriors left the captives and the booty before the officials and all the assembly. 15 Then those who were mentioned by name got up and took the captives, and with the booty they clothed all that were naked among them; they clothed them, gave them sandals, provided them with food and drink, and anointed them; and carrying all the feeble among them on donkeys, they brought them to their kindred at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria.

16 At that time King Ahaz sent to the king[a] of Assyria for help. 17 For the Edomites had again invaded and defeated Judah, and carried away captives. 18 And the Philistines had made raids on the cities in the Shephelah and the Negeb of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages; and they settled there. 19 For the LORD brought Judah low because of King Ahaz of Israel, for he had behaved without restraint in Judah and had been faithless to the LORD. 20 So King Tilgath-pilneser of Assyria came against him, and oppressed him instead of strengthening him. 21 For Ahaz plundered the house of the LORD and the houses of the king and of the officials, and gave tribute to the king of Assyria; but it did not help him.

22 In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the LORD—this same King Ahaz. 23 For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, which had defeated him, and said, "Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, I will sacrifice to them so that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. 24 Ahaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God, and cut in pieces the utensils of the house of God. He shut up the doors of the house of the LORD and made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. 25 In every city of Judah he made high places to make offerings to other gods, provoking to anger the LORD, the God of his ancestors. 26 Now the rest of his acts and all his ways, from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 27 Ahaz slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem; but they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. His son Hezekiah succeeded him.

29 Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old; he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. 2 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, just as his ancestor David had done.

[a] Gk Syr Vg Compare 2 Kings 16.7: Heb *kings*

rael seize a vast number (see 13.3n.) of captives, but this act brings a strong prophetic censure and the prisoners are compassionately released. This section, most likely a free composition of the Chronicler, illustrates some of his basic concerns, including the need for prophetic warning before punishment, and the complete efficacy of repentance. That the prophet was a northern Israelite and the Israelites themselves repented indicates that the people of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms still had an essential unity as "kin" (vv. 8,11). **16–20:** Invasions by the Edomites and the Philistines prompted Ahaz to send Temple treasures as tribute to the king of Assyria *Tiglath-pilneser* (the Chronicler's spelling of Tiglath-pileser) III (745–727 BCE), but the Assyrian king *oppressed him* instead. Quite the opposite outcome presented in 2 Kings 16.7–9. There, the Assyrian king overtakes Damascus and kills the Israelite king Rezin. On the Chronicler's opposition to alliances, see 16.1–14n. **21:** One more sign of Ahaz's desperate state—he plunders his own temple, palace, and official residences in an unsuccessful campaign to win relief from the pressure exerted by the Assyrian king. **22–25:** Ahaz's foreign policy disasters lead him to abandon his own religious institutions and worship the gods of the lands who defeated him. In Chronicles this is a further indication of the ignominy that characterizes Ahaz's rule. Judah never fully recovers from the depopulation and territorial losses it suffers during his reign.

29.1–36: Restoring the Temple: the beginning of Hezekiah's rule. The Chronicler devotes more attention to Hezekiah (ruled 727/715–698/687 BCE; the data are inconsistent) than to any other king except David and Solomon (29.1–32.33); the Chronicler views Hezekiah as an "ideal" king of the post Davidic-Solomonic era, much like Josiah in Kings. The Assyrian king Sennacherib's invasion, which dominates the coverage of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18.9–19.37, thus appears in condensed form (32.1–23). Instead, the Chronicler focuses on Hezekiah's reforms and restoration of the Temple. Most of this material is unparalleled in his sources (29.1–31.21;

3 In the first year of his reign, in the first
month, he opened the doors of the house of
the LORD and repaired them. 4 He brought in
the priests and the Levites and assembled
them in the square on the east. 5 He said to
them, "Listen to me, Levites! Sanctify your-
selves, and sanctify the house of the LORD,
the God of your ancestors, and carry out the
filth from the holy place. 6 For our ancestors
have been unfaithful and have done what
was evil in the sight of the LORD our God;
they have forsaken him, and have turned
away their faces from the dwelling of the
LORD, and turned their backs. 7 They also shut
the doors of the vestibule and put out the
lamps, and have not offered incense or made
burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of
Israel. 8 Therefore the wrath of the LORD came
upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he has made
them an object of horror, of astonishment,
and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes.
9 Our fathers have fallen by the sword and our
sons and our daughters and our wives are in
captivity for this. 10 Now it is in my heart to
make a covenant with the LORD, the God of
Israel, so that his fierce anger may turn away
from us. 11 My sons, do not now be negligent,
for the LORD has chosen you to stand in his
presence to minister to him, and to be his
ministers and make offerings to him."

12 Then the Levites arose, Mahath son of
Amasai, and Joel son of Azariah, of the sons
of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari,
Kish son of Abdi, and Azariah son of Jehal-
lelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah son of
Zimmah, and Eden son of Joah; 13 and of the
sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel; and of
the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Matta-
niah; 14 and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and
Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shema-
iah and Uzziel. 15 They gathered their broth-
ers, sanctified themselves, and went in as the
king had commanded, by the words of the
LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. 16 The
priests went into the inner part of the house
of the LORD to cleanse it, and they brought
out all the unclean things that they found in
the temple of the LORD into the court of the
house of the LORD; and the Levites took them
and carried them out to the Wadi Kidron.
17 They began to sanctify on the first day of
the first month, and on the eighth day of
the month they came to the vestibule of the
LORD; then for eight days they sanctified the
house of the LORD, and on the sixteenth day
of the first month they finished. 18 Then they
went inside to King Hezekiah and said, "We
have cleansed all the house of the LORD, the
altar of burnt offering and all its utensils,
and the table for the rows of bread and all
its utensils. 19 All the utensils that King Ahaz
repudiated during his reign when he was
faithless, we have made ready and sanctified;
see, they are in front of the altar of the LORD."

20 Then King Hezekiah rose early, assem-
bled the officials of the city, and went up to
the house of the LORD. 21 They brought seven
bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven
male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom
and for the sanctuary and for Judah. He com-
manded the priests the descendants of Aaron
to offer them on the altar of the LORD. 22 So
they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests
received the blood and dashed it against the
altar; they slaughtered the rams and their
blood was dashed against the altar; they also
slaughtered the lambs and their blood was
dashed against the altar. 23 Then the male
goats for the sin offering were brought to the
king and the assembly; they laid their hands
on them, 24 and the priests slaughtered them
and made a sin offering with their blood at
the altar, to make atonement for all Israel. For
the king commanded that the burnt offering
and the sin offering should be made for all
Israel.

cf. 2 Kings 18.4,16,22). **3–11:** Hezekiah begins by engaging a domestic policy crisis—the sorry legacy left by his predecessor (28.24). He oversees the repair of the Temple (vv. 3–4) and encourages the Levites to resume their traditional tasks (vv. 5–11). He makes a covenant with the LORD (v. 10; cf. 15.8–19) to move the nation from divine wrath (v. 8) to divine blessing. He does this immediately upon assuming the throne (v. 3), reflecting his great righteousness. **12–19:** The priests and Levites complete the Temple purification (cf. 13.10–11). **18:** *Rows of bread,* see 2.4n. **20–36:** As at Solomon's Temple dedication (5.2–7.6), the praises of the Levites follow the offering of sacrifices. The swift (re)establishment of *the service of the house of the LORD* (vv. 35–36) effectively reverses the neglect of the Temple in Ahaz's reign, resulting in great joy (cf. 30.25–26). **22:** Cf. Lev 17.6; Num 18.17.

25 He stationed the Levites in the house
of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres,
according to the commandment of David
and of Gad the king's seer and of the prophet
Nathan, for the commandment was from the
LORD through his prophets. 26 The Levites
stood with the instruments of David, and the
priests with the trumpets. 27 Then Hezekiah
commanded that the burnt offering be of-
fered on the altar. When the burnt offering
began, the song to the LORD began also, and
the trumpets, accompanied by the instru-
ments of King David of Israel. 28 The whole
assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and
the trumpeters sounded; all this continued
until the burnt offering was finished. 29 When
the offering was finished, the king and all
who were present with him bowed down and
worshiped. 30 King Hezekiah and the officials
commanded the Levites to sing praises to the
LORD with the words of David and of the seer
Asaph. They sang praises with gladness, and
they bowed down and worshiped.

31 Then Hezekiah said, "You have now
consecrated yourselves to the LORD; come
near, bring sacrifices and thank offerings to
the house of the LORD." The assembly brought
sacrifices and thank offerings; and all who
were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings.
32 The number of the burnt offerings that the
assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hun-
dred rams, and two hundred lambs; all these
were for a burnt offering to the LORD. 33 The
consecrated offerings were six hundred bulls
and three thousand sheep. 34 But the priests
were too few and could not skin all the burnt
offerings, so, until other priests had sanctified
themselves, their kindred, the Levites, helped
them until the work was finished—for the
Levites were more conscientious[a] than the
priests in sanctifying themselves. 35 Besides
the great number of burnt offerings there was
the fat of the offerings of well-being, and there
were the drink offerings for the burnt offerings.
Thus the service of the house of the LORD was
restored. 36 And Hezekiah and all the people
rejoiced because of what God had done for the
people; for the thing had come about suddenly.

30 Hezekiah sent word to all Israel
and Judah, and wrote letters also to
Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should
come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem,
to keep the passover to the LORD the God
of Israel. 2 For the king and his officials and
all the assembly in Jerusalem had taken
counsel to keep the passover in the second
month 3 (for they could not keep it at its
proper time because the priests had not
sanctified themselves in sufficient number,
nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem).
4 The plan seemed right to the king and all
the assembly. 5 So they decreed to make a

[a] Heb *upright in heart*

27: The coordination of Temple hymns and Temple sacrifices, likely a reflection of second Temple practices, is a consistent theme in Chronicles (1 Chr 23.30–31n.; cf. Jdt 9.1). **32–33**. *Seventy bulls*, see 1 Chr 29.21n. **34:** *Levites,* the Chronicler has a special sympathy for the plight of the Levites, even though he normally maintains a distinction between their roles and responsibilities and those of the priests. The Chronicler stresses cooperation and complementarity between the priests and Levites, not competition and hierarchy (1 Chr 23.28–32; 28.12–13, 21; 2 Chr 5.4–14; 13.9–12; 23.1–11; 35.3). In Chronicles, the priests and Levites share a common genealogy (1 Chr 6.1–81).

30.1–31.1: National Passover and further religious reforms. The consecration and rededication of the Temple complete, Hezekiah leads the people in celebrating a national Passover (unattested in Kings). The restoration of proper worship moves from the Passover offering, to destroying illicit altars in Jerusalem (vv. 13–14), to celebrating the festival of unleavened bread (vv. 13,21; cf. Ex 23.14–17; Deut 16.16–17), to destroying "*the pillars,*" "*the sacred poles,*" and "*the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh*" (31.1). The progression in Hezekiah's reforms is significant—from reestablishing ritual purity at the Temple to enforcing ritual unity in both Judah and the former Northern Kingdom. **30.1:** *Wrote letters.* Dissemination of royal declarations by missives was common in the Persian period. The Persian empire was renowned for its international postal system. **2:** A somewhat similar delay in observing the Passover is allowed in the legislation of Num 9.9–13. **5–9:** Hezekiah appeals to the remnant of the northern tribes and invites them to participate in the Passover. In spite of the Assyrian exile (v. 6; cf. 2 Kings 18.9–12), the northerners are still Israelites, and their positive response may elicit divine compassion for their relatives in exile (v. 9). **5:** *From Beer-sheba to Dan,* the

proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the passover to the LORD the God of Israel, at Jerusalem; for they had not kept it in great numbers as prescribed. 6 So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his officials, as the king had commanded, saying, "O people of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7 Do not be like your ancestors and your kindred, who were faithless to the LORD God of their ancestors, so that he made them a desolation, as you see. 8 Do not now be stiff-necked as your ancestors were, but yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his sanctuary, which he has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger may turn away from you. 9 For as you return to the LORD, your kindred and your children will find compassion with their captors, and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him."

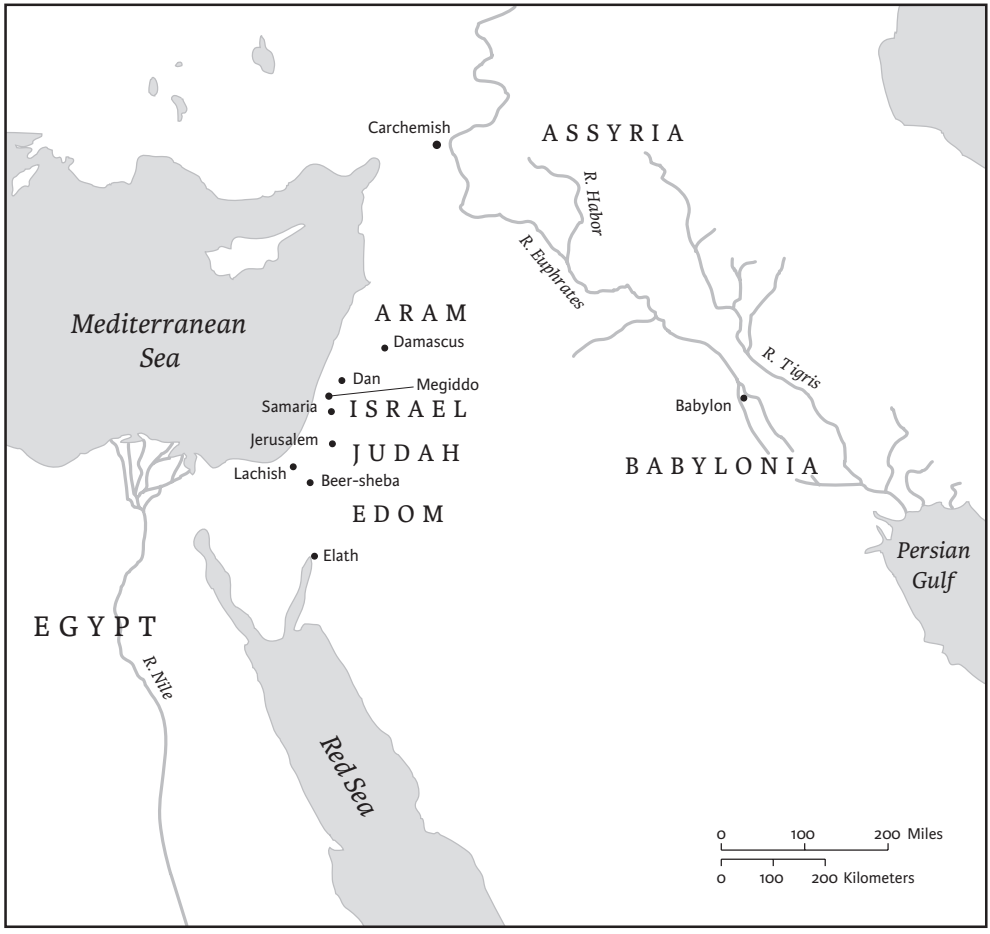
10 So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. 11 Only a few from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. 12 The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the officials commanded by the word of the LORD.

13 Many people came together in Jerusalem to keep the festival of unleavened bread in the second month, a very large assembly. 14 They set to work and removed the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for offering incense they took away and threw into the Wadi Kidron. 15 They slaughtered the passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and they sanctified themselves and brought burnt offerings into the house of the LORD. 16 They took their accustomed posts according to the law of Moses the man of God; the priests dashed the blood that they received[a] from the hands of the Levites. 17 For there were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had to slaughter the passover lamb for everyone who was not clean, to make it holy to the LORD. 18 For a multitude of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the passover otherwise than as prescribed. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "The good LORD pardon all 19 who set their hearts to seek God, the LORD the God of their ancestors, even though not in accordance with the sanctuary's rules of cleanness." 20 The LORD heard Hezekiah, and healed the people. 21 The people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the festival of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, accompanied by loud instruments for the LORD. 22 Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good skill in the service of the LORD. So the people ate the food of the festival for seven days, sacrificing offerings of well-being and giving thanks to the LORD the God of their ancestors.

23 Then the whole assembly agreed together to keep the festival for another seven days; so they kept it for another seven days with gladness. 24 For King Hezekiah of Judah gave the assembly a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep for offerings, and the officials gave the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep. The priests sanctified

[a] Heb lacks *that they received*

traditional southern and northern limits of Israel; see 1 Chr 21.2. **10–14:** Hezekiah's offer meets with an enthusiastic response from Judah and a mixed response from the northern tribes. **15–27:** The national celebration is reminiscent of the heady days of the United Monarchy. **18–20:** These verses suggest that the stereotypical view of postexilic Judaism as legalistic and inflexible is incorrect. **21:** *Festival of unleavened bread*. Consistent with the Holiness legislation embedded within the Priestly Code (Lev 17.1–26.46), Passover and unleavened bread



Chs 28–35: Assyria and Israel and Judah.

themselves in great numbers. [25] The whole assembly of Judah, the priests and the Levites, and the whole assembly that came out of Israel, and the resident aliens who came out of the land of Israel, and the resident aliens who lived in Judah, rejoiced. [26] There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon son of King David of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. [27] Then the priests and the Levites stood up and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; their prayer came to his holy dwelling in heaven.

31 Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke down the pillars, hewed down the sacred poles,[a] and pulled down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the people of Israel returned to their cities, all to their individual properties.

[a] Heb *Asherim*

are two different consecutive festivals. **25:** *Resident aliens,* cf. Num 9.14. **31.1**. *All Israel*. Hezekiah's enforcement of ritual purity (2 Kings 18.4) is democratized and extended in Chronicles, but Chronicles does not mention the elimination of the bronze serpent established by Moses.

31.2–19: The priestly and levitical divisions reestablished. In this chapter (unique to Chronicles) Hezekiah continues his reforms by reinstituting the priestly and levitical divisions first set out by David (1 Chr 23–26;

2 Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, division by division, everyone according to his service, the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, to minister in the gates of the camp of the LORD and to give thanks and praise. 3 The contribution of the king from his own possessions was for the burnt offerings: the burnt offerings of morning and evening, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the appointed festivals, as it is written in the law of the LORD. 4 He commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, so that they might devote themselves to the law of the LORD. 5 As soon as the word spread, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. 6 The people of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the tithe of cattle and sheep, and the tithe of the dedicated things that had been consecrated to the LORD their God, and laid them in heaps. 7 In the third month they began to pile up the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. 8 When Hezekiah and the officials came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and his people Israel. 9 Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites about the heaps. 10 The chief priest Azariah, who was of the house of Zadok, answered him, "Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have plenty to spare; for the LORD has blessed his people, so that we have this great supply left over."

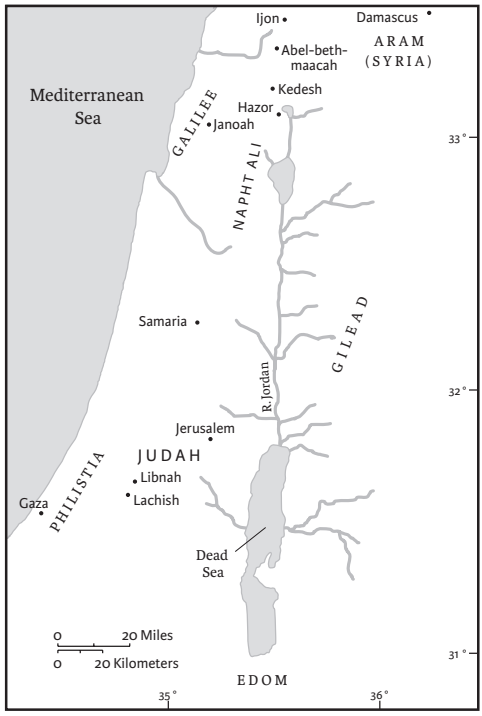
11 Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare store-chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared them. 12 Faithfully they brought in the contributions, the tithes and the dedicated things. The chief officer in charge of them was Conaniah the Levite, with his brother Shimei as second; 13 while Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were overseers assisting Conaniah and his brother Shimei, by the appointment of King Hezekiah and of Azariah the chief officer of the house of God. 14 Kore son of Imnah the Levite, keeper of the east gate, was in charge of the freewill offerings to God, to apportion the contribution reserved for the LORD and the most holy offerings. 15 Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah were faithfully assisting him in the cities of the priests, to distribute the portions to their kindred, old and young alike, by divisions, 16 except those enrolled by genealogy, males from three years old and upwards, all who entered the house of the LORD as the duty of each day required, for their service according to their offices, by their divisions. 17 The enrollment of the priests was according to their ancestral houses; that of the Levites from twenty years old and upwards was according to their offices, by their divisions. 18 The priests were enrolled with all their little children, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, the whole multitude; for they were faithful in keeping themselves holy. 19 And for the descendants of Aaron, the priests, who were in the fields of common land belonging to their towns, town by town, the people designated by name were to distribute portions to every male among the priests and to everyone among the Levites who was enrolled.

20 Hezekiah did this throughout all Judah; he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. 21 And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God, and in accordance with the law and the commandments, to seek his God, he did with all his heart; and he prospered.

28.13,21) and implemented by Solomon (2 Chr 8.14). **4–10:** Like David (1 Chr 22.14–16; 29.2–5), the king contributes toward the support of the Temple and its staff. As in David's time (1 Chr 29.6–9), the people respond with their own generous gifts. Because Hezekiah's reign recalls positive features of both David's reign and Solomon's reign, his tenure marks a highpoint in the Judahite monarchy. **11–20:** Hezekiah ensures that the contributions and tithes will be properly cared for and stored. **20–21:** A summation and commendation of Hezekiah's reforms, which emphasize that anyone who serves God *in accordance with the law and the commandments . . . with all his heart* will *prosper.*

32 After these things and these acts of faithfulness, King Sennacherib of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself. [2] When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, [3] he planned with his officers and his warriors to stop the flow of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. [4] A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the wadi that flowed through the land, saying, "Why should the Assyrian kings come and find water in abundance?" [5] Hezekiah[a] set to work resolutely and built up the entire wall that was broken down, and raised towers on it,[b] and outside it he built another wall; he also strengthened the Millo in the city of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance. [6] He appointed combat commanders over the people, and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, [7] "Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him; for there is one greater with us than with him. [8] With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles." The people were encouraged by the words of King Hezekiah of Judah.

[9] After this, while King Sennacherib of Assyria was at Lachish with all his forces, he sent his servants to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah of Judah and to all the people of Judah that were in Jerusalem, saying, [10] "Thus says King Sennacherib of Assyria: On what are you relying, that you undergo the siege of Jerusalem? [11] Is not Hezekiah misleading you, handing you over to die by famine and by thirst, when he tells you, 'The LORD our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria'? [12] Was it not this same Hezekiah who took away his



Ch 32: Places associated with Sennacherib's invasion of Judah

[a] Heb *He*

[b] Vg: Heb *and raised on the towers*

32.1–23: Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and threat to Jerusalem. The Chronicler borrows from and abbreviates 2 Kings 18.13–19.13, omitting Hezekiah's stripping of the Temple and his tribute to Sennacherib (2 Kings 18.13–16), which might reflect negatively on him. The complex account of Kings is simplified, and some parallel texts from the source have been conflated to create a smoother depiction of the events. **1:** *After these … acts of faithfulness*, in Chronicles, Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE is a complete shock. Although some scholars explain the massive invasion as a divinely initiated test of Hezekiah (cf. Gen 22.1), Chronicles does not claim that God initiated the foreign invasion (contrast 12.2; 21.16; 28.5; 33.11–36.17). In Chronicles, both human beings (including foreigners) and the LORD exercise free will. The story of Sennacherib's invasion is, therefore, a counterexample to a simplistic understanding of the Chronicler's retribution theology. **2–6:** Repairs to Jerusalem's infrastructure, including the construction of a new wall and the Siloam water tunnel (see 32.30), prepare for the eventuality of an attack by Sennacherib. Much of this material is not found In Kings, but see Isa 22.9–11. To this end, Hezekiah also initiates a program of urban mobilization. **5:** *Millo,* see 1 Chr 11.8n. **9–19:** As in Kings, the Assyrians try to convince the Jerusalemites that their God is no different from the defeated deities of other peoples. From the perspective of the Chronicler, this is blasphemy because the deities of other nations are *the work*

high places and his altars and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, 'Before one altar you shall worship, and upon it you shall make your offerings'? 13 Do you not know what I and my ancestors have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands at all able to save their lands out of my hand? 14 Who among all the gods of those nations that my ancestors utterly destroyed was able to save his people from my hand, that your God should be able to save you from my hand? 15 Now therefore do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you in this fashion, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to save his people from my hand or from the hand of my ancestors. How much less will your God save you out of my hand!"

16 His servants said still more against the Lord God and against his servant Hezekiah. 17 He also wrote letters to throw contempt on the LORD the God of Israel and to speak against him, saying, "Just as the gods of the nations in other lands did not rescue their people from my hands, so the God of Hezekiah will not rescue his people from my hand." 18 They shouted it with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, in order that they might take the city. 19 They spoke of the God of Jerusalem as if he were like the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of human hands.

20 Then King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz prayed because of this and cried to heaven. 21 And the LORD sent an angel who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned in disgrace to his own land. When he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword. 22 So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of King Sennacherib of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies; he gave them rest[a] on every side. 23 Many brought gifts to the LORD in Jerusalem and precious things to King Hezekiah of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward.

24 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. He prayed to the LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign. 25 But Hezekiah did not respond according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem. 26 Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

27 Hezekiah had very great riches and honor; and he made for himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of costly objects; 28 storehouses also for the yield of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds.[b] 29 He likewise provided cities for himself, and flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very great possessions. 30 This same Hezekiah closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *guided them*
[b] Gk Vg: Heb *flocks for folds*

of human hands (cf. 2 Kings 18.17–35). **18:** *The language of Judah,* later called Hebrew. **20:** Like other pious kings (in Chronicles) before him, Hezekiah appeals to God in conformity with the precedent established by David (1 Chr 17.16–27; 29.10–19) and Solomon (2 Chr 5.13–6.42); cf. 2 Kings 19.1–34. **21:** The LORD's dramatic deliverance of Hezekiah and Jerusalem responds directly to the prayer uttered by Hezekiah and Isaiah (v. 20; cf. 2 Kings 19.1–14) and accords with the LORD's earlier promises to Solomon (7.12–15; cf. 6.28–30). **22–23:** *Rest on every side* is a sign of divine favor (14.1n.), as is tribute from the nations (1 Chr 18.6; 2 Chr 8.2; 17.5,11). Neither motif appears in the parallel account in Kings.

32.24–33: Hezekiah's sickness, recovery, and wealth. Even this pious king was not without his faults (32.24–26; cf. 2 Kings 20.1–19; Isa 38–39); see 2 Chr 6.36. But like David (1 Chr 21.8,17) and Rehoboam (2 Chr 12.7) before him, Hezekiah *humbled himself* before God (see 7.14). **27–30:** Most of these economic and political initiatives, which do not appear in Kings, are focused outside Jerusalem (cf. vv. 2–8). **27:** Royal wealth indicates divine blessing in Chronicles, and Hezekiah's assets rival those of Solomon (1.11–12,14–17; 9.1–8,23–24). **31:** Cf. 2 Kings 20.12–19. **30:** See vv. 2–6n.

city of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works. 31 So also in the matter of the envoys of the officials of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.

32 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds, are written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. 33 Hezekiah slept with his ancestors, and they buried him on the ascent to the tombs of the descendants of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death. His son Manasseh succeeded him.

33 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. 2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. 3 For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had pulled down, and erected altars to the Baals, made sacred poles,[a] worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4 He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever." 5 He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6 He made his son pass through fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom, practiced soothsaying and augury and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. 7 The carved image of the idol that he had made he set in the house of God, of which God said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever; 8 I will never again remove the feet of Israel from the land that I appointed for your ancestors, if only they will be careful to do all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the ordinances given through Moses." 9 Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the people of Israel.

10 The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they gave no heed. 11 Therefore the LORD brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh captive in manacles, bound him with fetters, and brought him to Babylon. 12 While he was in distress he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. 13 He prayed to him, and God received his entreaty, heard his plea, and restored him again to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD indeed was God.

14 Afterward he built an outer wall for the city of David west of Gihon, in the valley,

[a] Heb *Asheroth*

33.1–20: Manasseh: regression and repentance. As in Kings, for the Chronicler, Manasseh (ruled 698/687–642 BCE; the data are inconsistent) is judged to be a wicked king (vv. 2–9). Nevertheless, after Manasseh suffers divine punishment in the form of exile (v. 11), he repents, changes course, and is forgiven (vv. 12–19). In so doing, Manasseh is presented as a model for Judean deportees living in other lands. These events have no source in Kings. **2–9:** Drawn from 2 Kings 21.2–9. **6:** *Pass through fire,* see 2 Kings 16.3n. **10:** The long-range prophecy of terrible disaster in 2 Kings 21.10–15 becomes a personal summons to repent, which temporarily goes unheeded. **11–13:** The exile of Manasseh, which does not appear in Kings, leads the Judean king to entreat the favor of the LORD and humble himself. **11:** *Babylon,* the reference is not impossible, because the Assyrians maintained a major presence in Babylon at this time. Nevertheless, Assyrian records mention that Manasseh was a loyal vassal. Whether historical or not, the story demonstrates how even one of Judah's worst kings, with God's help, could reverse course in exile, be forgiven, be brought back to his land, institute reforms, and make a new beginning. In this respect, the entire episode offered hope and confirmation to members of the Judean postexilic community, some of whom had ancestors who returned from the Babylonian exile and relatives residing in Babylon and other foreign lands. **13:** Going beyond his earlier pledge to Solomon (7.14), God restores Manasseh to his land. Manasseh becomes a model of how to deal with self-made adversity (6.36–39). **14–17:** Like other reformer kings (11.5–12; 14.3–7; 17.1–19; 32.27–30), Manasseh constructs fortifications and enforces some religious centralization. **17**: *Only to the LORD*, the author acknowledges that some sanctuaries, other than the Temple, were

reaching the entrance at the Fish Gate; he carried it around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height. He also put commanders of the army in all the fortified cities in Judah. 15 He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he threw them out of the city. 16 He also restored the altar of the LORD and offered on it sacrifices of well-being and of thanksgiving; and he commanded Judah to serve the LORD the God of Israel. 17 The people, however, still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, these are in the Annals of the Kings of Israel. 19 His prayer, and how God received his entreaty, all his sin and his faithlessness, the sites on which he built high places and set up the sacred poles[a] and the images, before he humbled himself, these are written in the records of the seers.[b] 20 So Manasseh slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in his house. His son Amon succeeded him.

21 Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned two years in Jerusalem. 22 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon sacrificed to all the images that his father Manasseh had made, and served them. 23 He did not humble himself before the LORD, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself, but this Amon incurred more and more guilt. 24 His servants conspired against him and killed him in his house. 25 But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon; and the people of the land made his son Josiah king to succeed him.

34 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. 2 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his ancestor David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. 3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still a boy, he began to seek the God of his ancestor David, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the sacred poles,[a] and the carved and the cast images. 4 In his presence they pulled down the altars of the Baals; he demolished the incense altars that stood above them. He broke down the sacred poles[a] and the carved and the cast images; he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. 5 He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. 6 In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins[c] all around, 7 he broke down the altars, beat the sacred poles[a] and the images into powder, and demolished all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

[a] Heb *Asherim*
[b] One Ms Gk: MT *of Hozai*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

dedicated to the God of Israel. **18–20:** An expansion of 2 Kings 21.17–18. **18–19:** *His prayer,* which is not given, is the basis for the creation of a later composition "The Prayer of Manasseh," now a book of the Apocrypha and a similar psalm in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

33.21–25: Degeneracy under Amon (641–640 BCE). This monarch follows the model of the earlier, rather than the later, Manasseh (33.2–9). The account is adapted from 2 Kings 21.19–26. **23–25:** In refusing to correct his policies, Amon follows the obstinate course set by Ahaz (28.1–27), worsens Judah's plight, and is punished. **25:** *People of the land,* see 2 Kings 11.14n.

34.1–33: Josiah (640–609 BCE): the champion of centralization. Both 2 Kings 22.1–23.30 and 2 Chr 34–35 acclaim Josiah's many reforms throughout Jerusalem and the land of Israel and Judah, but the Chronicler makes these reforms the work of all the people and not simply Josiah himself. **3–7:** The Chronicler restructures the account of the reform found in Kings in several ways, especially by claiming that Josiah began to seek the LORD in the eighth year of his reign, rather than later, as in Kings (2 Kings 22.3). In the twelfth year he initiates a number of national expeditions, which *purge Judah and Jerusalem* of all rival religious shrines to the Temple. **6:** The geographic extent of Josiah's interventions, from Simeon all the way north to Naphtali, are an addition to

8 In the eighteenth year of his reign, when
he had purged the land and the house, he
sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the
governor of the city, and Joah son of Joa-
haz, the recorder, to repair the house of the
LORD his God. 9 They came to the high priest
Hilkiah and delivered the money that had
been brought into the house of God, which
the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had
collected from Manasseh and Ephraim and
from all the remnant of Israel and from all
Judah and Benjamin and from the inhabitants
of Jerusalem. 10 They delivered it to the work-
ers who had the oversight of the house of the
LORD, and the workers who were working in
the house of the LORD gave it for repairing
and restoring the house. 11 They gave it to the
carpenters and the builders to buy quarried
stone, and timber for binders, and beams for
the buildings that the kings of Judah had let
go to ruin. 12 The people did the work faith-
fully. Over them were appointed the Levites
Jahath and Obadiah, of the sons of Merari,
along with Zechariah and Meshullam, of the
sons of the Kohathites, to have oversight.
Other Levites, all skillful with instruments
of music, 13 were over the burden bearers and
directed all who did work in every kind of
service; and some of the Levites were scribes,
and officials, and gatekeepers.

14 While they were bringing out the money
that had been brought into the house of the
LORD, the priest Hilkiah found the book of
the law of the LORD given through Moses.
15 Hilkiah said to the secretary Shaphan, "I
have found the book of the law in the house
of the LORD"; and Hilkiah gave the book to
Shaphan. 16 Shaphan brought the book to the
king, and further reported to the king, "All
that was committed to your servants they are
doing. 17 They have emptied out the money
that was found in the house of the LORD and
have delivered it into the hand of the over-
seers and the workers." 18 The secretary Sha-
phan informed the king, "The priest Hilkiah
has given me a book." Shaphan then read it
aloud to the king.

19 When the king heard the words of the
law he tore his clothes. 20 Then the king com-
manded Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan,
Abdon son of Micah, the secretary Shaphan,
and the king's servant Asaiah: 21 "Go, inquire
of the LORD for me and for those who are left
in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words
of the book that has been found; for the
wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us is
great, because our ancestors did not keep the
word of the LORD, to act in accordance with
all that is written in this book."

22 So Hilkiah and those whom the king had
sent went to the prophet Huldah, the wife
of Shallum son of Tokhath son of Hasrah,
keeper of the wardrobe (who lived in Jerusa-
lem in the Second Quarter) and spoke to her
to that effect. 23 She declared to them, "Thus
says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man
who sent you to me, 24 Thus says the LORD: I
will indeed bring disaster upon this place and
upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are
written in the book that was read before the
king of Judah. 25 Because they have forsaken
me and have made offerings to other gods,
so that they have provoked me to anger with
all the works of their hands, my wrath will
be poured out on this place and will not be
quenched. 26 But as to the king of Judah, who
sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall
you say to him: Thus says the LORD, the God
of Israel: Regarding the words that you have
heard, 27 because your heart was penitent
and you humbled yourself before God when
you heard his words against this place and its
inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself
before me, and have torn your clothes and
wept before me, I also have heard you, says
the LORD. 28 I will gather you to your ancestors

the Kings source. Josiah restores proper religious observance throughout all Israel. **8–21:** Adapted in part from 2 Kings 22.3–13. The discovery of *the book of the law of the LORD,* while Temple repairs are underway (vv. 8–14), becomes a matter of grave concern to Josiah because its contents bode ill for Judah. **9:** Since Josiah has already implemented reforms in North and South, it is no great surprise that funds for the Temple restoration project do not merely stem from the people in Judah (2 Kings 22.4), but also from *Manasseh and Ephraim and from all the remnant of Israel.* **14:** Most scholars think that *the book of the law of the LORD* refers to Deuteronomy in 2 Kings 22, but in Chronicles it may refer to the entire Pentateuch (or an earlier version of it). The Passover celebration (35.1–19) draws on more than one collection of earlier biblical law. **22–28:** Huldah's oracle, drawn from 2 Kings

and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place and its inhabitants." They took the message back to the king.

29 Then the king sent word and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30 The king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites, all the people both great and small; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. 31 The king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. 32 Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin pledge themselves to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem acted according to the covenant of God, the God of their ancestors. 33 Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel, and made all who were in Israel worship the LORD their God. All his days they did not turn away from following the LORD the God of their ancestors.

35 Josiah kept a passover to the LORD in Jerusalem; they slaughtered the passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month. 2 He appointed the priests to their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD. 3 He said to the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the LORD, "Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon son of David, king of Israel, built; you need no longer carry it on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel. 4 Make preparations by your ancestral houses by your divisions, following the written directions of King David of Israel and the written directions of his son Solomon. 5 Take position in the holy place according to the groupings of the ancestral houses of your kindred the people, and let there be Levites for each division of an ancestral house.[a] 6 Slaughter the passover lamb, sanctify yourselves, and on behalf of your kindred make preparations, acting according to the word of the LORD by Moses."

7 Then Josiah contributed to the people, as passover offerings for all that were present, lambs and kids from the flock to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bulls; these were from the king's possessions. 8 His officials contributed willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the chief officers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the passover offerings two thousand six hundred lambs and kids and three hundred bulls. 9 Conaniah also, and his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, the chiefs of the Levites, gave to the Levites for the passover offerings five thousand lambs and kids and five hundred bulls.

10 When the service had been prepared for, the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their divisions according to the king's command. 11 They slaughtered the passover lamb, and the priests dashed the blood that they received[b] from them, while the Levites did the skinning. 12 They set aside the burnt offerings so that they might distribute them according to the groupings of the ancestral houses of the people, to offer to the LORD, as

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb lacks *that they received*

22.14–20, portrays a bleak future for Judah. **29–33:** Like other noted Judean leaders who wish to avoid or counter a period of decline (15.8–19; 23.16; 29.10), Josiah leads the nation in covenant renewal (cf. 2 Kings 23.1–3). The ratification of the covenant leads to the implementation of reforms throughout his land (cf. 2 Kings 23.4–10). The result is strict observance and religious unity for the nation *all his days.*

35.1–19: Passover celebration. As in 2 Kings (23.4–20), national reforms (34.33) lead to a national Passover (2 Kings 23.21–23). Josiah's Passover offering is described in much more detail than in Kings and draws on various pieces of older legislation. **3:** The only reference to the ark during the Judahite monarchy (chs 10–36). The pedagogical responsibility of the Levites, who *taught all Israel,* is found elsewhere (Deut 33.8–11) but is more frequent in postexilic texts (e.g., 17.7–9; Neh 8.7–8). **4–6:** The provisions made during the United Monarchy are the model for the levitical and priestly divisions (31.2–19n.). **7–9:** The contributions of king, officials, and Levites

it is written in the book of Moses. And they did the same with the bulls. 13 They roasted the passover lamb with fire according to the ordinance; and they boiled the holy offerings in pots, in caldrons, and in pans, and carried them quickly to all the people. 14 Afterward they made preparations for themselves and for the priests, because the priests the descendants of Aaron were occupied in offering the burnt offerings and the fat parts until night; so the Levites made preparations for themselves and for the priests, the descendants of Aaron. 15 The singers, the descendants of Asaph, were in their place according to the command of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and the king's seer Jeduthun. The gatekeepers were at each gate; they did not need to interrupt their service, for their kindred the Levites made preparations for them.

16 So all the service of the LORD was prepared that day, to keep the passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. 17 The people of Israel who were present kept the passover at that time, and the festival of unleavened bread seven days. 18 No passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; none of the kings of Israel had kept such a passover as was kept by Josiah, by the priests and the Levites, by all Judah and Israel who were present, and by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this passover was kept.

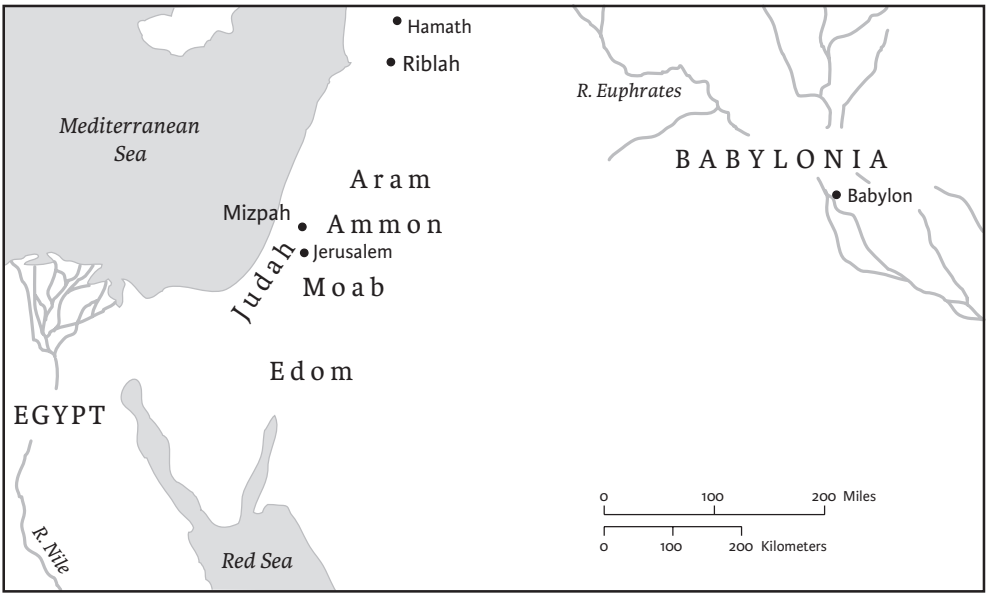
20 After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, King Neco of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out against him. 21 But Neco[a] sent envoys to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I am not coming against you today, but against the house with which I am at war; and God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, so that he will not destroy you." 22 But Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight with him. He did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but joined battle in the plain of Megiddo. 23 The archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am badly wounded." 24 So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in his second chariot[b] and brought him to Jerusalem. There he died, and was buried in the tombs of his ancestors. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25 Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah, and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a custom in Israel; they are recorded in the Laments. 26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and

[a] Heb *he*

[b] Or *the chariot of his deputy*

(cf. 34.9) help make the Passover a unifying civic event. **13:** The preparations of the Passover lamb are said to accord with the ordinance (cf. vv. 6,12). The beginning of the verse, properly translated, reads, "They boiled the Passover lamb with fire." This difficult idea reflects a combination of Ex 12.8, which prescribes that the lamb must be broiled on a fire, and Deut 16.7, which prescribes that it must be boiled. These reflect different customs, which ultimately came into conflict when the Torah was canonized. Chronicles and later rabbinic texts often dealt with such problems through harmonization, thus "boiling with fire." **18:** That the national Passover is unparalleled since the days of Samuel (cf. "the days of the judges" in 2 Kings 23.22) reflects well on Josiah. Chronicles, like 2 Kings 23.21–22, attributes to Josiah an incomparably successful Passover celebration. The Passover of Hezekiah (30.1–22) was also important, but enjoyed more limited participation than Josiah's Passover, which was attended by the *priests and the Levites, by all Judah and Israel,* and *the inhabitants of Jerusalem* (cf. 30.10–11).

35.20–27: Josiah's defeat and death by Pharaoh Neco. Unlike 2 Kings 23.29–30, in Chronicles Neco acts explicitly as a messenger and agent of God. The addition justifies the death of the otherwise righteous Josiah; he did not heed the prophetic voice. **20:** *Neco,* it is unclear why Josiah intervened against one of the superpowers of his day. Josiah may have been in an alliance with Neco's enemies (cf. 2 Kings 23.29). **23:** *Archers shot,* in conformity with Huldah's prophecy (34.24–28), Josiah is gathered to his fathers (v. 24) and does not see great calamity come to Jerusalem (36.17–21). The Chronicler may understand Huldah's prophecy to mean that Josiah would die in a time of peace for Judah, rather than the type of death Josiah would suffer himself. **25:** *Uttered a lament*. Jeremiah serves as the archetypal prophet both of the kingdom's demise (2 Chr 36.12) and of the people's return to the land (2 Chr 36.22).



Ch 36: Babylon and Judah in the early sixth century BCE.

his faithful deeds in accordance with what is written in the law of the LORD, [27] and his acts, first and last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

36 The people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and made him king to succeed his father in Jerusalem. [2] Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months in Jerusalem. [3] Then the king of Egypt deposed him in Jerusalem and laid on the land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold. [4] The king of Egypt made his brother Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim; but Neco took his brother Jehoahaz and carried him to Egypt.

[5] Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. [6] Against him King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up, and bound him with fetters to take him to Babylon. [7] Nebuchadnezzar also carried some of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his palace in Babylon. [8] Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and the abominations that he did, and what was found against him, are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah; and his son Jehoiachin succeeded him.

[9] Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did what was evil

36.1–14: Judah's last four kings. The Chronicler's history of Judah's final decades is much briefer and less gruesome than that of 2 Kings 24–25. Either the Chronicler had a shorter version of our book of Kings, or living in the postexilic restoration community, he felt no need to dwell on the details of the disaster of the exile. **1–4:** The account of the reign of Jehoahaz (609 BCE) is largely taken from 2 Kings 23.30–34. In Chronicles Jehoahaz receives no evaluation. **5–8:** The reign of Jehoiakim (608–598) is much abridged and adapted from 2 Kings 23.36–24.6. See also Dan 1.1–2. **6:** *Nebuchadnezzar* II (605–562 BCE) was one of the most powerful and successful Babylonian kings. Among his foreign policy accomplishments were the conquest of Tyre and the invasion of Egypt (Ezek 29.19–21). Both Chronicles and 2 Kings 24.1–17 mention a Babylonian invasion, which affected both Jehoiakim and his son Jehoiachin (598/7 BCE), but only Chronicles claims that the Babylonian king came to Jerusalem to bring both *Jehoiakim* and later his son Jehoiachin, along with various precious Temple *vessels,* to Babylon (v. 10). **9–10:** Jehoiachin (597) was eighteen years old, not *eight years old* (see 2 Kings 24.8). He suffers

in the sight of the LORD. [10] In the spring of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, along with the precious vessels of the house of the LORD, and made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.

[11] Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. [12] He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. [13] He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel. [14] All the leading priests and the people also were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of the LORD that he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

[15] The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; [16] but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD against his people became so great that there was no remedy.

[17] Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their youths with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or young woman, the aged or the feeble; he gave them all into his hand. [18] All the vessels of the house of God, large and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his officials, all these he brought to Babylon. [19] They burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious vessels. [20] He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, [21] to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

[22] In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit

a personal exile, along with *the precious vessels of the house of the LORD,* but in 2 Kings 24.8–17 the deportation of 597 BCE is much more widespread. **11–14:** Taken in part from 2 Kings 25.18–20. Like Ahaz (ch 28) and Amon (33.23), Zedekiah (597–586), the last king of Judah, refused to *humble himself.* The Chronicler criticizes Zedekiah, *the leading priests,* and *the people* for being *exceedingly unfaithful* (see 1 Chr 10.1–14n.). Thus, the Chronicler, offers a somewhat different reason from that offered in 2 Kings 24.19–20 for why the exile occurred under Zedekiah. **13:** *Rebelled,* the Babylonians under *Nebuchadnezzar* II took swift reprisal against vassals who chose to revolt. In this case, the Chronicler finds fault with Zedekiah himself for violating his oath to God and refusing to reverse his course. 14–21: This material, unique to Chronicles, provides an explanation for Judah's fall. **14:** *The leading priests*, the Chronicler blames not only royalty but also higher echelon priests and *the people* themselves for the exile.

36.15–23: Exile and the call to return. The Deuteronomist places a great deal of blame for Judah's fall on the sins of Manasseh (2 Kings 21.10–15; 23.26–27; 24.3–4), but this is impossible for the Chronicler, who narrated Manasseh's repentance (33.12–13). Instead, the references to the gradual rise in divine wrath, the repeated lack of repentance, and the succession of unheeded messengers and prophets (cf. 15.1–8; 21.12–15; 25.15–17) suggest that the Chronicler attributes the exile to a preponderance of unrequited sins during the last generations of Judah's independence (cf. 2 Kings 24.20). **17–21:** The record of Judah's exile in 586 BCE is partially drawn from 2 Kings 25.1–21. This author does not depict the voluntary migration to Egypt of 582 BCE (2 Kings 25.22–26). **17:** *The Chaldeans,* the Babylonians. *It kept sabbath*, indebted to the theology of Lev 25.1–7; 26.27–39, the Chronicler depicts the land observing its lost sabbath years, while the people are in exile. **20:** The *kingdom of Persia,* under Cyrus the Great (v. 22), defeated the kingdoms of Media, Lydia, and Babylon, thus becoming one of the ancient world's great empires. At the height of its power, Persia ruled a vast territory stretching from Greece in the west to India in the east. **21:** On the prophecies of Jeremiah, see Jer 25.11–12; 29.10, which are here conflated with Lev 26.34–35,43 and Isa 41.2,25; 44.28; 45.1,13. **22–23:** Kings ends with the mercies shown to Jehoiachin in exile (2 Kings 25.27–30), but Chronicles offers a clearer hope for the future: King Cyrus's decree in 538 BCE

of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: [23] "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people,
may the LORD his God be with him! Let him go up."

of an end to exile and a return to Jerusalem. As Chronicles repeatedly demonstrates, exile need not be a final conclusion, but a condition from which it is possible to return (6.36–39; 7.12–15; 33.12–13). Indeed, from the perspective of the books of Ezra-Nehemiah, Cyrus's decree marks the beginning of Persian-period Judah (Ezra 1.1–4). The return is *in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah* (Jer 29.10–14; 30.8–11,18–20; 31.7–14), emphasizing one last time, at the book's conclusion, the power of the prophetic word. Some manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible end with Chronicles, in which case the scriptures conclude with this optimistic note of anticipation.

EZRA

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah form a single book in early Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible, but are separated into two in later Christian tradition. The books are named for two principal Jewish leaders of the fifth century BCE. Ezra the priest and scribe is featured in chs 7–10 of the book that bears his name and in Neh 8–9; Nehemiah is prominent in the book that bears his name.

In Jewish Bibles, Ezra-Nehemiah is placed in the third division of the canon, the Writings, where it is either the last book or the next to last (before Chronicles). In most Christian canons, Ezra and Nehemiah as two books are located among the historical books following Chronicles. They precede Esther in the Protestant canon Old Testaments and Tobit in the Roman Catholic canon. For the Greek book of 1 Esdras, which includes sections of both Ezra and Nehemiah, see Introduction to 1 Esdras.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The unified book of Ezra-Nehemiah (called "Esdras b" in Greek manuscripts) describes the return of exiles from Babylonia after 538 BCE, and the reconstruction of Jewish life in Judah under Persian imperial rule between 538 and approximately 420. It depicts a massive return from exile, authorized by the edict of the Persian king Cyrus, and a lengthy process of rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple. It illustrates how Israel reconstituted itself as the "people of the Book," with scripture, specifically the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch, known in Ezra-Nehemiah as the Law of Moses, the Law of God/the LORD, or the Law), becoming authoritative for communal and personal life. These developments extend through the reign of several Persian kings and under Jewish leaders: Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The book shows that the Temple and its personnel gained unprecedented powers and the community developed new criteria for identity and membership.

Cyrus's edict permitting the return to Judah sets the agenda for the entire book of Ezra-Nehemiah, launching a national and religious rebirth and reconstruction. In response, the people rebuild the Temple, the community, and Jerusalem. The edict also establishes official Persian legitimation of Jewish life in the Persian province of Yehud (the name for Judah in Aramaic and other sources), claiming harmony between Persian imperial policies and the will of Israel's God, a position that pervades Ezra-Nehemiah.

Although recent Persian period archaeology of Judah and the newly published tablets referring to *al yahudu* (a Judean town) in Babylon shed fresh light on the period, it is still difficult to reconstruct the actual history. Based on additional information from the books of Haggai and Zechariah, many scholars think that the return and rebuilding took place in four or more steps. In this reconstruction, Ezra-Nehemiah states that the earliest returnees, led by Sheshbazzar in 538 BCE, began to rebuild the Temple but for some reason abandoned the project. Second, a later group of exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, resumed rebuilding during the reign of the Persian king Darius I (522–486) and completed the Temple reconstruction in 515. Third, a group led by Ezra in 458 during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465–424) reestablished the Torah, the law of Moses, as the authority for Jews in Yehud. Finally, a group led by Nehemiah beginning in 445, later in the reign of Artaxerxes I, restored Jerusalem's walls and repopulated Jerusalem. Some scholars hypothesize that Ezra's return and his religious innovations, took place only after Nehemiah's political improvements. But most favor the reconstruction given above, which follows the biblical sequence and which will be used in the annotations. Archaeological studies indicate only limited development in the province of Judah during the Persian period. This raises questions about the extent and effectiveness of the reconstruction that Ezra-Nehemiah describes and the historical accuracy of this biblical account.

DATE OF COMPOSITION, LITERARY HISTORY, AND STRUCTURE

Ezra-Nehemiah was probably composed in Judah after 400 BCE. It shares some themes and vocabulary with Chronicles, another Persian-period book. Ezra 1.1–3 overlaps the end of Chronicles, 2 Chr 36.22–23, which is why many earlier scholars thought it to be part of Chronicles. However, the books use different vocabulary and have different ideologies, and were most likely composed by different authors (see Introduction to 1 Chronicles, pp. 583–85). Ezra-Nehemiah also shares elements with several later books in antiquity under the name of

Ezra that are preserved in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, including 1 Esdras, which contains all of Ezra 1–10 and Nehemiah 8 (see 703–05), 2 Esdras, and 4 Ezra (in Vulgate Appendix).

Ezra-Nehemiah has a complicated literary history. It incorporates first-person memoirs or autobiographical sources of both Ezra (Ezra 7.27–9.15) and Nehemiah (Neh 1.1–7.5; 12.27–13.31), and letters of various officials from different periods, along with historical narrative, edited over a few decades. Although most of Ezra-Nehemiah is written in Hebrew, some sections (Ezra 4.6–6.18 and 7.12–26) are in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the Persian Empire.

The various sources of Ezra-Nehemiah have been combined carefully, resulting in a coherent structure despite sharp transitions. The work opens with God's promise and Cyrus's decree urging the Temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem (Ezra 1.1–4). It continues with exiled Israel's response (Ezra 1.5–Neh 7.73), culminating in celebration of reconstruction (Neh 8–13). Israel's enthusiastic response is first summed up (Ezra 1.5–11). Then, framed in a repeated list of returnees (Ezra 2 and Neh 7.6–73), the response unfolds as three stages of return and reconstruction. Stage One describes the reconstruction of the Temple in 538–515 BCE (Ezra 3–6); Stage Two, the mission of Ezra and the formation of the community according to the law of Moses in 458 (Ezra 7–10), and Stage Three, the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah's leadership in 445–444 (Neh 1.1–7.5). After the second list of returnees, the work concludes with celebration of renewal and reconstruction (Neh 8–13). This last section begins with the reading and implementation of the law of Moses (Neh 8); the confession and commitment of the people (Neh 9–10); the repopulation of the city and review of the people (Neh 11.1–12.26); and a celebration and purification (Neh 12.27–13.3). The very end is a coda in which Nehemiah recounts some of his reforms and invokes God's remembrance (Neh 13.4–31).

INTERPRETATION

The returned exiles were not only concerned with restoring preexilic institutions, such as the altar and the Temple, and restoring the city; they also adapted to changed circumstances by establishing new religious practices granting decisive authority to the book of the law/Torah, which likely reached its familiar form in the late postexilic period. To the author, the returned exiles were a godly remnant with a renewed commitment to perpetuate the covenantal teachings that kept them distinct. Being a minority within the vast polytheistic and multicultural Persian empire, they sought to protect their ethnic and religious identity by establishing rigorous religious boundaries between themselves and their neighbors. The author was worried that the community might repeat the mistakes that caused the exile, including intermarriage, and that a new destruction would follow.

Through its structure and narrative, Ezra-Nehemiah emphasizes the role of the people themselves in rebuilding, as well as the power of authoritative documents. It also conveys the expansion of holiness from the Temple to Jerusalem as a whole.

Tamara Cohn Eskenazi

1 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared:

[2] "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. [3] Any of those among you who are of his people—may their God be with them!—are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem; [4] and let all survivors, in whatever place they reside, be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods and with animals, besides freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem."

[5] The heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites—everyone whose spirit God had stirred—got ready to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. [6] All their neighbors aided them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with animals, and with valuable gifts, besides all that was freely offered. [7] King Cyrus himself brought out the vessels of the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. [8] King Cyrus of Persia had them released into the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. [9] And this was the inventory: gold basins, thirty; silver basins, one thousand; knives,[a] twenty-nine; [10] gold bowls, thirty; other silver bowls, four hundred ten; other vessels, one thousand; [11] the total of the gold and silver vessels was five thousand four hundred. All these Sheshbazzar brought up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

2 Now these were the people of the province who came from those captive exiles whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia;

[a] Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

1.1–4: God's promise and Cyrus's decree. The decree by the Persian king authorizes return to Judah and rebuilding God's house in Jerusalem. It calls thus for the reversal of the Babylonian destruction and deportations in the early sixth century BCE. The rest of the book describes three stages of return and rebuilding. Most of this decree also appears in 2 Chr 36.22–23, and in a different form in Ezra 6.2–5. **1:** *King Cyrus*, the Persian king (559–530 BCE) who conquered Babylon in 539 BCE and founded the great Persian empire. This *edict* in 538 (the *first year* of the text) is not recorded in extant Persian sources but its substance is consistent with Persian religious and political policy: The ancient Cyrus Cylinder describes Cyrus as restorer of several temples. The prophet *Jeremiah* lived through the destruction of Judah and repeatedly promised a restoration; see, e.g., Jer 29.10. **2:** *God of heaven,* a typical postexilic title (e.g., Neh 1.5; Dan 2.18). **3:** *His people,* i.e., worshipers of Israel's God. *Are now permitted,* better translated as a command to go up (see 2 Chr 36.23; 1 Esd 2.5). *Rebuild the house of the LORD*, Jerusalem's Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE (see 2 Kings 25). But in Ezra-Nehemiah, the notion of the house of the LORD encompasses more than the Temple; it includes eventually the city itself with its dedicated inhabitants (see Neh 11.1). **4:** *Survivors,* primarily referring to Jews still in exile and perhaps those in the land who survived the crisis.

Ezra 1.5–Neh 7.73: The three stages of return and reconstruction.

Ezra 1.5–8: These verses sum up the people's enthusiastic response to the decree, a response that leads to the reconstruction described in Ezra 2–Neh 7. **5:** *Judah and Benjamin* formerly constituted the kingdom of Judah (destroyed by Babylon); the other tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (destroyed and exiled by Assyria in 722 BCE; see 2 Kings 17) did not return. *The Levites* were religious functionaries; *the priests* were the leading subgroup of Levites who according to tradition were descended from Aaron, the first priest (see Ex 28.1), granted unique responsibilities for the sanctuary. **7–11:** The return of the sacred vessels symbolizes continuity with the destroyed Temple, whose looting is described in 2 Kings 25.13–17. The number of itemized vessels is smaller than the total given of 5,400. **8:** *Sheshbazzar,* a Jewish leader of the early return and the first governor of the Persian province of Yehud (see also 5.14–16); he may have been a descendant of King David.

2.1–70: The list of returnees. With its repetition in Neh 7.6–73a, the list frames the three stages of reconstruction. It also combines waves of immigration, and is thus anachronistic here. It was expanded over decades

they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, all to their own towns. [2] They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

The number of the Israelite people: [3] the descendants of Parosh, two thousand one hundred seventy-two. [4] Of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy-two. [5] Of Arah, seven hundred seventy-five. [6] Of Pahath-moab, namely the descendants of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred twelve. [7] Of Elam, one thousand two hundred fifty-four. [8] Of Zattu, nine hundred forty-five. [9] Of Zaccai, seven hundred sixty. [10] Of Bani, six hundred forty-two. [11] Of Bebai, six hundred twenty-three. [12] Of Azgad, one thousand two hundred twenty-two. [13] Of Adonikam, six hundred sixty-six. [14] Of Bigvai, two thousand fifty-six. [15] Of Adin, four hundred fifty-four. [16] Of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, ninety-eight. [17] Of Bezai, three hundred twenty-three. [18] Of Jorah, one hundred twelve. [19] Of Hashum, two hundred twenty-three. [20] Of Gibbar, ninety-five. [21] Of Bethlehem, one hundred twenty-three. [22] The people of Netophah, fifty-six. [23] Of Anathoth, one hundred twenty-eight. [24] The descendants of Azmaveth, forty-two. [25] Of Kiriatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty-three. [26] Of Ramah and Geba, six hundred twenty-one. [27] The people of Michmas, one hundred twenty-two. [28] Of Bethel and Ai, two hundred twenty-three. [29] The descendants of Nebo, fifty-two. [30] Of Magbish, one hundred fifty-six. [31] Of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred fifty-four. [32] Of Harim, three hundred twenty. [33] Of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty-five. [34] Of Jericho, three hundred forty-five. [35] Of Senaah, three thousand six hundred thirty.

[36] The priests: the descendants of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy-three. [37] Of Immer, one thousand fifty-two. [38] Of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred forty-seven. [39] Of Harim, one thousand seventeen.

[40] The Levites: the descendants of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the descendants of Hodaviah, seventy-four. [41] The singers: the descendants of Asaph, one hundred twenty-eight. [42] The descendants of the gatekeepers: of Shallum, of Ater, of Talmon, of Akkub, of Hatita, and of Shobai, in all one hundred thirty-nine.

[43] The temple servants: the descendants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, [44] Keros, Siaha, Padon, [45] Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, [46] Hagab, Shamlai, Hanan, [47] Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, [48] Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, [49] Uzza, Paseah, Besai, [50] Asnah, Meunim, Nephisim, [51] Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, [52] Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, [53] Barkos, Sisera, Temah, [54] Neziah, and Hatipha.

[55] The descendants of Solomon's servants: Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, [56] Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel, [57] Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth-hazzebaim, and Ami.

[58] All the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants were three hundred ninety-two.

[59] The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, though they could not prove their families or their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: [60] the descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda, six hundred

to include other members of the restored Judean community in Judah/Yehud between 538 and 444 BCE. The list is organized according to three groups: Israelites (laity), priests and Levites (followed by other, minor, cult personnel). **1–2:** *Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah,* of the list of leaders, only these three (if this Nehemiah is identical with the governor of Neh 1.1) will play a major role in Ezra-Nehemiah. Zerubbabel is among the last known descendants of David in the Hebrew Bible (see 1 Chr 3.19) and is called "governor" (e.g., Hag 1.1). He is one of the two major leaders of Stage One of the return and reconstruction along with Jeshua the priest, elsewhere also called Joshua and "high priest" (e.g., Hag 1.1). **2b–35**: Lay Israelites are listed by family ancestral names (vv. 2b–20) and towns of origin (vv. 21–35). Archaeology provides evidence of some increased population during the Persian period at some sites mentioned here. **36–39:** *Priests* include four families claiming descent from Aaron (cf. 1 Chr 24). **40–42:** *Levites* are listed according to their Temple functions in the postexilic period. **43–58:** Other Temple personnel and miscellaneous groups. **59–63**: Given the book's concern with communal identity, uncertain genealogies jeopardize membership in the community. Some whose membership is questioned, however, are later included as community members. Some listed towns (like Tel Melah in v. 59) are in Babylo-

fifty-two. 61 Also, of the descendants of the priests: the descendants of Habaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai (who had married one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name). 62 These looked for their entries in the genealogical records, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean; 63 the governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until there should be a priest to consult Urim and Thummim.

64 The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred sixty, 65 besides their male and female servants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty-seven; and they had two hundred male and female singers. 66 They had seven hundred thirty-six horses, two hundred forty-five mules, 67 four hundred thirty-five camels, and six thousand seven hundred twenty donkeys.

68 As soon as they came to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of families made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site. 69 According to their resources they gave to the building fund sixty-one thousand darics of gold, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly robes.

70 The priests, the Levites, and some of the people lived in Jerusalem and its vicinity;[a] and the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all Israel in their towns.

3 When the seventh month came, and the Israelites were in the towns, the people gathered together in Jerusalem. 2 Then Jeshua son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his kin set out to build the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God. 3 They set up the altar on its foundation, because they were in dread of the neighboring peoples, and they offered burnt offerings upon it to the LORD, morning and evening. 4 And they kept the festival of booths,[b] as prescribed, and offered the daily burnt offerings by

[a] 1 Esdras 5.46: Heb lacks *lived in Jerusalem and its vicinity*

[b] Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*

nia. **61–63**: Priestly legitimacy depends on descent from Aaron. Illegitimate priests threaten the sanctity of the Temple. **61:** *Barzillai the Gileadite,* see 2 Sam 17.27; 19.31. The adoption of the father-in-law's name suggests that Barzillai did not have a male heir. **63:** *Urim and Thummim,* sacred lots that priests used to get divine guidance in certain situations (Ex 28.30; Lev 8.8; Deut 33.8; 1 Sam 14.41). *Governor,* Heb "tirshata," a Persian title. **64:** The total given, 42,360, exceeds the sum of the enumerated groups (approximately 30,000), one of several signs of the list's expansion or an indication that the total includes women. **65–67**: The number of servants, as well as of singers and livestock, suggests relatively modest economic means. **69:** The precise monetary value of this contribution to the Temple is uncertain because the value of the daric and the mina fluctuated. Nevertheless, the passage suggests that the community invested a great deal in restoring its Temple. The *priestly robes* are specialized garments for official service. **70:** *All Israel in their towns,* Ezra-Nehemiah emphasizes continuity, suggesting a return to preexilic settlements. In reality, however, the Persian province of Yehud was considerably smaller than the earlier kingdom of Judah.

3.1–6.22: Stage One of reconstruction: building the Temple. Ezra 3 emphasizes the determination of the returnees to rebuild the Temple as soon as possible.

3.1–7: First step: rebuilding the altar. The restoration of the altar and a functioning priesthood indicates the resumption of sacrificial worship, a central means of religious expression in the ancient world. **1:** *The seventh month,* Tishri, (September-October), marked by holy convocations in Lev 23.23–43 and Num 29.1–38. **2:** *Jeshua . . . and Zerubbabel*, Ezra-Nehemiah assumes a pattern of dual leadership by a priest and a secular leader. *The law* (Heb "torah") *of Moses,* most likely some form of the Pentateuch (see notes to Neh 8). Ezra-Nehemiah describes conformity to the "torah," or teaching, of Moses (hence to God's teachings), as the guiding principle in reconstruction. **3–6:** The detailed catalogue of sacrifices confirms the resumption of worship according to authoritative traditions. **3:** *Dread of the neighboring peoples*, tension with local inhabitants and neighboring peoples is a major theme in Ezra-Nehemiah. Some scholars see in this tension a debate between returning Judeans and those Judeans who remained in the land over who represents postexilic "Israel"; others suggest that surrounding cultures saw Jewish renewal as a threat, as Ezra 4 indicates. **4:** *The festival of booths*, see Lev 23.34.

number according to the ordinance, as required for each day, [5] and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the sacred festivals of the LORD, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the LORD. [6] From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid. [7] So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from King Cyrus of Persia.

[8] In the second year after their arrival at the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their people, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to have the oversight of the work on the house of the LORD. [9] And Jeshua with his sons and his kin, and Kadmiel and his sons, Binnui and Hodaviah[a] along with the sons of Henadad, the Levites, their sons and kin, together took charge of the workers in the house of God.

[10] When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments were stationed to praise the LORD with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, according to the directions of King David of Israel; [11] and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD,

"For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever
toward Israel."

And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. [12] But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, [13] so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.

4 When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel, [2] they approached Zerubbabel and

[a] Compare 2.40; Neh 7.43; 1 Esdras 5.58: Heb *sons of Judah*

5: *Offerings at the new moon,* see Num 29.6. **7:** Sidon and Tyre helped build Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 5–7).

3.8–13: Second step: founding the Second Temple. Ezra 3–4 reports that laying the foundation of the Temple provoked opposition from the people in the land and caused a delay in building the Temple itself. According to Ezra-Nehemiah, this explains why the Temple was rebuilt only in the time of King Darius. The historical reality was likely more complex; the books of Haggai and Zechariah indicate that the people themselves lost interest. **8:** *Second year,* implicitly 537 or 536. Hag 2.18 dates the founding differently, to 520 BCE. Ezra 5.16 credits Sheshbazzar, not Zerubbabel and Jeshua, with laying the foundations. Ezra-Nehemiah thus compresses various events in its thematic presentation. **10–13:** Celebration of temple-foundings is a common ancient Near Eastern practice. **10:** *David*'s crowning achievement for Ezra-Nehemiah (as for Chronicles) is the development of liturgy. **11:** The quoted words are a frequently occurring refrain in late Psalms (e.g., 106.1; 107.1; 118.1; 136.1). **12:** *The first house,* Solomon's Temple, destroyed in 586 BCE. *Old people . . . wept*, postexilic sources contrast the splendor of Solomon's Temple with the smaller, less glorious, postexilic Second Temple. **13:** *The sound was heard far away*, the rejoicing alerts the neighbors and triggers the opposition.

4.1–6.22: Opposition and support. The edict of Cyrus authorized rebuilding the Temple, which according to several biblical sources was completed in 515 BCE, during the reign of Darius I. Ezra 4–6 explains the delay in building by describing opposition from neighbors to the building project.

4.1–24: Opposition from neighbors halts rebuilding. The opposition reflects competition for political and perhaps economic privileges within the Persian empire, as well as the definition of religious legitimacy. This section uses material in Aramaic out of chronological order to explain persistent hostilities and thus to account for the delay in rebuilding. **1–6: Initial opposition.** Ezra 4 presents the would-be supporters, soon to become adversaries, as self-proclaimed foreigners, which accounts for their exclusion from this particular sacred project. **2:** *We worship your God,* according to 2 Kings 17, Assyria forcibly repopulated Samaria after deporting the

the heads of families and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of King Esar-haddon of Assyria who brought us here." 3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of families in Israel said to them, "You shall have no part with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus of Persia has commanded us."

4 Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and made them afraid to build, 5 and they bribed officials to frustrate their plan throughout the reign of King Cyrus of Persia and until the reign of King Darius of Persia.

6 In the reign of Ahasuerus, in his accession year, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam and Mithredath and Tabeel and the rest of their associates wrote to King Artaxerxes of Persia; the letter was written in Aramaic and translated.[a] 8 Rehum the royal deputy and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes as follows 9 (then Rehum the royal deputy, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their associates, the judges, the envoys, the officials, the Persians, the people of Erech, the Babylonians, the people of Susa, that is, the Elamites, 10 and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar deported and settled in the cities of Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River wrote—and now 11 this is a copy of the letter that they sent):

"To King Artaxerxes: Your servants, the people of the province Beyond the River, send greeting. And now 12 may it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city; they are finishing the walls and repairing the

[a] Heb adds *in Aramaic,* indicating that 4.8–6.18 is in Aramaic. Another interpretation is *The letter was written in the Aramaic script and set forth in the Aramaic language*

Israelites, and these foreigners developed a syncretistic religion (2 Kings 17.41). *Esar-haddon,* king of Assyria (681–669). According to 2 Kings 17.3; 18.9, the king who resettled foreigners in northern Israel in 722 BCE was Shalmaneser (727–722); see 2 Kings 17.24. **3:** *We alone will build … as King Cyrus … commanded us,* the rebuilders claim that Cyrus's decree applies only to them, the sole legitimate remnant of Judah. Seeking to preserve ethnic and religious boundaries in the multicultural milieu of the Persian empire, as well as to protect the Temple's sanctity, the returnees refuse partnership with other groups. Once the Temple is built, however, Ezra-Nehemiah shows some readiness to include outsiders (see 6.21). **4:** *The people of the land,* local inhabitants; some scholars suppose people from Samaria. Although Ezra-Nehemiah implies that these "people of the land" were of foreign descent, the groups may have included Judeans who had not been exiled and did not share the politics, ideology, or practices of those who repatriated. Tension with the people of the land is later expressed, also, in the crisis of mixed marriages (Ezra 9–10). **5:** *King Darius of Persia* ruled 522–486 BCE. The Temple was rebuilt in his time (see 6.15). **6:** *Ahasuerus,* or Xerxes I (486–465 BCE), prominent in the book of Esther. This document is not preserved. **7–24:** Correspondence in Aramaic describes further opposition during the reign of Artaxerxes, who reigned in the fifth century BCE, after King Darius. The record of this opposition, which focuses on the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, is out of chronological order and serves to document how foreign adversaries (e.g., 4.10) repeatedly sabotaged Jewish rebuilding. **7a:** *Artaxerxes* I, king of Persia (465–424). According to Ezra 7–Neh 2, the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah took place during his reign. **7b–11:** The report to the king comes from Persian officials located around Judah and local inhabitants. **7b:** *Aramaic,* the lingua franca of the Persian period. The text continues in Aramaic until 6.18, suggesting a distinct Aramaic source for this information. **8–10:** Various explanatory material; the letter begins only in v. 11. **10:** *Osnappar,* Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria (669–627). *Samaria,* a designation for the northern Israelite region, named after its capital, was in the Persian period a center of provincial administration, possibly uneasy about Judah's redevelopment. *Province Beyond the River,* the Persian satrapy west of the Euphrates River, including Yehud (Judah) and Samaria. By the fifth century BCE, Samaria and Yehud were separate provinces, each with its own governor. Nehemiah will emphasize Samaria's opposition.

4.11–16: The opponents' letter. 12: *Rebuilding that … city,* Neh 1–7 records the rebuilding of the city in the

foundations. [13] Now may it be known to the king that, if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and the royal revenue will be reduced. [14] Now because we share the salt of the palace and it is not fitting for us to witness the king's dishonor, therefore we send and inform the king, [15] so that a search may be made in the annals of your ancestors. You will discover in the annals that this is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and that sedition was stirred up in it from long ago. On that account this city was laid waste. [16] We make known to the king that, if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then have no possession in the province Beyond the River."

[17] The king sent an answer: "To Rehum the royal deputy and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates who live in Samaria and in the rest of the province Beyond the River, greeting. And now [18] the letter that you sent to us has been read in translation before me. [19] So I made a decree, and someone searched and discovered that this city has risen against kings from long ago, and that rebellion and sedition have been made in it. [20] Jerusalem has had mighty kings who ruled over the whole province Beyond the River, to whom tribute, custom, and toll were paid. [21] Therefore issue an order that these people be made to cease, and that this city not be rebuilt, until I make a decree. [22] Moreover, take care not to be slack in this matter; why should damage grow to the hurt of the king?"

[23] Then when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and the scribe Shimshai and their associates, they hurried to the Jews in Jerusalem and by force and power made them cease. [24] At that time the work on the house of God in Jerusalem stopped and was discontinued until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia.

5 Now the prophets, Haggai[a] and Zechariah son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. [2] Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak set out to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem; and with them were the prophets of God, helping them.

[3] At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shetharbozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus, "Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this

[a] Aram adds *the prophet*

twentieth year of Artaxerxes (444 BCE). **13–14:** Here, the opponents warn that Judean rebuilding will result in sedition and loss of income to the king. Ironically, their letter proves the antiquity of the city and of Jewish claims to it. *Share the salt of the palace,* an idiomatic expression of loyalty to the palace as well as of mutual interests. **15:** *Annals of your ancestors,* the Assyrians and Babylonians kept careful records, and the Persians inherited and enlarged their bureaucracy. Here, as elsewhere in Ezra-Nehemiah, written records play a crucial role in establishing authority. **16:** Revolt in Jerusalem will endanger Persian rule throughout the western region of the empire.

4.17–24: Royal response, prohibiting building. This correspondence in Artaxerxes's time in the fifth century BCE, anachronistically placed here, is used to explain the delay in rebuilding. **19:** *Rebellion and sedition,* presumably a reference to prior rebellions against Assyria and Babylonia. **21:** *Until I make a decree,* this loophole will enable Nehemiah (Neh 2) to secure a new decree. **24:** *At that time,* the narrative resumes the story about the Temple that was interrupted after 4.5. *The second year of … Darius,* i.e., 520 BCE, when rebuilding resumes, as also in the books of Haggai and Zechariah.

5.1–6.12: Third step: resumption of rebuilding of the Temple. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah inspire the people to resume rebuilding, and the Temple is finally completed at the time of Darius, in 515 BCE, after King Darius supports and extends King Cyrus's privileges. **5.1–2:** Resumption of building begins with the urging of two prophets. **1:** *Haggai … and Zechariah,* in the books of Haggai and Zechariah, these prophets exhort leaders and community to build, starting in the second year of Darius (520 BCE). **2:** *Then Zerubbabel … and Jeshua,* see 2.1–2n.

5.3–6.12: New official Persian inquiry and correspondence lead to renewal of building permit. 5.3: *Tattenai,* a Persian official mentioned in nonbiblical sources as governor of the entire province Beyond the River, of which Yehud is a subunit (see 4.10n.).

structure?" [4] They[a] also asked them this, "What are the names of the men who are building this building?" [5] But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until a report reached Darius and then answer was returned by letter in reply to it.

[6] The copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates the envoys who were in the province Beyond the River sent to King Darius; [7] they sent him a report, in which was written as follows: "To Darius the king, all peace! [8] May it be known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built of hewn stone, and timber is laid in the walls; this work is being done diligently and prospers in their hands. [9] Then we spoke to those elders and asked them, 'Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?' [10] We also asked them their names, for your information, so that we might write down the names of the men at their head. [11] This was their reply to us: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. [12] But because our ancestors had angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house and carried away the people to Babylonia. [13] However, King Cyrus of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, made a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt. [14] Moreover, the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem and had brought into the temple of Babylon, these King Cyrus took out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. [15] He said to him, "Take these vessels; go and put them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site." [16] Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem; and from that time until now it has been under construction, and it is not yet finished.' [17] And now, if it seems good to the king, have a search made in the royal archives there in Babylon, to see whether a decree was issued by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusalem. Let the king send us his pleasure in this matter."

6 Then King Darius made a decree, and they searched the archives where the documents were stored in Babylon. [2] But it was in Ecbatana, the capital in the province of Media, that a scroll was found on which this was written: "A record. [3] In the first year of his reign, King Cyrus issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices are offered and burnt offerings are brought;[b] its height shall be sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits, [4] with three courses of hewn stones and one course of timber;

[a] Gk Syr: Aram *We*
[b] Meaning of Aram uncertain

5.6–17: New correspondence from sympathetic officials reverses the letters of 4.7–16. Tattenai the governor does not stop the builders while waiting for further instructions from King Darius. **8:** *Judah,* Aram "Yehud." Tattenai's report indicates building activities well in progress. **11–16:** This report generally parallels Ezra 1, but emphasizes Sheshbazzar's role as governor and does not mention Zerubbabel, because it aims to show continuity with the earliest authorization. **11:** *A great king,* Solomon; see 2 Chr 3–4. **12:** *Nebuchadnezzar,* see 1.7n. *Chaldean,* a biblical term for the Babylonians. **13:** *King Cyrus of Babylon,* the Persian king who controlled Babylon, where the Temple treasures were stored; see Ezra 1. **14:** *Sheshbazzar,* see 1.7n. 1 Esd 6.18, which parallels this account, also mentions Zerubbabel. **17:** Tattenai seeks to ascertain both whether Cyrus authorized building, and whether Darius wishes it to continue.

6.1–12: Darius's edict in support of the Temple. A discovery of Cyrus's memorandum confirms the legitimacy of the Temple in Jerusalem and brings additional support from King Darius. **2:** *Ecbatana,* the summer residence of Persian kings, now Hamadan in Iran. **3–5:** This archival version of Cyrus's decree emphasizes building size and funding; it is more generous than the public version (Ezra 1.1–4), explicitly offering royal financial support (v. 4). The relation between the two versions is uncertain. The memorandum resembles excavated records from the Persian administration. **3:** *Sixty cubits,* a cubit is about 18 in (45 cm). The measurements do not include

let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.
5 Moreover, let the gold and silver vessels
of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple in Jerusalem, each to its place; you shall put them in the house of God."

6 "Now you, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and you, their associates, the envoys in the province Beyond the River, keep away; 7 let the work on this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site.
8 Moreover I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God: the cost is to be paid to these people, in full and without delay, from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province Beyond the River. 9 Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests in Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail, 10 so that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his children.
11 Furthermore I decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of the house of the perpetrator, who then shall be impaled on it. The house shall be made a dunghill. 12 May the God who has established his name there overthrow any king or people that shall put forth a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, make a decree; let it be done with all diligence."

13 Then, according to the word sent by King Darius, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates did with all diligence what King Darius had ordered. 14 So the elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the prophesying of the prophet Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo. They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus, Darius, and King Artaxerxes of Persia; 15 and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

16 The people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. 17 They offered at the dedication of this house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes

length; a square building may be intended. **6–12:** Darius's support of the Temple is extremely generous and likely exaggerated. But if the information is reliable, it might indicate Persia's attempt to stabilize its hold in the Mediterranean area by securing the goodwill of the people of Yehud. Nonbiblical sources show that Darius also supported Egypt's religious institutions. **7:** *Governor,* Tattenai does not name a contemporary governor of Yehud (presumably Zerubbabel). **8:** *The cost,* Darius designates provincial revenue for the Temple a privilege likely to antagonize other local, taxpaying districts.

6.13–18: The completion of the Temple, an accomplishment credited to the Judeans guided by God and authorized by three Persian kings. Celebration concludes Stage One of the return and reconstruction. Stage Two will focus on rebuilding the community (Ezra 7–10), and Stage Three, on rebuilding Jerusalem's walls (Neh 1–7). **14:** The conclusion highlights the roles of elders and prophetic inspiration. *Cyrus, Darius, and King Artaxerxes,* according to Ezra 1–6, the Temple itself was rebuilt during Cyrus's and Darius's reigns, and completed in 515 BCE, before the time of Artaxerxes (464–424 BCE); hence his name in the list is at first puzzling. It illustrates Ezra-Nehemiah's understanding of the house of God as extending beyond the Temple to include the community (restored by Ezra) and the city (restored by Nehemiah; Neh 1–7) under Artaxerxes. Ezra 6.14 thus suggests the unity of Ezra-Nehemiah. The joint authorization, first by God and then by kings, is crucial to Ezra-Nehemiah's historical and theological understanding. **15:** *Finished on the third day … of Adar … sixth year,* March 12, 515 BCE.

6.16–22: The concluding dedication. The dedication of the Temple is described briefly. A more extensive celebration in Ezra-Nehemiah will follow the rebuilding of the city's walls as the completion of the entire "house of God" (Neh 8–13). **16:** *People of Israel,* i.e., *the returned exiles* (lit., "sons of exile") who now represent the fullness of Israel. **17:** *Sin offering,* or purification offering; see Num 7. *Twelve male goats … the number of the tribes,* the remnant that includes only Judah, Benjamin, and the Levites, worships on behalf of the full house of Israel,

of Israel. 18 Then they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their courses for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

19 On the fourteenth day of the first month the returned exiles kept the passover. 20 For both the priests and the Levites had purified themselves; all of them were clean. So they killed the passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves. 21 It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by all who had joined them and separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel. 22 With joy they celebrated the festival of unleavened bread seven days; for the Lord had made them joyful, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

7 After this, in the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, 2 son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, 3 son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, 4 son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, 5 son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of the chief priest Aaron— 6 this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord the God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was upon him.

7 Some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants also went up to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. 8 They came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 On the first day of the first month the journey up from Babylon was begun, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the gracious hand of his God was upon him. 10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel.

which it now represents. **18:** *Written in the book of Moses,* Ex 29; Lev 8; and Num 3; 4; and 8 designate priestly and levitical tasks. Ezra-Nehemiah stresses the religious legitimacy of the Temple, which complements the political legitimacy granted by Cyrus and Darius. Aramaic section ends here. **19–22:** Celebrating the Passover and the festival of unleavened bread (some five weeks after the Temple's dedication) has special significance for the reconstruction because the return from exile was viewed by some as a second Exodus (cf. e.g., Isa 52.11–12). **20:** *They killed,* the priestly laws of Lev 23.4–6 are followed here. **21:** *All who had joined them,* whereas the returnees excluded others from the act of rebuilding, reserving the task to "God's people" explicitly commissioned by Cyrus (Ezra 1.2–4 and 4.3), others could join once the Temple is rebuilt, following Ex 12.48, which notes that circumcised non-Israelites may participate in the Passover offering. **22:** *King of Assyria,* an anachronistic reference to the Persian king, alluding to the earliest exile by Assyria, which is now reversed.

7.1–10.44: Stage Two of reconstruction: Ezra and the reformation of the community according to the Torah. Ezra's mission focuses on the processes by which the community restructures itself to conform to an interpretation of the law that requires a separation from the people of the land. Ezra-Nehemiah implicitly dates this event in 458 BCE, during the reign of Artaxerxes I, though some scholars date it to 398 BCE, during the reign of Artaxerxes II.

7.1–10: The narrator's introduction of Ezra. 1–6: Ezra's long pedigree establishes his impeccable credentials both as priest of the most distinguished line and as scribe—the two roles that will account for his stature and acceptance within the Jewish community. **5:** *Chief priest,* His lineage qualifies Ezra to serve as a chief or high priest, even though he never undertakes this role in Ezra-Nehemiah. **6:** *Scribe,* a highly educated person, often in an important advisory position to kings. *Skilled in the law of Moses,* knowledgeable about the Torah. **7:** *Israel . . . priests . . . Levites*, Ezra's caravan includes the same basic groups as Ezra 2. *The seventh year of king Artaxerxes,* 458 BCE. **8:** *The fifth month,* Ab (July-August). **9:** *The first day of the first month,* i.e., Nisan (March-April), two weeks before Passover. The dates may be symbolic, reflecting the Exodus from Egypt in the first month (Ex 12.2; Num 33.3) and the destruction of the Temple in the fifth (2 Kings 25.8), although five months would be a reasonable time for a journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. **10:** Ezra's goals of studying, teaching, and practicing God's law account for his subsequent actions and model Jewish aspirations. These strengthen his credentials as priest, and his qualifications as an authoritative teacher of God's law.

[11] This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to the priest Ezra, the scribe, a scholar of the text of the commandments of the LORD and his statutes for Israel: [12] "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven: Peace.[a] And now [13] I decree that any of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom who freely offers to go to Jerusalem may go with you. [14] For you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God, which is in your hand, [15] and also to convey the silver and gold that the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, [16] with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, given willingly for the house of their God in Jerusalem. [17] With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, and their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem. [18] Whatever seems good to you and your colleagues to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do, according to the will of your God. [19] The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God, you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem. [20] And whatever else is required for the house of your God, which you are responsible for providing, you may provide out of the king's treasury.

[21] "I, King Artaxerxes, decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence, [22] up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred cors of wheat, one hundred baths[b] of wine, one hundred baths[b] of oil, and unlimited salt. [23] Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done with zeal for the house of the God of heaven, or wrath will come upon the realm of the king and his heirs. [24] We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on any of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.

[25] "And you, Ezra, according to the God-given wisdom you possess, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River who know the laws of your God; and you shall teach those who do not know them. [26] All who will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on them, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of their goods or for imprisonment."

[27] Blessed be the LORD, the God of our ancestors, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king to glorify the house of

[a] Syr Vg 1 Esdras 8.9: Aram *Perfect*
[b] A Heb measure of volume

7.11–26: Royal introduction of Ezra and his mission. This Aramaic royal letter establishes Ezra's credentials within the Persian bureaucracy. It reauthorizes immigration to Judah (v. 13) and royal subsidy for the Temple (vv. 14–24). It seems to place the Torah on equal footing with royal law (v. 26). **14:** *Seven counselors*, Persian royal advisers (see Esth 1.14 and *Hist.* 3.84). *The law of your God,* in Ezra-Nehemiah the book of the Torah. **15–19:** The royal privileges include financial support for the Temple by the king himself, voluntary contributions from Babylonian Jews for the Temple, and a free hand to use the surplus. **20:** Artaxerxes gives Ezra virtually a blank check, showing great trust in him. **21–24:** Artaxerxes assures a generous year's supply of provisions for the Temple. **21:** Additional support is to come from local officials. **22:** A *talent* was 75 lb (34 kg); a *cor* 6.5 bushels (230 L); and a *bath* about 6 gal (23 L). **24:** Tax exemption for Temple personnel is unusual. **25:** *All the people* probably means Jews in the province. **26:** The king affirms Ezra's comprehensive authority, as well as the Torah's. *The law of your God and the law of the king,* this crucial phrase sets the Torah as legally authoritative for the Jewish community in Yehud. It implies something akin to autonomy and self-rule in matters of religion and the Temple. Some scholars conclude that the Torah was compiled by Ezra as a result of Persian initiative, but this is neither stated nor likely.

7.27–9.15: Ezra's memoirs. The text resumes in Hebrew, with Ezra as narrator. He will describe the journey and the crisis of mixed marriages.

7.27–8.36: Ezra's journey and arrival. 7.27–28: Ezra expresses gratitude to God, rather than to the king.

the LORD in Jerusalem, [28] and who extended to me steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.

8 These are their family heads, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylonia, in the reign of King Artaxerxes: [2] Of the descendants of Phinehas, Gershom. Of Ithamar, Daniel. Of David, Hattush, [3] of the descendants of Shecaniah. Of Parosh, Zechariah, with whom were registered one hundred fifty males. [4] Of the descendants of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males. [5] Of the descendants of Zattu,[a] Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. [6] Of the descendants of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. [7] Of the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. [8] Of the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him eighty males. [9] Of the descendants of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred eighteen males. [10] Of the descendants of Bani,[b] Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him one hundred sixty males. [11] Of the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males. [12] Of the descendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him one hundred ten males. [13] Of the descendants of Adonikam, those who came later, their names being Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them sixty males. [14] Of the descendants of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them seventy males.

[15] I gathered them by the river that runs to Ahava, and there we camped three days. As I reviewed the people and the priests, I found there none of the descendants of Levi. [16] Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were leaders, and for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were wise, [17] and sent them to Iddo, the leader at the place called Casiphia, telling them what to say to Iddo and his colleagues the temple servants at Casiphia, namely, to send us ministers for the house of our God. [18] Since the gracious hand of our God was upon us, they brought us a man of discretion, of the descendants of Mahli son of Levi son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and kin, eighteen; [19] also Hashabiah and with him Jeshaiah of the descendants of Merari, with his kin and their sons, twenty; [20] besides two hundred twenty of the temple servants, whom David and his officials had set apart to attend the Levites. These were all mentioned by name.

[21] Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might deny ourselves[c] before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our possessions. [22] For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and cavalry to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king that the hand of our God is gracious to all who seek him, but his power and his wrath are against all who forsake him. [23] So we fasted and petitioned our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.

[24] Then I set apart twelve of the leading priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their kin with them. [25] And I weighed out to

[a] Gk 1 Esdras 8.32: Heb lacks *of Zattu*
[b] Gk 1 Esdras 8.36: Heb lacks *Bani*
[c] Or *might fast*

8.1–20: Ezra's caravan numbers about 1,500 men (women are not mentioned); like Ezra 2, the list mingles clan names and place names, although some important individuals are also singled out. **2:** *Hattush,* 1 Chr 3.22 mentions a descendant of David with this name, although nothing further is reported about him. Apparently some Davidic descendants remained in Babylonia after the return to Judah had begun. **4–20:** The additional members and clans in Ezra's caravan include names that already appeared in Ezra 2 (e.g., Pahath-moab in Ezra 2.6 and 8.4). **15:** *Ahava,* an unknown location along one of the canals of the river Euphrates. *None of . . . Levi,* Ezra demonstrates concern for the proper maintenance of the Temple and broadens the scope of its personnel to include Levites, the lower religious officials. **21–30:** Ezra requires of the community spiritual as well as physical preparations. **21:** *Fast,* a common preparation for beseeching God. *All our possessions,* even with the well-guarded royal roads, a long journey was hazardous, especially when transporting gold and silver. **22:** *I was ashamed,* Ezra's humility and trust indicate that God's power is ultimately greater than that of the Persian king's army. **24–30:** Further

them the silver and the gold and the vessels, the offering for the house of our God that the king, his counselors, his lords, and all Israel there present had offered; 26 I weighed out into their hand six hundred fifty talents of silver, and one hundred silver vessels worth . . . talents,[a] and one hundred talents of gold, 27 twenty gold bowls worth a thousand darics, and two vessels of fine polished bronze as precious as gold. 28 And I said to them, "You are holy to the LORD, and the vessels are holy; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the LORD, the God of your ancestors. 29 Guard them and keep them until you weigh them before the chief priests and the Levites and the heads of families in Israel at Jerusalem, within the chambers of the house of the LORD." 30 So the priests and the Levites took over the silver, the gold, and the vessels as they were weighed out, to bring them to Jerusalem, to the house of our God.

31 Then we left the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem; the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes along the way. 32 We came to Jerusalem and remained there three days. 33 On the fourth day, within the house of our God, the silver, the gold, and the vessels were weighed into the hands of the priest Meremoth son of Uriah, and with him was Eleazar son of Phinehas, and with them were the Levites, Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui. 34 The total was counted and weighed, and the weight of everything was recorded.

35 At that time those who had come from captivity, the returned exiles, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel, twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and as a sin offering twelve male goats; all this was a burnt offering to the LORD. 36 They also delivered the king's commissions to the king's satraps and to the governors of the province Beyond the River; and they supported the people and the house of God.

9 After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, "The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 For they have taken some of their daughters

[a] The number of talents is lacking

preparations that empower the clergy. **26:** *Talents* weigh about 75 lbs (34 kg) each. The huge amounts listed defy credibility. **27:** *Darics,* see 2.69n. **28:** *The vessels are holy,* holiness is derived from their dedication to God; these are not vessels from the First Temple. **31–36:** Arrival and celebration. **31:** *Twelfth day of the first month* (Nisan [March-April]), two days before the Passover commemorating the Exodus. A new Exodus may be implicit; however, practical reasons of weather make spring the season for expeditions (see 2 Sam 11.1). **33:** Ezra ensures that the gifts are transferred to both priests and Levites. **35:** *Returned exiles,* the restored community. **36:** *Satraps,* high officials in the Persian government, usually provincial governors.

9.1–15: The crisis of mixed marriages. The crisis in Stage Two of the reconstruction comes when men, including Jewish leaders, marry foreign women. To ensure survival as a small (see Ezra 9.8) minority in the midst of surrounding cultures, Ezra-Nehemiah advocates separatist policies. In this section, it calls for excluding foreign wives and their children from the community. The concern with intermarriages resembles the Athenian laws of 451 BCE, which granted citizenship only to men with two Athenian parents. The concern in Ezra-Nehemiah may, therefore, be similar: a more democratic society (with more power granted to members) expects more rigorous criteria for membership. **1:** *Have not separated,* Deut 7.1–5 prohibits any relation with the people of Canaan, and Deut 20.15–18 further demands their annihilation on the ground that they lead to religious defection. Ezra-Nehemiah substitutes separation for destruction for these people who are not actual Canaanites, but like Canaanites; *their abominations, from the Canaanites,* better "their abominations like the Canaanites." The informants equate the religious practices of the present inhabitants with those of the earlier proscribed nations. *Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites . . . Amorites,* Deut 7 specifically prohibits relations with these nations. *Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians,* Deut 23.3–8 specifically excludes Ammonites and Moabites from the congregation, but permits the incorporation of Egyptians at some point. This verse has thus extended the earlier prohibition. The targeted prohibited families probably include Judeans who had not gone into exile. **2:** *Holy seed* is progeny dedicated to God. The term probably reflects Isa 6.13, in reference to the remnant.

as wives for themselves and for their sons. Thus the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands, and in this faithlessness the officials and leaders have led the way."
3 When I heard this, I tore my garment and my mantle, and pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat appalled. 4 Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.

5 At the evening sacrifice I got up from my fasting, with my garments and my mantle torn, and fell on my knees, spread out my hands to the LORD my God, 6 and said,

"O my God, I am too ashamed and embarrassed to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens. 7 From the days of our ancestors to this day we have been deep in guilt, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as is now the case. 8 But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the LORD our God, who has left us a remnant, and given us a stake in his holy place, in order that he[a] may brighten our eyes and grant us a little sustenance in our slavery. 9 For we are slaves; yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to give us new life to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judea and Jerusalem.

10 "And now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, 11 which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land that you are entering to possess is a land unclean with the pollutions of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations. They have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness. 12 Therefore do not give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or prosperity, so that you may be strong and eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.' 13 After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and have given us such a remnant as this, 14 shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practice these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you destroy us without remnant or survivor? 15 O LORD, God of Israel, you are just, but we have escaped as a remnant, as is now the case. Here we are before you in our guilt, though no one can face you because of this."

10 While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him out of Israel; the people also wept bitterly. 2 Shecaniah son of Jehiel, of the descendants of Elam, addressed Ezra, saying,

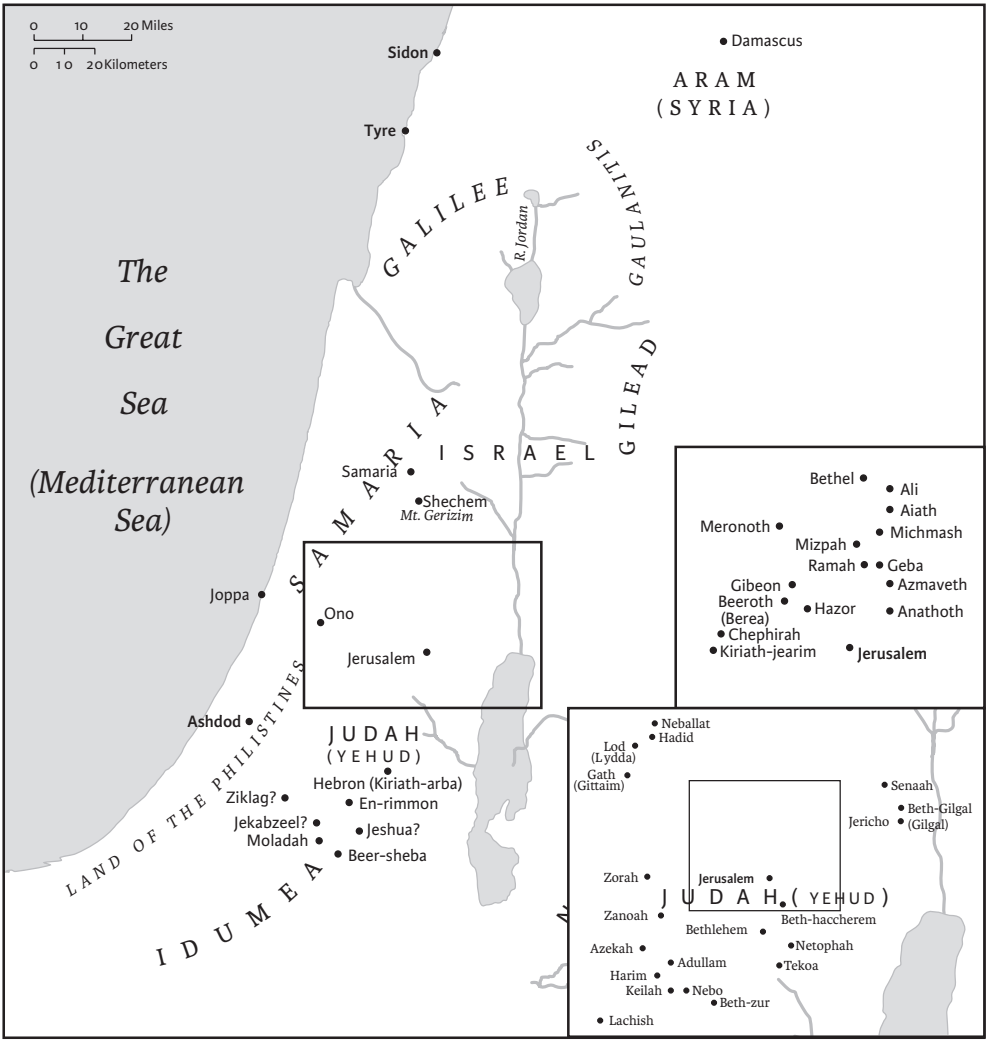
[a] Heb *our God*

9.3–4: Ezra reacts with mourning and prayer. His penitence produces remorse and generates communal action.

9.5–15: Ezra's prayer. More a sermon than a confession, the prayer rehearses events of the past in order to alter community behavior. Like the prophets and the Deuteronomistic History, Ezra interprets Israel's political devastation as the consequence of religious and moral failings by Israel; he uses the fear of a recurrence to motivate the community to separate from the other inhabitants of the land. **7:** *As is now the case,* the restoration is understood as a result of divine forgiveness, not Israel's merit. **8:** *Little sustenance,* Ezra's confession expresses the vulnerability of a small remnant. **9:** *For we are slaves,* i.e., a colonized people under Persian control. *Repair its ruins,* i.e., physical and spiritual reconstruction. *A wall,* actually "a fence," a metaphor for a weak protective barrier. **11–12:** This paraphrase and blending of Priestly and Deuteronomic material (Lev 18.24–30; Deut 7.3–4) is characteristic of this period, when the Torah as a book became authoritative, and its different laws, from different sources, were melded together.

10.1–44: Resolution of crisis. The crisis is resolved through communal consensus to reinterpret earlier laws and apply them to present circumstances, and therefore to oppose mixed marriages within the covenant community.

10.1–6: The impact of Ezra's prayer. Ezra's prayer attracts a crowd and inspires remorse and repentance. **2:** *Have married*, (lit., "have settled"), i.e., established on the land. Inheritance of land is a concern (see Ezra 9.12;



Judah and its neighbors in Ezra–Nehemiah.

"We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. 3 So now let us make a covenant with our God to send away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. 4 Take action, for it is your duty, and we are with you; be strong, and do it." 5 Then Ezra stood up and made the leading priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear that they would do as had been said. So they swore.

Deut 7). The proposal to exclude foreign wives comes from Shecaniah, a community member (his father's name, Jehiel, appears in 10.26 among the transgressors). The resolution will emerge by consensus. **3:** The children of such marriages are to be sent away as well, thereby not separated from their mothers. *Let it be done according to the law,* the Pentateuch does not include a law that demands dissolving mixed marriages; this implies a reinterpretation, applying a prohibition against such marriages to new circumstances. **4–5:** The people authorize Ezra to act. Although authorized by the Persian king, Ezra undertakes leadership roles only when the

6 Then Ezra withdrew from before the
house of God, and went to the chamber of Je-
hohanan son of Eliashib, where he spent the
night.[a] He did not eat bread or drink water,
for he was mourning over the faithlessness
of the exiles. 7 They made a proclamation
throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the
returned exiles that they should assemble
at Jerusalem, 8 and that if any did not come
within three days, by order of the officials
and the elders all their property should be
forfeited, and they themselves banned from
the congregation of the exiles.

9 Then all the people of Judah and Ben-
jamin assembled at Jerusalem within the
three days; it was the ninth month, on the
twentieth day of the month. All the people
sat in the open square before the house of
God, trembling because of this matter and
because of the heavy rain. 10 Then Ezra the
priest stood up and said to them, "You have
trespassed and married foreign women, and
so increased the guilt of Israel. 11 Now make
confession to the LORD the God of your an-
cestors, and do his will; separate yourselves
from the peoples of the land and from the
foreign wives." 12 Then all the assembly an-
swered with a loud voice, "It is so; we must do
as you have said. 13 But the people are many,
and it is a time of heavy rain; we cannot stand
in the open. Nor is this a task for one day or
for two, for many of us have transgressed in
this matter. 14 Let our officials represent the
whole assembly, and let all in our towns who
have taken foreign wives come at appointed
times, and with them the elders and judges of
every town, until the fierce wrath of our God
on this account is averted from us." 15 Only
Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of
Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and
Shabbethai the Levites supported them.

16 Then the returned exiles did so. Ezra
the priest selected men,[b] heads of families,
according to their families, each of them des-
ignated by name. On the first day of the tenth
month they sat down to examine the matter.
17 By the first day of the first month they had
come to the end of all the men who had mar-
ried foreign women.

18 There were found of the descendants of
the priests who had married foreign women,
of the descendants of Jeshua son of Jozadak

[a] 1 Esdras 9.2: Heb *where he went*
[b] 1 Esdras 9.16: Syr: Heb *And there were selected Ezra,*

community invites him to do so. **6:** *The chamber,* an office within the Temple complex that as a priest, Ezra may use. *Jehohanan son of Eliashib* appears in the priestly lists (Neh 12.23), although both names are common in the postexilic period.

10.7–8: Steps toward resolution. An assembly for the purpose of communal decision is convened, with a threat in case of noncompliance. Although Artaxerxes's letter authorizes Ezra to issue decrees, Ezra resorts to a communal process instead (see 10.5,16). Threats of confiscation apply to those who refuse to participate in the assembly, not those who offer a different opinion as to what should be done.

10.9–15: A communal process for resolution. The report focuses on the process in which the entire community participates in deciding and enforcing criteria for membership. **9:** *Heavy rains* are typical of the cold ninth month, Chislev (November-December). **10–11:** *Married,* see 10.2n. This is Ezra's first directive; he commands only at the invitation of the community. **12–14:** The community assents but offers an alternative mechanism for resolution. **14:** *Have taken* (lit., "have settled"); see 10.2n. Again, the community is responsible for action, devising a representative form ("our officials") of government. **15:** A minority opinion is registered, establishing that majority decision carries even without unanimity. *Meshullam* could be Ezra's companion in 8.16.

10.16–44: Results: compliance with communal decision. The issue of mixed marriages constitutes the first test of the new, legal status of the Torah, illustrating how an ancient book may shape the present and future through communal interpretive process facilitated by Ezra the scribe. **16:** *The returned exiles did so* on the basis of a democratic process. *Ezra . . . selected men,* the Heb text states that the community selects the committee, with Ezra serving as a member. This is consistent with the rest of Ezra-Nehemiah where the broader community plays a crucial role. **17:** *By the first day of the first month,* the commission's deliberations began in December 458 (v. 16) and concluded three months later in March 457 BCE, about one year after Ezra's caravan first set out for Jerusalem (7.9). **18:** *Had married* (lit., "had settled"); see 10.2n. *Jeshua son of Jozadak,* the high priest in the early return. See 2.1–2n. **18–19:** The high priest's family fully complies with the communal decision; this affirms the

and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. [19] They pledged themselves to send away their wives, and their guilt offering was a ram of the flock for their guilt. [20] Of the descendants of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. [21] Of the descendants of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziah. [22] Of the descendants of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

[23] Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. [24] Of the singers: Eliashib. Of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

[25] And of Israel: of the descendants of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Hashabiah,[a] and Benaiah. [26] Of the descendants of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah. [27] Of the descendants of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza. [28] Of the descendants of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai. [29] Of the descendants of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth. [30] Of the descendants of Pahath-moab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh. [31] Of the descendants of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, [32] Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah. [33] Of the descendants of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei. [34] Of the descendants of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel, [35] Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, [36] Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, [37] Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu. [38] Of the descendants of Binnui:[b] Shimei, [39] Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, [40] Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, [41] Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, [42] Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph. [43] Of the descendants of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah. [44] All these had married foreign women, and they sent them away with their children.[c]

[a] 1 Esdras 9.26 Gk: Heb *Malchijah*
[b] Gk: Heb *Bani, Binnui*
[c] 1 Esdras 9.36; meaning of Heb uncertain

ultimate status of the Torah, as the priests, who have the most power, submit to its teachings: Lev 21.10–15 forbids high priests to intermarry. This reflects a primary concern with the sanctity of the sanctuary. **20–44:** List of other offenders. There are about 113 offenders (the names are not always distinct), including members of the high priest's family (v. 18). **44:** *They sent them away with their children,* this sentence does not appear in Ezra 10, but comes from the later 1 Esdras. The Heb in Ezra 10.44 states: "Some had wives with whom they had sons." Ezra 10.44 thus does not report that the women and children of nonpriestly families were expelled. The conclusion of Stage Two (Ezra 7–10) focuses, rather, on establishing boundaries based on the Torah without resorting to military force (emotional casualties are not reported).

NEHEMIAH

The book of Nehemiah was originally the second section of a single book (Ezra-Nehemiah, preserved as Esdras b in the ancient Greek versions of the Bible); see further the Introduction to Ezra (pp. 675–76).

The Nehemiah section of Ezra-Nehemiah depicts the final stage of Jewish reconstruction after exile, featuring Nehemiah, the Jewish governor under Persian rule, who rebuilds Jerusalem's walls (1.1–7.5) and oversees many reforms. Large portions of this book are called the Nehemiah Memoir, a first-person account of his activities. The book's structure continues the narrative that began with Ezra 1. Nehemiah 1 begins with Stage Three of the return from exile, when Nehemiah rebuilds Jerusalem's walls (Neh 1.1–7.5). This is followed by the repetition of the list of returnees (7.6–73; see Ezra 2) that frames the three stages of return and reconstruction. The book concludes with the grand celebration of the reconstruction by the rededicated community, now organized according to the Torah, "the law of Moses/"the law of God" (chs 8–13), with rebuilt Jerusalem as a holy city.

Nehemiah is presented as a dynamic, enterprising man who achieves his goal of rebuilding despite repeated interference from other leaders such as the governor of Samaria (see 2.9–10). Although he does not appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, Nehemiah is celebrated in 2 Macc 1.19–36 and Sirach 49.13.

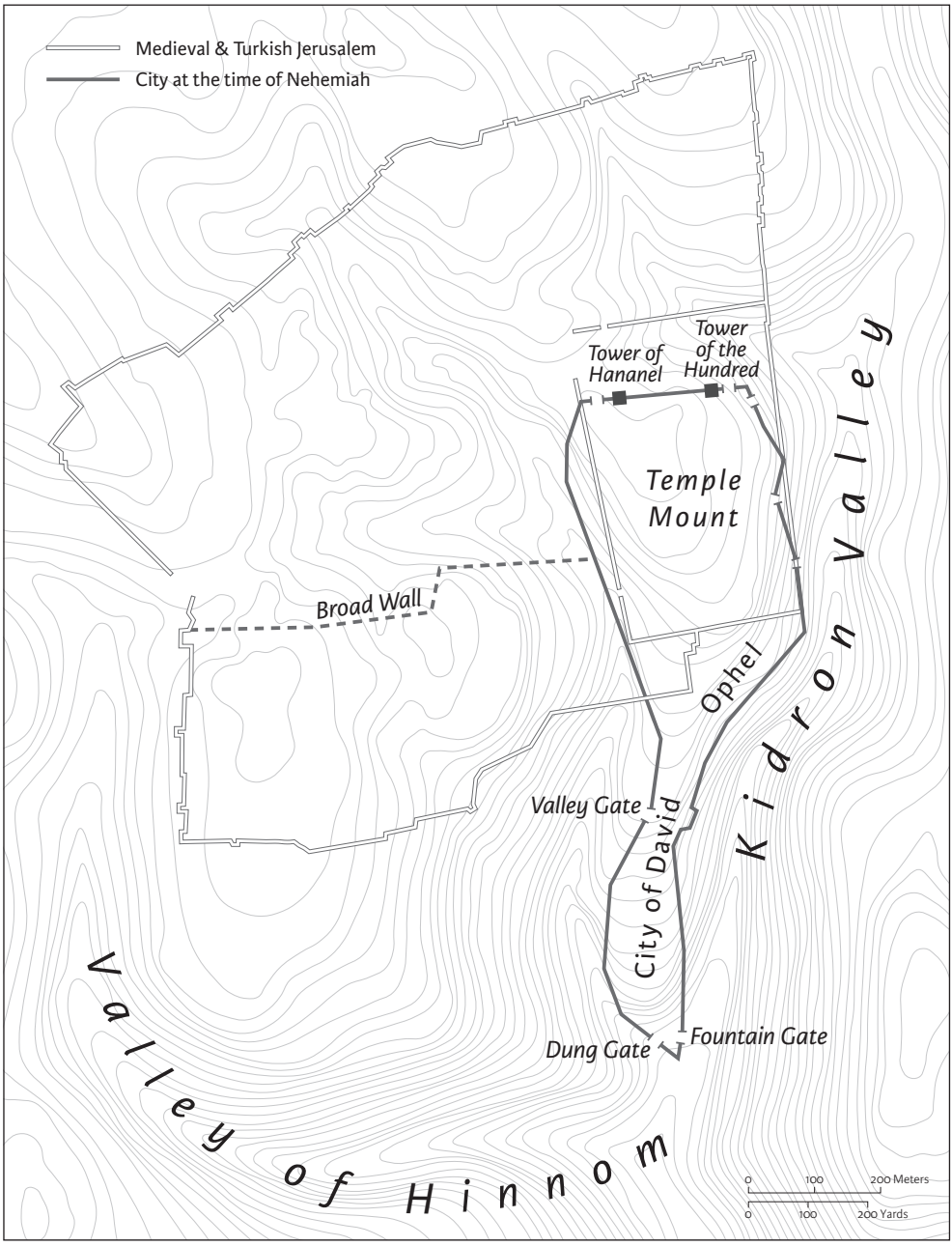
Tamara Cohn Eskenazi

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah.
In the month of Chislev, in the twentieth
year, while I was in Susa the capital, [2] one of
my brothers, Hanani, came with certain men
from Judah; and I asked them about the Jews
that survived, those who had escaped the
captivity, and about Jerusalem. [3] They replied,
"The survivors there in the province who
escaped captivity are in great trouble and
shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down,
and its gates have been destroyed by fire."
[4] When I heard these words I sat down
and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and
praying before the God of heaven. [5] I said,
"O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast
love with those who love him and keep his
commandments; [6] let your ear be attentive
and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your
servant that I now pray before you day and
night for your servants, the people of Israel,
confessing the sins of the people of Israel,
which we have sinned against you. Both I and
my family have sinned. [7] We have offended
you deeply, failing to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances
that you commanded your servant Moses.
[8] Remember the word that you commanded
your servant Moses, 'If you are unfaithful, I
will scatter you among the peoples; [9] but if

1.1–7.5: Stage Three of reconstruction: rebuilding Jerusalem under Nehemiah's leadership. These chapters come from what scholars call "the Nehemiah Memoir," a first-person account in the form of Nehemiah's autobiography (also found in chs 12–13). This section describes how Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, becomes the governor of Judah and rebuilds Jerusalem's walls.

1:1–2:10: Nehemiah's commission. 1.1–3: While serving the Persian king in Persia, Nehemiah learns about his people's plight in Judah and asks permission to go and help them. **1:** *Nehemiah,* a cupbearer (see 1.11n.) to King Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE). *Words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah*, this is the beginning of the Nehemiah Memoir. His father's name and his family are otherwise unknown. *Chislev* (November-December). *In the twentieth year,* most likely of Artaxerxes I (2.1), namely 445 BCE. *Susa,* the winter residence of Persian kings in Persia (modern Iran). Excavations have uncovered a magnificent palace there. **2–3:** *Jews that survived,* this includes those who remained in the land after 586 BCE, as well as those who had returned since (see Ezra 1.1–4). *The wall of Jerusalem* was *broken down* by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and apparently suffered further deterioration, possibly due to later unrecorded conflicts.

1.4–11: Nehemiah's prayer. The prayer incorporates themes from Deuteronomy and related literature about reasons for the dispersion and the possibility of restoration. It reflects Nehemiah's piety and expresses postexilic hope for restoration. **5:** *God of heaven,* a typical postexilic title (e.g., Ezra 1.2; Dan 2.18). **8–9:** A paraphrase of



Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah

you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name.' [10] They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand. [11] O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man!"

At the time, I was cupbearer to the king.
2 In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was served him, I carried the wine and gave it to the king. Now, I had never been sad in his presence before. [2] So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This can only be sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. [3] I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my ancestors' graves, lies waste, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" [4] Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. [5] Then I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my ancestors' graves, so that I may rebuild it." [6] The king said to me (the queen also was sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a date. [7] Then I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may grant me passage until I arrive in Judah; [8] and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, directing him to give me timber to make beams for the gates of the temple fortress, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And the king granted me what I asked, for the gracious hand of my God was upon me.

[9] Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent officers of the army and cavalry with me. [10] When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

ideas about God from Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 30.1–5). **11:** *This man,* Artaxerxes I. *Cupbearer,* a trusted high royal courtier who sampled wine for quality and safety (see 2.1).

2.1–8: Nehemiah's commission. Nehemiah uses an opportunity to propose a daring request, risking the king's disapproval. **1:** *Nisan*, March-April, the month of the Exodus from Egypt. The chronology of 1.1 (November-December) and 2.1 (March-April), both in the twentieth year, makes sense if Nehemiah's reckoning begins the year in the fall. (Both a spring and a fall new year are found in the Bible.) **2:** *I was … afraid,* because his request could imply divided loyalties, even treason. **3:** *My ancestors' graves,* depicting Jerusalem as graveyard dramatizes the importance of honoring ancestors and minimizes the threat that rebuilding Jerusalem might otherwise suggest. Ezra 4.21 indicates that this king had prohibited rebuilding Jerusalem's walls until further notice. **6:** The *queen*'s presence may indicate the dialogue's intimate setting, or account for the king's benevolence. She is not named; according to Greek sources, Artaxerxes's queen was Damaspia. *I set him a date,* 5.14 and 13.6 indicate that Nehemiah's mission as governor lasted twelve years. **8:** *Temple fortress,* Nehemiah explicitly mentions plans for the Temple's and fortifications' gates, including the city's walls, only after securing the king's consent.

2.9–10: Journey and opposition. Nehemiah's military escort visibly testifies to royal support for his mission. His arrival is met with opposition perhaps because it unsettles the political and economic equilibrium, such as control by Samaria or members of the aristocracy. Sanballat and Tobiah head the opposition against Nehemiah's renewal efforts. **10:** *Sanballat* is mentioned in the Aramaic Elephantine documents from fifth-century BCE Egypt as a governor of Samaria, Judah's northern neighbor, the former Israelite state now a province named after its chief city; see Ezra 4.10. He was apparently also related by marriage to Jerusalem's high priest (see 13.28n.). *Tobiah the Ammonite official,* probably a Jew. Nehemiah discredits him because of a connection to Ammon, Judah's eastern neighbor and a group excluded from membership in Israel according to Deut 23.4–7. His name is a compound Hebrew word for "good" ("tob") and "Yah," a shortened form of Yahweh, Israel's God (see also 6.18 and 13.4–9n.).

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there for
three days. 12 Then I got up during the night,
I and a few men with me; I told no one what
my God had put into my heart to do for Jeru-
salem. The only animal I took was the animal
I rode. 13 I went out by night by the Valley Gate
past the Dragon's Spring and to the Dung
Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem
that had been broken down and its gates that
had been destroyed by fire. 14 Then I went on
to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool;
but there was no place for the animal I was
riding to continue. 15 So I went up by way of
the valley by night and inspected the wall.
Then I turned back and entered by the Valley
Gate, and so returned. 16 The officials did not
know where I had gone or what I was doing;
I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the
nobles, the officials, and the rest that were to
do the work.

17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble
we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its
gates burned. Come, let us rebuild the wall
of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer
disgrace." 18 I told them that the hand of my
God had been gracious upon me, and also the
words that the king had spoken to me. Then
they said, "Let us start building!" So they
committed themselves to the common good.
19 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah
the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab
heard of it, they mocked and ridiculed us, say-
ing, "What is this that you are doing? Are you
rebelling against the king?" 20 Then I replied
to them, "The God of heaven is the one who
will give us success, and we his servants are
going to start building; but you have no share
or claim or historic right in Jerusalem."

3 Then the high priest Eliashib set to work
with his fellow priests and rebuilt the
Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set up its
doors; they consecrated it as far as the Tower
of the Hundred and as far as the Tower of
Hananel. 2 And the men of Jericho built next
to him. And next to them[a] Zaccur son of Imri
built.

[a] Heb *him*

2.11–18: Nehemiah's initial work in Jerusalem. Nehemiah undertakes a nighttime inspection of the walls, assessing the damage. **12:** *I told no one* (see v. 16), to avoid interference with his plans, Nehemiah keeps his initial inspection secret. **13–15:** Nehemiah's circuit of the walls confirms their dilapidated condition. Many of the landmarks can no longer be identified. **13:** *The Valley Gate* is in the western wall, the *Dragon's Spring* is unknown, and the *Dung Gate* is at the southern end of the wall (in a different location from the present Dung Gate in Jerusalem). **14:** The location of the *Fountain Gate* is uncertain; the *King's Pool* is probably the Pool of Siloam (3.15). *No place . . . to continue,* earlier structures and pathways of the eastern slope have collapsed beyond repair, making passage difficult. The damage on this side of the city seems beyond repair, which explains why the rebuilt Jerusalem will be smaller. **17–18:** Nehemiah galvanizes the Jews of Judah to rebuild by appealing to communal pride and disclosing divine and royal support.

2.19–20: Opposition. Sanballat and his associates attempt to stop Nehemiah by implying that he is a rebel, a charge that would antagonize Persian authorities. **19:** *Sanballat . . . and Tobiah,* see 2.10n. *Geshem,* known from nonbiblical sources as king of Qedar in Arabia, controlled territory south-southeast of Judah. *Rebelling,* a trumped-up charge to arouse Persian authorities' suspicion; cf. Ezra 4. **20:** *You have no share . . . in Jerusalem,* Nehemiah seeks to protect Judah from Samaria's control and interference. At stake may be the status of Yehud as a separate Persian province under Judean control. Like Zerubbabel earlier (Ezra 4), Nehemiah excludes non-Jews' participation in rebuilding.

3.1–32: Building the walls despite opposition. Rebuilding Jerusalem's walls reinforces the religious, political, and commercial power of Jerusalem. The list of participants offers important information for discerning the scope of Jerusalem, showing that it was considerably smaller than it had been before its destruction. The list of builders (some of whom probably subsidized the project rather than physically participating in the building) indicates strong communal support. In Ezra-Nehemiah, the rebuilding of the walls is presented as an extension of rebuilding the Temple in accordance with King Cyrus's edict in Ezra 1.

3.1–5: Restoring Jerusalem's northern boundary. 1: *The high priest Eliashib,* grandson of the priest Jeshua (12.10; Ezra 3.2). Consecrating the gate marks the project as a holy task: The city as a whole is by extension as holy as a house of God (see Neh 11.1). *The Tower of Hananel,* a boundary in Zech 14.10 for a newly sanctified Jerusalem. Most of the gates and other places named in the chapter cannot be located with certainty; see 2.13–14n. **2:** *Men of*

3 The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish
Gate; they laid its beams and set up its doors,
its bolts, and its bars. 4 Next to them Mer-
emoth son of Uriah son of Hakkoz made
repairs. Next to them Meshullam son of Bere-
chiah son of Meshezabel made repairs. Next
to them Zadok son of Baana made repairs.
5 Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but
their nobles would not put their shoulders to
the work of their Lord.[a]

6 Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son
of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid
its beams and set up its doors, its bolts, and
its bars. 7 Next to them repairs were made
by Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the
Meronothite—the men of Gibeon and of
Mizpah—who were under the jurisdiction
of[b] the governor of the province Beyond the
River. 8 Next to them Uzziel son of Harhaiah,
one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Next to
him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made
repairs; and they restored Jerusalem as far as
the Broad Wall. 9 Next to them Rephaiah son
of Hur, ruler of half the district of[c] Jerusalem,
made repairs. 10 Next to them Jedaiah son of
Harumaph made repairs opposite his house;
and next to him Hattush son of Hashabneiah
made repairs. 11 Malchijah son of Harim
and Hasshub son of Pahath-moab repaired
another section and the Tower of the Ovens.
12 Next to him Shallum son of Hallohesh,
ruler of half the district of[c] Jerusalem, made
repairs, he and his daughters.

13 Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah
repaired the Valley Gate; they rebuilt it and
set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and
repaired a thousand cubits of the wall, as far
as the Dung Gate.

14 Malchijah son of Rechab, ruler of the
district of[d] Beth-haccherem, repaired the
Dung Gate; he rebuilt it and set up its doors,
its bolts, and its bars.

15 And Shallum son of Col-hozeh, ruler of
the district of[d] Mizpah, repaired the Fountain
Gate; he rebuilt it and covered it and set up
its doors, its bolts, and its bars; and he built
the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the king's
garden, as far as the stairs that go down from
the City of David. 16 After him Nehemiah son
of Azbuk, ruler of half the district of[c] Beth-
zur, repaired from a point opposite the graves
of David, as far as the artificial pool and the
house of the warriors. 17 After him the Levites
made repairs: Rehum son of Bani; next to
him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of[c]
Keilah, made repairs for his district. 18 After
him their kin made repairs: Binnui,[e] son of
Henadad, ruler of half the district of[c] Keilah;
19 next to him Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler[f] of
Mizpah, repaired another section opposite
the ascent to the armory at the Angle. 20 After
him Baruch son of Zabbai repaired another
section from the Angle to the door of the
house of the high priest Eliashib. 21 After
him Meremoth son of Uriah son of Hakkoz
repaired another section from the door of the
house of Eliashib to the end of the house of
Eliashib. 22 After him the priests, the men of
the surrounding area, made repairs. 23 After

[a] Or *lords*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Or *supervisor of half the portion assigned to*
[d] Or *supervisor of the portion assigned to*
[e] Gk Syr Compare verse 24, 10.9: Heb *Bavvai*
[f] Or *supervisor*

Jericho, here and in vv. 9–11 volunteers from various districts of Yehud/Judah take responsibility for specific segments of the wall. **4:** *Hakkoz,* a family whose genealogy had been suspect initially (Ezra 2.61; Neh 7.63), but which has now been integrated. **5:** The *Tekoites,* residents of Tekoa, 10 mi (16 km) south of Jerusalem. Their efforts, despite abstention by leaders, underscore the popular nature of rebuilding.

3.6–14: Restoring Jerusalem's western boundary. The individuals named here are otherwise unknown. **7:** *Beyond the River,* see Ezra 4.10n. **8:** Traders in luxury items offer evidence of growing commerce and urbanization. *They restored,* more accurately "they left out," suggesting that the rebuilt city was smaller than earlier Jerusalem. The *Broad Wall* was probably originally built by King Hezekiah in the late eighth century BCE (see 2 Chr 32.5) to bolster the city's defenses against the Assyrians. An excavated portion of it can be seen in today's Jerusalem. **9–12:** The task is divided among leaders of five districts, some outside Jerusalem. **12:** The *daughters'* role, like the men's, may have entailed physical participation and financial sponsorship.

3.15–32: Restoring Jerusalem's southern and eastern boundaries. 16: *Graves of David,* an uncertain location where Davidic kings were buried (see 2 Chr 24.16). **23–24:** Jerusalemites take charge of areas adjacent to their dwellings.

them Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house. After them Azariah son of Maaseiah son of Ananiah made repairs beside his own house. 24 After him Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the Angle and to the corner. 25 Palal son of Uzai repaired opposite the Angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah son of Parosh 26 and the temple servants living[a] on Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate on the east and the projecting tower. 27 After him the Tekoites repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel.

28 Above the Horse Gate the priests made repairs, each one opposite his own house. 29 After them Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, made repairs. 30 After him Hananiah son of Shelemiah and Hanun sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section. After him Meshullam son of Berechiah made repairs opposite his living quarters. 31 After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, opposite the Muster Gate,[b] and to the upper room of the corner. 32 And between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.

4 [c] Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he mocked the Jews. 2 He said in the presence of his associates and of the army of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore things? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish it in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish—and burned ones at that?" 3 Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "That stone wall they are building—any fox going up on it would break it down!" 4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their taunt back on their own heads, and give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not cover their guilt, and do not let their sin be blotted out from your sight; for they have hurled insults in the face of the builders.

6 So we rebuilt the wall, and all the wall was joined together to half its height; for the people had a mind to work.

7 [d] But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and the gaps were beginning to be closed, they were very angry, 8 and all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. 9 So we prayed to our God, and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

10 But Judah said, "The strength of the burden bearers is failing, and there is too much rubbish so that we are unable to work on the wall." 11 And our enemies said, "They will not know or see anything before we come upon them and kill them and stop the work." 12 When the Jews who lived near them came, they said to us ten times, "From all the places where they live[e] they will come up against us."[f] 13 So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the

[a] Cn: Heb *were living*
[b] Or *Hammiphkad Gate*
[c] Ch 3.33 in Heb
[d] Ch 4.1 in Heb
[e] Cn: Heb *you return*
[f] Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

4.1–6.14: Obstacles to reconstruction. Nehemiah's memoir about Sanballat's opposition (2.19), interrupted by the list of builders, now resumes. Nehemiah, like the earlier returnees (Ezra 3–6; 7–10), encounters problems that hamper progress. Three types of threats to building activities are mentioned: intimidation by outsiders (4.1–23), economic hardships (5.1–19), and plots against Nehemiah (6.1–14).

4.1–23: First obstacle: intimidation. The neighboring people under Sanballat of Samaria (see 2.10n.) use taunts and threats. Tension with Samaria reproduces ancient competition between the two preexilic chief cities, Samaria of Israel, the Northern Kingdom and Jerusalem of Judah, the Southern Kingdom of Judah, both now under Persian control. **4–5:** Nehemiah repeatedly invokes God, often with a formulaic "remember me" (see 5.19n.). **10–12:** The builders temporarily succumb to the difficulties of the work and their opponents' (see 2.19n.) intimidation. **10:** *Judah,* the Jewish community. **13–14:** Nehemiah reorganizes the builders and secures

people according to their families,[a] with their swords, their spears, and their bows. [14] After I looked these things over, I stood up and said to the nobles and the officials and the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the LORD, who is great and awesome, and fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

[15] When our enemies heard that their plot was known to us, and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. [16] From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and body-armor; and the leaders posted themselves behind the whole house of Judah, [17] who were building the wall. The burden bearers carried their loads in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and with the other held a weapon. [18] And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. [19] And I said to the nobles, the officials, and the rest of the people, "The work is great and widely spread out, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. [20] Rally to us wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet. Our God will fight for us."

[21] So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from break of dawn until the stars came out. [22] I also said to the people at that time, "Let every man and his servant pass the night inside Jerusalem, so that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day." [23] So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me ever took off our clothes; each kept his weapon in his right hand.[b]

5 Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish kin. [2] For there were those who said, "With our sons and our daughters, we are many; we must get grain, so that we may eat and stay alive." [3] There were also those who said, "We are having to pledge our fields, our vineyards, and our houses in order to get grain during the famine." [4] And there were those who said, "We are having to borrow money on our fields and vineyards to pay the king's tax. [5] Now our flesh is the same as that of our kindred; our children are the same as their children; and yet we are forcing our sons and daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been ravished; we are powerless, and our fields and vineyards now belong to others."

[6] I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these complaints. [7] After thinking it over, I brought charges against the nobles and the officials; I said to them, "You are all taking interest from your own people." And I called a great assembly to deal with them,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn: Heb *each his weapon the water*

military protection; he demonstrates readiness for physical combat, confident in God's help. **5.1–19: Second obstacle: economic hardships.** The people's burden of heavy taxes to the Persian king (v. 4) is aggravated by wealthier Jews who exploit the situation for their own profit. To redress the balance, Nehemiah initiates economic reforms. He reminds the wealthy that their Judean poor are their kin, thus creating a community despite class and economic differences (see further at 6.17–19n.). The poor Judeans describe their decline into slavery. Biblical laws about slavery are inconsistent (compare Ex 21.2–10 and Deut 15.12–18 with Lev 25.35–43) although they all provide for the release of Israelite slaves at some point. **2:** *We are many,* better emended (though the addition of a single letter) to "we pledge" (see v. 3), suggesting that sons and daughters are pledged as security for loans and become slaves when loans are defaulted. **3:** The problem is the default on loans during famine and the consequent loss of property and family. **4:** *The king's tax,* the heavy levy from the provinces extracted by the Persian government. **5:** Results: Farmers are reduced to indentured slavery and lose their land, home, and children (the basic necessities for economic survival) to wealthier compatriots. *Ravished,* daughters were particularly vulnerable at times of economic hardship. Moreover, unlike males, daughters (according to Ex 21.7–10) cannot be redeemed when they become sexually attached to the master's household.

5.6–19: Nehemiah's response. Nehemiah combats economic hardships by reforming the practices of the wealthy and contributing personally to the economy from his own funds. **7:** *The nobles and the officials,* upper-class members exploiting the economic instability. *Taking interest,* more accurately, "taking pledges," (i.e., keeping items used as pledges: family members, fields, and houses); this practice is prohibited in Ex 22.24–26

[8] and said to them, "As far as we were able, we have bought back our Jewish kindred who had been sold to other nations; but now you are selling your own kin, who must then be bought back by us!" They were silent, and could not find a word to say. [9] So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God, to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies? [10] Moreover I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us stop this taking of interest. [11] Restore to them, this very day, their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the interest on money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them." [12] Then they said, "We will restore everything and demand nothing more from them. We will do as you say." And I called the priests, and made them take an oath to do as they had promised. [13] I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out everyone from house and from property who does not perform this promise. Thus may they be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen," and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

[14] Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor. [15] The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people, and took food and wine from them, besides forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God. [16] Indeed, I devoted myself to the work on this wall, and acquired no land; and all my servants were gathered there for the work. [17] Moreover there were at my table one hundred fifty people, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations around us. [18] Now that which was prepared for one day was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and every ten days skins of wine in abundance; yet with all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because of the heavy burden of labor on the people. [19] Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.

6 Now when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah and to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had built the wall and that there was no gap left in it (though up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), [2] Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm. [3] So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you?" [4] They sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. [5] In the same way Sanballat for the

and Deut 24.10. **8:** *We have bought back,* Lev 25.47–48 requires redeeming Israelite sold as slaves to foreigners. **10:** Nehemiah shows some sympathy for the nobles by admitting to some culpability at an earlier stage, but urges that the time has come for reform and leads them by example. **12:** Like Ezra (see Ezra 10), Nehemiah extracts a public oath from leaders. The priests administer a religiously binding oath to ensure the efficacy of the appended curses. **13:** Symbolic actions could accompany curses in the ancient Near East. *Fold,* the equivalent of a pocket. The gesture connotes removing all excessive matter (including wealth). **14–19:** The Persian government expected local populations to support the governors. Nehemiah foregoes such privileges and subsidizes the office with his own personal funds, as model for the Jewish aristocracy. **14:** *Governor,* this is the first we hear about Nehemiah's official position as governor, a title for several different ranks of officials. *Twentieth year,* see 1.1n. **15:** The Bible does not preserve names of other governors after Zerubbabel, although some, possibly from the intervening period, have been found in archaeological discoveries. *Forty shekels,* ca. 1 lb (456 gr). **17:** *Those who to us came from the nations,* the reference is to officials and guests from the rest of the empire. **19:** Such prayers are typical of Nehemiah (e.g., 4.4–5; 6.14; 13.14,22,31).

6.1–14: Third obstacle: plots against Nehemiah. Nehemiah describes several attempts to harm him personally. **1–4:** Attempts to harm Nehemiah in an unprotected place. **1:** *Sanballat and Tobiah and … Geshem,* see 2.10n.,19. The opposition comes from several different groups. **2:** *Plain of Ono,* in the northwest of the province of Yehud, far from the safety of Jerusalem. **5–7:** Attempts to frighten Nehemiah by threatening to report his

fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. 6 In it was written, "It is reported among the nations—and Geshem[a] also says it—that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall; and according to this report you wish to become their king. 7 You have also set up prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, 'There is a king in Judah!' And now it will be reported to the king according to these words. So come, therefore, and let us confer together." 8 Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done; you are inventing them out of your own mind" 9 —for they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

10 One day when I went into the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his house, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, tonight they are coming to kill you." 11 But I said, "Should a man like me run away? Would a man like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!" 12 Then I perceived and saw that God had not sent him at all, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 He was hired for this purpose, to intimidate me and make me sin by acting in this way, and so they could give me a bad name, in order to taunt me. 14 Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

15 So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid[b] and fell greatly in their own esteem; for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. 17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them. 18 For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah: and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah. 19 Also they spoke of his good deeds in my presence, and reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.

7 Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, 2 I gave my brother Hanani charge over Jerusalem, along with Hananiah

[a] Heb *Gashmu*
[b] Another reading is *saw*

alleged rebellion to the king. **7:** *Prophets* in Israel anointed kings (e.g., 1 Kings 1.34; 19.15–16); such an act could imply sedition on Nehemiah's part. **10–13:** Attempts to entice Nehemiah to discredit himself with religious authorities by entering the inner part of the Temple, permitted only to priests. **10:** *Shemaiah* is a suspected enemy within the community. **13:** Entering these sections of the Temple would cast Nehemiah as a sinful usurper violating the priestly domain and the Temple's sanctity. **14:** Nehemiah's repeated plea for divine remembrance (cf. 5.19). *The prophetess Noadiah*, otherwise unknown, she is one of four named women prophets in the Hebrew Bible (the others are Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah).

6.15–19: The completion of the walls. The extraordinarily short time ("fifty-two days") it took to restore the wall reflects the zeal of the community and Nehemiah's leadership abilities. **15:** *Elul,* August-September. *Fifty-two days,* excavated remnants of Nehemiah's wall reflect the haste of the builders. **17–19:** The opposition does not fall silent, but only changes its tactics, unsuccessfully. Tobiah's family ties with distinguished Jerusalemites, like Sanballat's (see Neh 13.28n.) suggest a conflict in Judah about the nature of the restored community. Nehemiah envisions a community based on Jewish kinship regardless of class; his opponents seek alliances along economic position, with the upper classes uniting across ethnic or political boundaries. **17:** *Tobiah,* see 2.10on. **19:** Some Jerusalemites seek rapprochement or compromise between Nehemiah and Tobiah.

7.1–5: Setting up guards. Nehemiah places religious functionaries to guard the city gates, thereby establishing Jewish control as well as indicating that the city, like the Temple, is now under religious supervision. **1:** *Gatekeepers . . . singers . . . Levites* ordinarily officiated at the Temple. As guards of the city's gates, they symbolize the new sanctity of the city as a whole (see 11.1). **2:** *Hanani,* see 1.2. *Citadel,* fortress (see 2.8).

the commander of the citadel—for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. 3 And I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot; while the gatekeepers[a] are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their watch posts, and others before their own houses." 4 The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few and no houses had been built.

5 Then my God put it into my mind to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who were the first to come back, and I found the following written in it:

6 These are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried into exile; they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his town. 7 They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.

The number of the Israelite people: 8 the descendants of Parosh, two thousand one hundred seventy-two. 9 Of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy-two. 10 Of Arah, six hundred fifty-two. 11 Of Pahath-moab, namely the descendants of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred eighteen. 12 Of Elam, one thousand two hundred fifty-four. 13 Of Zattu, eight hundred forty-five. 14 Of Zaccai, seven hundred sixty. 15 Of Binnui, six hundred forty-eight. 16 Of Bebai, six hundred twenty-eight. 17 Of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty-two. 18 Of Adonikam, six hundred sixty-seven. 19 Of Bigvai, two thousand sixty-seven. 20 Of Adin, six hundred fifty-five. 21 Of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, ninety-eight. 22 Of Hashum, three hundred twenty-eight. 23 Of Bezai, three hundred twenty-four. 24 Of Hariph, one hundred twelve. 25 Of Gibeon, ninety-five. 26 The people of Bethlehem and Netophah, one hundred eighty-eight. 27 Of Anathoth, one hundred twenty-eight. 28 Of Beth-azmaveth, forty-two. 29 Of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty-three. 30 Of Ramah and Geba, six hundred twenty-one. 31 Of Michmas, one hundred twenty-two. 32 Of Bethel and Ai, one hundred twenty-three. 33 Of the other Nebo, fifty-two. 34 The descendants of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred fifty-four. 35 Of Harim, three hundred twenty. 36 Of Jericho, three hundred forty-five. 37 Of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty-one. 38 Of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred thirty.

39 The priests: the descendants of Jedaiah, namely the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy-three. 40 Of Immer, one thousand fifty-two. 41 Of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred forty-seven. 42 Of Harim, one thousand seventeen.

43 The Levites: the descendants of Jeshua, namely of Kadmiel of the descendants of Hodevah, seventy-four. 44 The singers: the descendants of Asaph, one hundred forty-eight. 45 The gatekeepers: the descendants of Shallum, of Ater, of Talmon, of Akkub, of Hatita, of Shobai, one hundred thirty-eight.

46 The temple servants: the descendants of Ziha, of Hasupha, of Tabbaoth, 47 of Keros, of Sia, of Padon, 48 of Lebana, of Hagaba, of Shalmai, 49 of Hanan, of Giddel, of Gahar, 50 of Reaiah, of Rezin, of Nekoda, 51 of Gazzam, of Uzza, of Paseah, 52 of Besai, of

[a] Heb *while they*

3: For reasons of safety, the gates are to be open only during broad daylight. Although foreigners are not thereby excluded, their coming and going, like those of Jews, is subject to Jewish control. **4:** *The people within it were few,* most returnees had resumed a largely agrarian life in the surrounding countryside. Nehemiah's measures encourage greater urbanization, which is facilitated further in ch 11. **5:** The sparse population of Jerusalem is used as an editorial device to repeat the list from Ezra 2.

7.6–73: Frame: repeated list of returnees. Reproducing Ezra 2.1–70 with insignificant variations, the list connects the last stage of reconstruction with the successful efforts of the previous generations, as a continuous response to Cyrus's original decree (Ezra 1). By repeating the list from Ezra 2, Ezra-Nehemiah melds the three stages of return and reconstruction (Temple, community, city) into a single, unified event, spanning nearly a century (538–444 BCE). The repetition also identifies who now legitimately belongs to the restored community and is subject to the legal and religious practices, privileges, and responsibilities that follow. On the list itself,

Meunim, of Nephushesim, [53] of Bakbuk, of Hakupha, of Harhur, [54] of Bazlith, of Mehida, of Harsha, [55] of Barkos, of Sisera, of Temah, [56] of Neziah, of Hatipha.

[57] The descendants of Solomon's servants: of Sotai, of Sophereth, of Perida, [58] of Jaala, of Darkon, of Giddel, [59] of Shephatiah, of Hattil, of Pochereth-hazzebaim, of Amon.

[60] All the temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants were three hundred ninety-two.

[61] The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not prove their ancestral houses or their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: [62] the descendants of Delaiah, of Tobiah, of Nekoda, six hundred forty-two. [63] Also, of the priests: the descendants of Hobaiah, of Hakkoz, of Barzillai (who had married one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name). [64] These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean; [65] the governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until a priest with Urim and Thummim should come.

[66] The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred sixty, [67] besides their male and female slaves, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty-seven; and they had two hundred forty-five singers, male and female. [68] They had seven hundred thirty-six horses, two hundred forty-five mules,[a] [69] four hundred thirty-five camels, and six thousand seven hundred twenty donkeys.

[70] Now some of the heads of ancestral houses contributed to the work. The governor gave to the treasury one thousand darics of gold, fifty basins, and five hundred thirty priestly robes. [71] And some of the heads of ancestral houses gave into the building fund twenty thousand darics of gold and two thousand two hundred minas of silver. [72] And what the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand darics of gold, two thousand minas of silver, and sixty-seven priestly robes.

[73] So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, and all Israel settled in their towns.

When the seventh month came—the people of Israel being settled in their towns—

8 [1] all the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the

[a] Ezra 2.66 and the margins of some Hebrew Mss: MT lacks *They had . . . forty-five mules*

see the notes to Ezra 2. **66:** *Forty-two thousand three hundred sixty,* same total for the population as Ezra 2.64, although some numbers within the two lists do not match. **70–72:** The parallel in Ezra 2.68–69 differs. For the value of such contributions, see note there. **73:** *The seventh month,* Tishri (September-October; see Ezra 3.1), designated as a beginning of the new year in later Judaism. Lev 23.23–24 and Num 29.1–6 specify different practices for this date.

8.1–13.3: Celebration of renewal and reconstruction. The celebration represents the completion of the restoration that began in the time of King Cyrus nearly a century before. The reconstructed "house of God" encompasses the rebuilt Temple (Ezra 3–6), the reformed community (Ezra 7–10), and Jerusalem, surrounded by a wall (Neh 1–7). The rededication and celebration that this chapter describes extend over several weeks, at least from the first day of the seventh month (8.2) to the twenty-fourth (9.1), longer than any other celebration in the Bible.

8.1–18: Celebrating by reading and implementing the Torah. The reconstruction culminates when the community summons Ezra to bring "the book of the law of Moses" (8.1), (i.e., the Torah). Neh 8 signals the historical moment when the Torah, probably most of the Pentateuch, is publicly (re)introduced and receives communal sanction. Thus the ceremony in Neh 8 echoes Sinai as the receiving of God's teachings by the entire people, transforming them into "the people of the Book." The account is no longer Nehemiah's memoir but an anonymous, third-person report. Some scholars argue that this section was originally attached to the Ezra material, either before or after Ezra 9–10. Only this and the following section of Ezra-Nehemiah depict the two protagonists as contemporaries.

8.1–12: The first public reading of the book of Torah. This public reading of scriptures initiates a practice that will continue in Jewish and Christian traditions. The narrative emphasizes through repetition the special

law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel. 2 Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. 3 He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. 4 The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites,[a] helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. 8 So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved." 12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

13 On the second day the heads of ancestral houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to the scribe Ezra in order to study the words of the law. 14 And they found it written in the law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the people of Israel should live in booths[b] during the festival of the seventh month, 15 and that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem as follows, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees

[a] 1 Esdras 9.48 Vg: Heb *and the Levites*
[b] Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*

bond between the people and the "book." **1:** *The Water Gate,* this area is outside the Temple. Neither the Temple nor the priests (except for Ezra) are mentioned in these celebrations until ch. 10. The people, not Ezra, initiate the ceremony. **2:** Both men and women participate in this ceremony of hearing and receiving the Torah (see Deut 31.12). The implicit date for the reading is September 444 (or perhaps 443). **4:** Ezra's assistants include laity, as well as Levites, who are elsewhere connected to the study of the law. Their participation expresses broadened access to the authoritative teachings, a move away from exclusive control by priests, as in Jer 18.18. **5:** *When he opened it,* (i.e., unrolled the scroll). *All the people stood up,* in veneration of God's presence reflected in the book. This signals a dramatic relocation of divine presence and authority away from the Temple. **7:** *Helped the people to understand,* they either translate the Hebrew into the more familiar Aramaic or explain the content for greater clarity. **9:** *Nehemiah … and Ezra,* representing political and religious leadership, working harmoniously. This is the only verse that mentions both together. *The people wept,* either because of the warnings in the Torah or because they were overwhelmed by the awesome experience.

8.13–18: Implementing Torah: the festival of booths. The people now take initiative to study and implement the Torah, in this case celebrating the festival commanded in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (see v. 18). **14:** *They found it written,* reading the Torah made them aware of the regulations for the festival. *They … should live in booths* (Heb "sukkot"), see Lev 23.42–43. The fast of the Day of Atonement (set for the tenth of the month in Lev 23.26–32) is not mentioned. **15:** Lev 23.40 specifies types of tree branches, though it is not clear

to make booths,[a] as it is written." [16] So the people went out and brought them, and made booths[a] for themselves, each on the roofs of their houses, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. [17] And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths[a] and lived in them; for from the days of Jeshua son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. [18] And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the book of the law of God. They kept the festival seven days; and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the ordinance.

9 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads.[b] [2] Then those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their ancestors. [3] They stood up in their place and read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth part of the day, and for another fourth they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God. [4] Then Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani stood on the stairs of the Levites and cried out with a loud voice to the LORD their God. [5] Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."

[6] And Ezra said:[c] "You are the LORD, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of

[a] Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*
[b] Heb *on them*
[c] Gk: Heb lacks *And Ezra said*

that these were to be used for building booths. **17:** Ezra-Nehemiah identifies the community as those who had returned from the captivity, and links it with the first settlement of the land. *Jeshua son of Nun*, the leader of conquest of the land after the Exodus, and the hero of the book of Joshua. Josh 1.7–8 attributes ultimate successful survival to the study of the "book of the law," a practice that the restored community seeks to emulate. **18:** Deut 31.10–13 demands public readings of the Torah on the feast of booths (Sukkot) only every seventh year. Rabbinic interpretation of Neh 8–9 led to public reading as a weekly feature of Jewish worship. *The ordinance,* in Lev 23.36.

9.1–10.39: Celebration through confession and commitment. The lengthy prayer that follows restates Israelite history as a tale of divine faithfulness and Israelite faithlessness (Neh 9). To show their difference from their disloyal ancestors and in the hope of reversing the current plight, the postexilic community binds itself to God's law (Torah) in oath and undertakes additional responsibilities to keep God's teachings (Neh 10).

9.1–37: The great communal confession rehearses Israel's history. The people's prayer illustrates their awareness of their tradition and their commitment to repair damage done to Israel's relationship with God by earlier generations. The historical review also functions as a pedagogical tool for a new generation, emphasizing important moments in that history. The Temple is never mentioned. **1–5:** The preparations for prayer. **1:** Fasting as spiritual preparation is undertaken *on the twenty-fourth day,* a date not marked elsewhere for special worship. **2:** The recitation of shared history and confession of ancestral sins apply only to the Israelite people; this may account for the separation. Alternatively, this separation may aim at retaining ethnic boundaries by excluding foreigners from joint worship. See also 10.28; 13.3. **3:** The combination of prayer and reading will later characterize synagogue worship. **4–5:** Some of the Levites who shared the platform with Ezra earlier (8.4,7) now lead the congregation without him.

9.6–37: The communal prayer. This communal profession of faith articulates shared history and leads to renewed formal commitment to God's teaching (in ch 10). The community recalls the cycles of God's forbearance despite Israel's earlier infidelities (vv. 6–31) and hopes to be worthy of it in the present dire circumstances (vv. 32–37). As in the historical psalms, history is not invoked for its own sake (e.g., Pss 105–106). **6:** *Ezra*'s name does not appear in the Hebrew text but is inserted into the early Greek versions. Ezra's role in the Hebrew Bible concluded when he placed the Torah into the care of the community and trained others to guide the community accordingly (8.13). The great prayer in the Hebrew Bible is thus assigned to the community and its representatives.

heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you. 7 You are the LORD, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham; 8 and you found his heart faithful before you, and made with him a covenant to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite; and you have fulfilled your promise, for you are righteous.

9 "And you saw the distress of our ancestors in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea.[a] 10 You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants and all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted insolently against our ancestors. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. 11 And you divided the sea before them, so that they passed through the sea on dry land, but you threw their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters. 12 Moreover, you led them by day with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire, to give them light on the way in which they should go. 13 You came down also upon Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments, 14 and you made known your holy sabbath to them and gave them commandments and statutes and a law through your servant Moses. 15 For their hunger you gave them bread from heaven, and for their thirst you brought water for them out of the rock, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you swore to give them.

16 "But they and our ancestors acted presumptuously and stiffened their necks and did not obey your commandments; 17 they refused to obey, and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them; but they stiffened their necks and determined to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and you did not forsake them. 18 Even when they had cast an image of a calf for themselves and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, 19 you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness; the pillar of cloud that led them in the way did not leave them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night that gave them light on the way by which they should go. 20 You gave your good spirit to instruct them, and did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and gave them water for their thirst. 21 Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness so that they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell. 22 And you gave them kingdoms and peoples, and allotted to them every corner,[b] so they took possession of the land of King Sihon of Heshbon and the land of King Og of Bashan. 23 You multiplied their descendants like the stars of heaven, and brought them into the land that you had told their ancestors to enter and possess. 24 So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hands, with their kings and the peoples of the land, to do with them as they pleased. 25 And they captured fortress cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses filled with all sorts of goods, hewn cisterns, vineyards, olive orchards, and fruit trees in abundance; so they ate, and were filled and became fat, and delighted themselves in your great goodness.

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

9.7–31: Recitation of historical experience. The prayer summarizes traditions preserved in Genesis–2 Kings in which the Israelites repeatedly fail to honor God. **7–8:** See Gen 12–26. **8:** Abraham stands as the paradigm of faithfulness.

9–23: Highlights of events in Exodus–Deuteronomy describing God's actions on behalf of Israel. **12:** *Pillar,* see Ex 13.21. **13:** Unlike some earlier historical summaries (e.g., Deut 26.5–9; Josh 24.2–13), this one mentions the revelation at Sinai. **20:** *Good spirit,* perhaps a reference to the appointment of elders (Num 11.17–29). **22:** *Sihon … Og,* kings defeated in the battles for the land of Canaan (Num 21.21–35). **24–25:** This conquest is described

26 "Nevertheless they were disobedient
and rebelled against you and cast your law
behind their backs and killed your proph-
ets, who had warned them in order to turn
them back to you, and they committed great
blasphemies. 27 Therefore you gave them into
the hands of their enemies, who made them
suffer. Then in the time of their suffering
they cried out to you and you heard them
from heaven, and according to your great
mercies you gave them saviors who saved
them from the hands of their enemies. 28 But
after they had rest, they again did evil before
you, and you abandoned them to the hands
of their enemies, so that they had dominion
over them; yet when they turned and cried
to you, you heard from heaven, and many
times you rescued them according to your
mercies. 29 And you warned them in order to
turn them back to your law. Yet they acted
presumptuously and did not obey your com-
mandments, but sinned against your ordi-
nances, by the observance of which a person
shall live. They turned a stubborn shoulder
and stiffened their neck and would not obey.
30 Many years you were patient with them,
and warned them by your spirit through your
prophets; yet they would not listen. There-
fore you handed them over to the peoples
of the lands. 31 Nevertheless, in your great
mercies you did not make an end of them
or forsake them, for you are a gracious and
merciful God.

32 "Now therefore, our God—the great and
mighty and awesome God, keeping covenant
and steadfast love—do not treat lightly all the
hardship that has come upon us, upon our
kings, our officials, our priests, our prophets,
our ancestors, and all your people, since the
time of the kings of Assyria until today. 33 You
have been just in all that has come upon us,
for you have dealt faithfully and we have
acted wickedly; 34 our kings, our officials,
our priests, and our ancestors have not kept
your law or heeded the commandments and
the warnings that you gave them. 35 Even in
their own kingdom, and in the great good-
ness you bestowed on them, and in the large
and rich land that you set before them, they
did not serve you and did not turn from their
wicked works. 36 Here we are, slaves to this
day—slaves in the land that you gave to our
ancestors to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts.
37 Its rich yield goes to the kings whom you
have set over us because of our sins; they
have power also over our bodies and over our
livestock at their pleasure, and we are in great
distress."

38 [a]Because of all this we make a firm
agreement in writing, and on that sealed
document are inscribed the names of our of-
ficials, our Levites, and our priests.

10 [b] Upon the sealed document are the
names of Nehemiah the governor, son
of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah; 2 Seraiah, Azariah,
Jeremiah, 3 Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah,
4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, 5 Harim, Mer-
emoth, Obadiah, 6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,
7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, 8 Maaziah,
Bilgai, Shemaiah; these are the priests. 9 And
the Levites: Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui of
the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel; 10 and their as-
sociates, Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah,
Hanan, 11 Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah, 12 Zac-
cur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, 13 Hodiah, Bani,

[a] Ch 10.1 in Heb
[b] Ch 10.2 in Heb

in Joshua. **26–31:** A summary interpretation of the period from Joshua to the destruction of Jerusalem (see Judges–2 Kings) in which Israelites repeatedly spurned God when they were prosperous. **27:** *Saviors,* the same Heb word is translated "deliverer" in Judg 3.9,15.

9.32–37: The present distress. The community now contrasts its circumstances with those of past generations, hoping for God's compassion. **32:** *The time of the kings of Assyria,* Assyria controlled the land from the mid-eighth to the late seventh centuries BCE, destroying the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE. **36:** *Here we are, slaves to this day,* still subject to foreign rulers. In Ezra-Nehemiah, this criticism of Persian rule is exceptional; elsewhere the book presents Persian rulers as benevolent.

9.38–10.39: Commitment: the communal pledge. Notwithstanding its plight, the community pledges loyalty to Israel's God and to God's teachings, namely the Torah. **9.38:** *Because of all this,* because of this history the community commits itself unilaterally by a binding pledge to obedience. **10.1–27:** Signatories on behalf of the entire community include persons and clan names known from several previous lists (Ezra 2 and Neh 7; Ezra

Beninu. 14 The leaders of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, 15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, 16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, 17 Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, 18 Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, 19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, 20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, 21 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, 22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, 23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, 24 Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, 25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, 26 Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, 27 Malluch, Harim, and Baanah.

28 The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to adhere to the law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, 29 join with their kin, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his ordinances and his statutes. 30 We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons; 31 and if the peoples of the land bring in merchandise or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy it from them on the sabbath or on a holy day; and we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

32 We also lay on ourselves the obligation to charge ourselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: 33 for the rows of bread, the regular grain offering, the regular burnt offering, the sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed festivals, the sacred donations, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. 34 We have also cast lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, by ancestral houses, at appointed times, year by year, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law. 35 We obligate ourselves to bring the first fruits of our soil and the first fruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the LORD; 36 also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our livestock, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks; 37 and to bring the first of our dough, and our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the wine and the oil, to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and to bring to the Levites the tithes from our soil, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our rural towns. 38 And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive the tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tithe of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse. 39 For the people

8), but also reflects a broader religious and social participation. **28:** The entire people affirm their voluntary commitment to the pledge. *Separated themselves,* see 9.2n.; 13.3. **29:** The purpose of the pledge is to have all members bind themselves to God's Torah. **10.30–39:** This section lists voluntarily assumed obligations that reflect practices important for Jewish identity in the fifth century BCE. They express the seriousness with which the community vows to uphold the Torah and support the Temple. The laws mostly combine various laws from the Pentateuch/Torah as it now exists (but see at vss. 32 and 34).

10.30–31: Protecting religious and ethnic boundaries, an important theme throughout Ezra-Nehemiah. **30:** *We will not give our daughters,* see Ezra 9–10. **31:** Sabbath laws prohibit work on this day (e.g., Ex 31.12–17); the pledge classifies buying as work. The sabbath may have become especially important during the Babylonian exile. *Forego the crops,* see Ex 23.11. *Debt,* see Deut 15.1–3 (although the vocabulary differs).

10.32–39: Securing religious and social institutions. 32: The voluntary Temple tax reflects the commitment to undertake support of the Temple. *One-third of a shekel,* ca. 0.13 oz (3.75 gr). The Torah/Pentateuch does not require an annual Temple tax (Ex 30.13 is a one-time requirement). This self-imposed tax endures throughout the Second Temple period (see Mt 17.24). **33–38:** Provisions for regular Temple sacrifices and worship. **33:** *Rows of bread* are placed on a special table at the sanctuary on the sabbath (Ex 25.29; Lev 24.5–9). *Sin offerings,* or purification offerings, regular sacrifices in the Temple for public or personal transgression (Lev 4.13–21). **34:** *Wood,* for the altar's fires. This obligation is not prescribed by the Torah/Pentateuch. **35:** *First fruits,* see Ex 22.29; 23.19; Num 18.15–18. **36:** *Firstborn,* see Ex 22.29. **37:** *Tithes,* see Lev 27.30; Num 18.25–32. *The chambers* were the Temple storerooms (13.13; Ezra 8.29; 10.6). **38:** The Levites and priests depended on contributions.

of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of grain, wine, and oil to the storerooms where the vessels of the sanctuary are, and where the priests that minister, and the gatekeepers and the singers are. We will not neglect the house of our God.

11 Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem; and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in the holy city Jerusalem, while nine-tenths remained in the other towns. [2] And the people blessed all those who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.

[3] These are the leaders of the province who lived in Jerusalem; but in the towns of Judah all lived on their property in their towns: Israel, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants. [4] And in Jerusalem lived some of the Judahites and of the Benjaminites. Of the Judahites: Athaiah son of Uzziah son of Zechariah son of Amariah son of Shephatiah son of Mahalalel, of the descendants of Perez; [5] and Maaseiah son of Baruch son of Colhozeh son of Hazaiah son of Adaiah son of Joiarib son of Zechariah son of the Shilonite. [6] All the descendants of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were four hundred sixty-eight valiant warriors.

[7] And these are the Benjaminites: Sallu son of Meshullam son of Joed son of Pedaiah son of Kolaiah son of Maaseiah son of Ithiel son of Jeshaiah. [8] And his brothers[a] Gabbai, Sallai: nine hundred twenty-eight. [9] Joel son of Zichri was their overseer; and Judah son of Hassenuah was second in charge of the city.

[10] Of the priests: Jedaiah son of Joiarib, Jachin, [11] Seraiah son of Hilkiah son of Meshullam son of Zadok son of Meraioth son of Ahitub, officer of the house of God, [12] and their associates who did the work of the house, eight hundred twenty-two; and Adaiah son of Jeroham son of Pelaliah son of Amzi son of Zechariah son of Pashhur son of Malchijah, [13] and his associates, heads of ancestral houses, two hundred forty-two; and Amashsai son of Azarel son of Ahzai son of Meshillemoth son of Immer, [14] and their associates, valiant warriors, one hundred twenty-eight; their overseer was Zabdiel son of Haggedolim.

[15] And of the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub son of Azrikam son of Hashabiah son of Bunni; [16] and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the leaders of the Levites, who were over the outside work of the house of God; [17] and Mattaniah son of Mica son of Zabdi son of Asaph, who was the leader to begin the thanksgiving in prayer, and Bakbukiah, the second among his associates; and Abda son of Shammua son of Galal son of Jeduthun. [18] All the Levites in the holy city were two hundred eighty-four.

[19] The gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon and their associates, who kept watch at the gates, were one hundred seventy-two. [20] And the rest of Israel, and of the priests and the Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, all of them in their inheritance. [21] But the temple servants lived on Ophel; and Ziha and Gishpa were over the temple servants.

[22] The overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani son of Hashabiah son of Mattaniah son of Mica, of the descendants of Asaph, the singers, in charge of the work of

[a] Gk Mss: Heb *And after him*

11.1–12.26: The repopulation of Jerusalem and a review. A review of the genealogical and geographical extent of the community as part of repopulating Jerusalem.

11.1–36: Repopulation. The restored community requires ten percent of its members to dwell in Jerusalem. The lists of chs 11–12 are compiled from different sources. **1:** *Holy city,* a rare term in the Hebrew Bible; for Ezra-Nehemiah, the entire city, not only the Temple, is now holy (see also Ezek 48.35).

11.3–24: Census of repopulated Jerusalem. Jerusalem's population in 11.1–24 is slightly over 3,000. As ten percent of the total population, it implies some 30,000 residents for the entire province. This number is considerably smaller than the number of returnees (42,360) in Ezra 2.64 and Neh 7.66, but conforms to estimates reached by some archaeologists on the basis of nonbiblical data. It also roughly corresponds to the sum total of numbers in the lists of Ezra 2 and Neh 7. See Ezra 2.64n. **4–6:** *Judahites* are traced back to their ancestor Judah through his three sons: *Perez* (11.4; cf. Gen 38.29); the *Shilonite* (11.5), probably Shelah (Gen 38.4); and Zerah (11.24; Gen 38.30). **7–9:** *Benjaminites.* The individuals named are elsewhere unknown. **10–14:** *Priests.* The group includes three families. Some of these names appear also in Ezra's pedigree (Ezra 7.1–5). **19:** *Gatekeepers,* see

the house of God. [23] For there was a command from the king concerning them, and a settled provision for the singers, as was required every day. [24] And Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, of the descendants of Zerah son of Judah, was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people.

[25] And as for the villages, with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its villages, and in Dibon and its villages, and in Jekabzeel and its villages, [26] and in Jeshua and in Moladah and Beth-pelet, [27] in Hazar-shual, in Beer-sheba and its villages, [28] in Ziklag, in Meconah and its villages, [29] in En-rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, [30] Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, and Azekah and its villages. So they camped from Beer-sheba to the valley of Hinnom. [31] The people of Benjamin also lived from Geba onward, at Michmash, Aija, Bethel and its villages, [32] Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, [33] Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, [34] Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, [35] Lod, and Ono, the valley of artisans. [36] And certain divisions of the Levites in Judah were joined to Benjamin.

12 These are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, [2] Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, [3] Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, [4] Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, [5] Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, [6] Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, [7] Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the leaders of the priests and of their associates in the days of Jeshua.

[8] And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who with his associates was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. [9] And Bakbukiah and Unno their associates stood opposite them in the service. [10] Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada, [11] Joiada the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan the father of Jaddua.

[12] In the days of Joiakim the priests, heads of ancestral houses, were: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; [13] of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; [14] of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; [15] of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; [16] of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; [17] of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; [18] of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; [19] of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; [20] of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; [21] of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

[22] As for the Levites, in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, there were recorded the heads of ancestral houses; also the priests until the reign of Darius the Persian. [23] The Levites, heads of ancestral houses, were recorded in the Book of the Annals until the days of Johanan son of Eliashib. [24] And the leaders of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua son of Kadmiel, with their associates over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, section opposite to section. [25] Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers standing guard at the storehouses of the gates. [26] These were in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and in the days

Ezra 2.42 Neh 7.45. **24:** *At the king's hand,* (i.e., directly accountable to the king).

11.25–36: Census of other Jewish settlements. The geographical area spanned by the villages extends beyond the known boundaries of the Persian province of Yehud (Judah). The list, then, is either an ideal echoing Josh 15, envisioning a greater province, or more likely a register of Jews also in towns outside Yehud proper or an expanded list from a considerably later time. (For the location of sites that can be identified, see the map on p. 694.)

12.1–26: Review of priestly and levitical genealogies. The reconstituted community again (cf. ch 7) reviews its Temple personnel, spanning the entire era of reconstruction (520–444 BCE). The list is problematic, and contains repetitions, but its existence reflects the importance of accounting for priests and Levites in this period, a concern also reflected in the books of Chronicles. Although many names are familiar from other lists, the information resists clear chronological schematization. **1:** *Came up with Zerubbabel . . . and Jeshua,* (i.e., the governor and the priest who led Stage One of the return; see Ezra 2.1–2n.). **22:** *Until the reign of Darius the Persian,* Darius I (522–486). Some scholars suggest that the reference is to Darius II (423–404 BCE). 23. *The Book of the Annals* is mentioned often in Kings but is otherwise unknown. It is also the Hebrew title of the book of Chronicles. **24:** *David,* see Ezra 3.10n., though here called *the man of God,* a prophet. **26:** *Joiakim . . . Nehemiah . . . Ezra,* the three

of the governor Nehemiah and of the priest Ezra, the scribe.

27 Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with rejoicing, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. 28 The companies of the singers gathered together from the circuit around Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites; 29 also from Beth-gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. 30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves; and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

31 Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall, and appointed two great companies that gave thanks and went in procession. One went to the right on the wall to the Dung Gate; 32 and after them went Hoshaiah and half the officials of Judah, 33 and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, 34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, 35 and some of the young priests with trumpets: Zechariah son of Jonathan son of Shemaiah son of Mattaniah son of Micaiah son of Zaccur son of Asaph; 36 and his kindred, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God; and the scribe Ezra went in front of them. 37 At the Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went straight up by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east.

38 The other company of those who gave thanks went to the left,[a] and I followed them with half of the people on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall, 39 and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Old Gate, and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate of the Guard. 40 So both companies of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me; 41 and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; 42 and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. 43 They offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

44 On that day men were appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the law for the priests and for the Levites from the fields belonging to the towns; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered. 45 They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon. 46 For in the days of David and Asaph long ago there was a leader of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. 47 In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers.

[a] Cn: Heb *opposite*

figures—the officiating priest, the governor, and the priest Ezra in his capacity as scribe—mark the period of completion of the task.

12.27–13.3: Grand finale: a service of dedication: celebration, purification, procession, and separation. 12.27: The initiative again comes from the community (cf. 8.1). **30:** This unique ceremony of purification signals that the entire people in the now "holy city" (11.1,18) are sanctified..

12.31–42: The procession. Two groups circled the city on the wall and alongside it. On the gates named, see 2.13–14n.; 3.1n. **31:** *Then I,* Nehemiah. *Two great companies,* the groups marched in opposite directions and met at the Temple. **36:** *Musical instruments of David,* (see, e.g., 2 Chr 7.6). *The scribe Ezra,* this final appearance by Ezra is striking; as a priest (Ezra 7.1–5), he leads the priests. **42:** Antiphonal singing by the professional liturgical singers.

12.43–13.3: Final communal actions on the day of dedication. These include sacrifices and separation in accordance with the Torah/Pentateuch. **12.46:** *Asaph,* see 7.44; 1 Chr 16.5. **47:** The period is reckoned by reference to the two governors from the beginning of the return (Ezra 2) to Nehemiah, the time span covered by the

They set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the descendants of Aaron.

13 On that day they read from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, [2] because they did not meet the Israelites with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. [3] When the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.

[4] Now before this, the priest Eliashib, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah, [5] prepared for Tobiah a large room where they had previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. [6] While this was taking place I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes of Babylon I went to the king. After some time I asked leave of the king [7] and returned to Jerusalem. I then discovered the wrong that Eliashib had done on behalf of Tobiah, preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. [8] And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the room. [9] Then I gave orders and they cleansed the chambers, and I brought back the vessels of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

[10] I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them; so that the Levites and the singers, who had conducted the service, had gone back to their fields. [11] So I remonstrated with the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their stations. [12] Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. [13] And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses the priest Shelemiah, the scribe Zadok, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and as their assistant Hanan son of Zaccur son of Mattaniah, for they were considered faithful; and their duty was to distribute to their associates. [14] Remember

book Ezra-Nehemiah. **13.1–3:** The final action on that day implements the Torah by separating from foreigners. Although distinct from the issues of intermarriage (Ezra 9–10 and Neh 13.23–28), the separation is part of the social and religious boundaries that the restored community seeks to maintain within the multicultural setting of the Persian empire. The virtual quotation from Deut 23.4–7 indicates that Deuteronomy was available to the postexilic community as part of its "torah" or "law of Moses." **1.** *No Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter,* see Deut 23.3. **2:** *Balaam,* see Num 22–24 and Deut 23.5–6. **3:** *Separated,* see 9.2n.; 10.28.

13.4–31: Coda. Nehemiah's memoir (interrupted in 7.5 and only briefly present in 12.31–43) resumes with a retrospective from a time after 432 BCE, after Nehemiah's twelve years as governor (13.6; 5.14). At some point after returning to King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem, discovered violations of the communal pledge of ch 10, and took steps to restore order. These violations pertain to the purity of the Temple, observance of the sabbath, and intermarriage. **4–9:** Nehemiah evicts his opponent Tobiah from the Temple precinct. Nehemiah first referred to Tobiah as an "Ammonite official" (2.10), a national affiliation that may justify his expulsion (see 13.1–3). Apparently other Judeans considered Tobiah (whose name refers to Israel's God; see 2.10n.) a legitimate member of the community. His connection with the priests and installation at the Temple support this conclusion. On Tobiah's priestly relatives, see 6.18. **4:** *The priest Eliashib,* probably not the high priest (of 3.1 and 13.28); the name was common in this era. *Appointed over the chambers,* hence controlling the storage and distribution of Temple resources. **6:** *The thirty-second year,* 432 BCE. **9:** *Cleansed*, for Nehemiah, Tobiah's illegitimate presence ritually contaminated the room.

13.10–13: Nehemiah rectifies violations regarding funds for Levites and singers (cf. 10.37–39). **10:** *Levites . . . had gone,* Nehemiah may imply that Tobiah's presence hastened the departure of Levites who had not been paid. **11:** *Gathered them,* (i.e., the dispersed Levites). **12:** The opening words should be translated "All Judah had brought." Nehemiah alleges that the desertion of Levites resulted less from lack of contributions than from mismanagement, possibly by Tobiah. **13:** *And I appointed,* Nehemiah chooses new supervisors. *Considered faithful,* an important trait because of previous corruption under Tobiah and Eliashib. **14:** Conclusion: Nehemiah's plea for remembrance for these restoration efforts; cf. vv. 22,31 and see 5.19n.

me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.

15 In those days I saw in Judah people treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys; and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day; and I warned them at that time against selling food. 16 Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of merchandise and sold them on the sabbath to the people of Judah, and in Jerusalem. 17 Then I remonstrated with the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the sabbath day? 18 Did not your ancestors act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring more wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath."

19 When it began to be dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the sabbath. And I set some of my servants over the gates, to prevent any burden from being brought in on the sabbath day. 20 Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem once or twice. 21 But I warned them and said to them, "Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you." From that time on they did not come on the sabbath. 22 And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love.

23 In those days also I saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; 24 and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke the language of various peoples. 25 And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. 26 Did not King Solomon of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin. 27 Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?"

28 And one of the sons of Jehoiada, son of the high priest Eliashib, was the son-in-law

13.15–22: Nehemiah rectifies sabbath violations (cf. 10.31). The sabbath constitutes another cultural and religious boundary, one that gains importance in the postexilic period. **15:** *In those days,* when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem for the second time, after 432 BCE. **16:** *Tyrians,* merchants from Tyre, in modern Lebanon. **19–22:** Shutting the gates during the sabbath prevented foreign trading in the city during the sabbath. **22:** *They should purify themselves,* purified Levites guard the gates (7.1–3; 11.1) to secure sanctity, especially on the holy sabbath. Such measures are unique to the book of Ezra-Nehemiah, underscoring the holiness of the entire city.

13.23–29: Intermarriage problems (cf. 10.30). On marriage with foreigners in Ezra-Nehemiah, see Ezra 9–10, especially Ezra 9.1–15n. The problem, as Nehemiah presents it, is different from Ezra 9.2; Nehemiah focuses on the loss of Jewish identity exemplified by children of mixed marriages who no longer spoke Hebrew ("the language of Judah"). Intermarriage also signals for him turning away from Israel's God. **23:** *Ashdod,* an originally Philistine city near the southeast coast of the Mediterranean. **26:** *King Solomon*'s intermarriages corrupted his relations with God (1 Kings 11.1–8) and thus exemplify the danger to the present community. **28:** Evidently, some Jews, including the high priest's family, considered contracting marriage with Sanballat's family as appropriate. Eliashib consecrated the gates in 3.1. *Sanballat,* the family of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria (see 2.10n.). His sons had Hebrew names. Second Kings 17 describes the residents of Samaria as foreigners who accepted some aspects of Yahwistic worship. Samarians, like the later Samaritans, may have claimed, instead, that they were a remnant of the northern kingdom of Israel and true offspring of Abraham through Jacob. Like Ezra, Nehemiah vehemently objects to what he construes as intermarriage. *I chased him away,* Nehemiah acts firmly to protect the Temple's purity from illegitimate behavior by a priest. The Jewish historian Josephus reports that the Samaritan Temple near Shechem was built in the fourth century BCE for a priest expelled from Jerusalem (*Ant.* 11.8.2).

of Sanballat the Horonite; I chased him away from me. [29] Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, the covenant of the priests and the Levites.

[30] Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work; [31] and I provided for the wood offering, at appointed times, and for the first fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

13.30–31: Conclusion. The purification of the priesthood and Temple administration was difficult because of the status of the opposing priests. Therefore, Nehemiah presents restoring order and sanctity to the worship system as the crown of his achievement. **31:** *I provided for the wood offering … and for the first fruits,* see 10.34–35, in which the community pledges to provide these. With *good* as the last word, Nehemiah invokes a final blessing.

ESTHER

NAME

The book of Esther takes its name from its heroine, the Jewish woman of the Diaspora who becomes queen of Persia, saves her people from genocide, and with her guardian, Mordecai, inaugurates the new Jewish festival of Purim. This title first appears in the Greek translation (the Septuagint, LXX) of the story and thus may not be original. According to 2.7, Esther has a Hebrew name, Hadassah, but is otherwise called Esther, a name that is cognate with Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess of love and war, or with the Persian word *stara*, "star." The Latin (Vulgate) translation calls her Hester.

CANONICAL STATUS

Esther is the only book of the Hebrew Bible unattested among the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls (third century BCE to first century CE); Mark 6.23 is the only New Testament allusion. Like the Song of Solomon, the scriptural status of the book of Esther was sometimes debated in antiquity. Neither book mentions God or such key Jewish concepts as covenant, temple, sacrifice, or prayer. Furthermore, both Esther and Song of Solomon celebrate, albeit in different contexts, the power of feminine sexuality.

Only by the third or fourth centuries CE does the scroll appear to have overcome all rabbinical reservations. Early Christians harbored similar doubts; as late as the fourth century when the Western Church had accepted Esther in its Bible, some Eastern Church authorities continued to question it. The sixteenth-century Protestant reformer Martin Luther wished it had never been written.

In the Jewish scriptures ("Tanakh"), the book of Esther appears in the third section, the Writings ("Ketubim"); typically coming after Ecclesiastes, it is the last of the five festal scrolls ("Megillot"). Esther is read twice through during the Jewish early spring festival Purim. In Christian Bibles the book is grouped with the Historical Books, after Ezra and Nehemiah, in recognition of the story's setting in the Persian period (550–333 BCE).

Complicating Esther's place in the biblical canon are more than a hundred additional verses in the Greek (Septuagint) version that do not appear in surviving Hebrew manuscripts. These verses are excluded from their Bibles by Jews and Protestants, while Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians accept them. A translation of the full Greek text of Esther, including these additions, is part of the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in most editions of this Bible (see pages 1377–1773).

AUTHORSHIP, DATE, AND LITERARY HISTORY

Esther contains some folktale motifs, but its many allusions to other biblical texts, most notably the Joseph story (Gen 37–48), suggest a literate and cultured author, probably from a socially prominent Jewish family in the eastern Diaspora (Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria). A minority of scholars advocate composition in Judea. The anonymous author makes a case for living a full Jewish life as a minority group within the strictures imposed by the alien Diaspora environment. The version of Esther contained in the Hebrew Bible was probably composed in the early Hellenistic period (late fourth or early third century BCE). Esther shares with the books of Daniel and Tobit a story line featuring Diaspora Jews.

In light of the extra Greek verses mentioned above, and some internal contradictions suggesting that the book may be have been combined from earlier sources, the existing biblical (canonical) version of Esther clearly evolved over time; many scholars, for example, doubt that the Purim festival figured in earlier versions of the Esther story.

CONTENTS AND INTERPRETATION

Although the action of Esther takes place over a period of ten years in the reign of the Persian king Ahasuerus, the ten chapters of the story progress swiftly. The narrative relates how a Jewish girl named Esther came to be queen in place of the disgraced Vashti and how a rivalry between her relative Mordecai and his enemy Haman threatened the entire Jewish community. Through Esther's cleverness and boldness the plot is foiled, and the Jews given permission to defend themselves. The story serves, perhaps secondarily, as the background for the Jewish holiday of Purim.

Despite the setting and the author's familiarity with Persian customs, vocabulary, and names, Esther is not a work of history but a historical novella, that is, a fictional story set within a historical framework. Ahasuerus is probably meant to be Xerxes I of Persia (486–465 BCE), but there is no historical evidence for a Queen Vashti or for a Jewish queen, much less a Queen Esther. Aside from Esther (1.19) and Daniel (6.8) no ancient source refers to immutable "laws of the Persians and the Medes." The story's purpose is to entertain, but more importantly to demonstrate the inevitability of retributive justice and, paradoxically, the need for oppressed minorities to act shrewdly and boldly for that justice to prevail. Like the books of Ruth and Jonah, Esther seems to indicate a more inclusive attitude toward non-Jews than the authors of Ezra and Nehemiah. It has also been suggested that by linking Mordecai the hero to David's rival King Saul, the author of Esther is opposing Jewish groups who advocated a restoration of the Davidic line to some measure of political power (cf. Haggai, Zechariah). Finally, the book's historical tone legitimates the festival of Purim, which was probably a Mesopotamian or Persian holiday adopted by Diaspora Jews. Purim is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, although "Mordecai's day" in 2 Macc 15.36 is probably a Judean version of Purim.

As a woman, Esther mirrors the marginal and sometimes precarious status of Diaspora Jews. Yet the author seems to advocate a measure of accommodation with the larger gentile world that seems sympathetic to the Jews' fate (cf. 8.17; 9.3) and is not excluded from Purim celebrations (9.27). Esther herself draws no hint of criticism for marrying a gentile and inevitably violating Jewish dietary rules. Intertextual parallels link Esther with other biblical women, among them Abigail, Bathsheba, Abishag, and, remarkably, Jezebel.

The most intractable interpretive problem of Esther centers on God. Because God is never explicitly named in Esther, scholars are divided as to whether the author excluded divine participation altogether or intended to imply that God was active behind the scenes. Mordecai's ambiguous remark in 4.14 about help "from another quarter" has been invoked to argue both positions. The Greek additions to Esther took care to mention God frequently, thereby resolving this interpretive dilemma and, incidentally, providing an instance of early Jewish biblical interpretation at work.

In tune with the carnival spirit of Purim Esther's narrative style overflows with exaggeration and hyperbole: the duration of royal feasts, the absurdity of the king's first decree, Esther's extravagant beauty regimen, and the body count of the Jews' victims. Furthermore, in Esther one encounters a surprisingly modern tension between various forms of comedy—such as satire, irony, and farce—and tragedy. The author has adroitly bound these together within the narrative by complex patterns of symmetries, reversals, foreshadowing, and recurring motifs. For example, the story begins and ends with large-scale feasting, while more banquets punctuate the narrative at key moments. Royal edicts, some of them highly ironic, move the story forward. At different moments leading characters mirror each other directly or in reverse. The disobedient queen Vashti is deposed by royal command, but Queen Esther triumphantly defies royal law. Esther successfully begs the king for the lives of her people whom Haman has doomed; Haman in vain supplicates Esther for his own life. The most dramatic reversal of the story occurs in ch 6 when Haman suddenly finds himself in the humiliating position of presenting the royal rewards he expected for himself to his nemesis Mordecai instead.

While the main characters in Esther are essentially stereotypes without distinctive personalities, Esther does change over the course of the narrative. She begins as a passive figure, notable only for her beauty and obedient nature. Since all the women in the harem are beautiful, perhaps it is her exceptional sexual skills that win her the crown. However, after Mordecai's challenge to Esther in 4.13–14, Esther seems to embrace her Jewish identity; with this self-recognition Esther becomes the decisive actor in the story, risking her life, issuing orders first to Mordecai and then to the king himself. Ultimately, it is on Esther's authority, albeit in concert with Mordecai, that Purim is established, making Esther the only biblical woman to authorize a Jewish religious tradition.

Mary Joan Winn Leith

1 This happened in the days of Ahasuerus, the same Ahasuerus who ruled over one hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia.[a] 2 In those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, 3 in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his officials and ministers. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were present, 4 while he displayed the great wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and pomp of his majesty for many days, one hundred eighty days in all.

5 When these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in the citadel of Susa, both great and small, a banquet lasting for seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. 6 There were white cotton curtains and blue hangings tied with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings[b] and marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and colored stones. 7 Drinks were served in golden goblets, goblets of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. 8 Drinking was by flagons, without restraint; for the king had given orders to all the officials of his palace to do as each one desired. 9 Furthermore, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women in the palace of King Ahasuerus.

10 On the seventh day, when the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who attended him, 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing the royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the officials her beauty; for she was fair to behold. 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command conveyed by the eunuchs. At this the king was enraged, and his anger burned within him.

13 Then the king consulted the sages who knew the laws[c] (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and custom, 14 and those next to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven officials of Persia and Media, who had access to the king, and sat first in the kingdom): 15 "According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus conveyed by the eunuchs?" 16 Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, "Not only has Queen Vashti done wrong to the king, but also to all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. 17 For this deed of the queen will be made known to all women, causing them to look with contempt on their husbands, since they will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before

[a] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
[b] Or *rods*
[c] Cn: Heb *times*

1.1–9: King Ahasuerus holds a feast. 1: *Ahasuerus* (Ezra 4.6; not the same as in Dan 9.1 or Tob 14.15) is probably Xerxes I (486–465 BCE) whose Persian Empire from *India* (the Indus Valley) to *Ethiopia* (Heb "Cush," modern Sudan and Ethiopia) included some twenty satrapies (*Hist.* 3.89) subdivided into *provinces*. **2:** *Susa*, Ahasuerus's winter capital in northwestern Iran, ca. 200 mi (325 km) east of ancient Babylon. The *citadel* was a fortified section of the palace. **3–4:** Greek writers mention sumptuous feasts held by Persian kings. The *banquet*, with its exaggerated length of *one hundred and eighty days* (cf. Jdt 1.16), is the first of several that occur at key moments in the story. **5–6:** *Garden … curtains … couches*, the opulence emphasizes power and wealth. **8:** *Drinking was … without restraint*, demonstrating the king's permissiveness, excess, and lack of control over his court (cf. 3.11; 5.6; 7.2), which foreshadows his later inability to control Queen Vashti. **9:** *Vashti*, a Persian name meaning "beloved." Xerxes I's queen was Amestris (*Hist.* 7.61); no *Vashti* appears in any ancient records. Vashti's *banquet for the women* emphasizes the separate, gendered spheres of king and queen, a factor in Esther's later bravery.

1.10–22: Queen Vashti's downfall. 10: A person *merry with wine* (Prov 15.15) may come to grief (see 5.9; 1 Sam 25.36; 2 Sam 13.28; Dan 5.2; Jdt 12.20). *Eunuchs* were castrated males who served in the Persian court. The list of their names lends the story an air of authenticity. **12:** This episode occurs in reverse in 5.2 when Esther comes uninvited into the king's presence. **13–18:** A satirical moment: the king's *sages who knew the laws* inflate a domestic dispute into a national crisis. **14:** Only seven royal advisers enjoyed free *access to the king* (see 4.11; *Hist.* 3.84). The seven *officials* have Persian names. The fear of a feminine insurrection against patriarchal order

him, and she did not come.' 18 This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's behavior will rebel against[a] the king's officials, and there will be no end of contempt and wrath! 19 If it pleases the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be altered, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. 20 So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, vast as it is, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike."

21 This advice pleased the king and the officials, and the king did as Memucan proposed; 22 he sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, declaring that every man should be master in his own house.[b]

2 After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. 2 Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king. 3 And let the king appoint commissioners in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in the citadel of Susa under custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; let their cosmetic treatments be given them. 4 And let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did so.

5 Now there was a Jew in the citadel of Susa whose name was Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, a Benjaminite. 6 Kish[c] had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with King Jeconiah of Judah, whom King Nebu-

[a] Cn: Heb *will tell*
[b] Heb adds *and speak according to the language of his people*
[c] Heb *a Benjaminite* [6]*who*

lies just below the surface of many ancient myths and legends. Contrary to Memucan's dire imaginings, the real danger will come in the form of a conspiracy by palace bodyguards (2.21). **19:** *To another who is better than she* uses the same words as Samuel's rejection of Saul in favor of David (1 Sam 15.28). While divine and royal edicts in the ancient world are commonly described as irrevocable (cf. Ps 89.35), no sources outside the Bible indicate that the *laws of the Persians and the Medes* could *not be altered* (8.8; Dan 6.8,12); here the phrase subtly contrasts oppressive imperial laws with true justice. This *royal order* is the first in a series of edicts by the king. **20:** An instance of narrative irony: by decreeing that *all women* must *give honor to their husbands*, the king draws attention to his own failure to control his wife. **22:** Persian royal pronouncements were issued in Aramaic, the official language of Persian diplomacy, as well as in the *language*s of subject peoples (see Ezra 4.7,17; Dan 3.4,7,29). *Letters*, the Persian postal system was renowned (*Hist.* 8.98).

2.1–18: Esther becomes queen. 2.1–4: The king agrees to seek a new queen. 1: *Remembered* (i.e., positively; see Gen 40.14); the king may be regretting his treatment of Vashti but cannot risk losing face by reversing his earlier decision (1.19). **2:** Cf. 1 Kings 1.1–3. Patriarchal societies insist on a *virgin* bride to ensure the paternity of children within the marriage. Contrary to the story here, Persian kings could marry women only from certain noble Persian families (*Hist*. 3.84). **3:** *Let the king appoint commissioners* echoes the Joseph story (see Gen 41.34–35), a biblical text to which the book of Esther often alludes. *Eunuch*, see 1.10n. Eunuchs were especially needed as overseers of the king's *harem* (lit., "house of women"). *Cosmetic treatments,* see vv. 9,12; cf. 2 Kings 9.30.

2.5–11: Introducing two Jewish heroes: Mordecai and Esther. 5–6: *Mordecai*, a name derived from the chief Babylonian god Marduk, parallel to Esther's derivation from the goddess Ishtar. These divine names, however, were often used of people. The names in Mordecai's Benjaminite ancestry link him to King Saul (1 Sam 9.1–2), while Haman's genealogy (3.1) connects him to Saul's enemy, the Amalekite king Agag (1 Sam 15). *Jew* (Heb "yehudi"), originally meaning anyone from the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16.6), gained a broader meaning in the postexilic period and became a strong identity marker as here in Esther (see also 8.17 and cf. Zech 8.23; Neh 4.1; 5.8; 2 Macc 2.21; 6.6; 9.17). Mordecai's presence *in the citadel* (see 1.2n.) probably means he was a court official (see 2.19). The Hebrew wording implies it was Mordecai who was exiled with *Judah*'s last king, Jehoiachin (here called *Jeconiah*), when *Nebuchadnezzar* conquered Judah in 597 BCE (2 Kings 24), over a hundred years earlier. To avoid an unlikely century-old Mordecai, NRSV emends the text to make Mordecai's great-grandfather, Kish,

chadnezzar of Babylon had carried away.
7 Mordecai[a] had brought up Hadassah, that is
Esther, his cousin, for she had neither father
nor mother; the girl was fair and beautiful,
and when her father and her mother died,
Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter.
8 So when the king's order and his edict
were proclaimed, and when many young
women were gathered in the citadel of Susa
in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken
into the king's palace and put in custody of
Hegai, who had charge of the women. 9 The
girl pleased him and won his favor, and he
quickly provided her with her cosmetic
treatments and her portion of food, and
with seven chosen maids from the king's
palace, and advanced her and her maids to
the best place in the harem. 10 Esther did not
reveal her people or kindred, for Mordecai
had charged her not to tell. 11 Every day
Mordecai would walk around in front of the
court of the harem, to learn how Esther was
and how she fared.

12 The turn came for each girl to go in to
King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months
under the regulations for the women, since
this was the regular period of their cosmetic
treatment, six months with oil of myrrh and
six months with perfumes and cosmetics for
women. 13 When the girl went in to the king
she was given whatever she asked for to take
with her from the harem to the king's palace.
14 In the evening she went in; then in the
morning she came back to the second harem
in custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch,
who was in charge of the concubines; she did
not go in to the king again, unless the king
delighted in her and she was summoned by
name.

15 When the turn came for Esther daughter
of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had
adopted her as his own daughter, to go in to
the king, she asked for nothing except what
Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of
the women, advised. Now Esther was ad-
mired by all who saw her. 16 When Esther was
taken to King Ahasuerus in his royal palace
in the tenth month, which is the month of
Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, 17 the
king loved Esther more than all the other
women; of all the virgins she won his favor
and devotion, so that he set the royal crown
on her head and made her queen instead of
Vashti. 18 Then the king gave a great banquet
to all his officials and ministers—"Esther's
banquet." He also granted a holiday[b] to the
provinces, and gave gifts with royal liberality.

19 When the virgins were being gathered
together,[c] Mordecai was sitting at the king's
gate. 20 Now Esther had not revealed her
kindred or her people, as Mordecai had
charged her; for Esther obeyed Mordecai
just as when she was brought up by him. 21 In
those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the
king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the
king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold,

[a] Heb *He*
[b] Or *an amnesty*
[c] Heb adds *a second time*

part of the original exile. *Susa*, see 1.2n. **7:** Esther's Hebrew name *Hadassah* means "myrtle." Like other Jewish exiles (Dan 1.6–7) Esther has both a Hebrew and a Babylonian name, but hereafter the author calls her only Esther. **9:** In winning the *favor* of Hegai, Esther resembles Joseph in the house of Potiphar (Gen 39.2–6) and Daniel at the Babylonian court (Dan 1.9). Unlike Daniel (1.8), Esther appears unconcerned with Jewish dietary rules.

2.12–18: Esther becomes queen. 14: The impossibility of seeing the king again unless *summoned by name* foreshadows Esther's dilemma in 4.11–16. **15:** As Esther takes her fateful step toward queenship, her father's name (*Abihail*) is supplied in the manner of preexilic queens of Judah (see 1 Kings 15.2; 22.42; 2 Kings 15.33). In asking only for what Hegai *advised*, Esther demonstrates the characteristic prudence that will continue to serve her well. **16:** *Tebeth*, December-January. *In the seventh year of his reign*, Ahasuerus has been trying out queen candidates for about four years. **17:** Cf. Gen 37.3. **18:** *Esther's banquet*, probably a wedding feast, foreshadows the two she gives later (5.5; 6.14–7.1), as well as the feast of Purim (9.22). A *holiday*, declared by a king on special occasions, was primarily economic (see Jer 34.8–11), often involving relief from tribute obligations, taxes, debt-slavery, and military service. *Gifts* foreshadows 9.22.

2.19–23: Mordecai and Esther save the king's life. 19: *The king's gate*, the gathering place at the entrance to the palace complex for royal officials. **20:** Esther's silence about *her kindred or her people* indicates her compliant nature and heightens suspense. **21:** Some interpreters have seen divine intervention in this and later mysterious

became angry and conspired to assassinate[a] King Ahasuerus. 22 But the matter came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai. 23 When the affair was investigated and found to be so, both the men were hanged on the gallows. It was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

3 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the officials who were with him. 2 And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and did obeisance to Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or do obeisance. 3 Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" 4 When they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would avail; for he had told them that he was a Jew. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or do obeisance to him, Haman was infuriated. 6 But he thought it beneath him to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, having been told who Mordecai's people were, Haman plotted to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

7 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur—which means "the lot"—before Haman for the day and for the month, and the lot fell on the thirteenth day[b] of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. 8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and separated among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not appropriate for the king to tolerate them. 9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued for their destruction, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, so that they may put it into the king's treasuries." 10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. 11 The king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, and the people as well, to do with them as it seems good to you."

12 Then the king's secretaries were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's

[a] Heb *to lay hands on*

[b] Cn Compare Gk and verse 13 below: Heb *the twelfth month*

coincidences (see 4.14; 6.1–3). *Conspired to assassinate,* see 3.6n. **22:** *Esther told the king*, seems to contradict the rules of royal access (2.14 and 4.11). **23:** *Hanged on the gallows* (lit., "on a tree"), i.e., by impalement, a disgraceful death, foreshadowing 5.14; 7.9–10; 9.13–14. *The book of the annals*, an official record of royal acts (cf. 10.2; 1 Kings 14.19,29; 2 Chr 25.26; 32.32).

3.1–15: Haman plots to annihilate the Jews. 1: *Agagite*, descended from King Agag the Amalekite (see 2.5n.). **2:** Suggestions for why *Mordecai did not bow down* include ancestral enmity between Mordecai and Haman (see 2.5n.) or that Mordecai, like contemporary Greeks, abhorred as dishonorable the Persian custom of abasing oneself on the ground to superiors (contrast Prov. 29.23). **4:** *Day after day* echoes Joseph's rejection of Potiphar's wife (Gen 39.10). **6:** In 2.21 the Heb verb *to destroy* is translated "assassinate" and *plotted* as "conspired." The identical wording sets up a parallel between Haman's plot and that of the conspirators in 2.21–23. **7:** *The twelfth year*, Esther has been queen for five years. The reference to *pur*, an Akkadian word for *lot,* may have been inserted by a later editor to connect the plot of Esther more closely with the Purim festival (see 9.20–32n.). Passover occurs in *Nisan* (March-April), the first month of the Babylonian and Jewish year. Traditional Jewish interpretation drew fruitful parallels between the Esther story and Passover. *Adar*, February-March. **8:** Haman begins with the truth: the Jews were indeed *scattered and separated* (Zech 7.14) and, like other subject peoples, their statutes (Deut 4.5–6) were different. He slides into falsehood in claiming that Jews *do not keep the king's laws*. **9:** *Ten thousand talents of silver* is an astronomical sum, the equivalent of more than a hundred million US dollars. **10:** The *signet ring* authorizes Haman to sign documents in the king's name (3.12; 8.2,8; cf. Gen 41.41–42; 1 Kings 21.8–9). The first appearance of Haman's epithet, *enemy of the Jews* (8.1; 9.10,24). **12:** Another irony: the

satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language; it was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's ring. [13] Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces, giving orders to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. [14] A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation, calling on all the peoples to be ready for that day. [15] The couriers went quickly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

4 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; [2] he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. [3] In every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

[4] When Esther's maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them. [5] Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what was happening and why. [6] Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, [7] and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. [8] Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people.

[9] Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. [10] Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai, saying, [11] "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—all alike are to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone, may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days." [12] When they told Mordecai what Esther had said, [13] Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. [14] For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." [15] Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, [16] "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink

deadly *edict* goes out on the day before Passover (v. 7n.; Ex 12.6; Lev 23.5). It is issued in various *languages*; see 1.22n. **13:** *Couriers*, see 1.22n. **15:** *Citadel of Susa,* see 1.2n.

4.1–17: Mordecai persuades Esther to risk her life to save her people. 1: *Sackcloth and ashes* and torn clothing were traditional signs of mourning and repentance (2 Sam 3.31; Job 42.6; Dan 9.3; Jon 3.6). By remaining outside *the king's gate* Mordecai may be signaling that his Jewish identity outweighs his privileged status as an official in the Persian court (cf. 2.19). **3:** *Fasting* was believed to influence the deity (Lev 16.29–31; Judg 20.26; 2 Sam 12.16; 1 Kings 21.27; Jon 3.5,8; Ezra 8.21–23; Joel 1.14; 2.12–14; 1 Macc 3.47). **4–10:** Esther, her Jewish identity still secret, is unaware of the edict. **6:** The city *square* is a traditional place of public mourning (Am 5.16; Isa 15.3; Jer 48.38). **8:** *Susa*, see 1.2n. **11:** Like other biblical heroes called to save their people (Ex 3.11; 4.10; Judg 6.15; Jer 1.6; Luke 1.34), Esther initially objects. *One law,* no such regulation is known. *I myself have not been called to come in to the king,* see 2.14. **14:** *From another quarter*, perhaps a reference to divine providence (see 2.21n.). *Who knows?* Often precedes an expression of hope for divine mercy (2 Sam 12.22; Joel 2.14; Jon 3.9). **16–17:** Esther's request for a community fast foreshadows her religious authority in 9.29. *If I perish*, Esther voices resignation or selfless dedication (see Gen 43.14).

for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." [17] Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

5 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, opposite the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne inside the palace opposite the entrance to the palace. [2] As soon as the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won his favor and he held out to her the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the top of the scepter. [3] The king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom." [4] Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to a banquet that I have prepared for the king." [5] Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther desires." So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. [6] While they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." [7] Then Esther said, "This is my petition and request: [8] If I have won the king's favor, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet that I will prepare for them, and then I will do as the king has said."

[9] Haman went out that day happy and in good spirits. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and observed that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was infuriated with Mordecai; [10] nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home. Then he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh, [11] and Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the ministers of the king. [12] Haman added, "Even Queen Esther let no one but myself come with the king to the banquet that she prepared. Tomorrow also I am invited by her, together with the king. [13] Yet all this does me no good so long as I see the Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate." [14] Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged on it; then go with the king to the banquet in good spirits." This advice pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

6 On that night the king could not sleep, and he gave orders to bring the book of records, the annals, and they were read to the king. [2] It was found written how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had conspired to assassinate[a] King Ahasuerus. [3] Then the king said, "What honor or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king's servants

[a] Heb *to lay hands on*

5.1–8: Esther before the king. 2: Against the precept of Prov. 20.2 Esther risks angering the king; she resembles wise women who plead on behalf of others (1 Sam 25.24–31; 2 Sam 14.4–17; 20.16–20). *Favor*, see 2.9,17 (Ex 12.36). *Scepter,* see 4.11. **3:** Three times the king will offer *half of my kingdom* (v. 6; 7.2; cf. Mk 6.23). Typical of folktales, the third offer (7.2) succeeds. **4:** *Banquet*, see 1.3–4n. Food, reassuring and nurturing, often figures in stories of women confronting powerful men alone (Judg 5.25; 2 Sam 13.6–10; Jdt 10.5; 12.1,17–20); Esther works indirectly to achieve her goal

5.9–14: Haman's happiness is spoiled. 9: *Good spirits*, the same term is used of Ahasuerus ("merry") in 1.10. **10–14:** *Zeresh, Esther's negative counterpart,* is nevertheless an exemplary son-bearing wife (5.11; 9.7–10) and loyal counselor to her husband (Prov. 31.11). Haman's boasting sets him up as a fool ripe for a fall, a theme also found in wisdom literature (Prov 11.28; 13.3; 16.5,18; 27.1; 29.20). *Gallows*, see 2.23n. *Fifty cubits*, ca. 72 ft (22 m), an exaggerated height. Only *the king* can order an execution.

6.1–13: Mordecai's triumph. This masterpiece of ironic narrative uses alliteration, repetition, understatement, and reversal. **1–2:** The king's insomnia, a traditional folktale device (Dan 6.18; 1 Esd 3.3), is another instance of opportune fate in Esther (see 2.9,15,17,21; 3.7; 4.14; 5.2; 6.13). *Annals,* see 2.23n. Herodotus (*Hist.*

who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him." [4] The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him. [5] So the king's servants told him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." The king said, "Let him come in." [6] So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor?" Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?" [7] So Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king wishes to honor, [8] let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and a horse that the king has ridden, with a royal crown on its head. [9] Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials; let him[a] robe the man whom the king wishes to honor, and let him[a] conduct the man on horseback through the open square of the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall it be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor.'" [10] Then the king said to Haman, "Quickly, take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to the Jew Mordecai who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned." [11] So Haman took the robes and the horse and robed Mordecai and led him riding through the open square of the city, proclaiming, "Thus shall it be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor."

[12] Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate, but Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. [13] When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom your downfall has begun, is of the Jewish people, you will not prevail against him, but will surely fall before him."

[14] While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman off to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

7 [1] So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. [2] On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." [3] Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. [4] For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; but no enemy can compensate for this damage to the king."[b] [5] Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?" [6] Esther said, "A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen. [7] The king rose from the feast in wrath and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that the king had determined to destroy him. [8] When the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman

[a] Heb *them*

[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

8.85,90) notes that Persian kings kept records of courtiers' noble deeds. **6:** *Whom the king wishes to honor,* repeated six times in vv. 6–11. The king's omission of his honoree's name parallels Haman's concealment of the identity of those he intended to annihilate (3.8). **8:** *Royal robes*, a gesture of favor (Gen 37.3; 41.42; 1 Sam 18.4; 1 Kings 1.33). *Crown*, an ornament for the horse's head depicted on Mesopotamian and Persian reliefs. **11:** The *open square*, previously the site of Mordecai's mourning (4.6), now witnesses his public commendation by the king (cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.3.23). **12:** *Head covered*, a sign of grief (2 Sam 15.30; 19.4; Jer 14.4), foreshadows Haman's ruin.

6.14–7.10: Esther's second banquet and Haman's fall. 7.2: *Half of my kingdom*, see 5.3n. **3:** No longer self-effacing (see 2.20n.; 5.4n.), Esther seizes the right moment to speak directly of herself and of her people. **4:** *Sold*, probably a reference to Haman's bribe in 3.11 (see 4.7; but note the metaphorical use of the verb in Deut 32.30; Judg 2.14; 3.8; 4.2,9; 10.7). *To be destroyed*, etc., Esther quotes from the royal edict (3.13). *Damage to the king*, perhaps the king would be shamed if his queen were dishonored. **6:** Like Esther before the king in 15.5, now Haman is *terrified before the king and the queen*. **8:** Following common custom (8.3; 1 Sam 25.23–24; 2 Kings

had thrown himself on the couch where Esther was reclining; and the king said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?" As the words left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. [9] Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Look, the very gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, stands at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." And the king said, "Hang him on that." [10] So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated.

8 On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her. [2] Then the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. So Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

[3] Then Esther spoke again to the king; she fell at his feet, weeping and pleading with him to avert the evil design of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. [4] The king held out the golden scepter to Esther, [5] and Esther rose and stood before the king. She said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have won his favor, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I have his approval, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote giving orders to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. [6] For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming on my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?" [7] Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to the Jew Mordecai, "See, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he plotted to lay hands on the Jews. [8] You may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring; for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked."

[9] The king's secretaries were summoned at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day; and an edict was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews and to the satraps and the governors and the officials of the provinces from India to Ethiopia,[a] one hundred twenty-seven provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, and also to the Jews in their script and their language. [10] He wrote letters in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed them with the king's ring, and sent them by mounted couriers riding on fast steeds bred from the royal herd.[b] [11] By these letters the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to assemble and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, with their children and women, and to plunder their goods [12] on a single day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. [13] A copy of the writ was to be issued as a decree in every province and published to all peoples,

[a] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

4.27), Haman tries to supplicate the queen by falling at her feet. His gesture contrasts with Mordecai's in 3.2. *Assault the queen*, Ahasuerus mistakes Haman's posture as a sexual assault, an unpardonable affront to both male and royal honor and, as such, a capital offense. *They covered Haman's face* symbolically negating his identity. **9–10:** *Gallows*, see 2.23n. Poetic justice prevails (cf. Prov 26.27).

8.1–17: Mordecai rises to power and counteracts the anti-Jewish edict. Reversals abound in this chapter (see 1 Sam 2.1–10). **1:** In 3.9, Haman offered the king much silver; now the king gives Haman's wealth to Esther. **2:** Haman's elevated rank becomes Mordecai's with the transfer of the king's signet ring (see v. 8; 3.10n). **3:** The edict against the Jews still stands. **4:** *Scepter,* see 4.11. **5:** *Devised by Haman*, Esther diplomatically dissociates the king from the royal edict. **8:** The king's earlier edict *cannot be revoked* (see 1.19n.), but a new edict can neutralize the former's intent. **9:** The verse follows the same general structure as 3.12–13 (see 1.19–22) while reversing the effect. *Sivan*, May-June. *Language,* see 1.22n. **11:** *Allowed*, not commanded. *Destroy . . . annihilate,* the same wording appears in 3.13. The story's hyperbolic style and pattern of reversals and retribution, rather than any actual historical event, account for the excess of bloodshed to come (9.5–16). **12:** The date of the intended extermina-

and the Jews were to be ready on that day to take revenge on their enemies. [14] So the couriers, mounted on their swift royal steeds, hurried out, urged by the king's command. The decree was issued in the citadel of Susa.

[15] Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king, wearing royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple, while the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. [16] For the Jews there was light and gladness, joy and honor. [17] In every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict came, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a festival and a holiday. Furthermore, many of the peoples of the country professed to be Jews, because the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.

9 Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, when the king's command and edict were about to be executed, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain power over them, but which had been changed to a day when the Jews would gain power over their foes, [2] the Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who had sought their ruin; and no one could withstand them, because the fear of them had fallen upon all peoples. [3] All the officials of the provinces, the satraps and the governors, and the royal officials were supporting the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai had fallen upon them. [4] For Mordecai was powerful in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces as the man Mordecai grew more and more powerful. [5] So the Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, slaughtering, and destroying them, and did as they pleased to those who hated them. [6] In the citadel of Susa the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred people. [7] They killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, [8] Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, [9] Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, Vaizatha, [10] the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews; but they did not touch the plunder.

[11] That very day the number of those killed in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king. [12] The king said to Queen Esther, "In the citadel of Susa the Jews have killed five hundred people and also the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It shall be granted you. And what further is your request? It shall be fulfilled." [13] Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let the Jews who are in Susa be allowed tomorrow also to do according to this day's edict, and let the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows." [14] So the king commanded this to be done; a decree was issued in Susa, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged. [15] The Jews who were in Susa gathered also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and they killed three

tion (3.7,13) becomes a day of triumph and validates the Purim festival (see 9.21). *Adar*, February-March. **14:** See 1.22n. *Citadel of Susa*, see 1.2n. **15–17:** Mordecai's attire contrasts with 4.1, as the Jews' mourning in 4.1–4 turns to joy. **16:** *Light and gladness, joy and honor* contrast with 4.3. **17:** *Professed to be Jews*, this translation is possible, but the Heb may simply mean that gentiles joined the Jews in their resistance (see 9.3), not that they converted to Judaism. An earlier version of the book may have ended here with no mention of the festival.

9.1–10.3: The origins of Purim. 9.1–19: The Jews triumph over their enemies. 1: A reminder that the king's edict against the Jews still stands; the terms of the second edict allow the Jews to defend themselves. *Adar,* February-March. **2–4:** The Jews' victory is described in language reminiscent of the conquest of Canaan. Opposition to the Jews is implied by *no one could withstand them* (Josh 23.9). *The fear of them*, a supernatural terror common in holy war (Ex 15.14–16; Josh 2.8–12; Ps 105.38). **4:** Mordecai's power resembles that of Moses (Ex 11.3). **6:** *Citadel of Susa*, see 1.2n. **7–10:** Haman boasted unwisely about his many sons (5.11). The ten names are traditionally recited in a single breath when the scroll is read liturgically. **10:** The note that the Jews did not *plunder* (as in vv. 15,16; contrast 3.13 and 8.11) is a reminder of the Agag story (see 2.5; 3.1) where the Jews plundered to their own hurt, breaking the rules of holy war (1 Sam 15.9; cf. Josh 7.1). **12–15:** At Esther's *request* (5.3,6; 7.2) the king grants the Jews of Susa (as distinct from the *citadel of Susa*) a second day of revenge and allows them to shame Haman further by hanging (impaling, see 2.23n.) the corpses of his sons in public (Josh 8.29; 10.26; 1 Sam 17.54; 31.10). Notice of the extra day for observing the king's edict is probably included to explain why the city Jews of Susa celebrated Purim on the fifteenth of Adar and rural Jews on the fourteenth (see 9.18–19).

hundred persons in Susa; but they did not touch the plunder.

16 Now the other Jews who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and gained relief from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of those who hated them; but they laid no hands on the plunder. 17 This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made that a day of feasting and gladness.

18 But the Jews who were in Susa gathered on the thirteenth day and on the fourteenth, and rested on the fifteenth day, making that a day of feasting and gladness. 19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, who live in the open towns, hold the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day for gladness and feasting, a holiday on which they send gifts of food to one another.

20 Mordecai recorded these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21 enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same month, year by year, 22 as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor. 23 So the Jews adopted as a custom what they had begun to do, as Mordecai had written to them.

24 Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur—that is "the lot"—to crush and destroy them; 25 but when Esther came before the king, he gave orders in writing that the wicked plot that he had devised against the Jews should come upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26 Therefore these days are called Purim, from the word Pur. Thus because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them, 27 the Jews established and accepted as a custom for themselves and their descendants and all who joined them, that without fail they would continue to observe these two days every year, as it was written and at the time appointed. 28 These days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every family, province, and city; and these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants.

29 Queen Esther daughter of Abihail, along with the Jew Mordecai, gave full written authority, confirming this second letter about Purim. 30 Letters were sent wishing peace and security to all the Jews, to the one hundred twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, 31 and giving orders that these days of Purim should be observed at their appointed seasons, as the Jew Mordecai and Queen Esther enjoined on the Jews, just as they had laid down for themselves and for their descendants regulations concerning their fasts and their lamentations. 32 The

18–19: Jews today observe Purim with *feasting* and *gifts of food* (see 2.9, "portion of food"; Neh 8.10).

9.20–32: The inauguration of the feast of Purim. The emphasis upon the written word (cf. 6.2; 10.2), a particular concern in postexilic Judaism, was probably intended to legitimize a festival not mentioned in the Torah (cf. the origin of Hanukkah in 1 Macc 4.56–59; 2 Macc 1.1–2.28; 10.1–8). **20:** *Near and far*, Isa 57.19. **22:** Purim occurs not on the day of the Jews' military triumph but on the day they obtained their *relief. Sorrow into gladness*, Isa 61.3; Jer 31.13. **23:** Ex 24.3. **24–26:** A plot summary that differs slightly from the book. Esther's name does not appear in the Heb text of v. 25 and has been added by the translator. The festival came to be called Purim for the lot, Heb "pur" (pl. "purim"), which Haman cast (see 3.7n.). **24:** *Crush* (Heb "hummam"), a word play on Haman's name. **28:** *Remembered; commemoration*, see Ex 13.3; 20.8. **29–32:** Probably added later. The Heb text is extremely corrupt, and the verses do not appear in some ancient versions. **30:** *Peace and security*, the wording suggests Purim fulfills the prophecy of Zech 8.19 (see Isa 39.8; Jer 33.6) and therefore the humanly inaugurated festival is legitimate. **31:** *Fasts*, not the Jewish Fast of Esther, which came to be observed on the thirteenth of Adar only beginning in the ninth century CE. **32:** Queen Esther is the only woman in the Bible credited with establishing a religious observance.

command of Queen Esther fixed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.

10 King Ahasuerus laid tribute on the land and on the islands of the sea. [2] All the acts of his power and might, and the full account of the high honor of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? [3] For Mordecai the Jew was next in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was powerful among the Jews and popular with his many kindred, for he sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his descendants.

10.1–3: Postscript: the greatness of Ahasuerus and Mordecai. 1: This seemingly irrelevant comment may imply that the king prospered with Mordecai's assistance (see Gen 47.1–26). **2:** *Written in the annals,* a standard formula for historical reports in Kings and Chronicles (1 Kings 14.19,29; 2 Chr 25.26; 32.32). **3:** The book ends without reference to Esther. Rather, Mordecai is the model of a successful Diaspora Jew and of Jews living harmoniously in the gentile world.

INTRODUCTION TO THE POETICAL AND WISDOM BOOKS

PLACEMENT AND CONTENTS

The title "Poetical Books" for the canonical section comprised of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, is somewhat inaccurate; the canonical division of "Prophets" also contains much poetry, and not all of these "Poetical Works" are poetry. In Jewish tradition these five books are included in the Writings, the third division of the canon; their order there varies widely in different manuscripts and editions, and this section also includes prose works such as Chronicles. The earliest evidence for seeing Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon as a unit comes from the second century CE, though it took many centuries for these five books, in the arrangement found here, to be recognized as the third section of the Christian Bible. The order of these books was variable, and some traditions placed them at the end of the Christian Old Testament, while others put them following the Torah or Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Its current placement in English Bibles follows some manuscript traditions, which most likely sought to organize the first section of the Christian Bible by placing the Torah first, followed by other works about the past (the Historical Books), books about the present (the Poetical Books), and books about the future (the Prophetic Books). This arrangement, which places the prophets last, would have also fostered the idea that the Old Testament is an introduction to the New Testament; the Prophetic Books would then immediately precede the Gospels as prophecy followed by fulfillment.

The five Poetical Books were written or edited at widely different times and consist of many different literary genres, such as love poetry (the Song of Solomon), Temple liturgy (most of Psalms), and wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes). It is likely that they entered the canon for quite different reasons: Psalms was used for prayers; the Song of Solomon was probably first canonized as an ancient love poem used in wedding ceremonies; while Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes may have been become canonical under the influence of a class of sages who wrote, preserved, and studied wisdom literature. These books thus do not form a unit sharing basic themes or vocabulary, unlike works assigned to other canonical divisions, such as the Historical Books or the Prophetic Books.

"Wisdom literature" has typically been described in terms of works that focus or reflect on universal human concerns, especially the understanding of individual experiences and the maintenance of ordered relationships that lead both to success on the human plane and to divine approval. Some scholars see such books as deriving from a particular group of ancient Israelite scribes. Books classified as "wisdom literature" are thus in some ways a departure from the concerns of most other biblical books. They do not focus primarily on the nation of Israel and on its great formative historical memories, such as the Exodus from Egypt, or on Jerusalem and the Temple. They do not mention covenant, the central theological notion that elsewhere in the Bible binds together God, the people of Israel, and the land of Israel.

In recent scholarship, the concept of "wisdom" has been criticized as too elastic and amorphous. Indeed, the three wisdom books in this collection are remarkably different from one another: Proverbs suggests that the righteous are rewarded and do not suffer; the book of Job profoundly challenges this view; while Ecclesiastes, in contrast to both Job and Proverbs, is deeply skeptical of the utility of wisdom. In addition, portions of many biblical books contain passages that are similar to Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, or include passages that also emphasize the importance of the divine order and are not centered on covenant. Nevertheless, "wisdom," as a modern category deriving from the beginning of the twentieth century, remains useful.

Proverbs is representative of a type of ancient Near Eastern thought that looked for pattern and repetition in nature and in the moral life. In this tradition, the regular recurrence of natural phenomena could provide an analogy to guide human beings in their social interactions:

> As charcoal is to hot embers and wood to fire,
> so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife (Prov 26.21).

The inevitability of the natural occurrence is mirrored in the inevitability of the social one. This kind of thinking then was extended to moral behavior, with the argument that good behavior, like good farming practice, will be rewarded:

> Anyone who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit,
> and anyone who takes care of a master will be honored (Prov 27.18).

Job and Ecclesiastes to some extent dispute this widespread ancient Near Eastern tradition. Job denies the inevitability of rewards for living an upright life and refutes the idea that human suffering is always deserved. Ecclesiastes treats the idea of inevitability in a different way: the natural repetitions of seasons, tasks, and occupations become an image of futility, in which people are "like fish taken in a cruel net, and like birds caught in a snare" (9.12), powerless to understand their own destiny. The themes of the wisdom tradition are continued in the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books of the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), both of which combine didactic themes and style familiar especially from the book of Proverbs with retrospective summaries of Israel's history, thus extending the borders of wisdom literature.

Although Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon are loosely described as Poetical Books, they are not all poetry. Ecclesiastes contains some poetical sections, such as the poem of 3.1–8 ("For everything there is a season"), or quoted poetic proverbs (e.g., 7.1–6), but the book is predominantly prose. The first two chapters of Job and its final eleven verses are also prose. Additionally, the nature of the poetry in these books is very different, ranging from the highly structured, largely static poetry of Proverbs, to the intensely erotic, more free-flowing poetry of Song of Solomon.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BIBLICAL POETRY

Poetry is a cross-cultural phenomenon: most cultures distinguish between an everyday type of discourse (prose), and heightened discourse (poetry). This heightening may be accomplished in a number of different ways, including the use of figuration (e.g., metaphor, simile), meter, and certain types of sound patterning, such as alliteration and rhyme. Some of these features are broadly shared between the poetry of different peoples, while other are highly specific to particular cultures. Thus Hebrew poetry, unlike its classical English counterpart, has neither (true) rhythm nor rhyme; nevertheless, it is poetic in that it uses certain devices in significant enough concentration to distinguish it from everyday speech or prose. The prose-poetry distinction is relative rather than absolute; as in English, we may speak of poetic prose and prosaic poetry. Thus, "pure prose" and "pure poetry" should be seen as opposites on a continuum, within which a large variety of possibilities occur in the Bible as in other literary traditions.

The main shared characteristic between typical English poetry and biblical poetry is the use of figuration. This may be seen, for example, in the central image of Psalm 23, which is introduced by the metaphor, "The Lord is my shepherd" (v. 1). The following verses unpack or detail the meaning of this metaphor, noting in vv. 2–3 how God, the ideal shepherd, tends his people/sheep:

> He makes me lie down in green pastures;
> he leads me beside still waters;
> he restores my soul.
> He leads me in right paths
> for his name's sake.

Psalm 1 is characterized by a set of two contrasting similes: the righteous

> are like trees
> planted by streams of water,
> which yield their fruit in its season,
> and their leaves do not wither (v. 3),

while the wicked "are like chaff that the wind drives away" (v. 4). The Song of Solomon is especially rich in similes and metaphors, as in the beginning of ch 2:

I am a rose of Sharon,
    a lily of the valleys.
As a lily among brambles,
    so is my love among maidens.
As an apple tree among the trees of the wood,
    so is my beloved among young men.
With great delight I sat in his shadow,
    and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

The main characteristic of biblical poetry, nevertheless, is not figuration but parallelism, in which most poetic lines may be divided into two (or sometimes three) parts; the second part of the line is intimately connected to the first part through a variety of means, such as semantics and/or syntax and/or sound-play, and typically seconds it in some way. For example, Ps 6.2 reads:

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
    O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror.

The verse clearly divides into two more or less equal sections, and each element in the first part is mirrored, seconded, or paralleled in the second. Parallelism, which is not typical of biblical prose, serves as the backbone of biblical poetry.

Since the eighteenth century, it has been customary to see three main types of parallelism in the Bible: synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic. The earlier quotation from Ps 6.2 is an example of synonymous parallelism—the second part of the verse more or less repeats the first. Antithetical parallelism can be seen in Prov 10.1:

A wise child makes a glad father,
    but a foolish child is a mother's grief.

In this balanced, two-part line, the elements in the first line are antithetical, or opposite, to those in the second. In synthetic parallelism, the second part of the line completes the thought of the first part, and is neither the same nor the opposite—both parts are needed to complete the thought. For example, after the superscription "A psalm of David," Ps 23.1 continues:

The LORD is my shepherd,
    I shall not want.

Here the second part concludes the idea of the first; the verse may be converted into prose by adding the word "because": "Because the LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want."

The appropriateness of the three labels—synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic—which were accepted by biblical scholars for two centuries, has been called into question on several grounds. First, languages have no true synonyms; thus "synonymous parallelism" is a misleading term. Furthermore, very often two parallel words can be similar but are not the same, as may be seen in the example from Ps 6.2: "I am languishing" || "my bones are shaking with terror." The term antithetical parallelism has been questioned because not all elements of part B are the antithesis of part A. This may be seen in the example from Prov 10.1, where "child" is used in both parts A and B; a complete antithesis might contrast a "wise child" with a "foolish parent." Finally, "synthetic" has been criticized as too vague. Although these criticisms are fair, the three terms, if understood as ideal types from which actual lines may deviate to a greater or lesser extent, remain useful.

A much more serious criticism of the classical model emerged in the mid-1980s. Before that, many interpreters thought that parallelism is formulaic, and the second half of the poetic line typically adds little to the line, but merely seconds it. This was substantiated, many scholars thought, by the study of modes of oral composition of traditional poetry, where formulae filled in the line, allowing the poet to concentrate on the following line. Several scholars have since suggested just the opposite, that the second part heightens or extends the first, and according to them, the typical biblical verse should be read "A, and even more so, B." This model,

which has gained substantial support, would suggest that Ps 6.2b, "O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror" is not a type of filler that merely restates "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing." Rather we would understand the verse as a whole as: "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing," and moreover, "O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror," where the claim "for my bones are shaking with terror" is a more vivid description that intensifies the verse's opening "for I am languishing."

To complicate matters, sometimes, as in the previous example, it is clear that the second part of the verse does go beyond the first part in some significant fashion, and thus justifies this newer model. Yet in other cases the second part seems to be a filler, carrying little if any semantic weight, let alone intensifying the first. For example, the major image of Ps 121 is the ability of God to protect the individual. This is expressed at the psalm's center, where God is imagined metaphorically as a "shade" (v. 5) from the intense Mediterranean sun. The psalm continues (v. 6): "The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night." The second part, "nor the moon by night" is not an intensification; in fact, it makes no sense, since no one in ancient Israel was afflicted with moonburn or moonstroke. The second part here is a(n antithetical) filler and carries no semantic weight. It should thus be seen as part of an ancient Near Eastern and biblical pattern of word pairs, where a particular word (e.g., "sun" or "father") automatically evokes a related ("antithetical" or "synonymous") word (e.g., "moon" or "mother").

Thus, parallelism is much more complicated than would appear on the surface. Clearly it is characterized by sets of lines, each of which may be divided into two (or less often, three) parts, typically of the same length and mirroring each other on semantic, syntactic, and phonological levels. It is sometimes unclear if the second should typically be read as an intensification of the first, or as a filler that carries little or no semantic value. This uncertainty is extremely frustrating not only because it leaves us unsure how to read much of biblical poetry, especially the extent to which we do or do not need to pay close attention to the second half of the line, but also because our understanding of this aspect of biblical poetry will affect our reconstruction of many Israelite institutions. To return to Prov 10.1—"A wise child makes a glad father, but a foolish child is a mother's grief"—if we follow the older understanding of parallelism, the second half is largely a filler, indicating that the father had the major role in the child's upbringing in ancient Israel, while if we follow the newer understanding, where the second intensifies the first, the mother was primarily responsible for the child.

Another area that has engendered significant controversy concerns the extent to which meter or rhythm existed in biblical poetry. Much of this debate concerns the definition of meter. In the Western poetic tradition, meter is a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables; biblical poetic texts in their current form lack meter or rhythm. Extensive metrical patterns can be found in some biblical texts only if they are emended or reconstructed extensively. Biblical lines in most poetic works, however, are approximately the same length. There is some possibility that this reflects the remnant of some metrical system, and that at an earlier time, each part had the same pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables as well as the same length, but this pattern has been lost as a result of changes in the pronunciation of ancient Hebrew over time. More likely, Hebrew always lacked true meter, and the similarity of length is part of the larger system of parallelism, which encouraged each part to mirror its counterpart in length, as well as in semantic, syntactic, and phonological structure.

Scholars have until recently been primarily concerned with the line as the main unit of biblical poetry. This is not really surprising, given how foreign biblical parallelism is to the modern Western (but not the ancient Near Eastern) ear. This interest in the line has obscured the significance of the strophe or stanza and of the poem as a whole. But recent scholarship has seen a legitimate return to these larger units. For example, when studying passages like Job 3, most earlier scholars concentrated on the parallelism of lines like v. 5:

> Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.
> Let clouds settle upon it;
> let the blackness of the day terrify it.

Now, in addition to this type of analysis, interpreters study how the poet creates this exquisite poem by using images of day and night, light and darkness, throughout the entire chapter. This is not, however, an either/or proposition: Looking at how the individual line functions as poetry and how these lines sometimes join together to form complete poems, offers a much fuller appreciation and understanding of these Poetical Books; this includes appreciating other large-scale structures of poems, such as acrostics and chiasm (e.g., ABBA) units.

AUTHORSHIP

At least four of the five Poetical Books, according to their traditional authorship, derive from the kings of the United Monarchy, David and Solomon. Approximately half of the Psalms contain superscriptions or titles incorporating "of David," and many early Jewish and Christian traditions attribute all 150 of the Psalms to David. Proverbs 1.1 ("The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel"), 10.1, and 25.1 explicitly attribute (sections of) that book to Solomon. Ecclesiastes, in its opening chapter, presents itself as "the words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1.1; cf. 1.12); premodern Jewish and Christian tradition understood this royal teacher to be Solomon, who is described in 1 Kings as exceedingly rich, just like the protagonist of Ecclesiastes. Finally, the Song of Solomon opens with an explicit (but secondary; see Song 1.1n.) note: "the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's." Given the association of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon with David and Solomon, it is not surprising that some early Christian interpreters connected Job as well to the period of Solomon. This canonical division of five books thus likely came into being not because they were poetic, but as the compilations connected to David and his son Solomon; only secondarily was it labeled the "Poetical Books." This traditional attributions of authorship, however, have been rejected by modern scholars; see the Introduction to each book for a detailed discussion.

JOB

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

The book bears the name of its principal character, Job, a righteous man who is afflicted by God, apparently unjustly, and who demands restitution. In Jewish tradition the book of Job belongs with the poetical books in the division called the Writings (Ketubim). Printed Hebrew Bibles place Job after Psalms and Proverbs, although other positions are found in earlier Hebrew manuscripts and lists. In older Christian Bibles, Job was sometimes placed with the historical books and sometimes with the poetical books; but its consistent place now is as the first of the poetical books, preceding Psalms.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book is anonymous, and it offers few clues to its historical context or date of composition. Most scholars would date it between the seventh and fourth centuries BCE, but its story is set in much older times.

LITERARY HISTORY, STRUCTURE, AND CONTENTS

Many scholars have proposed that the prose prologue and epilogue reflect a tale about Job older than the poetic dialogues. In the sixth century BCE the prophet Ezekiel mentions Job, along with Noah, the hero of the Flood story (Gen 6–9), and Dan'el, as heroes who saved others by their righteousness (Ezek 14.14,20). The frame of the book is the prose prologue and epilogue (chs 1–2; 42.7–17). Within that frame are the poetic dialogues: first, three cycles of speeches by Job and his friends (chs 3–31) plus the Elihu speeches (chs 32–37), and second, two speeches by the LORD, each followed by a response from Job (38.1–42.6). The third cycle of speeches by Job and his friends presents many problems, and it is possible that the original order of the book is no longer correctly preserved. It has also commonly been thought that the speeches of Elihu (chs 32–37) and the poem on wisdom (ch 28) are later additions to the book's first edition, but a tendency among scholars to regard the book as a unified whole is becoming noticeable.

INTERPRETATION

The book of Job is perhaps the most sustained piece of theological writing in the Hebrew Bible, and it is unique in the Bible for its sympathetic portrayal of differing theological points of view. The theme of the book is often described as the problem of suffering, but it is rather that of the injustice of undeserved suffering. By the standards of his day, Job's suffering can only be a sign that he is a great sinner; resisting that implication, he demands that God explain why he, a righteous man, is being so badly treated. More than that, he reasons that his case shows that God is not governing the world in justice, and he argues that the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous in general are further evidence of God's neglect of justice. When he replies to Job, God speaks only of his designs in creating the universe and does not mention the issue of justice, no doubt implying that Job is right, that justice is not a primary divine concern. Among the books of the Bible, Job is highly unusual, and, unsurprisingly, its force has often been misunderstood or evaded. In the older history of interpretation, the book was commonly viewed as a repository of wise sayings, and its overall theme was little appreciated. In our own time, it is recognized as a major work of world literature, capable of diverse interpretations.

GUIDE TO READING

The chapters most essential for understanding the narrative and the argument are: chs 1–2 (the prologue); 3–11 (the first cycle of dialogues between Job and the friends); 29–31 (Job's final speech); 38.1–42.6 (the divine speeches, with Job's responses); 42.7–17 (the epilogue).

David J. A. Clines

1 There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. [2] There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. [3] He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and very many servants; so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. [4] His sons used to go and hold feasts in one another's houses in turn; and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. [5] And when the feast days had run their course, Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." This is what Job always did.

[6] One day the heavenly beings[a] came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan[b] also came among them. [7] The LORD said to Satan,[b] "Where have you come from?" Satan[b] answered the LORD, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." [8] The LORD said to Satan,[b] "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil." [9] Then Satan[b] answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? [10] Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. [11] But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." [12] The LORD said to Satan,[b] "Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!" So Satan[b] went out from the presence of the LORD.

[13] One day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the eldest brother's house, [14] a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were feeding beside them, [15] and the Sabeans fell on them and carried them off, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you." [16] While he was still speaking, another came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; I alone have escaped to tell you." [17] While he was still speaking, another came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three columns, made a raid on the camels and carried them off, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you." [18] While he was still speaking, another came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, [19] and suddenly a great wind came across the desert, struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; I alone have escaped to tell you."

[20] Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshiped. [21] He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the

[a] Heb *sons of God*
[b] Or *the Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*

1.1–2.13: Prologue. The prose prologue contains five scenes, artistically arranged: the first, third, and fifth scenes (1.1–5,13–22; 2.7–13) take place on earth, the second and fourth (1.6–12; 2.1–6) in heaven. All the earthly characters, including Job, remain ignorant throughout the book of what takes place on the heavenly plane.

1.1–5: The naïve language, in the style of a folktale, evokes a distant past. *The land of Uz* is Edom, southeast of Israel (cf. Jer 25.20; Lam 4.21). Job is not an Israelite; but he is a worshiper of the true God, although he, along with his friends, calls him "El," "Eloah," and "Elohim" (all meaning "God"), and "Shadday" ("the Almighty"), not "Yahweh" ("the Lord"). **2:** *Seven sons*, a perfect number. **4:** *Hold feasts . . . in turn*, lit. "each on his day," presumably on birthdays. **5:** *Cursed*, the Heb text has the word "blessed" here, apparently as a euphemism or pious scribal correction (so also in 1.11; 2.5, 9; see also 1 Kings 21.13). **6–12:** The gathering of the divine council in heaven (cf. 1 Kings 22.19–22; Ps 82.1) includes "the Satan," i.e., "the adversary" of Job and other humans (cf. Zech 3.1), not of God; he is not the "devil" of later Jewish and Christian literature (see textual note *b*). Here he acts as God's eyes and ears on earth. He questions whether Job's righteousness is for its own sake or for the sake of its reward. **13–22:** Four messengers announce four disasters, from all directions: *Sabeans* come from the south (Sheba), *Chaldeans* from the north, the lightning (*fire of God*) from the west, with storms sweeping in from the Mediterranean, the *great wind* from the eastern desert. **21:** Job praises the LORD for both good and evil, proving God's

LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;
blessed be the name of the LORD."
22 In all this Job did not sin or charge God
with wrongdoing.

2 One day the heavenly beings[a] came to
present themselves before the LORD, and
Satan[b] also came among them to present
himself before the LORD. 2 The LORD said to
Satan,[b] "Where have you come from?" Satan[c]
answered the LORD, "From going to and fro
on the earth, and from walking up and down
on it." 3 The LORD said to Satan,[b] "Have you
considered my servant Job? There is no one
like him on the earth, a blameless and upright
man who fears God and turns away from evil.
He still persists in his integrity, although you
incited me against him, to destroy him for no
reason." 4 Then Satan[b] answered the LORD,
"Skin for skin! All that people have they will
give to save their lives.[d] 5 But stretch out your
hand now and touch his bone and his flesh,
and he will curse you to your face." 6 The
LORD said to Satan,[b] "Very well, he is in your
power; only spare his life."
7 So Satan[b] went out from the presence of
the LORD, and inflicted loathsome sores on
Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of
his head. 8 Job[e] took a potsherd with which to
scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.
9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still
persist in your integrity? Curse[f] God, and die."
10 But he said to her, "You speak as any foolish
woman would speak. Shall we receive the
good at the hand of God, and not receive the
bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.
11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all
these troubles that had come upon him, each
of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the
Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar
the Naamathite. They met together to go and
console and comfort him. 12 When they saw
him from a distance, they did not recognize
him, and they raised their voices and wept
aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in
the air upon their heads. 13 They sat with him
on the ground seven days and seven nights,
and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw
that his suffering was very great.

3 After this Job opened his mouth and
cursed the day of his birth. 2 Job said:

a Heb *sons of God*
b Or *the Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*
c Or *The Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*
d Or *All that the man has he will give for his life*
e Heb *He*
f Heb *Bless*

confidence in him justified. The *mother's womb* to which Job will return is that of mother earth (cf. Gen 3.19). **2.1–6:** Now again in the heavenly council, the LORD remarks that Job *still persists in his integrity*, i.e., continues blameless as ever. **4:** *Skin for skin!* Job has saved his own skin by piously accepting the death of his children; if God now attacks Job himself, Job will attack God, by cursing him (see 1.5n.). **7–13:** The fourth scene dissolves into the fifth: God authorizes the suffering, and immediately the Satan afflicts Job. **7:** *Loathsome sores*, some unspecified skin disease (cf. 7.5; 30.30). **8:** To express his sense of desolation and isolation, Job removes himself from society and sits on the rubbish heap outside his city, performing rituals of mourning (cf. Ezek 27.30; Jon 3.6). He uses broken pieces of pottery he finds there to scratch himself to relieve the itchiness. **9:** The outcome of all Job's piety has been to rob his wife of her ten children, her social standing, and her livelihood. When she urges him to *curse God* (see 1.5n.), and so bring his misery to an end with death, he mildly replies that she is speaking like *any foolish woman*, i.e., low-class, irreligious women, abandoning their family's standards of formal and proper behavior. *Job did not sin with his lips*, it is not implied that he sinned in what he thought. Job has disproved the Satan's claim that Job would sin with his lips by cursing God. **11–13:** Job, being a chieftain of great importance (1.3), has other high-ranking friends. These three, all apparently from other towns in Edom, have kindly intentions toward him, but when they see how badly he is suffering they do not offer him any consolation, but treat him as if he were already dead, throwing *dust … upon their heads*, a mourning ritual (see Josh 7.6; Lam 2.10), and silently mourning him *seven days and seven nights* (see Gen 50.10; Sir 22.12).

3.1–42.6: The dialogues.

3.1–11.20: First cycle of speeches.

3.1–26: Job's first speech. After the grandeur and deliberateness of the prologue (chs 1–2), the reader is suddenly plunged into the dramatic turmoil of the poem (3.1–42.6); the external description of suffering gives way to Job's inner experience. Its three strophes express a wish he had never been born (vv. 3–10); failing that,

3 "Let the day perish in which I was born,
and the night that said,
'A man-child is conceived.'
4 Let that day be darkness!
May God above not seek it,
or light shine on it.
5 Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.
Let clouds settle upon it;
let the blackness of the day terrify it.
6 That night—let thick darkness seize it!
let it not rejoice among the days of the year;
let it not come into the number of the months.
7 Yes, let that night be barren;
let no joyful cry be heard[a] in it.
8 Let those curse it who curse the Sea,[b]
those who are skilled to rouse up Leviathan.
9 Let the stars of its dawn be dark;
let it hope for light, but have none;
may it not see the eyelids of the morning—
10 because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb,
and hide trouble from my eyes.

11 "Why did I not die at birth,
come forth from the womb and expire?
12 Why were there knees to receive me,
or breasts for me to suck?
13 Now I would be lying down and quiet;
I would be asleep; then I would be at rest
14 with kings and counselors of the earth
who rebuild ruins for themselves,
15 or with princes who have gold,
who fill their houses with silver.
16 Or why was I not buried like a stillborn child,
like an infant that never sees the light?
17 There the wicked cease from troubling,
and there the weary are at rest.
18 There the prisoners are at ease together;
they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster.
19 The small and the great are there,
and the slaves are free from their masters.

20 "Why is light given to one in misery,
and life to the bitter in soul,
21 who long for death, but it does not come,
and dig for it more than for hidden treasures;
22 who rejoice exceedingly,
and are glad when they find the grave?
23 Why is light given to one who cannot see the way,
whom God has fenced in?
24 For my sighing comes like[c] my bread,
and my groanings are poured out like water.
25 Truly the thing that I fear comes upon me,
and what I dread befalls me.

[a] Heb *come*
[b] Cn: Heb *day*
[c] Heb *before*

a wish he had died at birth (vv. 11–19); failing that, a wish that he, and people suffering as he does, could simply die when they are ready (vv. 20–26). **3–10:** A curse naturally concerns the future, and a curse on the day of his birth (cf. Jer 20.14–18) is a futile curse, for the past cannot be changed. Job wishes that the day of his birth and conception (viewed poetically as one event) could have been blacked out (vv. 4–6a) so that it would not have entered into the calendar of the year (vv. 6b,c); he wishes that the sorcerers who put a curse on days could have made it one of the unlucky days, in which it would have been impossible for his parents to have conceived him or for his mother to have given birth to him (vv. 8a,10a). **8:** Some ancient magicians obviously believed they could *rouse up Leviathan*, the sea-monster (cf. Ps 104.26; Isa 27.1) and dragon of chaos (see 7.12; Ps 74.13–14), who would perhaps swallow up the sun, so causing the darkness of eclipse. **11–19:** If he had to be born, why could he not have died at birth (v. 11a) or, at least, have been stillborn (v. 16)? Death has for him now become sweeter than life, and he compares the quiet peacefulness of the underworld (Sheol; cf. Eccl 6.3–5; Sir 30.3) to his present troubled and anxious lot (vv. 13–19). **14.** Near Eastern kings frequently boasted that they had rebuilt famous ruined cities. **20–26:** Now Job not only asks why he himself has to go on living, but why people in general cannot simply die when they want to (vv. 20–23). **23:** Previously, God's hedge of protection about his life (cf. 1.10) had ensured his well-being; but now that he wants to die, God's preservation of his life seems an artificial

[26] I am not at ease, nor am I quiet;
I have no rest; but trouble comes."

4 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
[2] "If one ventures a word with you, will
you be offended?
But who can keep from speaking?
[3] See, you have instructed many;
you have strengthened the weak hands.
[4] Your words have supported those who
were stumbling,
and you have made firm the feeble knees.
[5] But now it has come to you, and you are
impatient;
it touches you, and you are dismayed.
[6] Is not your fear of God your confidence,
and the integrity of your ways your hope?

[7] "Think now, who that was innocent ever
perished?
Or where were the upright cut off?
[8] As I have seen, those who plow iniquity
and sow trouble reap the same.
[9] By the breath of God they perish,
and by the blast of his anger they are
consumed.
[10] The roar of the lion, the voice of the
fierce lion,
and the teeth of the young lions are
broken.
[11] The strong lion perishes for lack of prey,
and the whelps of the lioness are
scattered.

[12] "Now a word came stealing to me,
my ear received the whisper of it.
[13] Amid thoughts from visions of the night,
when deep sleep falls on mortals,
[14] dread came upon me, and trembling,
which made all my bones shake.
[15] A spirit glided past my face;
the hair of my flesh bristled.
[16] It stood still,
but I could not discern its appearance.
A form was before my eyes;
there was silence, then I heard a voice:
[17] 'Can mortals be righteous before[a] God?
Can human beings be pure before[a] their
Maker?
[18] Even in his servants he puts no trust,
and his angels he charges with error;
[19] how much more those who live in
houses of clay,
whose foundation is in the dust,
who are crushed like a moth.
[20] Between morning and evening they are
destroyed;
they perish forever without any
regarding it.
[21] Their tent-cord is plucked up within
them,
and they die devoid of wisdom.'

5 "Call now; is there anyone who will
answer you?
To which of the holy ones will you turn?
[2] Surely vexation kills the fool,
and jealousy slays the simple.
[3] I have seen fools taking root,
but suddenly I cursed their dwelling.

[a] Or *more than*

prolongation of his misery, and the hedge has become a prison wall rather than a wall of defense. **26:** Unlike the restfulness of the underworld, which is what he desires, his life has no *rest*, but only *trouble*.

4.1–5.27: Eliphaz's first speech. Eliphaz regards Job as a pious man and urges him not to lose heart, since the innocent never finally suffer. Even the pious are not perfect, however, and may experience reproof and discipline (5.17); but they will soon come to an end (4.6). **4.2–6:** Eliphaz is not scornful in reminding Job how he has comforted others; he believes that Job's good deeds are a reason why God will soon restore him. **7–11:** Eliphaz describes the fate of the wicked, as a contrast to what Job can expect since he is not one of them. **8:** Cf. Hos 10.13; Gal 6.7. **10:** Cf. Ps 58.6. **12–21:** However, not even the angels are perfect (v. 18), still less the righteous (v. 17; cf. 15.14–16; 25.4–6). They are mere mortals, who, unlike the angels, can expire within a single day (v. 20a) and be so insignificant that they can die without anyone noticing (v. 20b) and without their ever attaining wisdom (v. 21b). Eliphaz's dream or waking vision terrified him because of its supernatural source, but the message it brought was obvious. Appeals to revelatory experience are unusual in wisdom books, but see 33.15–18. **5.1–7:** Suffering, in fact, has to be expected. Not believing that Job really wants to die (as in ch 3), Eliphaz assumes Job is hoping to escape his suffering. But that is wishful thinking, for suffering is natural for humans; they always bring trouble upon themselves (v. 7 may be better translated "Humans beget suffering for themselves"). Even

4 Their children are far from safety,
they are crushed in the gate,
and there is no one to deliver them.
5 The hungry eat their harvest,
and they take it even out of the thorns;[a]
and the thirsty[b] pant after their wealth.
6 For misery does not come from the earth,
nor does trouble sprout from the ground;
7 but human beings are born to trouble
just as sparks[c] fly upward.

8 "As for me, I would seek God,
and to God I would commit my cause.
9 He does great things and unsearchable,
marvelous things without number.
10 He gives rain on the earth
and sends waters on the fields;
11 he sets on high those who are lowly,
and those who mourn are lifted to safety.
12 He frustrates the devices of the crafty,
so that their hands achieve no success.
13 He takes the wise in their own craftiness;
and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end.
14 They meet with darkness in the daytime,
and grope at noonday as in the night.
15 But he saves the needy from the sword of their mouth,
from the hand of the mighty.
16 So the poor have hope,
and injustice shuts its mouth.

17 "How happy is the one whom God reproves;
therefore do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.[d]
18 For he wounds, but he binds up;
he strikes, but his hands heal.
19 He will deliver you from six troubles;
in seven no harm shall touch you.
20 In famine he will redeem you from death,
and in war from the power of the sword.
21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue,
and shall not fear destruction when it comes.
22 At destruction and famine you shall laugh,
and shall not fear the wild animals of the earth.
23 For you shall be in league with the stones of the field,
and the wild animals shall be at peace with you.
24 You shall know that your tent is safe,
you shall inspect your fold and miss nothing.
25 You shall know that your descendants will be many,
and your offspring like the grass of the earth.
26 You shall come to your grave in ripe old age,
as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing floor in its season.
27 See, we have searched this out; it is true.
Hear, and know it for yourself."

6 Then Job answered:
2 "O that my vexation were weighed,
and all my calamity laid in the balances!

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Aquila Symmachus Syr Vg: Heb *snare*
[c] Or *birds*; Heb *sons of Resheph*
[d] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

the angels (*the holy ones*, v. 1) cannot prevent the cycle of cause and effect when humans sin and bring punishment upon themselves. The fools whose *vexation* or resentment and *jealousy* bring them to ruin are a case in point (cf. Prov 12.16; 14.30; Sir 30.24). **8–16:** As in 4.2–6, Eliphaz regards Job as an essentially pious man, who should patiently leave his *cause*, or case, in divine hands (v. 8), since God is a great reverser of fortunes (vv. 11–16). **10–15:** The destructive acts of God (vv. 12–14) are enclosed within the frame of his saving acts (vv. 10–11,15), so the chief effect of this picture of God's working is to give *hope* to the poor (v. 16; contrast Lk 1.51–53). **17–27:** Eliphaz interprets Job's suffering as God's disciplining (cf. Ps 94.12; Prov 3.11–12; Hos 6.1), which is a blessing in itself (v. 17) and that "he who wounds is he who soothes the sore" (v. 18, JB). Job must only recognize and not reject (*despise*, v. 17) God's discipline, and "apply it to yourself" (v. 27, NIV).

6.1–7.21: Job's second speech. 6.1–13: A soliloquy, addressed to no one. In ch 3 Job had only asked why sufferers like him must go on living; but here he actively yearns for immediate death (vv. 8–9). If he could die

3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea;
therefore my words have been rash.
4 For the arrows of the Almighty[a] are in me;
my spirit drinks their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.
5 Does the wild ass bray over its grass,
or the ox low over its fodder?
6 Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt,
or is there any flavor in the juice of mallows?[b]
7 My appetite refuses to touch them;
they are like food that is loathsome to me.[b]

8 "O that I might have my request,
and that God would grant my desire;
9 that it would please God to crush me,
that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!
10 This would be my consolation;
I would even exult[b] in unrelenting pain;
for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.
11 What is my strength, that I should wait?
And what is my end, that I should be patient?
12 Is my strength the strength of stones,
or is my flesh bronze?
13 In truth I have no help in me,
and any resource is driven from me.

14 "Those who withhold[c] kindness from a friend
forsake the fear of the Almighty.[a]
15 My companions are treacherous like a torrent-bed,
like freshets that pass away,
16 that run dark with ice,
turbid with melting snow.
17 In time of heat they disappear;
when it is hot, they vanish from their place.
18 The caravans turn aside from their course;
they go up into the waste, and perish.
19 The caravans of Tema look,
the travelers of Sheba hope.
20 They are disappointed because they were confident;
they come there and are confounded.
21 Such you have now become to me;[d]
you see my calamity, and are afraid.
22 Have I said, 'Make me a gift'?
Or, 'From your wealth offer a bribe for me'?
23 Or, 'Save me from an opponent's hand'?
Or, 'Ransom me from the hand of oppressors'?

24 "Teach me, and I will be silent;
make me understand how I have gone wrong.
25 How forceful are honest words!
But your reproof, what does it reprove?
26 Do you think that you can reprove words,
as if the speech of the desperate were wind?
27 You would even cast lots over the orphan,
and bargain over your friend.

28 "But now, be pleased to look at me;
for I will not lie to your face.
29 Turn, I pray, let no wrong be done.
Turn now, my vindication is at stake.
30 Is there any wrong on my tongue?
Cannot my taste discern calamity?

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Syr Vg Compare Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Cn Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

now, before his suffering leads him into blasphemy, he could at least have the *consolation* of not having *denied the words*, the commandments, of the *Holy One*. Eliphaz has called on Job to be *patient*, but patience needs a *strength* that Job does not have (vv. 11–13). He begins to think of God as his enemy, armed with poisoned *arrows* and with *terrors* as his army (v. 4; cf. Deut 32.23; Lam 2.4). **14–30:** Turning now to the friends, Job accuses them of defrauding him of friendship's debt of *kindness* or, rather, "loyalty" (v. 14), *afraid* that if they identify themselves too closely with Job they too will come under God's judgment (v. 21). **15 –17:** The *torrent-bed* and *freshets* are the wadis that are full of water during the rainy seasons but are dry during the summer when water is most needed (cf. Jer 15.18). **18–20:** *Tema* and *Sheba,* areas in northern and southwestern Arabia, respectively.

7 "Do not human beings have a hard
service on earth,
and are not their days like the days of a
laborer?
2 Like a slave who longs for the shadow,
and like laborers who look for their
wages,
3 so I am allotted months of emptiness,
and nights of misery are apportioned
to me.
4 When I lie down I say, 'When shall I rise?'
But the night is long,
and I am full of tossing until dawn.
5 My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt;
my skin hardens, then breaks out again.
6 My days are swifter than a weaver's
shuttle,
and come to their end without hope.[a]

7 "Remember that my life is a breath;
my eye will never again see good.
8 The eye that beholds me will see me no
more;
while your eyes are upon me, I shall be
gone.
9 As the cloud fades and vanishes,
so those who go down to Sheol do not
come up;
10 they return no more to their houses,
nor do their places know them any
more.

11 "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my
soul.
12 Am I the Sea, or the Dragon,
that you set a guard over me?
13 When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,
my couch will ease my complaint,'
14 then you scare me with dreams
and terrify me with visions,
15 so that I would choose strangling
and death rather than this body.
16 I loathe my life; I would not live forever.
Let me alone, for my days are a breath.
17 What are human beings, that you make
so much of them,
that you set your mind on them,
18 visit them every morning,
test them every moment?
19 Will you not look away from me for a
while,
let me alone until I swallow my spittle?
20 If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher
of humanity?
Why have you made me your target?
Why have I become a burden to you?
21 Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity?
For now I shall lie in the earth;
you will seek me, but I shall not be."

8 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 "How long will you say these things,
and the words of your mouth be a great
wind?
3 Does God pervert justice?
Or does the Almighty[b] pervert the
right?
4 If your children sinned against him,
he delivered them into the power of
their transgression.
5 If you will seek God
and make supplication to the
Almighty,[b]
6 if you are pure and upright,

[a] Or *as the thread runs out*
[b] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

7.1–21: Turning now to God, Job interweaves his own death-wish with his experience of the futility and misery of human life generally. **9:** *Sheol,* the abode of the dead. **12:** God, far from letting him alone, treats him like one of the legendary monsters of the deep, Yam (*the Sea*) or Tannin (*the Dragon*), who had to be muzzled by God at creation (cf. 3.8n.; 38.8–11; Isa 51.9). **17–18:** A bitter parody of Ps 8.4. The psalm expresses wonder at the high status humans have been given as rulers of the earth despite their apparent insignificance on the cosmic scale. Job's language is a reproof of God for the disproportionate attention God gives to mortals, subjecting them to perpetual hostile scrutiny.

8.1–22: Bildad's first speech. Like all the friends, Bildad believes that suffering is punishment, and that the death of Job's children is proof of their sin. Bildad has less confidence in Job's righteousness than Eliphaz did, and his encouragement to Job depends on a condition, *if you are pure and upright* (v. 6). **2–7:** Job's children are dead, so they must have sinned (v. 4). By contrast, Job himself is not dead, so he must be innocent of anything

surely then he will rouse himself for you
and restore to you your rightful place.
7 Though your beginning was small,
your latter days will be very great.

8 "For inquire now of bygone generations,
and consider what their ancestors have found;
9 for we are but of yesterday, and we know nothing,
for our days on earth are but a shadow.
10 Will they not teach you and tell you
and utter words out of their understanding?

11 "Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh?
Can reeds flourish where there is no water?
12 While yet in flower and not cut down,
they wither before any other plant.
13 Such are the paths of all who forget God;
the hope of the godless shall perish.
14 Their confidence is gossamer,
a spider's house their trust.
15 If one leans against its house, it will not stand;
if one lays hold of it, it will not endure.
16 The wicked thrive[a] before the sun,
and their shoots spread over the garden.
17 Their roots twine around the stoneheap;
they live among the rocks.[b]
18 If they are destroyed from their place,
then it will deny them, saying, 'I have never seen you.'
19 See, these are their happy ways,[c]
and out of the earth still others will spring.

20 "See, God will not reject a blameless person,
nor take the hand of evildoers.
21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter,
and your lips with shouts of joy.
22 Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,
and the tent of the wicked will be no more."

9 Then Job answered:
2 "Indeed I know that this is so;
but how can a mortal be just before God?
3 If one wished to contend with him,
one could not answer him once in a thousand.
4 He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength
—who has resisted him, and succeeded?—
5 he who removes mountains, and they do not know it,
when he overturns them in his anger;
6 who shakes the earth out of its place,
and its pillars tremble;
7 who commands the sun, and it does not rise;
who seals up the stars;

a Heb *He thrives*
b Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
c Meaning of Heb uncertain

deserving of death. He has only to *seek God* in prayer (v. 5), and if he is *pure and upright* his prayer will be heard. **8–19:** No effect without a cause, as the case of the wicked shows. **8–10:** Bildad's trust in the wisdom of *bygone generations* instead of *we* [who] *know nothing* is contrasted with Job's reliance on his own experience (6.4–7, 30). **20–22:** Bildad believes Job may yet prove to be a *blameless person* (v. 20).

9.1–10.22: Job's third speech. Here is Job's strongest statement so far of his feeling of powerlessness (e.g. 9.3–4,14–20,30–31), his sense of being trapped (9.15,20,27–31), and his belief that God's apparent concern for him throughout his life has not really been for his benefit, but in order to fasten guilt upon him (10.13–14). Novel in this speech is the question of how Job is to be vindicated, that is, shown publicly to be in the right after all. It is a hopeless task to make God declare him innocent (9.2), which eventually throws Job into despair (10.15–16). But it has become an ambition that will only grow in attraction for him as the book progresses (cf. 13.13–23; 16.18–21; 19.23–27; 23.2–14). **9.2:** Job is not saying that no one can actually be *just* in the sight of God, but complaining that because God has such power and wisdom he can defeat any human's attempt to be declared righteous or "win his case" (REB) against God; God will not give humans the satisfaction of hearing their innocence affirmed. **5–13:** Job focuses upon the more negative aspects of God's power (vv. 5–7) not in order to picture him as a God of chaos but to emphasize his freedom to act, whether for good or ill. His freedom

8 who alone stretched out the heavens
and trampled the waves of the Sea;[a]
9 who made the Bear and Orion,
the Pleiades and the chambers of the
south;
10 who does great things beyond
understanding,
and marvelous things without number.
11 Look, he passes by me, and I do not see
him;
he moves on, but I do not perceive him.
12 He snatches away; who can stop him?
Who will say to him, 'What are you
doing?'

13 "God will not turn back his anger;
the helpers of Rahab bowed beneath
him.
14 How then can I answer him,
choosing my words with him?
15 Though I am innocent, I cannot answer
him;
I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.[b]
16 If I summoned him and he answered me,
I do not believe that he would listen to
my voice.
17 For he crushes me with a tempest,
and multiplies my wounds without
cause;
18 he will not let me get my breath,
but fills me with bitterness.
19 If it is a contest of strength, he is the
strong one!
If it is a matter of justice, who can
summon him?[c]
20 Though I am innocent, my own mouth
would condemn me;
though I am blameless, he would prove
me perverse.
21 I am blameless; I do not know myself;
I loathe my life.
22 It is all one; therefore I say,
he destroys both the blameless and the
wicked.
23 When disaster brings sudden death,
he mocks at the calamity[d] of the
innocent.
24 The earth is given into the hand of the
wicked;
he covers the eyes of its judges—
if it is not he, who then is it?

25 "My days are swifter than a runner;
they flee away, they see no good.
26 They go by like skiffs of reed,
like an eagle swooping on the prey.
27 If I say, 'I will forget my complaint;
I will put off my sad countenance and
be of good cheer,'
28 I become afraid of all my suffering,
for I know you will not hold me
innocent.
29 I shall be condemned;
why then do I labor in vain?
30 If I wash myself with soap
and cleanse my hands with lye,
31 yet you will plunge me into filth,
and my own clothes will abhor me.
32 For he is not a mortal, as I am, that I
might answer him,
that we should come to trial together.
33 There is no umpire[e] between us,
who might lay his hand on us both.
34 If he would take his rod away from me,
and not let dread of him terrify me,

[a] Or *trampled the back of the sea dragon*
[b] Or *for my right*
[c] Compare Gk: Heb *me*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Another reading is *Would that there were an umpire*

makes him incomprehensible (v. 10), unaccountable (v. 12), and uncontrollable (v. 13). **9:** *Bear, Orion, Pleiades*, in the translation the familiar names of the star groups in Greek tradition are substituted for the Heb terms; cf. 38.31–33; Am 5.8. **13:** *Rahab*, the legendary sea-monster of chaos, similar to or identical with Leviathan, with whom God did battle at creation (see also 26.12; Ps 89.10; Isa 51.9). **14–24:** Job believes that even if he could bring God to court he would not get vindication. **15 :** Job is not going to *appeal for mercy* for that might sound like an admission of guilt. What he wants is vindication, not relief from his sufferings. **17:** *Tempest,* better "storm." **22:** God *destroys both the blameless and the wicked* because he is determined upon hostility to humans. **25–35:** The monologue has turned into an address to God. **32–35:** A legal confrontation with God is doomed because the two parties cannot be on the same level (v. 32). Job needs an *umpire* or arbitrator, one who would *lay his hand* upon both parties as a gesture of reconciliation. Since there is no such umpire, Job will have to conduct his

35 then I would speak without fear of him,
for I know I am not what I am thought to be.[a]

10 "I loathe my life;
I will give free utterance to my complaint;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
2 I will say to God, Do not condemn me;
let me know why you contend against me.
3 Does it seem good to you to oppress,
to despise the work of your hands
and favor the schemes of the wicked?
4 Do you have eyes of flesh?
Do you see as humans see?
5 Are your days like the days of mortals,
or your years like human years,
6 that you seek out my iniquity
and search for my sin,
7 although you know that I am not guilty,
and there is no one to deliver out of your hand?
8 Your hands fashioned and made me;
and now you turn and destroy me.[b]
9 Remember that you fashioned me like clay;
and will you turn me to dust again?
10 Did you not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese?
11 You clothed me with skin and flesh,
and knit me together with bones and sinews.
12 You have granted me life and steadfast love,
and your care has preserved my spirit.
13 Yet these things you hid in your heart;
I know that this was your purpose.
14 If I sin, you watch me,
and do not acquit me of my iniquity.
15 If I am wicked, woe to me!
If I am righteous, I cannot lift up my head,
for I am filled with disgrace
and look upon my affliction.
16 Bold as a lion you hunt me;
you repeat your exploits against me.
17 You renew your witnesses against me,
and increase your vexation toward me;
you bring fresh troops against me.[c]

18 "Why did you bring me forth from the womb?
Would that I had died before any eye had seen me,
19 and were as though I had not been,
carried from the womb to the grave.
20 Are not the days of my life few?[d]
Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort[e]
21 before I go, never to return,
to the land of gloom and deep darkness,
22 the land of gloom[f] and chaos,
where light is like darkness."

11 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:
2 "Should a multitude of words go unanswered,
and should one full of talk be vindicated?
3 Should your babble put others to silence,
and when you mock, shall no one shame you?
4 For you say, 'My conduct[g] is pure,
and I am clean in God's[h] sight.'

a Cn: Heb *for I am not so in myself*
b Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *made me together all around, and you destroy me*
c Cn Compare Gk: Heb *toward me; changes and a troop are with me*
d Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *Are not my days few? Let him cease!*
e Heb *that I may brighten up a little*
f Heb *gloom as darkness, deep darkness*
g Gk: Heb *teaching*
h Heb *your*

lawsuit himself. **10.1–2:** Job's intention to begin a legal controversy with God. **3–7:** Speculation about God's motives for his treatment of Job. **8–17:** The contradiction between God's real and apparent purposes in creating Job and keeping him alive. **9:** Cf. 33.6; G en 2.7; 3.19; Isa 64.8. **10:** Human conception is pictured as cheese-making: semen, a milk-like substance, is poured into the womb, where, like cheese, it coagulates into the embryo (cf. Ps 139.13–16; Wis 7.2). **18–22:** An appeal for release from God's oppressive presence.

11.1–20: Zophar's first speech. Zophar is the least sympathetic of the three friends. His message to Job is simple: you are suffering because God knows that you are a secret sinner (v. 6); therefore repent (vv. 13–14)! **4–6:** Zophar agrees with Job that the real issue is the question of sin. Since it is not obvious that Job is a sinner, his

5 But O that God would speak,
and open his lips to you,
6 and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!
For wisdom is many-sided.[a]
Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.

7 "Can you find out the deep things of God?
Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?[b]
8 It is higher than heaven[c]—what can you do?
Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?
9 Its measure is longer than the earth,
and broader than the sea.
10 If he passes through, and imprisons,
and assembles for judgment, who can hinder him?
11 For he knows those who are worthless;
when he sees iniquity, will he not consider it?
12 But a stupid person will get understanding,
when a wild ass is born human.[a]

13 "If you direct your heart rightly,
you will stretch out your hands toward him.
14 If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away,
and do not let wickedness reside in your tents.
15 Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish;
you will be secure, and will not fear.
16 You will forget your misery;
you will remember it as waters that have passed away.
17 And your life will be brighter than the noonday;
its darkness will be like the morning.
18 And you will have confidence, because there is hope;
you will be protected[d] and take your rest in safety.
19 You will lie down, and no one will make you afraid;
many will entreat your favor.
20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail;
all way of escape will be lost to them,
and their hope is to breathe their last."

12 Then Job answered:
2 "No doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you.
3 But I have understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
Who does not know such things as these?
4 I am a laughingstock to my friends;
I, who called upon God and he answered me,
a just and blameless man, I am a laughingstock.
5 Those at ease have contempt for misfortune,[a]
but it is ready for those whose feet are unstable.
6 The tents of robbers are at peace,
and those who provoke God are secure,
who bring their god in their hands.[e]

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[c] Heb *The heights of heaven*
[d] Or *you will look around*
[e] Or *whom God brought forth by his hand*; Meaning of Heb uncertain

sin must be secret. So bad a sinner is Job that even with all his punishment God is letting Job off lightly (v. 6). **7–12:** God's wisdom is focused on the detection of wrongdoing. **8:** *Sheol*, the abode of the dead. **13–20:** Restoration depends entirely on Job's complete repentance. He must *stretch out* his *hands* in prayer and renounce his present sinfulness. The result will be a clear conscience (*you will lift up your face*) and a sense of security (v. 15).

12.1–20.29: Second cycle of speeches.

12.1–14.22: Job's fourth speech. In the first part, Job addresses his friends (12.2–13.19) and in the second, God (13.20–14.22). The essence of the whole speech is: I want nothing to do with you *worthless physicians* (13.4); I desire to *speak to the Almighty* (13.3). **12.2–13.19:** For the first time Job shows himself contemptuous of the friends. He believes his wisdom is superior to theirs (12.2), for he knows something they do not: that it is possible for a righteous person to be afflicted and, equally, that the deeds of the wicked can go unpunished (vv.

7 "But ask the animals, and they will teach
you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell
you;
8 ask the plants of the earth,[a] and they will
teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to
you.
9 Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?
10 In his hand is the life of every living
thing
and the breath of every human being.
11 Does not the ear test words
as the palate tastes food?
12 Is wisdom with the aged,
and understanding in length of days?

13 "With God[b] are wisdom and strength;
he has counsel and understanding.
14 If he tears down, no one can rebuild;
if he shuts someone in, no one can
open up.
15 If he withholds the waters, they dry up;
if he sends them out, they overwhelm
the land.
16 With him are strength and wisdom;
the deceived and the deceiver are his.
17 He leads counselors away stripped,
and makes fools of judges.
18 He looses the sash of kings,
and binds a waistcloth on their loins.
19 He leads priests away stripped,
and overthrows the mighty.
20 He deprives of speech those who are
trusted,
and takes away the discernment of the
elders.
21 He pours contempt on princes,
and looses the belt of the strong.
22 He uncovers the deeps out of darkness,
and brings deep darkness to light.
23 He makes nations great, then destroys
them;
he enlarges nations, then leads them
away.
24 He strips understanding from the
leaders[c] of the earth,
and makes them wander in a pathless
waste.
25 They grope in the dark without light;
he makes them stagger like a drunkard.

13 "Look, my eye has seen all this,
my ear has heard and understood it.
2 What you know, I also know;
I am not inferior to you.
3 But I would speak to the Almighty,[d]
and I desire to argue my case
with God.
4 As for you, you whitewash with lies;
all of you are worthless physicians.
5 If you would only keep silent,
that would be your wisdom!
6 Hear now my reasoning,
and listen to the pleadings of my lips.
7 Will you speak falsely for God,
and speak deceitfully for him?
8 Will you show partiality toward him,
will you plead the case for God?
9 Will it be well with you when he searches
you out?
Or can you deceive him, as one person
deceives another?
10 He will surely rebuke you
if in secret you show partiality.
11 Will not his majesty terrify you,
and the dread of him fall upon you?
12 Your maxims are proverbs of ashes,
your defenses are defenses of clay.

13 "Let me have silence, and I will speak,
and let come on me what may.

a Or *speak to the earth*
b Heb *him*
c Heb adds *of the people*
d Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

4–6). **7–12:** Job is not addressing the friends, but ironically imagining what they might say to him. **13–25:** This hymn to the destructive power of the Almighty presents Job's new wisdom: God is no calm governor of a well-ordered universe, but an eccentric deity who cannot be comprehended or tamed. His chief characteristic is his upsetting of stable order. **13.1–3:** Nevertheless, Job is determined to argue a lawsuit with God. **4–12:** The friends have been speaking as false witnesses on behalf of God. Although Job has many doubts about God's justice, he does not doubt that God will punish the friends for their *partiality* toward himself (v. 10) and their lack of objectivity. **13–19:** Ending his address to the friends, Job explains what he will ask of God. Unlike chs 7 and 9–10,

14 I will take my flesh in my teeth,
and put my life in my hand.[a]
15 See, he will kill me; I have no hope;[b]
but I will defend my ways to his face.
16 This will be my salvation,
that the godless shall not come before him.
17 Listen carefully to my words,
and let my declaration be in your ears.
18 I have indeed prepared my case;
I know that I shall be vindicated.
19 Who is there that will contend with me?
For then I would be silent and die.
20 Only grant two things to me,
then I will not hide myself from your face:
21 withdraw your hand far from me,
and do not let dread of you terrify me.
22 Then call, and I will answer;
or let me speak, and you reply to me.
23 How many are my iniquities and my sins?
Make me know my transgression and my sin.
24 Why do you hide your face,
and count me as your enemy?
25 Will you frighten a windblown leaf
and pursue dry chaff?
26 For you write bitter things against me,
and make me reap[c] the iniquities of my youth.
27 You put my feet in the stocks,
and watch all my paths;
you set a bound to the soles of my feet.
28 One wastes away like a rotten thing,
like a garment that is moth-eaten.

14 "A mortal, born of woman, few of days
and full of trouble,
2 comes up like a flower and withers,
flees like a shadow and does not last.
3 Do you fix your eyes on such a one?
Do you bring me into judgment with you?
4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?
No one can.
5 Since their days are determined,
and the number of their months is known to you,
and you have appointed the bounds that they cannot pass,
6 look away from them, and desist,[d]
that they may enjoy, like laborers, their days.

7 "For there is hope for a tree,
if it is cut down, that it will sprout again,
and that its shoots will not cease.
8 Though its root grows old in the earth,
and its stump dies in the ground,
9 yet at the scent of water it will bud
and put forth branches like a young plant.
10 But mortals die, and are laid low;
humans expire, and where are they?
11 As waters fail from a lake,
and a river wastes away and dries up,
12 so mortals lie down and do not rise again;
until the heavens are no more, they will not awake
or be roused out of their sleep.
13 O that you would hide me in Sheol,
that you would conceal me until your wrath is past,

[a] Gk: Heb *Why should I take… in my hand?*
[b] Or *Though he kill me, yet I will trust in him*
[c] Heb *inherit*
[d] Cn: Heb *that they may desist*

where he asked God to stop paying attention to him, he now deliberately calls God into disputation with him (v. 22). It is dangerous (v. 14), suicidal in fact (v. 15); but Job is sure that right is on his side (v. 18). **15:** The traditional translation of the verse (see textual note *b*) is based on an alternate reading of the Hebrew. **20–27:** Job first insists that God bring out in the open what he has against Job, but with two conditions for fairness (v. 20): God must *withdraw* his *hand* of punishment from him, and he must not *terrify* him (v. 21). **24:** *Enemy* (Heb "'oyeb," possibly a wordplay on Job's name ("'iyyob"). **14.1–22:** The focus changes from Job himself to the lot of humanity. Humans are too unimportant for God to scrutinize them as he does Job; he could reasonably overlook their sins. **1:** The expression *born of woman* is simply a synonym for any human being (see 15.14). **7–12:** The hopes of a tree and of humankind are contrasted. A tree that is cut down can hope for new life; for humans there is none *until the heavens are no more*, i.e., never. If only Sheol, the underworld, could be, not a final resting place without

that you would appoint me a set time,
and remember me!
14 If mortals die, will they live again?
All the days of my service I would wait
until my release should come.
15 You would call, and I would answer you;
you would long for the work of your
hands.
16 For then you would not[a] number my steps,
you would not keep watch over my sin;
17 my transgression would be sealed up in
a bag,
and you would cover over my iniquity.

18 "But the mountain falls and crumbles
away,
and the rock is removed from its place;
19 the waters wear away the stones;
the torrents wash away the soil of the
earth;
so you destroy the hope of mortals.
20 You prevail forever against them, and
they pass away;
you change their countenance, and
send them away.
21 Their children come to honor, and they
do not know it;
they are brought low, and it goes
unnoticed.
22 They feel only the pain of their own
bodies,
and mourn only for themselves."

15 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
2 "Should the wise answer with windy
knowledge,
and fill themselves with the east wind?
3 Should they argue in unprofitable talk,
or in words with which they can do no
good?
4 But you are doing away with the fear of
God,
and hindering meditation before God.
5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth,
and you choose the tongue of the crafty.
6 Your own mouth condemns you, and
not I;
your own lips testify against you.

7 "Are you the firstborn of the human race?
Were you brought forth before the hills?
8 Have you listened in the council of God?
And do you limit wisdom to yourself?
9 What do you know that we do not know?
What do you understand that is not
clear to us?
10 The gray-haired and the aged are on our
side,
those older than your father.
11 Are the consolations of God too small
for you,
or the word that deals gently with you?
12 Why does your heart carry you away,
and why do your eyes flash,[b]
13 so that you turn your spirit against God,
and let such words go out of your
mouth?
14 What are mortals, that they can be
clean?
Or those born of woman, that they can
be righteous?
15 God puts no trust even in his holy ones,
and the heavens are not clean in his
sight;
16 how much less one who is abominable
and corrupt,
one who drinks iniquity like water!

[a] Syr: Heb lacks *not*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

an exit, but a temporary hiding-place from God's scrutiny and anger (v. 13). **14:** A rhetorical question, expecting the answer No! **18–19:** The only expectation humans can have is that God will final. **18–19:** The only expectation humans can have is that God will finally *prevail against them*.

15.1–35: Eliphaz's second speech. 2–16: Eliphaz regards Job's faults as both intellectual and moral. His intellectual mistake is not to realize that even the most perfect human is tainted in God's sight (vv. 14–16). His moral fault is not to bear his suffering with bravery and patience. Whatever Job's original fault, it was minor compared with the sin of his present behavior; it is a sin against himself (v. 6) and against God (v. 13) to speak so one-sidedly and bitterly about God. The very passion of Job's speech is proof that he is in the wrong (vv. 12–13). **2:** *East wind,* the oppressively hot wind from the desert. **4:** *Fear of God* is the emotion of fear proper to a human being in the presence of God. Job's charges against God imply he has lost his due sense of creatureliness. **7:** *Council of God*, see 1.6–12n. **14:** *Born of woman,* see 14.1n. **16:** An extreme generalization about humans as compared with

17 "I will show you; listen to me;
what I have seen I will declare—
18 what sages have told,
and their ancestors have not hidden,
19 to whom alone the land was given,
and no stranger passed among them.
20 The wicked writhe in pain all their days,
through all the years that are laid up for the ruthless.
21 Terrifying sounds are in their ears;
in prosperity the destroyer will come upon them.
22 They despair of returning from darkness,
and they are destined for the sword.
23 They wander abroad for bread, saying, 'Where is it?'
They know that a day of darkness is ready at hand;
24 distress and anguish terrify them;
they prevail against them, like a king prepared for battle.
25 Because they stretched out their hands against God,
and bid defiance to the Almighty,[a]
26 running stubbornly against him
with a thick-bossed shield;
27 because they have covered their faces with their fat,
and gathered fat upon their loins,
28 they will live in desolate cities,
in houses that no one should inhabit,
houses destined to become heaps of ruins;
29 they will not be rich, and their wealth will not endure,
nor will they strike root in the earth;[b]
30 they will not escape from darkness;
the flame will dry up their shoots,
and their blossom[c] will be swept away[d] by the wind.
31 Let them not trust in emptiness, deceiving themselves;
for emptiness will be their recompense.
32 It will be paid in full before their time,
and their branch will not be green.
33 They will shake off their unripe grape, like the vine,
and cast off their blossoms, like the olive tree.
34 For the company of the godless is barren,
and fire consumes the tents of bribery.
35 They conceive mischief and bring forth evil
and their heart prepares deceit."

16 Then Job answered:
2 "I have heard many such things;
miserable comforters are you all.
3 Have windy words no limit?
Or what provokes you that you keep on talking?
4 I also could talk as you do,
if you were in my place;
I could join words together against you,
and shake my head at you.
5 I could encourage you with my mouth,
and the solace of my lips would assuage your pain.

6 "If I speak, my pain is not assuaged,
and if I forbear, how much of it leaves me?
7 Surely now God has worn me out;
he has[e] made desolate all my company.

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[b] Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Gk: Heb *mouth*
[d] Cn: Heb *will depart*
[e] Heb *you have*

God's purity (cf. 25.4–6). **17–35:** This depiction of the miserable life and fearsome fate of the wicked (cf. 18.5–21; 20.4–29) concerns, first, their lifelong fear of death (vv. 20–26), and, second, their final destiny (vv. 27–35), that they will die prematurely (vv. 31–33). As always, Eliphaz believes Job is not one of the truly wicked, so this is a depiction of what does not apply to him. But he had better take care that he does not join them in his hostility toward God (v. 25).

16.1–17.16: Job's fifth speech. This is the most disjointed of Job's speeches so far. Several earlier themes recur: he criticizes the friends (16.2–6); he then soliloquizes, lamenting the attacks of God (vv. 7–17); he imagines his possible vindication (vv. 18–22); he makes a lament about the friends (17.1–10); he fears that he will die without being vindicated (vv. 11–16). Unlike his previous speech (chs 12–14), the subject here is always Job himself and not humanity in general. **16.7–17:** Job depicts God's assaults as if they were the attacks by various kinds of opponents, a wild animal (vv. 9–10), a traitor (v. 11), a wrestler (v. 12), an archer (vv. 12c–13a), a swordsman (vv.

8 And he has[a] shriveled me up,
which is a witness against me;
my leanness has risen up against me,
and it testifies to my face.
9 He has torn me in his wrath, and hated me;
he has gnashed his teeth at me;
my adversary sharpens his eyes against me.
10 They have gaped at me with their mouths;
they have struck me insolently on the cheek;
they mass themselves together against me.
11 God gives me up to the ungodly,
and casts me into the hands of the wicked.
12 I was at ease, and he broke me in two;
he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces;
he set me up as his target;
13 his archers surround me.
He slashes open my kidneys, and shows no mercy;
he pours out my gall on the ground.
14 He bursts upon me again and again;
he rushes at me like a warrior.
15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin,
and have laid my strength in the dust.
16 My face is red with weeping,
and deep darkness is on my eyelids,
17 though there is no violence in my hands,
and my prayer is pure.

18 "O earth, do not cover my blood;
let my outcry find no resting place.
19 Even now, in fact, my witness is in heaven,
and he that vouches for me is on high.
20 My friends scorn me;
my eye pours out tears to God,
21 that he would maintain the right of a mortal with God,
as[b] one does for a neighbor.
22 For when a few years have come,
I shall go the way from which I shall not return.

17 My spirit is broken, my days are extinct,
the grave is ready for me.
2 Surely there are mockers around me,
and my eye dwells on their provocation.

3 "Lay down a pledge for me with yourself;
who is there that will give surety for me?
4 Since you have closed their minds to understanding,
therefore you will not let them triumph.
5 Those who denounce friends for reward—
the eyes of their children will fail.

6 "He has made me a byword of the peoples,
and I am one before whom people spit.
7 My eye has grown dim from grief,
and all my members are like a shadow.
8 The upright are appalled at this,
and the innocent stir themselves up against the godless.
9 Yet the righteous hold to their way,
and they that have clean hands grow stronger and stronger.
10 But you, come back now, all of you,
and I shall not find a sensible person among you.
11 My days are past, my plans are broken off,
the desires of my heart.

[a] Heb *you have*
[b] Syr Vg Tg: Heb *and*

13b–14). Cf. Lam 3.1–20. **18–22:** God's wrongful attack on Job will probably lead to Job's death. So he appeals to the earth to take blood revenge for him once he is dead—upon God! **18:** *O earth, do not cover my blood*, is the same kind of cry as Abel's who was unlawfully killed (Gen 4.10). **19:** Even now, while he is still alive, he has a *witness . . . in heaven*, which cannot be God, since God has been nothing but his enemy (vv. 7–14). His witness is his own innocence. **20:** *My friends scorn me*, better translated "It is my cry that is my spokesman." **17.1–16:** Job is confident that he is in the right, but he does not expect he will live to see his innocence vindicated. **1:** He is not literally at death's door (cf. 16:22) but psychologically he is already in the grip of death. **3:** Since no one will guarantee his innocence, he must ask God to accept his own person as his *pledge.* **8–9:** Job adopts the point of view of the friends. **11–16:** Job falls again into despair, not a despair that robs him of his belief in his own innocence;

12 They make night into day;
'The light,' they say, 'is near to the darkness.'[a]
13 If I look for Sheol as my house,
if I spread my couch in darkness,
14 if I say to the Pit, 'You are my father,'
and to the worm, 'My mother,' or 'My sister,'
15 where then is my hope?
Who will see my hope?
16 Will it go down to the bars of Sheol?
Shall we descend together into the dust?"

18 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 "How long will you hunt for words?
Consider, and then we shall speak.
3 Why are we counted as cattle?
Why are we stupid in your sight?
4 You who tear yourself in your anger—
shall the earth be forsaken because of you,
or the rock be removed out of its place?

5 "Surely the light of the wicked is put out,
and the flame of their fire does not shine.
6 The light is dark in their tent,
and the lamp above them is put out.
7 Their strong steps are shortened,
and their own schemes throw them down.
8 For they are thrust into a net by their own feet,
and they walk into a pitfall.
9 A trap seizes them by the heel;
a snare lays hold of them.
10 A rope is hid for them in the ground,
a trap for them in the path.
11 Terrors frighten them on every side,
and chase them at their heels.
12 Their strength is consumed by hunger,[b]
and calamity is ready for their stumbling.
13 By disease their skin is consumed,[c]
the firstborn of Death consumes their limbs.
14 They are torn from the tent in which they trusted,
and are brought to the king of terrors.
15 In their tents nothing remains;
sulfur is scattered upon their habitations.
16 Their roots dry up beneath,
and their branches wither above.
17 Their memory perishes from the earth,
and they have no name in the street.
18 They are thrust from light into darkness,
and driven out of the world.
19 They have no offspring or descendant among their people,
and no survivor where they used to live.
20 They of the west are appalled at their fate,
and horror seizes those of the east.
21 Surely such are the dwellings of the ungodly,
such is the place of those who do not know God."

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *Disaster is hungry for them*
[c] Cn: Heb *It consumes the limbs of his skin*

but a despair that he can ever be shown to be innocent. **13–14:** *The Pit,* another term for Sheol. Job has lost his family and can only expect to join the family of worms in the underworld.

18.1–21: Bildad's second speech. After an opening address to Job (vv. 2–4), this speech contains nothing but a description of the fate of the wicked. This is probably not Bildad's prediction of Job's future but a description of the kind of fate that does not await him (as in his first speech, Bildad does not think Job one of the wicked). Yet he does see in Job, who is fighting a battle between doctrine and experience, someone who is tearing himself to pieces. And he finds Job's demand for a new theology deeply disturbing: *shall … the rock be removed out of its place?* (v. 4). **5–21:** Eliphaz's picture of the fate of the wicked in ch 15 focused on how they experience terror and insecurity all their life; but Bildad concentrates on the final days of the wicked, describing how they are trapped by death (vv. 8–10), torn from their dwellings (v. 14), and brought before the lord of the underworld (v. 14). **13–14:** *Death* was represented in ancient mythology as a king ruling over the underworld; Death's *firstborn* will be one of his offspring, such as disease, and the *terrors* are his agents who drag people from life down into his kingdom.

19 Then Job answered:
2 "How long will you torment me,
and break me in pieces with words?
3 These ten times you have cast reproach upon me;
are you not ashamed to wrong me?
4 And even if it is true that I have erred,
my error remains with me.
5 If indeed you magnify yourselves against me,
and make my humiliation an argument against me,
6 know then that God has put me in the wrong,
and closed his net around me.
7 Even when I cry out, 'Violence!' I am not answered;
I call aloud, but there is no justice.
8 He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass,
and he has set darkness upon my paths.
9 He has stripped my glory from me,
and taken the crown from my head.
10 He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone,
he has uprooted my hope like a tree.
11 He has kindled his wrath against me,
and counts me as his adversary.
12 His troops come on together;
they have thrown up siegeworks[a] against me,
and encamp around my tent.
13 "He has put my family far from me,
and my acquaintances are wholly estranged from me.
14 My relatives and my close friends have failed me;
15 the guests in my house have forgotten me;
my serving girls count me as a stranger;
I have become an alien in their eyes.
16 I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer;
I must myself plead with him.
17 My breath is repulsive to my wife;
I am loathsome to my own family.
18 Even young children despise me;
when I rise, they talk against me.
19 All my intimate friends abhor me,
and those whom I loved have turned against me.
20 My bones cling to my skin and to my flesh,
and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.
21 Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends,
for the hand of God has touched me!
22 Why do you, like God, pursue me,
never satisfied with my flesh?

23 "O that my words were written down!
O that they were inscribed in a book!

[a] Cn: Heb *their way*

19.1–29: Job's sixth speech. In this speech there is an address to the friends at beginning, middle, and end (vv. 2–6,21–22,28–29). Between these addresses there is a complaint (vv. 7–20) and an expression of wish, knowledge, and desire (vv. 23–27). **2–6:** Job begins to recognize the friends as his enemies. **3:** *Ten times*, i.e., many times. **4:** Job does not admit to any sin. But if he had sinned, it would not have been a sin against the friends; so it is unfair of them to attack him. **7–12:** To depict the wrongs God has done him, Job deploys a range of images of assault (cf. 16.9,12–14): he is like a townsman who has been robbed (v. 7), a traveler who finds his path blocked and nightfall overtaking him (v. 8), a prince humiliated by a foreign ruler (v. 9), a tree pulled out of the ground (v. 10), a person who finds his friend has become his enemy (v. 11), a city besieged by enemies (v. 12). **13–20:** Here is the literal truth of what Job is experiencing, as distinct from the feelings his experience provoked in vv. 7–12. He is isolated and alienated, because his suffering is understood as punishment for sin. **20:** Normally bones are the body's framework, and the flesh and skin cling to them; Job feels so weak that it seems his bones need support. *Escaped by the skin of my teeth*, or rather, with the skin of my teeth, means that Job feels he has been flayed alive, his skin being stripped from every part of his body except his teeth, which of course have no skin. **21:** *Have pity on me*, i.e., stop persecuting me. **23–27:** If his *words*, his claim to innocence, could be chiseled in stone in an inscription (not a *book*, v. 23), God would eventually rise last (rather than *at the last*, v. 25) in the court case to deliver his verdict that would clear Job, even after his death (v. 26a). Nevertheless, what Job really desires is to see his name cleared while he is still alive (v. 26b should probably be translated "Yet, to behold God

24 O that with an iron pen and with lead
they were engraved on a rock forever!
25 For I know that my Redeemer[a] lives,
and that at the last he[b] will stand upon
the earth;[c]
26 and after my skin has been thus
destroyed,
then in[d] my flesh I shall see God,[e]
27 whom I shall see on my side,[f]
and my eyes shall behold, and not
another.
My heart faints within me!
28 If you say, 'How we will persecute him!'
and, 'The root of the matter is found in
him';
29 be afraid of the sword,
for wrath brings the punishment of the
sword,
so that you may know there is a
judgment."

20 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:
2 "Pay attention! My thoughts urge me to
answer,
because of the agitation within me.
3 I hear censure that insults me,
and a spirit beyond my understanding
answers me.
4 Do you not know this from of old,
ever since mortals were placed on
earth,
5 that the exulting of the wicked is short,
and the joy of the godless is but for a
moment?
6 Even though they mount up high as the
heavens,
and their head reaches to the
clouds,
7 they will perish forever like their own
dung;
those who have seen them will say,
'Where are they?'
8 They will fly away like a dream, and not
be found;
they will be chased away like a vision of
the night.
9 The eye that saw them will see them no
more,
nor will their place behold them any
longer.
10 Their children will seek the favor of the
poor,
and their hands will give back their
wealth.
11 Their bodies, once full of youth,
will lie down in the dust with them.

12 "Though wickedness is sweet in their
mouth,
though they hide it under their
tongues,
13 though they are loath to let it go,
and hold it in their mouths,
14 yet their food is turned in their
stomachs;
it is the venom of asps within them.
15 They swallow down riches and vomit
them up again;
God casts them out of their bellies.
16 They will suck the poison of asps;
the tongue of a viper will kill them.
17 They will not look on the rivers,
the streams flowing with honey and
curds.

[a] Or *Vindicator*
[b] Or *that he the Last*
[c] Heb *dust*
[d] Or *without*
[e] Meaning of Heb of this verse uncertain
[f] Or *for myself*

while still in my flesh—that is my desire, to see him with my own eyes"). **25:** The word *Redeemer* or *Vindicator* should not be capitalized, since the kinsman or champion (as the Heb "go'el" means) is not God (God is his enemy). The only champion Job has is his own innocence, which he has spoken of in 16.18–21 as his witness, his advocate ("he that vouches for me"), and his spokesman. **28–29:** Job turns to the friends again. They say *the root of the matter is found in him*, i.e., he is the author of his own misfortunes; he says they should *be afraid of the sword*, since they have accused him unjustly, and that is a crime.

20.1–29: Zophar's second speech. It is mostly devoted to the theme of the doom of the wicked. But unlike Eliphaz (ch 15), for whom the fate of the wicked is a picture of what Job is not, or Bildad (ch 18), for whom it is a picture of what Job may become, for Zophar it is a picture of what Job will not avoid unless he changes radically. **4–11:** The key image here is the disappearance of the wicked. **12–23:** The key image here is eating: nothing the

18 They will give back the fruit of their toil,
and will not swallow it down;
from the profit of their trading
they will get no enjoyment.
19 For they have crushed and abandoned
the poor,
they have seized a house that they did
not build.

20 "They knew no quiet in their bellies;
in their greed they let nothing escape.
21 There was nothing left after they had
eaten;
therefore their prosperity will not endure.
22 In full sufficiency they will be in distress;
all the force of misery will come upon
them.
23 To fill their belly to the full
God[a] will send his fierce anger into
them,
and rain it upon them as their food.[b]
24 They will flee from an iron weapon;
a bronze arrow will strike them through.
25 It is drawn forth and comes out of their
body,
and the glittering point comes out of
their gall;
terrors come upon them.
26 Utter darkness is laid up for their
treasures;
a fire fanned by no one will devour
them;
what is left in their tent will be
consumed.
27 The heavens will reveal their iniquity,
and the earth will rise up against them.
28 The possessions of their house will be
carried away,
dragged off in the day of God's[c] wrath.
29 This is the portion of the wicked from God,
the heritage decreed for them by God."

21 Then Job answered:
2 "Listen carefully to my words,
and let this be your consolation.
3 Bear with me, and I will speak;
then after I have spoken, mock on.
4 As for me, is my complaint addressed to
mortals?
Why should I not be impatient?
5 Look at me, and be appalled,
and lay your hand upon your mouth.
6 When I think of it I am dismayed,
and shuddering seizes my flesh.
7 Why do the wicked live on,
reach old age, and grow mighty in
power?
8 Their children are established in their
presence,
and their offspring before their eyes.
9 Their houses are safe from fear,
and no rod of God is upon them.
10 Their bull breeds without fail;
their cow calves and never miscarries.
11 They send out their little ones like a
flock,
and their children dance around.
12 They sing to the tambourine and the lyre,
and rejoice to the sound of the pipe.
13 They spend their days in prosperity,
and in peace they go down to Sheol.
14 They say to God, 'Leave us alone!
We do not desire to know your ways.
15 What is the Almighty,[d] that we should
serve him?
And what profit do we get if we pray to
him?'
16 Is not their prosperity indeed their own
achievement?[e]
The plans of the wicked are repugnant
to me.

17 "How often is the lamp of the wicked put
out?

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Heb *his*
[d] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[e] Heb *in their hand*

wicked eat brings them lasting benefit. **24–29:** A nightmarish collection of images (weapons, law court, fire, flood) of how inescapable is the final doom of the wicked.

21.1–27.23: Third cycle of speeches.

21.1–34: Job's seventh speech. Job denies the friends' belief that the wicked do not prosper but come to an early grave. **6–16:** The wicked prosper; why is that so? Within three verses Job contradicts Zophar (v. 7; cf. 20.11), Bildad (v. 8; cf. 18.19), and Eliphaz (v. 9; cf. 5.24). **13:** *Sheol*, the abode of the dead. **17–21:** Only rarely do the wicked

How often does calamity come upon them?
How often does God[a] distribute pains in his anger?
18 How often are they like straw before the wind,
and like chaff that the storm carries away?
19 You say, 'God stores up their iniquity for their children.'
Let it be paid back to them, so that they may know it.
20 Let their own eyes see their destruction,
and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty.[b]
21 For what do they care for their household after them,
when the number of their months is cut off?
22 Will any teach God knowledge,
seeing that he judges those that are on high?
23 One dies in full prosperity,
being wholly at ease and secure,
24 his loins full of milk
and the marrow of his bones moist.
25 Another dies in bitterness of soul,
never having tasted of good.
26 They lie down alike in the dust,
and the worms cover them.

27 "Oh, I know your thoughts,
and your schemes to wrong me.
28 For you say, 'Where is the house of the prince?
Where is the tent in which the wicked lived?'
29 Have you not asked those who travel the roads,
and do you not accept their testimony,
30 that the wicked are spared in the day of calamity,
and are rescued in the day of wrath?
31 Who declares their way to their face,
and who repays them for what they have done?
32 When they are carried to the grave,
a watch is kept over their tomb.
33 The clods of the valley are sweet to them;
everyone will follow after,
and those who went before are innumerable.
34 How then will you comfort me with empty nothings?
There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood."

22 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
2 "Can a mortal be of use to God?
Can even the wisest be of service to him?
3 Is it any pleasure to the Almighty[b] if you are righteous,
or is it gain to him if you make your ways blameless?
4 Is it for your piety that he reproves you,
and enters into judgment with you?
5 Is not your wickedness great?
There is no end to your iniquities.

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

suffer. If the friends say, Well, their children suffer (v. 19), Job replies: Retribution should strike the people who deserve it! **17:** Job challenges the notion that the wicked do not live long (cf. 18.5; Prov 13.9; 24.20). **18:** Job disputes the axiom that the wicked are *straw before the wind* (cf. Ps 35.5) or *like chaff that the storm carries away* (cf. Ps 1.4). **19–21:** *You say* is not in the Hebrew; alternatively, the sentence may be translated, "Is God storing up punishment for their children?" **22–26:** Being good or bad makes no difference; the same fate happens to all. **27–34:** *I know your thoughts,* the friends have been thinking: the wicked suffer, Job is suffering, therefore Job belongs with the wicked. But the wicked do not suffer, says Job; ask any traveler, who will tell tales of famous wicked persons who are spared retribution (v. 30), are never denounced (v. 31), and whose tombs are watched over to protect them from grave robbers (v. 32).

22.1–30: Eliphaz's third speech. 2–11: As in his first speech (chs 4–5), Eliphaz believes that Job will be delivered *because of the cleanness of your hands* (v. 30). Surprisingly, however, he here apparently accuses Job of untold wickedness (v. 5), mainly social injustice (vv. 6–9). But he cannot believe that Job has actually *exacted pledges … for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing* (v. 6), withheld *water* and *bread*, i.e., food, *from the hungry* (v. 7), and rejected the pleas of *widows* and *orphans* (v. 9). He must mean that, since Job is suffering for some cause, and since the cause cannot be found in any wrong that Job has done, his sin must lie in what he

6 For you have exacted pledges from your
family for no reason,
and stripped the naked of their
clothing.
7 You have given no water to the weary to
drink,
and you have withheld bread from the
hungry.
8 The powerful possess the land,
and the favored live in it.
9 You have sent widows away empty-handed,
and the arms of the orphans you have
crushed.[a]
10 Therefore snares are around you,
and sudden terror overwhelms you,
11 or darkness so that you cannot see;
a flood of water covers you.

12 "Is not God high in the heavens?
See the highest stars, how lofty they
are!
13 Therefore you say, 'What does God
know?
Can he judge through the deep
darkness?
14 Thick clouds enwrap him, so that he
does not see,
and he walks on the dome of heaven.'
15 Will you keep to the old way
that the wicked have trod?
16 They were snatched away before their
time;
their foundation was washed away by
a flood.
17 They said to God, 'Leave us alone,'
and 'What can the Almighty[b] do to us?'[c]
18 Yet he filled their houses with good
things—
but the plans of the wicked are
repugnant to me.
19 The righteous see it and are glad;
the innocent laugh them to scorn,
20 saying, 'Surely our adversaries are cut
off,
and what they left, the fire has
consumed.'

21 "Agree with God,[d] and be at peace;
in this way good will come to you.
22 Receive instruction from his mouth,
and lay up his words in your heart.
23 If you return to the Almighty,[b] you will
be restored,
if you remove unrighteousness from
your tents,
24 if you treat gold like dust,
and gold of Ophir like the stones of the
torrent-bed,
25 and if the Almighty[b] is your gold
and your precious silver,
26 then you will delight yourself in the
Almighty,[b]
and lift up your face to God.
27 You will pray to him, and he will hear
you,
and you will pay your vows.
28 You will decide on a matter, and it will be
established for you,
and light will shine on your ways.
29 When others are humiliated, you say it
is pride;
for he saves the humble.
30 He will deliver even those who are
guilty;
they will escape because of the
cleanness of your hands."[e]

23 Then Job answered:
2 "Today also my complaint is bitter;[f]
his[g] hand is heavy despite my groaning.

a Gk Syr Tg Vg: Heb *were crushed*
b Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
c Gk Syr: Heb *them*
d Heb *him*
e Meaning of Heb uncertain
f Syr Vg Tg: Heb *rebellious*
g Gk Syr: Heb *my*

has failed to do. **12–20:** God can see Job's secret sins; they are sins of omission. **21–30:** How Job can be delivered. The speech ends on an uplifting note: Job has only to *return* to God (v. 23), *pray* and fulfill his vows (v. 27); then everything he does will prosper (v. 28). Cf. Zophar's advice in 11:13–20. **24:** There is a pun involving the words for *gold* (Heb "batser") and *like the stones* (Heb "betsur") and the words *dust* (Heb "'apar") and *Ophir* (Heb "'opir"). *Ophir* was an Arabian city famous for its high-quality gold (Gen 10.29; 1 Kings 9.28; 1 Chr 29.4).

23.1–24.25: Job's eighth speech. This speech is a soliloquy, addressed neither to the friends nor to God. In ch 23 Job is concerned mainly with himself and his sense of how inaccessible God is to him. In ch 24

3 Oh, that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come even to his dwelling!
4 I would lay my case before him,
and fill my mouth with arguments.
5 I would learn what he would answer me,
and understand what he would say to me.
6 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?
No; but he would give heed to me.
7 There an upright person could reason with him,
and I should be acquitted forever by my judge.

8 "If I go forward, he is not there;
or backward, I cannot perceive him;
9 on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him;
I turn[a] to the right, but I cannot see him.
10 But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tested me, I shall come out like gold.
11 My foot has held fast to his steps;
I have kept his way and have not turned aside.
12 I have not departed from the commandment of his lips;
I have treasured in[b] my bosom the words of his mouth.
13 But he stands alone and who can dissuade him?
What he desires, that he does.
14 For he will complete what he appoints for me;
and many such things are in his mind.
15 Therefore I am terrified at his presence;
when I consider, I am in dread of him.
16 God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty[c] has terrified me;
17 If only I could vanish in darkness,
and thick darkness would cover my face![d]

24 "Why are times not kept by the Almighty,[c]
and why do those who know him never see his days?
2 The wicked[e] remove landmarks;
they seize flocks and pasture them.
3 They drive away the donkey of the orphan;
they take the widow's ox for a pledge.
4 They thrust the needy off the road;
the poor of the earth all hide themselves.
5 Like wild asses in the desert
they go out to their toil,
scavenging in the wasteland
food for their young.

[a] Syr Vg: Heb *he turns*
[b] Gk Vg: Heb *from*
[c] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[d] Or *But I am not destroyed by the darkness; he has concealed the thick darkness from me*
[e] Gk: Heb *they*

his concern is with others, especially the innocent poor, who seem to be neglected by God. If he could gain access to God, he would be vindicated; but he despairs of ever receiving such vindication, since God plainly does not hold regular *times* for judgment when wrongs are righted (24.1). **23.3–17:** *Oh, that I knew where I might find him . . . !* God is plainly not entering into the lawsuit that Job desires (cf. 19.26), so Job must search him out. But his quest is a failure (vv. 8–9). God is not acting fairly or legally; *what he desires, that he does* (v. 13), and that is only to harm Job. **4–7:** When Job first imagined a lawsuit with God (9.3–4), he immediately recognized that he could not succeed. But the more he considers the idea, the more it becomes a reality. In a later speech, even though he has no hope of success (13.15), he craves to enter into dispute with him (13.3). In his next speech he announces that he already has a "witness" stationed in heaven, his "cry" that is his spokesman (16.19–20). Still later, he expresses his conviction that his case will be heard, even if after his death (19.27). Now he believes that he would get justice from God if only he could locate him. **8–9:** *Forward, backward, left,* and *right* designate the four cardinal directions: east, west, south, and north. **24.1–25:** Why does God not hold regular assize days, i.e., judicial proceedings (*times*, v. 1), during which the injustices in the world's government could be cleared up? **2–12:** Why is the injustice of the suffering of the innocent poor allowed to go on for so long? God *pays no attention to their prayer* (v. 12). **2:** *Landmarks*, i.e., boundary stones; removing a neighbor's landmarks in order to increase the size of one's own property is prohibited (cf. Deut 9.14; 27.17; Prov 22.28; 23.10; Hos 5.10). **3:** The orphan, i.e., the

6 They reap in a field not their own
and they glean in the vineyard of the wicked.
7 They lie all night naked, without clothing,
and have no covering in the cold.
8 They are wet with the rain of the mountains,
and cling to the rock for want of shelter.

9 "There are those who snatch the orphan child from the breast,
and take as a pledge the infant of the poor.
10 They go about naked, without clothing;
though hungry, they carry the sheaves;
11 between their terraces[a] they press out oil;
they tread the wine presses, but suffer thirst.
12 From the city the dying groan,
and the throat of the wounded cries for help;
yet God pays no attention to their prayer.

13 "There are those who rebel against the light,
who are not acquainted with its ways,
and do not stay in its paths.
14 The murderer rises at dusk
to kill the poor and needy,
and in the night is like a thief.
15 The eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight,
saying, 'No eye will see me';
and he disguises his face.
16 In the dark they dig through houses;
by day they shut themselves up;
they do not know the light.
17 For deep darkness is morning to all of them;
for they are friends with the terrors of deep darkness.

18 "Swift are they on the face of the waters;
their portion in the land is cursed;
no treader turns toward their vineyards.
19 Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters;
so does Sheol those who have sinned.
20 The womb forgets them;
the worm finds them sweet;
they are no longer remembered;
so wickedness is broken like a tree.

21 "They harm[b] the childless woman,
and do no good to the widow.
22 Yet God[c] prolongs the life of the mighty by his power;
they rise up when they despair of life.
23 He gives them security, and they are supported;
his eyes are upon their ways.
24 They are exalted a little while, and then are gone;
they wither and fade like the mallow;[d]
they are cut off like the heads of grain.
25 If it is not so, who will prove me a liar,
and show that there is nothing in what I say?"

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Tg: Heb *feed on* or *associate with*
[c] Heb *he*
[d] Gk: Heb *like all others*

fatherless, and the widow are examples of the poor and underprivileged. Those pictured here are not as poor as the homeless day laborers of vv. 5–6. **6:** *Glean*, those who owned fields and vineyards were supposed to leave some produce for the poor to gather (Lev 19.9–10; 23.22; Deut 24.1; Ruth 2.1–10). **9:** Children could be taken as slaves until parents paid debts to creditors (2 Kings 4:1–7; Neh 5.1–5). **10–11:** See v.6n. **13–17:** Why is the injustice of the successful evildoer allowed to continue? Three typical rebels *against the light* (v. 13)—the murderer, the adulterer, and the thief—are allowed to live, though their friends are *the terrors of deep darkness* (v. 17) and they should by rights be with them in the underworld. **18–25:** These verses about the early death of the wicked are so unlike Job's views that they must be either a quotation by Job of the friends (RSV adds "You say" at the beginning of v. 16), or, possibly part of the missing third speech of Zophar. See also 27.7–10n.

25 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 "Dominion and fear are with God;[a]
he makes peace in his high heaven.
3 Is there any number to his armies?
Upon whom does his light not arise?
4 How then can a mortal be righteous
before God?
How can one born of woman be pure?
5 If even the moon is not bright
and the stars are not pure in his sight,
6 how much less a mortal, who is a maggot,
and a human being, who is a worm!"

26 Then Job answered:
2 "How you have helped one who has
no power!
How you have assisted the arm that has
no strength!
3 How you have counseled one who has no
wisdom,
and given much good advice!
4 With whose help have you uttered words,
and whose spirit has come forth from
you?
5 The shades below tremble,
the waters and their inhabitants.
6 Sheol is naked before God,
and Abaddon has no covering.
7 He stretches out Zaphon[b] over the void,
and hangs the earth upon nothing.
8 He binds up the waters in his thick
clouds,
and the cloud is not torn open by them.
9 He covers the face of the full moon,
and spreads over it his cloud.
10 He has described a circle on the face of
the waters,
at the boundary between light and
darkness.
11 The pillars of heaven tremble,
and are astounded at his rebuke.
12 By his power he stilled the Sea;
by his understanding he struck down
Rahab.
13 By his wind the heavens were made fair;
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.
14 These are indeed but the outskirts of his
ways;
and how small a whisper do we hear of
him!
But the thunder of his power who can
understand?"

27 Job again took up his discourse and
said:
2 "As God lives, who has taken away my
right,

[a] Heb *him*
[b] Or *the North*

25.1–26.14: Bildad's third speech. As it stands, Bildad's speech is uncommonly short (25.2–6) but although 26.1–14 is now assigned to Job, it was probably originally part of Bildad's speech. Such a rearrangement would help remove the problem of having three speeches of Job in a row (chs 26, 27–28, 29–31) without any intervening words from the friends. The theme of Bildad's speech would then be the power of God, in three spheres: in the heavens (25.2–6), in the underworld (26.5–6), and in creation (26.7–13). The speech is an address to Job (cf. 25.4, 6; 26.14), belittling him (26.2–4), denying his claim to innocence (25.2–6), and putting him in his place by focusing exclusively on God's untrammeled power (26.5–14). **25.2–3:** *He makes peace in his high heaven*, probably an allusion to God's defeat at creation of the powers of chaos (cf. 9.13; 26.11–13; Isa 51.9). Peace through terror is God's style, according to Bildad. **26.5:** *Shades*, i.e., the inhabitants of the underworld. **6:** *Abaddon* (meaning "destruction"), another name for Sheol, the abode of the dead. **7:** At creation, God stretched out the heavens (here called *Zaphon*, "the north") like a tent without a center pole and suspended the earth from *nothing*. **8:** The *clouds* are conceived as waterskins (cf. 38.37). **10:** The *circle on the face of the waters* appears to be both the horizon where the sky meets the earth and the boundary between day and night. **11:** The *pillars of heaven* are envisaged as supporting the solid canopy of heaven; they are the same as the "foundations of the heavens" (2 Sam 22.8). **12:** The depiction is still of the creation of the world, when according to some biblical myths God waged a battle against a monster known as *Sea* or *Rahab* (cf. 9.13n.; Ps 89.11; Isa 51.9). **13:** The *fleeing serpent* is another of God's primordial enemies, called Leviathan in 3.8 and Isa 27.1. **14:** These visible and reputed proofs of God's greatness are but the *outskirts of his ways*, and convey only a faint *whisper* of the *thunder* of his actual power. Humans cannot hope to comprehend the real God, but can catch only a glimpse of him.

27.1–6,11–12: Job's ninth speech. Although chs 27–28 are traditionally ascribed to Job, some of their contents seem more natural in the mouths of other speakers. Chs 27.7–10,11–23 should probably be assigned to Zophar

and the Almighty,[a] who has made my soul bitter,
3 as long as my breath is in me
and the spirit of God is in my nostrils,
4 my lips will not speak falsehood,
and my tongue will not utter deceit.
5 Far be it from me to say that you are right;
until I die I will not put away my integrity from me.
6 I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go;
my heart does not reproach me for any of my days.

7 "May my enemy be like the wicked,
and may my opponent be like the unrighteous.
8 For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts them off,
when God takes away their lives?
9 Will God hear their cry
when trouble comes upon them?
10 Will they take delight in the Almighty?[a]
Will they call upon God at all times?
11 I will teach you concerning the hand of God;
that which is with the Almighty[a] I will not conceal.
12 All of you have seen it yourselves;
why then have you become altogether vain?

13 "This is the portion of the wicked with God,
and the heritage that oppressors receive from the Almighty:[a]
14 If their children are multiplied, it is for the sword;
and their offspring have not enough to eat.
15 Those who survive them the pestilence buries,
and their widows make no lamentation.
16 Though they heap up silver like dust,
and pile up clothing like clay—
17 they may pile it up, but the just will wear it,
and the innocent will divide the silver.
18 They build their houses like nests,
like booths made by sentinels of the vineyard.
19 They go to bed with wealth, but will do so no more;
they open their eyes, and it is gone.
20 Terrors overtake them like a flood;
in the night a whirlwind carries them off.
21 The east wind lifts them up and they are gone;
it sweeps them out of their place.
22 It[b] hurls at them without pity;
they flee from its[c] power in headlong flight.
23 It[b] claps its[c] hands at them,
and hisses at them from its[c] place.

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[b] Or *He* (that is God)
[c] Or *his*

(who otherwise does not have a third speech), and ch 28 may well be the conclusion of Elihu's speeches displaced from this point (see notes on 32.1–37.24), although many think it is an independent poem, not spoken by any of the characters in the book of Job. **1–6:** Job's speech here is short and to the point: for the first time, he swears an oath to his innocence. **2:** Job swears by the life of God—a bold move, for to do so is effectively a curse upon God if the oath is not true. **5:** If he were to accept the friends' reproaches, he would be denying what he knows to be true about himself. **11–12:** Job himself, not the stories of the slaying of the dragon at creation, is the best testimony to the power of God and to his intentions.

27.7–10,13–17; 24.18–24; 27.18–23: Zophar's third speech. The remainder of ch 27 is similar to Zophar's second speech in ch 20, except that here the focus is on the fact of the destiny of the wicked, whereas there it had been on the behavior that marks them out as wicked. He does not mean that Job is one of the wicked; rather, he paints this picture of their destiny to frighten Job into amendment of life so as to avoid the fate of the wicked. Ironically, much of the fate of the wicked has already befallen Job. **27.18:** *Nests* and *booths* are fragile, temporary structures. **21:** *The east wind* is the sirocco, the hot, violent wind that blew down the house of Job's children (1.19).

28 "Surely there is a mine for silver,
and a place for gold to be refined.
2 Iron is taken out of the earth,
and copper is smelted from ore.
3 Miners put[a] an end to darkness,
and search out to the farthest bound
the ore in gloom and deep darkness.
4 They open shafts in a valley away from
human habitation;
they are forgotten by travelers,
they sway suspended, remote from
people.
5 As for the earth, out of it comes bread;
but underneath it is turned up as by
fire.
6 Its stones are the place of sapphires,[b]
and its dust contains gold.

7 "That path no bird of prey knows,
and the falcon's eye has not seen it.
8 The proud wild animals have not trodden it;
the lion has not passed over it.

9 "They put their hand to the flinty rock,
and overturn mountains by the roots.
10 They cut out channels in the rocks,
and their eyes see every precious thing.
11 The sources of the rivers they probe;[c]
hidden things they bring to light.

12 "But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of
understanding?
13 Mortals do not know the way to it,[d]
and it is not found in the land of the
living.
14 The deep says, 'It is not in me,'
and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'
15 It cannot be gotten for gold,
and silver cannot be weighed out as its
price.
16 It cannot be valued in the gold of
Ophir,
in precious onyx or sapphire.[b]
17 Gold and glass cannot equal it,
nor can it be exchanged for jewels of
fine gold.
18 No mention shall be made of coral or of
crystal;
the price of wisdom is above pearls.
19 The chrysolite of Ethiopia[e] cannot
compare with it,
nor can it be valued in pure gold.

20 "Where then does wisdom come from?
And where is the place of
understanding?
21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living,
and concealed from the birds of the
air.

[a] Heb *He puts*
[b] Or *lapis lazuli*
[c] Gk Vg: Heb *bind*
[d] Gk: Heb *its price*
[e] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

28.1–28: A poem on wisdom, or conclusion of Elihu's speeches. Although as it stands ch 28 is part of a speech of Job, it is hard to see why Job, who is focused on the question of justice, should be interested in the issue of how wisdom is to be acquired. Most scholars therefore regard the chapter as an independent poem, not spoken by any of the characters in the book of Job, which has found its way into it. Alternatively, its theme of the desirability of wisdom might be seen as most suitable in the mouth of Elihu (and its final sentence is very like 37.24, the final sentence of Elihu's other speeches). Quite possibly, the speeches of Elihu, now in chs 32–37, originally preceded this poem in ch 28. **1–11:** The poem begins, in the fashion of a riddle, with a topic far different from the actual subject of the poem, which is the acquisition of wisdom. The opening topic is that of mining minerals, its theme being the extreme efforts humans will go to in order to acquire things that are precious. In remote places (*forgotten by travelers*, v. 4) miners dig *shafts* where they dangle from ropes (*sway suspended*). Their lamps *put an end to darkness* underground (v. 3). Their tunnels are a *path no bird of prey knows* (v. 7). **12:** Wisdom is even more desirable, but harder to get at than the precious metals. **13–19:** Wisdom is apparently impossible to find or to buy (but see v. 28!). **14:** The Deep and the Sea are, unusually, personified, as ancient powers that might know the location of valuable objects like wisdom. **15–19:** Even if it could be found, wisdom could not be bought, being more valuable than the most expensive items, gold, silver, precious stones, and glass. **16:** *Ophir*, known as a source of gold; see 22.24n. **17:** *Glass* in pre-Roman times was as expensive as precious stones; it was used in jewelry and inlays. **20–27:** Wisdom is apparently inaccessible to humans, its place being known only to God (v. 23), who determined its nature at creation (vv. 24–27). **20–22:** *Abaddon and*

22 Abaddon and Death say,
'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'

23 "God understands the way to it,
and he knows its place.
24 For he looks to the ends of the earth,
and sees everything under the heavens.
25 When he gave to the wind its weight,
and apportioned out the waters by measure;
26 when he made a decree for the rain,
and a way for the thunderbolt;
27 then he saw it and declared it;
he established it, and searched it out.
28 And he said to humankind,
'Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding.'"

29 Job again took up his discourse and said:
2 "O that I were as in the months of old,
as in the days when God watched over me;
3 when his lamp shone over my head,
and by his light I walked through darkness;
4 when I was in my prime,
when the friendship of God was upon my tent;
5 when the Almighty[a] was still with me,
when my children were around me;
6 when my steps were washed with milk,
and the rock poured out for me streams of oil!
7 When I went out to the gate of the city,
when I took my seat in the square,
8 the young men saw me and withdrew,
and the aged rose up and stood;
9 the nobles refrained from talking,
and laid their hands on their mouths;
10 the voices of princes were hushed,
and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.
11 When the ear heard, it commended me,
and when the eye saw, it approved;
12 because I delivered the poor who cried,
and the orphan who had no helper.
13 The blessing of the wretched came upon me,
and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;
my justice was like a robe and a turban.
15 I was eyes to the blind,
and feet to the lame.
16 I was a father to the needy,
and I championed the cause of the stranger.
17 I broke the fangs of the unrighteous,
and made them drop their prey from their teeth.
18 Then I thought, 'I shall die in my nest,

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

Death, see 26.6n. **28:** Surprisingly, it turns out, although wisdom is desirable and precious, and cannot be found in any place or bought for any price, there is no secret about its essence. It consists of *the fear of the Lord*, i.e., the emotion of fear in the presence of God, and of shunning evil—that is, a proper attitude both to religion and to ethics. It is the attitude of Job in 1.1.

29.1–31.40: Job's tenth speech. The speech consists of three sections: in the first Job surveys, in nostalgic mood, his happy former life (ch 29); in the second he portrays, in pathetic mood, his present isolation and degradation (ch 30); in the third, he utters, in defiant mood, a series of self-curses that climax with a desperate appeal to be heard and vindicated (ch 31). The presence of the friends is ignored completely, and, except for 30.20–23, God is not addressed: the focus is entirely on Job's own experience. **29.2–25:** Job wishes he were still living his former life. **2–6:** A picture of his domestic bliss, realistic description mingling with metaphors like *my steps were washed with milk* (v. 6), signifying a superabundance of wealth. **7–25:** A picture of his social worth, its principal ingredient being the honor accorded by his fellow citizens. **7:** The town *square* at the *gate of the city* was the place where men would transact business and settle matters of law (cf. Ruth 4.1–12). **8:** *Young men saw me and withdrew* as a mark of deference. **12–17:** Job remembers his main role as protector of the underprivileged: the poor, orphans, the dying, widows, the blind, the lame, strangers. **14:** *Righteousness* adorned him, bringing him honor as a costly garment would. **17:** Enemies of the underprivileged, *the unrighteous*, are pictured as wild animals. **18:** *Phoenix*, a mythical bird that lives for 500 years or more and thought to be reborn from its ashes.

and I shall multiply my days like the phoenix;[a]
19 my roots spread out to the waters,
with the dew all night on my branches;
20 my glory was fresh with me,
and my bow ever new in my hand.'

21 "They listened to me, and waited,
and kept silence for my counsel.
22 After I spoke they did not speak again,
and my word dropped upon them like dew.[b]
23 They waited for me as for the rain;
they opened their mouths as for the spring rain.
24 I smiled on them when they had no confidence;
and the light of my countenance they did not extinguish.[c]
25 I chose their way, and sat as chief,
and I lived like a king among his troops,
like one who comforts mourners.

30 "But now they make sport of me,
those who are younger than I,
whose fathers I would have disdained
to set with the dogs of my flock.
2 What could I gain from the strength of their hands?
All their vigor is gone.
3 Through want and hard hunger
they gnaw the dry and desolate ground,
4 they pick mallow and the leaves of bushes,
and to warm themselves the roots of broom.
5 They are driven out from society;
people shout after them as after a thief.
6 In the gullies of wadis they must live,
in holes in the ground, and in the rocks.
7 Among the bushes they bray;
under the nettles they huddle together.
8 A senseless, disreputable brood,
they have been whipped out of the land.

9 "And now they mock me in song;
I am a byword to them.
10 They abhor me, they keep aloof from me;
they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of me.
11 Because God has loosed my bowstring and humbled me,
they have cast off restraint in my presence.
12 On my right hand the rabble rise up;
they send me sprawling,
and build roads for my ruin.
13 They break up my path,
they promote my calamity;
no one restrains[d] them.
14 As through a wide breach they come;
amid the crash they roll on.
15 Terrors are turned upon me;
my honor is pursued as by the wind,
and my prosperity has passed away like a cloud.

16 "And now my soul is poured out within me;
days of affliction have taken hold of me.
17 The night racks my bones,
and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest.
18 With violence he seizes my garment;[e]

[a] Or *like sand*
[b] Heb lacks *like dew*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Cn: Heb *helps*
[e] Gk: Heb *my garment is disfigured*

25: Job claims to have held an almost royal status. **30.1–31:** Job depicts his present situation—his dishonor (vv. 1–15) and his inner suffering (vv. 16–23)—and concludes with an address to God (vv. 20–23), and a lament (vv. 24–31). **1:** The young men who despise him are scorned as low-born. Contrast Job's words in 24.1–12. **2–8:** Their fathers are imagined by Job as without honor (*disreputable*, v. 8), excluded from ordinary society (v. 5) and living rough in the wild (v. 6), and with only leaves and roots to eat (v. 4). **4:** *Mallow,* or "saltwort," a leafy plant eaten by the very poor. *Broom*, the largest bush in the desert; its roots made good charcoal. **9–15:** The same young men as in v. 1, who in happier days would have deferred to him (29.6), now scorn Job as a sinner suffering God's punishment. **11–14:** He depicts them as military enemies, attacking him like a besieged city (cf. 16.12–14; 19.12). **16–23:** Worse even than his loss of honor is his sense that God has become his torturer, who intends his death (v. 23). **16:** *My soul is poured out within me*, i.e., his life force is running away like liquid from a vessel.

he grasps me by[a] the collar of my
tunic.
19 He has cast me into the mire,
and I have become like dust and ashes.
20 I cry to you and you do not answer me;
I stand, and you merely look at me.
21 You have turned cruel to me;
with the might of your hand you
persecute me.
22 You lift me up on the wind, you make me
ride on it,
and you toss me about in the roar of the
storm.
23 I know that you will bring me to death,
and to the house appointed for all
living.

24 "Surely one does not turn against the
needy,[b]
when in disaster they cry for help.[c]
25 Did I not weep for those whose day was
hard?
Was not my soul grieved for the poor?
26 But when I looked for good,
evil came;
and when I waited for light, darkness
came.
27 My inward parts are in turmoil, and are
never still;
days of affliction come to meet me.
28 I go about in sunless gloom;
I stand up in the assembly and cry for
help.
29 I am a brother of jackals,
and a companion of ostriches.
30 My skin turns black and falls from me,
and my bones burn with heat.
31 My lyre is turned to mourning,
and my pipe to the voice of those who
weep.

31 "I have made a covenant with my eyes;
how then could I look upon a virgin?
2 What would be my portion from God
above,
and my heritage from the Almighty[d] on
high?
3 Does not calamity befall the unrighteous,
and disaster the workers of iniquity?
4 Does he not see my ways,
and number all my steps?

5 "If I have walked with falsehood,
and my foot has hurried to deceit—
6 let me be weighed in a just balance,
and let God know my integrity!—
7 if my step has turned aside from the way,
and my heart has followed my eyes,
and if any spot has clung to my hands;
8 then let me sow, and another eat;
and let what grows for me be rooted
out.

9 "If my heart has been enticed by a
woman,
and I have lain in wait at my neighbor's
door;
10 then let my wife grind for another,
and let other men kneel over her.
11 For that would be a heinous crime;
that would be a criminal offense;
12 for that would be a fire consuming down
to Abaddon,
and it would burn to the root all my
harvest.

[a] Heb *like*
[b] Heb *ruin*
[c] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

24–31: Job's misery is a compound of his loss of former dignity, inner turmoil, physical pain. He is in *mourning* for the loss of what he once had. **29:** Job's miserable cries are like those of *jackals* and *ostriches,* creatures that inhabit desolate places. **31.1–40:** For the last time, Job summons God to a lawsuit, demanding he state what the charges against him are (v. 35). He imagines himself composing a document affirming his innocence, an oath of clearance, in the form of a curse upon himself that is meant to come into effect if he is lying. He declares his innocence against seven possible charges: deceit (vv. 5–8), adultery (vv. 9–12), disregard of servants (vv. 13–15), disregard of the poor (vv. 16–23), trust in wealth (vv. 24–28), rejoicing at the misfortune of others (vv. 29–34), and assault on the land (vv. 38–40b). **1:** He has kept himself so far from sexual misconduct that he has even forbidden his desires. **9–10:** In Job's world, a man's adultery with a married woman is an offense against the woman's husband, so the punishment he would deserve is to suffer the multiple adultery of other men with his wife after she had become a prostitute. The verb *kneel* has a sexual overtone. **12:** *Abaddon*, the abode of the dead (see 26.6n).

13 "If I have rejected the cause of my male
or female slaves,
when they brought a complaint against
me;
14 what then shall I do when God rises up?
When he makes inquiry, what shall I
answer him?
15 Did not he who made me in the womb
make them?
And did not one fashion us in the
womb?

16 "If I have withheld anything that the
poor desired,
or have caused the eyes of the widow
to fail,
17 or have eaten my morsel alone,
and the orphan has not eaten from it—
18 for from my youth I reared the orphan[a]
like a father,
and from my mother's womb I guided
the widow[b]—
19 if I have seen anyone perish for lack of
clothing,
or a poor person without covering,
20 whose loins have not blessed me,
and who was not warmed with the
fleece of my sheep;
21 if I have raised my hand against the
orphan,
because I saw I had supporters at the
gate;
22 then let my shoulder blade fall from my
shoulder,
and let my arm be broken from its
socket.
23 For I was in terror of calamity from God,
and I could not have faced his majesty.

24 "If I have made gold my trust,
or called fine gold my confidence;
25 if I have rejoiced because my wealth was
great,
or because my hand had gotten much;
26 if I have looked at the sun[c] when it
shone,
or the moon moving in splendor,
27 and my heart has been secretly
enticed,
and my mouth has kissed my hand;
28 this also would be an iniquity to be
punished by the judges,
for I should have been false to God
above.

29 "If I have rejoiced at the ruin of those
who hated me,
or exulted when evil overtook them—
30 I have not let my mouth sin
by asking for their lives with a curse—
31 if those of my tent ever said,
'O that we might be sated with his
flesh!'[d]—
32 the stranger has not lodged in the street;
I have opened my doors to the
traveler—
33 if I have concealed my transgressions as
others do,[e]
by hiding my iniquity in my bosom,
34 because I stood in great fear of the
multitude,
and the contempt of families terrified
me,
so that I kept silence, and did not go out
of doors—
35 O that I had one to hear me!
(Here is my signature! Let the Almighty[f]
answer me!)
O that I had the indictment written by
my adversary!

[a] Heb *him*
[b] Heb *her*
[c] Heb *the light*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Or *as Adam did*
[f] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

13–15: Job goes far beyond the obligations of his time in admitting that slaves have any rights and in affirming their common humanity with him. **16–23:** Job's humanitarian deeds are implicitly a rebuttal of Eliphaz's claims (24.6–9). Cf. 29.12–17. **21:** *At the gate*, see 29.7n. **24–28:** Confidence in one's wealth and the devotion paid to heavenly bodies are two forms of false worship. **27:** *My mouth has kissed my hand*, to throw a kiss as a gesture of worship. **31:** *O that we might be sated with his flesh!*, or better, "O that there were someone not yet satisfied with his meat!" There is no chance of finding anyone who has not benefited from Job's hospitality. **35–37:** These verses are the climax to the speech, and it is strange that they are not at the end; perhaps vv. 38–40 have been misplaced and should follow v. 34. **35:** *One to*

[36] Surely I would carry it on my shoulder;
I would bind it on me like a crown;
[37] I would give him an account of all my steps;
like a prince I would approach him.

[38] "If my land has cried out against me,
and its furrows have wept together;
[39] if I have eaten its yield without payment,
and caused the death of its owners;
[40] let thorns grow instead of wheat,
and foul weeds instead of barley."

The words of Job are ended.

32 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. [2] Then Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became angry. He was angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God; [3] he was angry also at Job's three friends because they had found no answer, though they had declared Job to be in the wrong.[a] [4] Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they were older than he. [5] But when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouths of these three men, he became angry.

[6] Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite answered:

"I am young in years,
and you are aged;
therefore I was timid and afraid
to declare my opinion to you.
[7] I said, 'Let days speak,
and many years teach wisdom.'
[8] But truly it is the spirit in a mortal,
the breath of the Almighty,[b] that makes for understanding.
[9] It is not the old[c] that are wise,
nor the aged that understand what is right.
[10] Therefore I say, 'Listen to me;
let me also declare my opinion.'

[11] "See, I waited for your words,
I listened for your wise sayings,
while you searched out what to say.
[12] I gave you my attention,
but there was in fact no one that confuted Job,
no one among you that answered his words.
[13] Yet do not say, 'We have found wisdom;
God may vanquish him, not a human.'
[14] He has not directed his words against me,
and I will not answer him with your speeches.

[15] "They are dismayed, they answer no more;
they have not a word to say.

[a] Another ancient tradition reads *answer, and had put God in the wrong*
[b] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *many*

hear me, i.e., God. **36:** Job would be proud to display the sheet of charges God has against him, for it would be blank (or else filled with falsehoods).

32.1–37.24: Elihu's speeches. Many scholars think that the Elihu speeches (chs. 32–37) are a later addition to the book, partly because Elihu is not mentioned in the prologue or epilogue. It may be, however, that the Elihu speeches originally followed directly after the last of the friends' third speeches, i.e., after ch 27, and that ch 28 was the last of Elihu's speeches. This rearrangement would make better sense of the phrase *these three men* in 32.1, and it would also mean that the LORD addresses Job immediately after Job's last speech (chs 29–31) is concluded. In any case, the Elihu speeches are part of the book we now have, and Elihu has a distinctive contribution to make to its argument. Elihu, who professes himself opposed both to Job and to his friends (32.2–3,10–12; 33.1–12) is offering a middle way between them. Against the friends, he argues that suffering is not necessarily the penalty for sin already committed, but may be a warning, to keep a person back from sin; it is better understood as discipline or education.

32.1–33.33: Elihu's first speech. 32.6–14: Elihu has hitherto deferred to the other friends on account of their greater age, but he realizes that all humans have an equal access to wisdom, since all have in them the *breath of the Almighty* (v. 8; cf. Gen 2.7). He feels he must speak because the friends have not answered Job adequately (vv. 11–14). **7:** *I said*, i.e., to myself. **9:** *It is not the old that are wise*, he must mean that it is not always the old who have wisdom. **15:** From here to the end of ch 33 Elihu addresses Job, referring to the friends as "they."

16 And am I to wait, because they do not
speak,
because they stand there, and answer
no more?
17 I also will give my answer;
I also will declare my opinion.
18 For I am full of words;
the spirit within me constrains me.
19 My heart is indeed like wine that has no
vent;
like new wineskins, it is ready to burst.
20 I must speak, so that I may find relief;
I must open my lips and answer.
21 I will not show partiality to any person
or use flattery toward anyone.
22 For I do not know how to flatter—
or my Maker would soon put an end to
me!

33 "But now, hear my speech, O Job,
and listen to all my words.
2 See, I open my mouth;
the tongue in my mouth speaks.
3 My words declare the uprightness of my
heart,
and what my lips know they speak
sincerely.
4 The spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty[a] gives
me life.
5 Answer me, if you can;
set your words in order before me; take
your stand.
6 See, before God I am as you are;
I too was formed from a piece of clay.
7 No fear of me need terrify you;
my pressure will not be heavy on you.

8 "Surely, you have spoken in my hearing,
and I have heard the sound of your
words.
9 You say, 'I am clean, without
transgression;
I am pure, and there is no iniquity in
me.
10 Look, he finds occasions against me,
he counts me as his enemy;
11 he puts my feet in the stocks,
and watches all my paths.'

12 "But in this you are not right. I will
answer you:
God is greater than any mortal.
13 Why do you contend against him,
saying, 'He will answer none of my[b]
words'?
14 For God speaks in one way,
and in two, though people do not
perceive it.
15 In a dream, in a vision of the night,
when deep sleep falls on mortals,
while they slumber on their beds,
16 then he opens their ears,
and terrifies them with warnings,
17 that he may turn them aside from their
deeds,
and keep them from pride,
18 to spare their souls from the Pit,
their lives from traversing the River.
19 They are also chastened with pain upon
their beds,
and with continual strife in their bones,
20 so that their lives loathe bread,
and their appetites dainty food.
21 Their flesh is so wasted away that it
cannot be seen;
and their bones, once invisible, now
stick out.
22 Their souls draw near the Pit,
and their lives to those who bring
death.
23 Then, if there should be for one of them
an angel,

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[b] Compare Gk: Heb *his*

17–22: Elihu's third reason for speaking is that he feels he will explode with frustration if he does not. **19:** It is not his *heart* but his "belly" that is like a wineskin that the new fermenting wine will burst if it is not vented. **33.1–7:** Elihu challenges Job to prepare for debate. **8–33:** Job believes, says Elihu, that he is faultless (v. 9), that God's treatment of him is pure malice (vv. 10–11), and that God refuses to answer his complaints of injustice (v. 13). Elihu's response is that God has various ways of speaking to humans, e.g., dreams (vv. 15–17) and suffering (vv. 19–28). In both cases, God's purpose is not to punish but to rescue humans from their sin (vv. 29–30). **18:** *The Pit*, another term for Sheol, the abode of the dead. *The River*, the underworld stream the dead must cross before they reach Sheol, like the Greek river Styx. **23:** *An angel, a mediator, one of a thousand*, probably "the thousand"

a mediator, one of a thousand,
one who declares a person upright,
24 and he is gracious to that person, and says,
'Deliver him from going down into the Pit;
I have found a ransom;
25 let his flesh become fresh with youth;
let him return to the days of his youthful vigor';
26 then he prays to God, and is accepted by him,
he comes into his presence with joy,
and God[a] repays him for his righteousness.
27 That person sings to others and says,
'I sinned, and perverted what was right,
and it was not paid back to me.
28 He has redeemed my soul from going down to the Pit,
and my life shall see the light.'

29 "God indeed does all these things,
twice, three times, with mortals,
30 to bring back their souls from the Pit,
so that they may see the light of life.[b]
31 Pay heed, Job, listen to me;
be silent, and I will speak.
32 If you have anything to say, answer me;
speak, for I desire to justify you.
33 If not, listen to me;
be silent, and I will teach you wisdom."

34 Then Elihu continued and said:
2 "Hear my words, you wise men,
and give ear to me, you who know;
3 for the ear tests words
as the palate tastes food.
4 Let us choose what is right;
let us determine among ourselves what is good.
5 For Job has said, 'I am innocent,
and God has taken away my right;
6 in spite of being right I am counted a liar;
my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.'
7 Who is there like Job,
who drinks up scoffing like water,
8 who goes in company with evildoers
and walks with the wicked?
9 For he has said, 'It profits one nothing to take delight in God.'

10 "Therefore, hear me, you who have sense,
far be it from God that he should do wickedness,
and from the Almighty[c] that he should do wrong.
11 For according to their deeds he will repay them,
and according to their ways he will make it befall them.
12 Of a truth, God will not do wickedly,
and the Almighty[c] will not pervert justice.
13 Who gave him charge over the earth
and who laid on him[d] the whole world?

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Syr: Heb *to be lighted with the light of life*
[c] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[d] Heb lacks *on him*

were a group of supportive angels (unlike the accusatory angel the Satan), who would take up the cause of humans in the divine court (cf. 5.1, where Eliphaz denies that Job can expect any help from such angels). **24:** *Ransom* is usually money paid to release a guilty person from punishment, but here some unspecified ground for forgiveness. **32:** Elihu's ultimate purpose, to *justify* Job, is like that of the supportive angels.

34.1–37: Elihu's second speech. In vv. 2–15 Elihu addresses the friends, in vv. 16–37 Job. God, he argues, cannot do wrong by failing to execute retribution; but Job is doing wrong by claiming that God has acted unjustly toward him. All of Elihu's criticism of Job concerns Job's speeches; he does not hold against him anything he may have said or done before the book opened. His focus is not on what Job deserves but on the infamy of his complaints against God. **7:** *Scoffing* is blasphemy against God, which is how Elihu regards Job's criticism of God. **8:** *Goes in company with evildoers*, metaphorically, by questioning the divine justice, Job puts himself in bad company. **9:** According to Job in 21.15, it is the wicked who say that there is no profit in religion, but Elihu asserts that Job's words, such as those in 9.22 and 21.7, amount to the same thing. Yet if Job were to say that religion is indeed profitable, he would deny that his piety is disinterested and he would accept the calumny of the Satan! **10–15:** God acts justly, for the righteous remain alive; if he did not, they might well be dead, for he has only to

14 If he should take back his spirit[a] to
himself,
and gather to himself his breath,
15 all flesh would perish together,
and all mortals return to dust.

16 "If you have understanding, hear this;
listen to what I say.
17 Shall one who hates justice govern?
Will you condemn one who is righteous
and mighty,
18 who says to a king, 'You scoundrel!'
and to princes, 'You wicked men!';
19 who shows no partiality to nobles,
nor regards the rich more than the poor,
for they are all the work of his hands?
20 In a moment they die;
at midnight the people are shaken and
pass away,
and the mighty are taken away by no
human hand.

21 "For his eyes are upon the ways of
mortals,
and he sees all their steps.
22 There is no gloom or deep darkness
where evildoers may hide themselves.
23 For he has not appointed a time[b] for
anyone
to go before God in judgment.
24 He shatters the mighty without
investigation,
and sets others in their place.
25 Thus, knowing their works,
he overturns them in the night, and
they are crushed.
26 He strikes them for their wickedness
while others look on,
27 because they turned aside from
following him,
and had no regard for any of his ways,
28 so that they caused the cry of the poor to
come to him,
and he heard the cry of the afflicted—
29 When he is quiet, who can condemn?
When he hides his face, who can behold
him,
whether it be a nation or an
individual?—
30 so that the godless should not reign,
or those who ensnare the people.

31 "For has anyone said to God,
'I have endured punishment; I will not
offend any more;
32 teach me what I do not see;
if I have done iniquity, I will do it no
more'?
33 Will he then pay back to suit you,
because you reject it?
For you must choose, and not I;
therefore declare what you know.[c]
34 Those who have sense will
say to me,
and the wise who hear me will say,
35 'Job speaks without knowledge,
his words are without insight.'
36 Would that Job were tried to the limit,
because his answers are those of the
wicked.
37 For he adds rebellion to his sin;
he claps his hands among us,
and multiplies his words against God."

35 Elihu continued and said:
2 "Do you think this to be just?
You say, 'I am in the right before God.'
3 If you ask, 'What advantage have I?
How am I better off than if I had sinned?'
4 I will answer you
and your friends with you.
5 Look at the heavens and see;
observe the clouds, which are higher
than you.

[a] Heb *his heart his spirit*
[b] Cn: Heb *yet*
[c] Meaning of Heb of verses 29-33 uncertain

gather to himself his breath and mortals die. **16–37:** Turning to Job, Elihu makes the same argument: God, as the universal ruler, cannot act wrongly, and Job's suggestion that he can is itself a wickedness. **21:** Although Elihu speaks of *mortals* generally, his concern is purely with rulers. **24–28:** Elihu does not refer to all rulers, only to those who have behaved unjustly.

35.1–16: Elihu's third speech. 2–8: Elihu takes up Job's complaints, that he is no better off than if he had sinned (v. 3b), and that there is no benefit in righteousness (v. 3a). Elihu responds that piety should be assessed in terms of benefit, and that justice is not a matter of one's own rights and deserts, but of others benefiting

6 If you have sinned, what do you
accomplish against him?
And if your transgressions are
multiplied, what do you do to
him?
7 If you are righteous, what do you give to
him;
or what does he receive from your
hand?
8 Your wickedness affects others like you,
and your righteousness, other human
beings.

9 "Because of the multitude of oppressions
people cry out;
they call for help because of the arm of
the mighty.
10 But no one says, 'Where is God my
Maker,
who gives strength in the night,
11 who teaches us more than the animals of
the earth,
and makes us wiser than the birds of
the air?'
12 There they cry out, but he does not
answer,
because of the pride of evildoers.
13 Surely God does not hear an empty cry,
nor does the Almighty[a] regard it.
14 How much less when you say that you do
not see him,
that the case is before him, and you are
waiting for him!
15 And now, because his anger does not
punish,
and he does not greatly heed
transgression,[b]
16 Job opens his mouth in empty talk,
he multiplies words without
knowledge."

36 Elihu continued and said:
2 "Bear with me a little, and I will show
you,
for I have yet something to say on God's
behalf.
3 I will bring my knowledge from far away,
and ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
4 For truly my words are not false;
one who is perfect in knowledge is with
you.

5 "Surely God is mighty and does not
despise any;
he is mighty in strength of
understanding.
6 He does not keep the wicked alive,
but gives the afflicted their right.
7 He does not withdraw his eyes from the
righteous,
but with kings on the throne
he sets them forever, and they are
exalted.
8 And if they are bound in fetters
and caught in the cords of affliction,
9 then he declares to them their work
and their transgressions, that they are
behaving arrogantly.
10 He opens their ears to instruction,
and commands that they return from
iniquity.
11 If they listen, and serve him,
they complete their days in prosperity,
and their years in pleasantness.
12 But if they do not listen, they shall perish
by the sword,
and die without knowledge.

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[b] Theodotion Symmachus Compare Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

from one's virtue. **6:** Reminiscent of Job in 7.20; but whereas Job meant that any sin he may have done is hardly worth retribution since he himself will soon be dead, Elihu means that the important thing is the effect of sin or righteousness upon humans rather than upon God. **9–16:** The absence of a response from God does not mean that God cares nothing about humans, as Job claimed (24.12). God responds to the cries of the oppressed only if they deserve justice, for being oppressed is no proof of innocence, and crying out in pain is not the same as crying to God for deliverance.

36.1–37.24: Elihu's fourth speech. It has two parts: 36.2–25, continuing the theme of the justice of God, and 36.26–37.24, an instruction on the theme of the God of nature, its subtext being that God's energies in creation and world governance are vehicles of his righteous judgments. **36.5–15:** The topic is how God treats those righteous people who fall into sin (vv. 7–12,15) in comparison with how he treats the truly wicked (vv. 6,14). By allowing that the righteous are sometimes sinful, Elihu transcends the traditional dogma that drew a firm line

13 "The godless in heart cherish anger;
they do not cry for help when he binds them.
14 They die in their youth,
and their life ends in shame.[a]
15 He delivers the afflicted by their affliction,
and opens their ear by adversity.
16 He also allured you out of distress
into a broad place where there was no constraint,
and what was set on your table was full of fatness.

17 "But you are obsessed with the case of the wicked;
judgment and justice seize you.
18 Beware that wrath does not entice you into scoffing,
and do not let the greatness of the ransom turn you aside.
19 Will your cry avail to keep you from distress,
or will all the force of your strength?
20 Do not long for the night,
when peoples are cut off in their place.
21 Beware! Do not turn to iniquity;
because of that you have been tried by affliction.
22 See, God is exalted in his power;
who is a teacher like him?
23 Who has prescribed for him his way,
or who can say, 'You have done wrong'?

24 "Remember to extol his work,
of which mortals have sung.
25 All people have looked on it;
everyone watches it from far away.
26 Surely God is great, and we do not know him;
the number of his years is unsearchable.
27 For he draws up the drops of water;
he distills[b] his mist in rain,
28 which the skies pour down
and drop upon mortals abundantly.
29 Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds,
the thunderings of his pavilion?
30 See, he scatters his lightning around him
and covers the roots of the sea.
31 For by these he governs peoples;
he gives food in abundance.
32 He covers his hands with the lightning,
and commands it to strike the mark.
33 Its crashing[c] tells about him;
he is jealous[c] with anger against iniquity.

37 "At this also my heart trembles,
and leaps out of its place.
2 Listen, listen to the thunder of his voice
and the rumbling that comes from his mouth.
3 Under the whole heaven he lets it loose,
and his lightning to the corners of the earth.
4 After it his voice roars;
he thunders with his majestic voice
and he does not restrain the lightnings[d] when his voice is heard.
5 God thunders wondrously with his voice;
he does great things that we cannot comprehend.
6 For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth';
and the shower of rain, his heavy shower of rain,
7 serves as a sign on everyone's hand,

[a] Heb *ends among the temple prostitutes*
[b] Cn: Heb *they distill*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Heb *them*

between righteous and wicked. **16–25:** Now Elihu offers his personal advice to Job. Finding himself subject to God's punishment, what he should do is not to complain about the injustice of it, but to discover in it God's instruction. **36.26–37.24:** Suffering is education, says Elihu, and God is the great Teacher. He has built into the order of creation lessons for the improvement of humans. Rain, for example, is a means of exhibiting divine munificence toward humans. **29:** *Pavilion,* God's heavenly dwelling (cf. 2 Sam 22.12). **30:** *Covers the roots of the sea*, the verb should rather mean "uncovers." **32:** It is here bolt lightning, as distinct from sheet lightning in v. 30. **36.33–37.5:** Thunder and lightning are further examples of how God teaches humans. **37.6–8:** The snows and rains of winter are both mysterious (v. 5b) and a further communication of the divine, "so that all may rec-

so that all whom he has made may
know it.[a]
[8] Then the animals go into their lairs
and remain in their dens.
[9] From its chamber comes the whirlwind,
and cold from the scattering winds.
[10] By the breath of God ice is given,
and the broad waters are frozen fast.
[11] He loads the thick cloud with moisture;
the clouds scatter his lightning.
[12] They turn round and round by his
guidance,
to accomplish all that he commands
them
on the face of the habitable world.
[13] Whether for correction, or for his land,
or for love, he causes it to happen.

[14] "Hear this, O Job;
stop and consider the wondrous works
of God.
[15] Do you know how God lays his command
upon them,
and causes the lightning of his cloud to
shine?
[16] Do you know the balancings of the
clouds,
the wondrous works of the one whose
knowledge is perfect,
[17] you whose garments are hot
when the earth is still because of the
south wind?
[18] Can you, like him, spread out the skies,
hard as a molten mirror?
[19] Teach us what we shall say to him;
we cannot draw up our case because of
darkness.
[20] Should he be told that I want to speak?
Did anyone ever wish to be swallowed
up?
[21] Now, no one can look on the light
when it is bright in the skies,
when the wind has passed and cleared
them.
[22] Out of the north comes golden splendor;
around God is awesome majesty.
[23] The Almighty[b]—we cannot find him;
he is great in power and justice,
and abundant righteousness he will not
violate.
[24] Therefore mortals fear him;
he does not regard any who are wise in
their own conceit."

38 Then the LORD answered Job out of
the whirlwind:
[2] "Who is this that darkens counsel by
words without knowledge?
[3] Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall
declare to me.

[4] "Where were you when I laid the
foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.

[a] Meaning of Heb of verse 7 uncertain
[b] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

ognize that he is at work" (as v. 7b should probably be translated). **9–13:** Other meteorological phenomena. **9:** The winds are stored in heavenly chambers. *Whirlwind*, or rather "tempest" (a whirlwind is properly a tornado).

13: Rain can have various significances: it may be a punishment (a *correction*), a sign of God's *love* (or rather, "loyalty"), or a token of his care for his world (as when it falls on uninhabited land; cf. 38.26). In any case, it tells humans something about God's workings. **14–24:** Some of the most obscure verses in the whole book. **22:** The *north* sometimes means the heavens (as in 26.7), and the *golden splendor* may be simply the sun. For the possibility that the speeches of Elihu originally ended with the poem about wisdom, see 32.1–37.24n; 28.1–28n.

38.1–42.6: The LORD's speeches and Job's responses.

38.1–40.2: The LORD's first speech. Between the proem in 38.2–3 and the peroration in 40.1–2, the speech is divided into two almost equal halves: 38.4–38 concerning the physical universe, and 38.39–39.30 concerning the world of animals. The divine speeches are notable for their silence over Job's complaint of injustice, as if God means to say that administering justice is not part of his cosmic plan. **38.1:** *Whirlwind,* better "storm," see 37.9. **2:** *Counsel*, or rather "the plan," the set of divine principles according to which the creation is run. Job *darkens*, or "obscures," them by focusing on his quest for justice, which is not included in the divine plan. **3:** *Gird up your loins like a man*, as a warrior does in preparation for combat. Job had better understand that summoning God to trial will not lead to a calm, rational, orderly legal process. **4–38:** In ten strophes, the Lord sketches his design, or plan, for the universe. **4–7:** Creation is conceived as the erection of a building. For the creator as

[5] Who determined its measurements—
surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
[6] On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
[7] when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings[a] shouted
for joy?

[8] "Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst out from the womb?—
[9] when I made the clouds its garment,
and thick darkness its swaddling band,
[10] and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,
[11] and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and
no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be
stopped'?

[12] "Have you commanded the morning
since your days began,
and caused the dawn to know its place,
[13] so that it might take hold of the skirts of
the earth,
and the wicked be shaken out of it?
[14] It is changed like clay under the seal,
and it is dyed[b] like a garment.
[15] Light is withheld from the wicked,
and their uplifted arm is broken.

[16] "Have you entered into the springs of
the sea,
or walked in the recesses of the deep?
[17] Have the gates of death been revealed to
you,
or have you seen the gates of deep
darkness?

[18] Have you comprehended the expanse of
the earth?
Declare, if you know all this.

[19] "Where is the way to the dwelling of light,
and where is the place of darkness,
[20] that you may take it to its territory
and that you may discern the paths to
its home?
[21] Surely you know, for you were born then,
and the number of your days is great!

[22] "Have you entered the storehouses of
the snow,
or have you seen the storehouses of the
hail,
[23] which I have reserved for the time of
trouble,
for the day of battle and war?
[24] What is the way to the place where the
light is distributed,
or where the east wind is scattered
upon the earth?

[25] "Who has cut a channel for the torrents
of rain,
and a way for the thunderbolt,
[26] to bring rain on a land where no one lives,
on the desert, which is empty of human
life,
[27] to satisfy the waste and desolate land,
and to make the ground put forth grass?

[28] "Has the rain a father,
or who has begotten the drops of dew?

[a] Heb *sons of God*
[b] Cn: Heb *and they stand forth*

architect, see Prov 8.27–30. The earth was built on foundations (vv. 4–6; see Pss 78.69; 102.25; 104.5; Isa 48.13), and strict limits were set for the primeval waters of chaos (vv. 8–11; 26.10; Pss 104.9; 148.6). **5:** *The line*, the measuring line for its foundations. **6:** *Cornerstone* should properly be "capstone," the last and topmost stone laid. Sinking the bases and laying the capstone mark the beginning and end of the work. **7:** The *stars* are regarded as *heavenly beings*. **8–11:** The separation of sea and land at creation. There is allusion to the ancient myth of a primordial divine struggle with the sea (cf. 7.12; 9.13), although the imagery uncharacteristically treats the sea as a newborn baby. **12–15:** The daily renewal of creation as each day is created afresh. As in 24.13–17, it is assumed that the wicked prefer the cover of darkness for their activities. **16–18:** The extent of the world, together with the underworld, *death* being regarded as a city with *gates*. **19–21:** *Light* and *darkness* are thought of as dwelling in the same home, using it each day in turns. **22–24:** *Snow, hail,* and heat are kept in heavenly storehouses. **24:** It is probably "heat," rather than *light* that is distributed over the earth, often by the hot, violent *east wind* or sirocco. **25–27:** Rainstorms travel via an unseen channel through the air from the clouds to the earth. **28–30:** *Rain, dew, ice, hoarfrost* are more placid forms of moisture than torrents (v. 25). **28:** *Has the rain a father?* No, it

29 From whose womb did the ice come
forth,
and who has given birth to the
hoarfrost of heaven?
30 The waters become hard like stone,
and the face of the deep is frozen.

31 "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades,
or loose the cords of Orion?
32 Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in
their season,
or can you guide the Bear with its
children?
33 Do you know the ordinances of the
heavens?
Can you establish their rule on the
earth?

34 "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,
so that a flood of waters may cover you?
35 Can you send forth lightnings, so that
they may go
and say to you, 'Here we are'?
36 Who has put wisdom in the inward
parts,[a]
or given understanding to the mind?[a]
37 Who has the wisdom to number the
clouds?
Or who can tilt the waterskins of the
heavens,
38 when the dust runs into a mass
and the clods cling together?

39 "Can you hunt the prey for the lion,
or satisfy the appetite of the young
lions,
40 when they crouch in their dens,
or lie in wait in their covert?
41 Who provides for the raven its prey,
when its young ones cry to God,
and wander about for lack of food?

39 "Do you know when the mountain
goats give birth?
Do you observe the calving of the deer?
2 Can you number the months that they
fulfill,
and do you know the time when they
give birth,
3 when they crouch to give birth to their
offspring,
and are delivered of their young?
4 Their young ones become strong, they
grow up in the open;
they go forth, and do not return to
them.

5 "Who has let the wild ass go free?
Who has loosed the bonds of the swift
ass,
6 to which I have given the steppe for its
home,
the salt land for its dwelling place?
7 It scorns the tumult of the city;
it does not hear the shouts of the
driver.
8 It ranges the mountains as its pasture,
and it searches after every green thing.

9 "Is the wild ox willing to serve you?
Will it spend the night at your crib?
10 Can you tie it in the furrow with ropes,
or will it harrow the valleys after you?
11 Will you depend on it because its
strength is great,
and will you hand over your labor to it?

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

has no mythological ancestry, it is not supernatural. **29:** *Ice* is properly "rime" formed when water droplets in fog freeze, as on trees, as distinct from *hoarfrost* formed when water vapor settles, as on the ground. **31–33:** The four constellations, the *Pleiades*, *Orion*, *Mazzaroth* (perhaps the Hyades), and the *Bear* (or better, Aldebaran), were all regarded as bringers of rain; see 9.9n. *Binding* and *loosing* would be interfering with their rain-making. **34–38:** The clouds and lightning do not fall of their own accord, but in obedience to their master's voice. **36:** The verse should be translated: "Who gave the ibis its wisdom or endowed the rooster with its intelligence?" Both birds were regarded as foretellers of rain, which is depicted as stored in great jars (v. 37; not *waterskins*) in the clouds. **38.39–39.30:** In seven strophes, nine animals are depicted. They are all undomesticated animals, which live independently of humans. **38.39–41:** The lion and the raven—one huge, the other small—both need to hunt to feed their young. **39.1–4:** *Mountain goats* or ibexes, unlike lions and ravens, are shy and elusive. **5–8:** The *wild ass* or onager was famous for its independence and freedom, in contrast to its domesticated cousin the ass. **9–12:** The *wild ox* or aurochs was a massive animal with long thick horns; it too is contrasted with its

12 Do you have faith in it that it will return,
and bring your grain to your threshing
floor?[a]

13 "The ostrich's wings flap wildly,
though its pinions lack plumage.[b]
14 For it leaves its eggs to the earth,
and lets them be warmed on the
ground,
15 forgetting that a foot may crush them,
and that a wild animal may trample
them.
16 It deals cruelly with its young, as if they
were not its own;
though its labor should be in vain, yet it
has no fear;
17 because God has made it forget wisdom,
and given it no share in
understanding.
18 When it spreads its plumes aloft,[b]
it laughs at the horse and its rider.

19 "Do you give the horse its might?
Do you clothe its neck with mane?
20 Do you make it leap like the locust?
Its majestic snorting is terrible.
21 It paws[c] violently, exults mightily;
it goes out to meet the weapons.
22 It laughs at fear, and is not dismayed;
it does not turn back from the sword.
23 Upon it rattle the quiver,
the flashing spear, and the javelin.
24 With fierceness and rage it swallows the
ground;
it cannot stand still at the sound of the
trumpet.
25 When the trumpet sounds, it says 'Aha!'
From a distance it smells the battle,
the thunder of the captains, and the
shouting.
26 "Is it by your wisdom that the hawk
soars,
and spreads its wings toward the south?
27 Is it at your command that the eagle
mounts up
and makes its nest on high?
28 It lives on the rock and makes its home
in the fastness of the rocky crag.
29 From there it spies the prey;
its eyes see it from far away.
30 Its young ones suck up blood;
and where the slain are, there it is."

40 And the LORD said to Job:
2 "Shall a faultfinder contend with the
Almighty?[d]
Anyone who argues with God must
respond."

3 Then Job answered the LORD:
4 "See, I am of small account; what shall I
answer you?
I lay my hand on my mouth.
5 I have spoken once, and I will not
answer;
twice, but will proceed no further."

6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the
whirlwind:
7 "Gird up your loins like a man;
I will question you, and you declare to
me.
8 Will you even put me in the wrong?
Will you condemn me that you may be
justified?

[a] Heb *your grain and your threshing floor*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they dig*
[d] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

obedient and hard-working domesticated counterpart. **13–18:** The *ostrich* is a paradoxical creature: it is a bird that cannot fly, and while reputedly foolish, it is clever enough to escape its predators. **19–25:** The war *horse* is not exactly wild, but it has a will of its own and is not a servant of humans. **26–30:** The *hawk* and the *eagle* are birds of prey. **26:** The *wisdom* of the hawk is its instinct for its seasonal migration. **27:** *Eagle*, probably vulture. **30:** Vultures feed on the dead *slain* in battle. **40.1–2:** Despite the didactic language of the divine speech, this challenge shows that the ruling metaphor is still that of the lawsuit, in which Job must now either concede the case or offer new arguments.

40.3–5: Job's first response. Strikingly, Job does not capitulate; he says only that he will not repeat what he has already said. He defers his response until he speaks again in 42.2–6.

40.6–41.34: The LORD's second speech. 40.7–14: God's question *Will you even put me in the wrong?* (v. 8) means that he has correctly heard Job's speeches as not merely a demand for personal vindication but as a

9 Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a voice like his?

10 "Deck yourself with majesty and dignity;
clothe yourself with glory and splendor.
11 Pour out the overflowings of your anger,
and look on all who are proud, and abase them.
12 Look on all who are proud, and bring them low;
tread down the wicked where they stand.
13 Hide them all in the dust together;
bind their faces in the world below.[a]
14 Then I will also acknowledge to you
that your own right hand can give you victory.

15 "Look at Behemoth,
which I made just as I made you;
it eats grass like an ox.
16 Its strength is in its loins,
and its power in the muscles of its belly.
17 It makes its tail stiff like a cedar;
the sinews of its thighs are knit together.
18 Its bones are tubes of bronze,
its limbs like bars of iron.

19 "It is the first of the great acts of God—
only its Maker can approach it with the sword.
20 For the mountains yield food for it
where all the wild animals play.
21 Under the lotus plants it lies,
in the covert of the reeds and in the marsh.
22 The lotus trees cover it for shade;
the willows of the wadi surround it.
23 Even if the river is turbulent, it is not frightened;
it is confident though Jordan rushes against its mouth.
24 Can one take it with hooks[b]
or pierce its nose with a snare?

41[c] "Can you draw out Leviathan[d] with a fishhook,
or press down its tongue with a cord?
2 Can you put a rope in its nose,
or pierce its jaw with a hook?
3 Will it make many supplications to you?
Will it speak soft words to you?
4 Will it make a covenant with you
to be taken as your servant forever?
5 Will you play with it as with a bird,
or will you put it on leash for your girls?
6 Will traders bargain over it?
Will they divide it up among the merchants?
7 Can you fill its skin with harpoons,
or its head with fishing spears?
8 Lay hands on it;
think of the battle; you will not do it again!
9[e] Any hope of capturing it[f] will be disappointed;
were not even the gods[g] overwhelmed at the sight of it?

a Heb *the hidden place*
b Cn: Heb *in his eyes*
c Ch 40.25 in Heb
d Or *the crocodile*
e Ch 41.1 in Heb
f Heb *of it*
g Cn Compare Symmachus Syr: Heb *one is*

far-reaching critique of God's government of the world and as a demand for an alternative world order. God is obviously not going to change his world order, so his ironic response is: let Job reorder the world to his own taste by crushing the wicked (vv. 11–13); then he will have nothing to complain about. **15–24:** *Behemoth* is an ambiguous figure. It is dangerous, and yet to try capturing it is so absurd that it is beyond being a danger. It is powerful but actually does little except sleep, eat, and procreate. Unlike the animals of the first divine speech, it is a beast without qualities. Yet it is God's showpiece (v. 19a). Is it because it so well represents God's freedom to refuse rules and rationality and principles of utility? *Behemoth* is literally the plural of the common Heb term for "animal." Scholarly opinion is divided as to whether it is a primeval monster (v. 19) or is to be identified with the hippopotamus. It is otherwise not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible; see 2 Esd 6.49,51. **41.1–34:** The depiction of *Leviathan* treats, first, the impossibility of capturing it (vv. 1–11), second, its physical characteristics (vv. 12–24), and third, the creature in motion (vv. 25–32). Unlike Behemoth, who was indolent and unthreatening,

10 No one is so fierce as to dare to stir it up.
Who can stand before it?[a]
11 Who can confront it[a] and be safe?[b]
—under the whole heaven, who?[c]

12 "I will not keep silence concerning its limbs,
or its mighty strength, or its splendid frame.
13 Who can strip off its outer garment?
Who can penetrate its double coat of mail?[d]
14 Who can open the doors of its face?
There is terror all around its teeth.
15 Its back[e] is made of shields in rows,
shut up closely as with a seal.
16 One is so near to another
that no air can come between them.
17 They are joined one to another;
they clasp each other and cannot be separated.
18 Its sneezes flash forth light,
and its eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.
19 From its mouth go flaming torches;
sparks of fire leap out.
20 Out of its nostrils comes smoke,
as from a boiling pot and burning rushes.
21 Its breath kindles coals,
and a flame comes out of its mouth.
22 In its neck abides strength,
and terror dances before it.
23 The folds of its flesh cling together;
it is firmly cast and immovable.
24 Its heart is as hard as stone,
as hard as the lower millstone.
25 When it raises itself up the gods are afraid;
at the crashing they are beside themselves.
26 Though the sword reaches it, it does not avail,
nor does the spear, the dart, or the javelin.
27 It counts iron as straw,
and bronze as rotten wood.
28 The arrow cannot make it flee;
slingstones, for it, are turned to chaff.
29 Clubs are counted as chaff;
it laughs at the rattle of javelins.
30 Its underparts are like sharp potsherds;
it spreads itself like a threshing sledge on the mire.
31 It makes the deep boil like a pot;
it makes the sea like a pot of ointment.
32 It leaves a shining wake behind it;
one would think the deep to be white-haired.
33 On earth it has no equal,
a creature without fear.
34 It surveys everything that is lofty;
it is king over all that are proud."

42 Then Job answered the LORD:
2 "I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
3 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

[a] Heb *me*
[b] Gk: Heb *that I shall repay*
[c] Heb *to me*
[d] Gk: Heb *bridle*
[e] Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb *pride*

Leviathan is nothing but violence and turmoil. Leviathan is described in terms that evoke the crocodile; some scholars understand it as the mythical chaos monster. (See 3.8n.) **34:** As *king* of beasts, Leviathan is a source of pleasure and pride for its maker.

42.1–6: Job's second response. Job abandons his lawsuit against God, but his charges have not been answered. He says: (1) *I know that you can do all things* (v. 2). He has always known that, but he means that he now recognizes that for God questions of justice are collapsed into the issue of his power. Job can only ever confront God's power, a sphere where he will inevitably be a loser. (2) *I have uttered . . . things too wonderful for me* (v. 3), Job means that he now realizes that cosmic justice is a marvel beyond human comprehension, like the structure of the universe. Justice is not a principle or value to which God is subject. (3) Now that he has *heard* God for himself and his *eye sees* him (a metaphor for his experience of God), he "submits" and "accepts consolation." *I despise myself*, no object of the verb is expressed, and the verb is probably not Heb "ma'as," "despise," but

4 'Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.'
5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
6 therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes."

7 After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. 8 Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has done." 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

10 And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money[a] and a gold ring. 12 The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. 13 He also had seven sons and three daughters. 14 He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. 15 In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. 16 After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. 17 And Job died, old and full of days.

[a] Heb *a qesitah*

"masas," "melt, be discouraged," as in Josh 2.11 (REB rightly translates "I yield"). *Repent*, Job has never acknowledged any sin, so he cannot be repenting; the verb means rather "be comforted." Job means he will now end his period of mourning (in *dust and ashes*) and resume his normal life.

42.7–17: Epilogue. The naive narrative of the folktale world of the prologue resumes, as Job is vindicated in the eyes of his friends (vv. 7–9) and his extended family (vv. 10–17). **7:** Surprisingly, the LORD is angry with the friends and their *folly* (v. 8), but says Job has *spoken of me what is right.* He must be referring to Job's conclusion that God does not execute justice in the realm of humans, which the friends always denied but which God himself has effectively admitted in his speeches. **10–17:** Job's lost possessions are restored to him twice over—perhaps an acknowledgment that what he had lost at the beginning of the story had actually been stolen from him by God (cf. Ex 22.4, where a thief must pay double restitution). He acquires a new family to replace his dead children, and he is feted by his family and friends. The pious man Job once again becomes the wealthiest man in all the east; so is the doctrine of retribution—which the book of Job has seemed so concerned to refute—here affirmed? **11:** *Bread* means "food." The *piece of money* is not a coin but a piece of silver of guaranteed weight. **14:** *Jemimah* probably means "turtledove," *Keziah* "cassia" or cinnamon, *Keren-happuch* "antinomy," a black eye cosmetic, the three names invoking the three senses of hearing, taste, and sight. **15:** Along with his sons, Job's daughters are given an inheritance, an unusual practice.

PSALMS

NAME, LOCATION IN CANON, AND NUMBERING

The word "Psalms" derives from the Greek name of the book, *Psalmoi*, which means songs played to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument. This title reflects the musical character of the psalms here as hymns or compositions that were sung. The book's Hebrew name, *Tehillim*, "praises," recalls a predominant type of poem in the book, but this is not accurate, since the book contains many other genres of prayers as well.

In Jewish Bibles today the book of Psalms is the first book of the Writings, the third part of the canon. In Christian Bibles it is one of the poetical books, coming after the book of Job. In older manuscripts these books often occur in a slightly different order.

There have been two systems of numbering the psalms, one dependent on the Hebrew text and the other on the Greek Septuagint (LXX). The LXX counted Pss 9–10 and 114–115 as single poems and divided Pss 116 and 148 into two poems, resulting in a discrepancy of one from the Hebrew numbering of Pss 8–147; in the case of Pss 9–10 the LXX is clearly correct: they form a single acrostic (alphabetic) psalm. The Latin Vulgate and older Roman Catholic translations follow the Septuagint numbering; all modern translations follow the Hebrew chapter numbering. There are also two systems of numbering psalm verses. The most common system, used by the NRSV and most English translations, assigns no verse number to the superscription or title, so that "v. 1" is always the first line of the psalm poem. The other system follows printed Hebrew Bibles in assigning a verse number to the superscription and thus often is one verse behind the NRSV verse number.

DATE AND AUTHORSHIP

The book of Psalms is an anthology, or more properly an anthology of anthologies, comprising several collections of poetic prayers composed at various times and places in ancient Israel, mostly in the first half of the first millennium BCE. Although many are attributed to King David, and some to other individuals, scholars agree that few if any were actually written by them. Rather, their authors, like those of many of the books of the Hebrew Bible, are anonymous.

STRUCTURE AND SUPERSCRIPTIONS

The book of Psalms is divided into five books, a deliberate parallel to the five books of the Torah or Pentateuch. Each of these five parts—Psalms 1–41; 42–72; 73–89; 90–106; 107–150—ends with a doxology or "word of praise." Psalm 1 introduces this collection by explicitly mentioning "the law (Heb *torah*) of the LORD." Psalm 150 serves as a megadoxology, concluding both the fifth part and the book of Psalms as a whole. In it "everything that breathes" praises the LORD in heaven and on earth, using a wide variety of musical instruments.

Within the five parts, we find evidence of other collections. A note at the end of Ps 72 states "The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended," but after this another eighteen psalms are attributed to David. Psalms 42–49; 84; 85; 87; and 88 are attributed to "the Korahites," members of a priestly family whose ancestor was Korah. Psalms 50 and 73–83 are attributed to Asaph, one of Korah's sons, and Ps 88 to Heman, another of his sons. Psalms 93–99, clustered together, share the theme of divine kingship. Each of Pss 120–134 is called "A Song of Ascents," creating another collection, perhaps sung by pilgrims as they made their way up to Jerusalem or into the Temple precincts. Individual psalms are repeated (with some variation) as well (e.g., Ps 14 = Ps 53), indicating that the book in its final form is an anthology of collections, some of which contain identical texts.

Scholars have also identified another collection: Psalms 43–83 are called the "Elohistic Psalter," because here there is a preference for the divine name *Elohim* ("God") over *Yahweh* ("the LORD"), which is much more frequent in the other psalms. Recent scholarship has attempted to identify stylistic and theological features of collections such as the psalms attributed to the Korahites (Pss 42–49; 84–88), who were a guild of Temple singers (2 Chr 20.19).

Many of the psalms have superscriptions—titles or prefatory verses that were added over the centuries. They are attempts to link the psalm to a biblical character, especially to David, or to suggest an apt context for the psalm. Unfortunately, few of the technical terms can be identified with any certainty. The phrase "To the

leader" occurs fifty-five times, usually with the ascription of the psalm "Of David." Some terms may be the names of melodies, for example, "Do Not Destroy" (Pss 57–59; 75), and "The Deer of the Dawn" (Ps 22). Other terms that occur are "Prayer" (Heb *tepillah*), "Maskil" ("instructive poem"?), "Psalm" (Heb *mizmor*), and "Song" (*shir*). Many of the terms in the superscriptions are uncertain, as is "Selah," a Hebrew word occurring seventy-one times in the body of thirty-nine psalms, perhaps to mark stanza divisions.

THE POETRY OF THE PSALMS

It is remarkable, though easily overlooked, that the Psalms are poems and in many manuscripts are formatted—like Proverbs and Job, differently from other biblical books—in lines rather than in continuously running format (line for line). This format provides segmentation that interrupts the continuous flow of sense found in prose, thereby increasing information density and emotion. Rather than relying for meaning on plot, character, and setting as in narrative prose , biblical verse relies heavily on verbal resources—the sound and meaning of words, rhyme, repetition, images, fixed word-pairs and the like. Consequently, in comparison with narrative prose, verse is seemingly more "disjointed," personal, and capable of being sung. A major characteristic of Hebrew poetry is parallelism of lines in which the second line can be synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic of the first: for example, "In Judah God is known, / his name is great in Israel" (Ps 76.1, synonymous); "For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, / but the way of the wicked will perish" (Ps 1.6, antithetic); "As a deer longs for flowing streams, / so my soul longs for you, O God" (Ps 42.1, synthetic). Thus, in synonymous parallelism, the second line repeats in different words what has already been expressed in the first; in antithetic parallelism, the second line presents the same idea as the first by way of contrast or negation; and synthetic parallelism completes or expands the idea of the first part in the second part. Parallelism slows the pace of the poem and sets up resonances between lines. Biblical verse is not metrical in a modern sense, but it does have phonemic stress that contributes to the rhythm.

GENRES

More than eighty psalms fall into one of three main types or genres: hymn, petition (used in these notes for the customary "lament"; "lament" is only one component of the petition), and thanksgiving.

- *Hymn* (approximately twenty-eight psalms). The structure is simple: a call to worship, often with the subject named (e.g., "Praise the Lord, all you nations," Ps 117.1), sometimes with musical instruments mentioned (e.g., "Praise him with trumpet sound," Ps 150.3). The invitatory phrase is often repeated in the final verse. The body of the poem is normally introduced by the preposition "for, because," giving the basis for the praise. This is typically something God has done, for example, the act by which Israel came into being as a people: the Exodus from Egypt and entry into Canaan. References to this one event can be in historical terms with human characters prominent (e.g., Ps 105) or in mythical terms with God portrayed as acting directly rather than through human agency (e.g., Ps 114).
- *Individual petition* (approximately forty psalms). Petitionary psalms begin with an unadorned cry to the Lord (e.g., "Help, O Lord!" Ps 12.1). This is followed by a complaint, namely a description of a difficulty facing the psalmist such as sickness, unfair legal accusation, treachery of former friends, or ostracism from the community as a consequence of sin. Usually there is a statement of trust, uttered despite the trouble, which is often described hyperbolically (e.g., "I am not afraid of ten thousands of people," Ps 3.6). The worshiper prays for rescue and sometimes also for the downfall of the enemy. Some contain confessions of guilt, while others suggest that the psalmist is persecuted for unknown or unfair reasons. Each petition is a minidrama with three actors: the psalmist, the enemies (often "the wicked"), and God. Psalmists portray themselves as loyal followers of the Lord who are victims of a serious affliction (often personified) from which their Lord, their patron, should rescue them.
- *Community petitions* (about eighteen psalms) complain that the Lord has abandoned the nation to its enemies. They often "remember" or recite before God the event that brought Israel into existence in the hope that God will reactivate that event. Can the Lord allow that founding event to be annulled by an enemy? The foundational event can be described in various ways, for example, transplanting a vine from Egypt (Ps 80.8,14) or defeating Sea and installing the people in their land (Ps 77).

- *Individual thanksgiving* (about twelve psalms). Such psalms presume that the LORD has answered the petition and now give thanks to the LORD. In a sense they are a follow-up of the individual petition, for they report to the community how God has heard the petition, a biblical way of giving thanks.

About thirty psalms are grouped together by scholars according to their subject: royal songs, Zion songs, festival songs, and liturgies. According to style or tone, others are reckoned "songs of trust" (e.g., Pss 23; 91; 121) and "instructions" (e.g., Pss 37; 49; 73). Three psalms have "torah" (authoritative instruction) as their subject (Pss 1; 19; 119).

THE TEMPLE AS CONTEXT FOR PSALMS

The Jerusalem Temple was an essential element of Israelite religion, and it is not surprising that many psalms refer to it (e.g., "the courts of the house of the LORD," Ps 116.19); its ceremonies ("inquire in his temple," Ps 27.4); and the three annual feasts of pilgrimage to the Temple (the Psalter's frequent allusions to the Exodus would have been appropriate for any of the feasts). Some scholars have suggested that a New Year Festival was celebrated in preexilic Israel in early fall at which time enthronement psalms would have been fitting (e.g., Pss 47; 93; 95–100). In these psalms the Hebrew verb customarily rendered "the LORD is king," could also be translated as "the LORD has become king," celebrating the recognition that the LORD has overcome his foes and brought the world into being.

With the Babylonian destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE, the scattered exiles prayed facing toward the Temple site in far-off Jerusalem, like Daniel in 6.10, "he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him." When the Temple was finally destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, Jews and Christians lost any chance of praying in an actual building and participating in its liturgy. The biblical text itself became the place where God graciously chose to dwell and hear the prayers of the people. Those who prayed could be sure of God's presence no matter where they prayed.

EARLY USAGE

The dissident Jewish community at Qumran (ca. 150 BCE–70 CE) provides a glimpse into the development and interpretation of the Psalter in early Judaism. Their library of religious literature contains more copies of the Psalms than of any other biblical book. The manuscripts yield two important conclusions: the four psalm commentaries interpreted contemporary events apocalyptically, that is, as referring to the end-time in which the community believed itself to be living; and the order of psalms, at least in the latter part of the Psalter (Books IV and V), was still in flux, and in these psalms nonbiblical poetry can be found.

INTERPRETATION

For about two thousand years the 150 Psalms have been a lovingly memorized prayer book, transposing to the daily life of Jews and Christians the meeting of Israel and its LORD. They were prayed from antiquity onward, by the founders of rabbinic Judaism, the early Christians, the fathers of the church, and the medieval synagogue and church. They are today a treasure shared by Jews and Christians. The psalms' power lies not only in being sacred scripture but also in their reflecting human feelings before God and expressing them directly, concretely, and skillfully.

As prayers and schools of prayer, the psalms guide modern believers in their relationship to God. Their range and honesty encourage people to come before God in their weakness and need as well as in their strength. Against a modern tendency to make a relationship to God completely private, most of the poems are communal; even individual petitions and songs of trust display a vivid sense of belonging to a people chosen and blessed by God. Against self-centered worship, the psalms are unhesitatingly theocentric—the world is made for God—though they balance it with the conviction that the LORD loves the people of Israel and is passionate about their flourishing. Psalms is the most cited Old Testament book in the New Testament. Christians praying these psalms have traditionally linked their prayers with those of Jesus, whose prayers become the prayers of the church.

Despite the psalms' splendor and humanity, people often find it difficult to pray them, for many of the psalms seem violent and vindictive. We must remember, however, that the chief issue for biblical worshipers is

God's power to save. Can God save from life's dangers and grant protection and prosperity? Since the arena in which power was displayed most vividly is the battlefield, it is not surprising that the LORD was often portrayed as a warrior, ruling with power. The war imagery is, however, secondary to the main point: God is a just ruler and judge, who upholds the faithful and righteous, and puts down the wicked and rebellious.

The so-called vindictive psalms are especially difficult for those who simplistically view Christianity as uniformly gentle and concerned primarily with the individual soul. Yet these psalms are not interested in punishment for its own sake but in redressing a wrong in the present. The psalmists think concretely rather than abstractly: they view evil as embodied in unjust people and thus pray for their elimination, including their potential for living on in their children. The psalms generally entrust the carrying out of these wishes into God's hands in the conviction that only God can make the world truly just and good. Sufferers can, however, cry out to God to take action, and can even use words that appear extreme. Those who trust in God (see Ps 37.5–6) can pray these psalms by leaving everything—execution and timetable—in God's hands.

Richard J. Clifford

BOOK I PSALMS 1—41

Psalm 1

1 Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
2 but their delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law they meditate day and night.
3 They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.
4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 2

1 Why do the nations conspire,
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,

Ps 1: The two ways. A torah or instructional psalm serving as an introduction to the Psalter, along with Ps 2. Both celebrate the saving presence of God—Ps 1 for the individual and Ps 2 for the Davidic king—who offers blessing and protection from the wicked. Unlike the following psalms, these introductory works lack a Davidic superscription, suggesting their secondary, editorial function. Using the metaphor of the two ways, one leading to life and the other to death, Psalm 1 declares that reciting God's saving torah or teaching (in this case, including the psalms) keeps one on the path of life. **1–3:** Any individual who adheres to the torah (*law*), the authoritative teaching contained in the psalms, and rejects the views of the wicked, is fortunate. **1:** *Scoffers,* like *the wicked* and *sinners*, contemptuously dismiss God's capacity to rule the world. **2:** *Meditate,* lit., "recite"; ancients usually read aloud. *Trees,* possibly the trees in the Temple garden (Pss 52.8; 92.12–15) on Mount Zion, abundantly watered, symbolizing vitality (Pss 46.4; 65.9; Ezek 47.12). **4–7:** In contrast to the well-watered and deeply rooted tree (a vertical image; cf. Jer 17.7–8) is the dry and wind-driven *chaff* (a horizontal image).

Ps 2: The Israelite king, instrument of God's rule. In this royal psalm, a court poet asks incredulously why the nations dare to threaten the Davidic king (vv. 1–3) when the Most High has stated that the king is his son and representative, hence in principle the most high among earthly kings. Like Ps 1, Ps 2 is introductory, and there are links between the two psalms, which are considered a single unit in some traditions: Ps 2.11 ends with "happy," echoing the first word in Ps 1; "the way [of the wicked] will perish" in 1.6 is echoed in 2.11, "you will perish in the way"; thematically, the divine instruction of the psalmist in Ps 1 protects from evil persons just as the divine promise in Ps 2 protects the Israelite king and people from evil kings. **1–3:** In describing hostile nations, the speaker quotes their deluded speech as in Pss 48.4–8; 76; and Ezek 38–39. **2:** *Anointed* (Heb "mashiaḥ") is

against the LORD and his anointed,
saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds asunder,
and cast their cords from us."

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the LORD has them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his
wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."

7 I will tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to me, "You are my son;
today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations
your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your
possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod
of iron,
and dash them in pieces like a potter's
vessel."

10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear,
with trembling 12 kiss his feet,[a]
or he will be angry, and you will perish in
the way;
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Happy are all who take refuge
in him.

Psalm 3

A Psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.

1 O LORD, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
2 many are saying to me,
"There is no help for you[b] in God." *Selah*

3 But you, O LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, and the one who lifts up my
head.
4 I cry aloud to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy hill.
Selah

5 I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, for the LORD sustains me.
6 I am not afraid of ten thousands of
people
who have set themselves against me all
around.

7 Rise up, O LORD!
Deliver me, O my God!
For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.

8 Deliverance belongs to the LORD;
may your blessing be on your people!
Selah

[a] Cn: Meaning of Heb of verses 11b and 12a is uncertain
[b] Syr: Heb *him*

always used in the Hebrew Bible of an actual ruler rather than of a future ideal king. **4–9:** Dismissing the vain posturing of the kings, the Davidic king cites God's adoption formula (see 2 Sam 7.14; Ps 89.26–27) and promise of universal sovereignty. **6:** *Zion, my holy hill,* Jerusalem, where the royal palace and the Temple were part of the same architectural complex. **10–11:** In the light of the divine promise, the poet warns the kings to end their rebellion and submit. **12:** The exact meaning of the words translated *kiss his feet* is debated, and was the subject of much Jewish-Christian polemic in the Middle Ages, when it was sometimes rendered "Kiss the son."

Ps 3: Threatened by many but trusting still. An individual petition. Threatened by "many enemies" (v. 1) who deny that the LORD can provide "help" and "deliverance" (vv. 2,8), the psalmist calmly affirms God's presence. Each of the three sections (vv. 1–3; 4–6; 7–8) begins with a prayer and ends with a statement of confidence. **Superscription:** This secondary superscription situates the psalm with David fleeing from his rebellious son Absalom (2 Sam 15–18). **1:** The psalmist responds to the enemies by addressing God as "you" (v. 3) and using divine titles expressing power to save. **2:** *Selah* (also vv. 4,8) is a musical notation, used a total of 78 times, only in Psalms and Hab 3. Its exact meaning is uncertain, but it often marks a section of a psalm. **3:** *My glory,* one who restores my glory or dignity. **4:** *His holy hill,* Mount Zion, where some psalmists believed God was most present (but contrast, e.g., Ps 2.4, "He who sits in the heavens"). **5:** *I lie down,* calmly sleeping while enemies lurk is an act of trust. **7:** God striking the enemies on the mouth for their words is poetic justice, punishment fitting the crime. The psalmist, however, leaves the actual punishment to God.

Psalm 4

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

1 Answer me when I call, O God of my right!
You gave me room when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

2 How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame?
How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies? *Selah*
3 But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.

4 When you are disturbed,[a] do not sin;
ponder it on your beds, and be silent. *Selah*
5 Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

6 There are many who say, "O that we might see some good!
Let the light of your face shine on us, O LORD!"
7 You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound.

8 I will both lie down and sleep in peace;
for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety.

Psalm 5

To the leader: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD;
give heed to my sighing.
2 Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.
3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.

4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil will not sojourn with you.
5 The boastful will not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.
6 You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.

7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,
will enter your house,
I will bow down toward your holy temple in awe of you.
8 Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.

9 For there is no truth in their mouths;
their hearts are destruction;
their throats are open graves;

[a] Or *are angry*

Ps 4: Rescue me so that I can be an example to sinners. An individual petition, with a strong emphasis on trust. **1–3:** Confident in the care God lavishes on the faithful (vv. 1a,3b), the psalmist boldly demands that the slanderers cease their lies. The LORD's answering and hearing the psalmist (vv. 1,3) signifies an intimate relationship. *God of my right,* God who vindicates me. **2:** *Selah* (also v. 4), see Ps 3.2n. **4–6:** *Ponder on your beds,* reflect in private in contrast to public worship mentioned in v. 5, "offer right sacrifices." **6:** Unlike *many* who demand divine gifts as a right, the psalmist quietly relies upon the LORD to grant joy and security. *Light . . . shine,* cf. the priestly blessing in Num 6.24–26. **7–8:** Lying down to sleep is an act of trust in God, for in sleep one cannot see danger or defend oneself.

Ps 5: Prayer for access to the Temple. An individual petition for protection from the wicked who seem to be keeping the psalmist from the presence of God in the Temple. To the psalmist, the Temple was the house of Israel's God and a place where blessings were given and protection was offered. Three themes alternate: seeking and enjoying God's presence (vv. 1–3,7–8,11–12), God's abhorrence of the wicked (vv. 4–6), and the threat of the wicked (vv. 9–10). **7:** In contrast to the wicked who cannot stand before the all-holy God, the psalmist desires to visit the *Temple,* relying on God to travel there safely (v. 8). *Steadfast love,* Heb "ḥesed," presumes a prior relationship initiated by the LORD to provide mercy and protection. **9:** The enemies are characterized by

they flatter with their tongues.
[10] Make them bear their guilt, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;
because of their many transgressions cast them out,
for they have rebelled against you.

[11] But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
so that those who love your name may exult in you.
[12] For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover them with favor as with a shield.

Psalm 6

To the leader: with stringed instruments; according to The Sheminith. A Psalm of David.

[1] O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger,
or discipline me in your wrath.
[2] Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror.
[3] My soul also is struck with terror,
while you, O LORD—how long?

[4] Turn, O LORD, save my life;
deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.
[5] For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who can give you praise?

[6] I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
[7] My eyes waste away because of grief;
they grow weak because of all my foes.

[8] Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.
[9] The LORD has heard my supplication;
the LORD accepts my prayer.
[10] All my enemies shall be ashamed and struck with terror;
they shall turn back, and in a moment be put to shame.

Psalm 7

A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjaminite.

[1] O LORD my God, in you I take refuge;
save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me,
[2] or like a lion they will tear me apart;
they will drag me away, with no one to rescue.

their perverted organs of speech and the inconsistency of their words and their intentions. **11–12:** The mixing of private longing and public celebration and joy shows that the psalmist hopes to join fellow Israelites in worshiping God.

Ps 6: Plea for God's help in sickness. An individual petition consisting of petition (vv. 1–2,4–5), complaint (vv. 2–3,6–7), mention of enemies (v. 8), and statement of trust (vv. 9–10). Tightly structured in two major parts, vv. 1–5 address God, and vv. 6–10 address God and the enemies. **Superscription:** *Sheminith,* "the eighth," possibly an eight-stringed instrument. **3:** The sufferer interprets physical illness and emotional exhaustion as divine abandonment and asks *how long* the estrangement will last (see Ps 13.1n.). **4:** The opening imperative verb *turn* (to me), addressed to God, is matched by the imperative verb in v. 8, "depart from me," addressed to the enemies, whose exact nature is unclear here, as in many psalms. Separation from the God whom the psalmist delights in praising is intolerable. **5:** *Sheol* is the underworld, where the dead reside. In Sheol, one is removed from the presence of God and the possibility of rendering worship; cf. Pss 30.9; 88.10–12; 115.17. **8:** A sudden change of mood, caused by renewed confidence in God's help, which may have been intimated by a sign or oracle that the psalmist perceived.

Ps 7: Prayer for deliverance from enemies and for justice. An individual petition that begins with the psalmist seeking refuge, perhaps in the Temple, and taking an oath of innocence (vv. 1–5); he then asks God to intervene (vv. 6–8), continues by a plea for justice for the entire world (vv. 9–16), and ends with a statement of trust (v. 17). **Superscription:** This incident in David's life is otherwise unknown, suggesting that these superscriptions are sometimes based on events beyond those narrated in the books of Samuel. *Shiggaion,* a musical term of unknown meaning, occurring only here. **1–5:** An innocent person could claim sanctuary at the altar (Ex

3 O LORD my God, if I have done this,
if there is wrong in my hands,
4 if I have repaid my ally with harm
or plundered my foe without cause,
5 then let the enemy pursue and overtake me,
trample my life to the ground,
and lay my soul in the dust. *Selah*

6 Rise up, O LORD, in your anger;
lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;
awake, O my God;[a] you have appointed a judgment.
7 Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered around you,
and over it take your seat[b] on high.
8 The LORD judges the peoples;
judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness
and according to the integrity that is in me.

9 O let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
but establish the righteous,
you who test the minds and hearts,
O righteous God.
10 God is my shield,
who saves the upright in heart.
11 God is a righteous judge,
and a God who has indignation every day.

12 If one does not repent, God[c] will whet his sword;
he has bent and strung his bow;
13 he has prepared his deadly weapons,
making his arrows fiery shafts.
14 See how they conceive evil,
and are pregnant with mischief,
and bring forth lies.
15 They make a pit, digging it out,
and fall into the hole that they have made.
16 Their mischief returns upon their own heads,
and on their own heads their violence descends.

17 I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness,
and sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.

Psalm 8

To the leader: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.

1 O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.
2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;

[a] Or *awake for me*
[b] Cn: Heb *return*
[c] Heb *he*

21.14; 1 Kings 2.28–35), though an oath of innocence involved risk if one did not tell the truth. **5:** *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **6–8:** The psalmist urgently appeals to the divine judge, who is surrounded, it seems, by members of the heavenly court having responsibility over the nations. **15–16:** That the wicked are caught in the traps they set is a common idea in wisdom literature and the psalms (e.g., Prov 26.27; see also Pss 9.15–16; 35.7–8; 141.10). **17:** Thanks for the anticipated rescue.

Ps 8: Wonder at the LORD's creation of humans. This memorable hymn praises God who has given such honor and responsibility to humans. **Superscription:** *Gittith,* an unknown musical term, also in Pss 81; 84. **1:** *Name,* parallel to *glory* (of God). As often in hymns, the opening invitation is reprised in the final line (v. 9), forming an inclusio or envelope structure. **2:** The text is unclear; it may refer to the LORD's victory over chaotic forces (see Pss 89; 93). **3–8:** Looking at the vast universe, the poet is awed by the LORD's attentiveness to one small element in that universe: humans, who have been given the honor of ruling the three domains of sky, earth, and sea. The picture is much like Gen 1.26–28, where humans rule over the three domains and enjoy the dignity of being

4 what are human beings that you are
mindful of them,
mortals[a] that you care for them?

5 Yet you have made them a little lower
than God,[b]
and crowned them with glory and
honor.
6 You have given them dominion over the
works of your hands;
you have put all things under their
feet,
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the
sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the
seas.

9 O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the
earth!

Psalm 9

To the leader: according to Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.

1 I will give thanks to the LORD with my
whole heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
2 I will be glad and exult in you;
I will sing praise to your name, O Most
High.

3 When my enemies turned back,
they stumbled and perished before you.
4 For you have maintained my just cause;
you have sat on the throne giving
righteous judgment.

5 You have rebuked the nations, you have
destroyed the wicked;
you have blotted out their name forever
and ever.
6 The enemies have vanished in everlasting
ruins;
their cities you have rooted out;
the very memory of them has perished.

7 But the LORD sits enthroned forever,
he has established his throne for
judgment.
8 He judges the world with righteousness;
he judges the peoples with equity.

9 The LORD is a stronghold for the
oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
10 And those who know your name put
their trust in you,
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken
those who seek you.

11 Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in
Zion.
Declare his deeds among the peoples.
12 For he who avenges blood is mindful of
them;
he does not forget the cry of the
afflicted.

13 Be gracious to me, O LORD.
See what I suffer from those who hate me;
you are the one who lifts me up from
the gates of death,

[a] Heb *ben adam*, lit. *son of man*
[b] Or *than the divine beings* or *angels*: Heb *elohim*

created in the image of God. **4:** Contrast Ps 144.3; Job 7.17. **5:** *God,* better, "heavenly beings" (Heb "'elohim," lit., "gods"; see textual note *b*). As the heavenly world is ruled by heavenly beings, so the earthly world, parallel to it, is ruled by earthly beings as in Gen 1.26–28.

Pss 9–10: Thanks, petition, and pain at God's distance and silence. Hebrew tradition handed down Pss 9–10 as two poems, but together they form one unit with an acrostic structure: Each section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, though several letters are missing. The Greek text transmitted it as a single poem. As in other acrostic poems (Pss 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145; Lam 1–4; Prov 31.10–31), the alphabetic structure provides unity, though the content is less systematically structured. The psalm records three successive experiences of God: joyous recognition of benefits to the singer (9.3–4) and the nation (9.5–8), a cry for help during an attack (9.13–14), and a deeply felt desire for justice (10.1–18). **Superscription:** *Muth-labben,* a musical term of unknown meaning; see also Ps 48.14n. **9.1–6:** A promise to tell others what God has done for the psalmist (vv. 3–4) and for the nation (vv. 5–6). **7–12:** The LORD as righteous judge and defender of the oppressed. **13–20:** Awareness of God's salvation inspires fresh petitions (vv. 13–14,19–20) and a serene statement

14 so that I may recount all your praises,
and, in the gates of daughter Zion,
rejoice in your deliverance.

15 The nations have sunk in the pit that
they made;
in the net that they hid has their own
foot been caught.
16 The LORD has made himself known, he
has executed judgment;
the wicked are snared in the work of
their own hands. *Higgaion. Selah*

17 The wicked shall depart to Sheol,
all the nations that forget God.

18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

19 Rise up, O LORD! Do not let mortals
prevail;
let the nations be judged before you.
20 Put them in fear, O LORD;
let the nations know that they are only
human. *Selah*

Psalm 10

1 Why, O LORD, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times of
trouble?
2 In arrogance the wicked persecute the
poor—
let them be caught in the schemes they
have devised.

3 For the wicked boast of the desires of
their heart,
those greedy for gain curse and
renounce the LORD.
4 In the pride of their countenance the
wicked say, "God will not seek it out";
all their thoughts are, "There is no God."

5 Their ways prosper at all times;
your judgments are on high, out of their
sight;
as for their foes, they scoff at them.
6 They think in their heart, "We shall not
be moved;
throughout all generations we shall not
meet adversity."

7 Their mouths are filled with cursing and
deceit and oppression;
under their tongues are mischief and
iniquity.
8 They sit in ambush in the villages;
in hiding places they murder the
innocent.

Their eyes stealthily watch for the
helpless;
9 they lurk in secret like a lion in its
covert;
they lurk that they may seize the poor;
they seize the poor and drag them off in
their net.

10 They stoop, they crouch,
and the helpless fall by their might.
11 They think in their heart, "God has
forgotten,
he has hidden his face, he will never
see it."

12 Rise up, O LORD; O God, lift up your
hand;
do not forget the oppressed.
13 Why do the wicked renounce God,
and say in their hearts, "You will not
call us to account"?

14 But you do see! Indeed you note trouble
and grief,
that you may take it into your hands;
the helpless commit themselves to you;
you have been the helper of the orphan.

15 Break the arm of the wicked and
evildoers;
seek out their wickedness until you find
none.

that divine justice will prevail (vv. 15–18). **15–16:** See Ps 7.15–16n. *Higgaion,* an unknown musical term, occurring only here. *Selah* (also v. 20), see Ps 3.2n. **17:** *Sheol,* the underworld, abode of the dead. **10.1–18:** With the question *Why?* (v. 1), the psalmist complains of the effects of God's absence—the persecution of the poor by the wealthy (v. 2a)—and gives an unusually long description of the wicked who devote all their energy to evil (vv. 3–11), concluding with a confident prayer that God will see and act (vv. 12–18).

16 The LORD is king forever and ever;
the nations shall perish from his land.

17 O LORD, you will hear the desire of the meek;
you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear
18 to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed,
so that those from earth may strike terror no more.[a]

Psalm 11

To the leader. Of David.

1 In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to me,
"Flee like a bird to the mountains;[b]
2 for look, the wicked bend the bow,
they have fitted their arrow to the string,
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart.
3 If the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"

4 The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD's throne is in heaven.
His eyes behold, his gaze examines humankind.
5 The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,
and his soul hates the lover of violence.
6 On the wicked he will rain coals of fire and sulfur;
a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.
7 For the LORD is righteous;
he loves righteous deeds;
the upright shall behold his face.

Psalm 12

To the leader: according to The Sheminith. A Psalm of David.

1 Help, O LORD, for there is no longer anyone who is godly;
the faithful have disappeared from humankind.
2 They utter lies to each other;
with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,
the tongue that makes great boasts,
4 those who say, "With our tongues we will prevail;
our lips are our own—who is our master?"

5 "Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan,
I will now rise up," says the LORD;
"I will place them in the safety for which they long."
6 The promises of the LORD are promises that are pure,
silver refined in a furnace on the ground,
purified seven times.

7 You, O LORD, will protect us;
you will guard us from this generation forever.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Syr Jerome Tg: Heb *flee to your mountain, O bird*

Ps 11: Trust in the LORD and do not panic. A song of trust, which develops one aspect of the individual petition, the statement of trust in the LORD in the Temple (as in Pss 27.8–9,13; 42.2). After a scornful dismissal of timorous advice (vv. 1–3), it offers a bold statement of confidence in God (vv. 4–7). **1:** Disaster in the form of invading armies and moral collapse has struck and people are urging flight. A fleeing *bird* is a symbol of panic-stricken flight as in Isa 16.2; Prov 27.8. **4–7:** Rejecting others' advice, the psalmist chooses instead to trust in the LORD's protective presence in the Temple, confident that the just LORD will curb the wicked and uphold the loyal. **6:** *Coals of fire and sulfur* and *a scorching wind,* divine weapons (see Gen 19.24; Am 7.4). **7:** The *upright* see the LORD's *face,* i.e., experience the divine presence in the Temple; see Pss 27.8–9; 42.2.

Ps 12: Prayer in a time of moral disorder and lawlessness. An individual petition provoked by the destructive speech of the powerful (vv. 1–4); it is answered by a promise of divine intervention (v. 5) that invites the psalmist's trust (vv. 6–8). Like Ps 60.6–8, this psalm seems to preserve an oracle of salvation (v. 5), perhaps uttered by a Temple official in response to a petition (cf. 1 Sam 1.11–18). **Superscription:** *Sheminith,* see Ps 6n. **1–4:** Victimized by an ungodly group using lies to control the community (vv. 1–2), the psalmist begs God to destroy their capacity to speak. **6–7:** The psalmist takes the *promises* as already operating.

[8] On every side the wicked prowl,
as vileness is exalted among humankind.

Psalm 13

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

[1] How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
[2] How long must I bear pain[a] in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

[3] Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
[4] and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

[5] But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
[6] I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm 14

To the leader. Of David.

[1] Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is no one who does good.

[2] The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind
to see if there are any who are wise,
who seek after God.

[3] They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse;
there is no one who does good,
no, not one.

[4] Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and do not call upon the LORD?

[5] There they shall be in great terror,
for God is with the company of the righteous.
[6] You would confound the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.

[7] O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!
When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people,
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

[a] Syr: Heb *hold counsels*

Ps 13: How long will the enemy threaten my life? An individual petition; vv. 1–2 are the complaint; vv. 3–4, the petition, and vv. 5–6, the statement of trust and promise of praise **1:** How long? Ancient sufferers sought to know exactly how long they must suffer; see Pss 35.17; 74.9–10; Isa 6.11. *Hide your face,* God has refused to look kindly at the psalmist. **3:** *Consider and answer me,* a contemporary paraphrase might be, "Look at me! Talk to me!" referring back to the complaint in v. 1 that the LORD has hidden his face. *Give light to my eyes,* i.e., give me joy and vitality (see Prov 29.13). **5:** *But I trusted,* better, "trust." Anxiety gives way to trust as is typical of individual petitions.

Ps 14: Refusal to be silenced by those who deny God's justice. A song of trust condemning those who deny that God is active in the world and declaring trust in God who cares for the poor (among whom the psalmist wants to be counted). Psalm 53 is a near duplicate. **1:** *There is no God,* denies God's ability to govern, not necessarily God's existence; see Ps 10.4. **2:** God's scrutiny lays bare the deniers' folly and malice. In the style of wisdom literature, the rebellious are contrasted with the *wise, who seek after God*. **5:** *There,* perhaps a reference to Mount Zion as in Pss 48.6; 76.3, where the wicked will be punished and the poor upheld. **7:** The psalm moves from the individual to the community, as Israel lives in the hope that salvation comes from *Zion*. *When the LORD restores* may refer to the hoped-for restoration of Jerusalem after its destruction in 586 BCE; this verse may be a later addition.

Psalm 15

A Psalm of David.

1 O LORD, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy hill?

2 Those who walk blamelessly, and do
what is right,
and speak the truth from their heart;
3 who do not slander with their tongue,
and do no evil to their friends,
nor take up a reproach against their
neighbors;
4 in whose eyes the wicked are despised,
but who honor those who fear the
LORD;
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;
5 who do not lend money at interest,
and do not take a bribe against the
innocent.

Those who do these things shall never be
moved.

Psalm 16

A Miktam of David.

1 Protect me, O God, for in you I take
refuge.
2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."[a]

3 As for the holy ones in the land, they are
the noble,
in whom is all my delight.

4 Those who choose another god multiply
their sorrows;[b]
their drink offerings of blood I will not
pour out
or take their names upon my lips.

5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my
cup;
you hold my lot.
6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in
pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.

7 I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
8 I keep the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall
not be moved.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul
rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
10 For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.

11 You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness
of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures
forevermore.

[a] Jerome Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

Ps 15: Who will be admitted into God's presence? The psalm may reflect a ritual admitting worshipers to the Temple (cf. Ps 24 and Isa 33.14b–16). Ten actions describe the righteousness expected of a genuine worshiper: the first two are positive (v. 2), the second three, negative (v. 3), the third three, negative and positive (v. 4), and the last two negative (v. 5b). **1:** The question. *Tent,* a poetic designation for the Temple (Pss 27.5; 61.4). **2–5b:** The ten clauses describing the ideal worshiper overlap and make their effect cumulatively. **2:** *Walk,* conduct oneself. *Speak the truth from their heart,* one does not say one thing while intending another. **4:** *In whose eyes the wicked are despised,* the righteous reject anyone rejected by God. **5:** *Do not lend money at interest,* an ethical injunction forbidden by Ex 22.25 and Lev 25.37. *Money* means silver that was weighed out. **5c:** After the confession, an officiant, perhaps a priest or Levite, presumably admitted worshipers to the Temple.

Ps 16: God the supreme good. A declaration of loyalty to the one God of Israel, though others may worship many gods: such commitment brings great blessings. **Superscription:** *Miktam,* a technical term of unknown meaning. **1–2:** Though a cry for rescue from an immediate danger, the verses are most probably a declaration of trust in a particular God—the LORD—in traditional client-patron language. **3:** NRSV interprets the unclear verse as referring to Israelites whose fellowship one gains when one professes faith in the LORD. **4:** *Blood offerings* are rare in biblical religion; see Ps 50.13, and cf. Ex 24.6. **5–6:** *Portion, lot, boundary lines,* and *heritage,* a metaphor based on the distribution and possession of the land of Israel as in Josh 13–19. Possibly the psalmist was a priest; see Num 18.20; Josh 18.7. **7–11:** The response of the individual whose God is now the LORD, giving praise (v. 8) and rejoicing in God's nearness (vv. 9–11). **10:** *Sheol . . . the Pit,* the abode of the dead.

Psalm 17

A Prayer of David.

1 Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my
cry;
give ear to my prayer from lips free of
deceit.
2 From you let my vindication come;
let your eyes see the right.

3 If you try my heart, if you visit me by
night,
if you test me, you will find no
wickedness in me;
my mouth does not transgress.
4 As for what others do, by the word of
your lips
I have avoided the ways of the violent.
5 My steps have held fast to your paths;
my feet have not slipped.

6 I call upon you, for you will answer me,
O God;
incline your ear to me, hear my words.
7 Wondrously show your steadfast love,
O savior of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right
hand.

8 Guard me as the apple of the eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,
9 from the wicked who despoil me,
my deadly enemies who surround me.
10 They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak
arrogantly.
11 They track me down;[a] now they
surround me;
they set their eyes to cast me to the
ground.
12 They are like a lion eager to tear,
like a young lion lurking in ambush.

13 Rise up, O LORD, confront them,
overthrow them!
By your sword deliver my life from the
wicked,
14 from mortals—by your hand, O LORD—
from mortals whose portion in life is in
this world.
May their bellies be filled with what you
have stored up for them;
may their children have more than
enough;
may they leave something over to their
little ones.

15 As for me, I shall behold your face in
righteousness;
when I awake I shall be satisfied,
beholding your likeness.

Psalm 18

To the leader. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, *who addressed the words of this song to the* LORD *on the day when the* LORD *delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said:*

1 I love you, O LORD, my strength.
2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my
deliverer,
my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,

[a] One Ms Compare Syr: MT *Our steps*

Ps 17: Rescue me, your loyal client, and let me see your face. An individual petition stressing the psalmist's past loyalty (vv. 1–5), present need (vv. 6–14), and ardent hope to see God in the Temple (v. 15). **1–5:** Wishing to gain a fair hearing, the psalmist claims to have passed every testing and been proven loyal. **6:** *You will answer me,* the result of the long-established trust between divine patron and human client. **7:** *Steadfast love* (Heb "ḥesed"), a covenantal term here, referring to the loving obligations assumed by each partner. **8:** *Apple of the eye,* the pupil. *Shadow of your wings* (Pss 36.7; 57.1; etc.): Either disembodied wings representing divine protection as in Egyptian religion, or the wings of the composite animals guarding the deity's throne in the Temple, the cherubim. **13:** *Confront them,* lit., "come before their face," anticipating the conclusion of the psalm where the supplicant wants to see God's face at the Temple. **14:** Expresses the wish that the wicked and their families undergo what they have tried to inflict on others. **15:** Though presumably still in danger, the psalmist speaks with the certainty that the opening petition has been granted.

Ps 18: A royal thanksgiving. A report of the king's rescue (vv. 1–19) is followed by reflections on his intimate relationship with the LORD and his primacy among earth's kings (vv. 20–45); the psalm ends with a fresh acknowledgment of the LORD's aid (vv. 46–50). Some scholars think that Ps 18 may have been sung at the coro-

my shield, and the horn of my salvation,
my stronghold.
3 I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
so I shall be saved from my enemies.

4 The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of perdition assailed me;
5 the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.

6 In my distress I called upon the LORD;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.

7 Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the mountains trembled
and quaked, because he was angry.
8 Smoke went up from his nostrils,
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.
9 He bowed the heavens, and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.
10 He rode on a cherub, and flew;
he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind.
11 He made darkness his covering around him,
his canopy thick clouds dark with water.
12 Out of the brightness before him
there broke through his clouds
hailstones and coals of fire.
13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
and the Most High uttered his voice.[a]
14 And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
he flashed forth lightnings, and routed them.
15 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid bare
at your rebuke, O LORD,
at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

16 He reached down from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of mighty waters.
17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
and from those who hated me;
for they were too mighty for me.
18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity;
but the LORD was my support.
19 He brought me out into a broad place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.
21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
22 For all his ordinances were before me,
and his statutes I did not put away from me.
23 I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from guilt.
24 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,

[a] Gk See 2 Sam 22.14: Heb adds *hailstones and coals of fire*

nation of the Davidic king to ground his authority in the LORD's creation victory (cf. Ps 89.5–28). An alternate version of the psalm appears in 2 Sam 22. In structure, the psalm has parallel reports of rescue, the first told from a heavenly perspective (vv. 4–19), and the second from an earthly perspective (vv. 35–45). The first report adapts the cosmic language of a mythic battle between sea and rainstorm (the weapon of the LORD as storm god) to depict God's rescue of the Israelite king from his enemies. Each report has a short hymnic introduction (vv.1–3,31–34) and conclusion (vv. 20–30,46–50). **Superscription:** Rescues of David from foreign kings and domestic enemies including Saul (e.g., 1 Sam 18.10–30). **4–5:** The enemies from which the LORD delivered the king are cosmic, both the chaotic *torrents* of the primordial sea, and the power of *death,* in *Sheol,* the underworld, the abode of the dead. **7–15:** In answer to the king's prayer (v. 6), the LORD appears as a storm god; cf. Ex 15.8,10; Pss 29.3–9; 104.3–4,7. **10:** *Cherub,* one of the bearers of the divine throne (see Ex 25.18–20; Ezek 1; Ps 17.8n.). **16–19:** Deliverance from a tight spot (v. 6) into a *broad,* unconfined *place* (see also v. 36). **20–24:** *According to*

according to the cleanness of my hands
in his sight.

25 With the loyal you show yourself loyal;
with the blameless you show yourself
blameless;
26 with the pure you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you show yourself
perverse.
27 For you deliver a humble people,
but the haughty eyes you bring down.
28 It is you who light my lamp;
the LORD, my God, lights up my
darkness.
29 By you I can crush a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a wall.
30 This God—his way is perfect;
the promise of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all who take refuge in
him.

31 For who is God except the LORD?
And who is a rock besides our God?—
32 the God who girded me with strength,
and made my way safe.
33 He made my feet like the feet of a deer,
and set me secure on the heights.
34 He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of
bronze.
35 You have given me the shield of your
salvation,
and your right hand has supported me;
your help[a] has made me great.
36 You gave me a wide place for my steps
under me,
and my feet did not slip.
37 I pursued my enemies and overtook
them;
and did not turn back until they were
consumed.
38 I struck them down, so that they were
not able to rise;
they fell under my feet.
39 For you girded me with strength for the
battle;
you made my assailants sink under me.
40 You made my enemies turn their backs
to me,
and those who hated me I destroyed.
41 They cried for help, but there was no one
to save them;
they cried to the LORD, but he did not
answer them.
42 I beat them fine, like dust before the
wind;
I cast them out like the mire of the
streets.

43 You delivered me from strife with the
peoples;[b]
you made me head of the nations;
people whom I had not known served
me.
44 As soon as they heard of me they obeyed
me;
foreigners came cringing to me.
45 Foreigners lost heart,
and came trembling out of their
strongholds.

46 The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock,
and exalted be the God of my salvation,
47 the God who gave me vengeance
and subdued peoples under me;
48 who delivered me from my enemies;
indeed, you exalted me above my
adversaries;
you delivered me from the violent.

49 For this I will extol you, O LORD, among
the nations,
and sing praises to your name.
50 Great triumphs he gives to his king,
and shows steadfast love to his
anointed,
to David and his descendants forever.

[a] Or *gentleness*
[b] Gk Tg: Heb *people*

my righteousness (vv. 20,24), having fulfilled his covenant responsibilities, the king counts on his patron's loyal response. **25–45:** A new section with fresh topics: the LORD as loyal supporter (vv. 25–31), arming the king and granting him victory (vv. 32–42), and installing him as head of the kings of the world (vv. 43–45). **46–48:** Repetition of the epithets of the LORD from vv. 1–3, *rock* and deliverer, bring the psalm to a close. **50:** The LORD's eternal commitment to the dynasty of David (see 2 Sam 7.13; Ps 89.27–37).

Psalm 19

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament[a] proclaims his handiwork.
2 Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
3 There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
4 yet their voice[b] goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens[c] he has set a tent for the sun,
5 which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hid from its heat.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the decrees of the LORD are sure,
making wise the simple;
8 the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eyes;
9 the fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
12 But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.
13 Keep back your servant also from the insolent;[d]
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 20

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 The LORD answer you in the day of trouble!
The name of the God of Jacob protect you!
2 May he send you help from the sanctuary,
and give you support from Zion.

[a] Or *dome*
[b] Gk Jerome Compare Syr: Heb *line*
[c] Heb *In them*
[d] Or *from proud thoughts*

Ps 19: Divine instruction gives light and life to humans. Like Pss 1 and 119, this psalm insists that divine instruction (Heb "torah") transforms humans. Though many scholars divide the psalm into two distinct compositions, a hymn to the sun vv. 1–6 and a meditation on wisdom in vv. 7–14, the poem is coherent. Divine wisdom, discernible in the daily movements of the heavens (vv. 1–4b), particularly in the sun's steady course (vv. 4c–6), is also visible in the teaching (vv. 7–9) to which humans have access; the psalm concludes with a prayer to fulfill these teachings (vv. 10–14). **1–4:** Without a word being said, the sun leads the day-night rhythm of the heavens that manifests divine control. **4:** *A tent for the sun,* God has given authority to the sun to lead the course of the heavens. In comparable religious literature, the head of the pantheon authorized lesser deities to build their tent dwellings. The sun symbolizes divine justice and wisdom because nothing is hid from its rays. **7–10:** There are six synonyms for instruction or law (Heb "torah") in vv. 7–9. The first four describe the law's beneficial effects on humans; the final two are concerned with the teaching itself rather than its effect on humans (v. 9). **11–13:** May the wisdom contained in the law instruct the psalmist's heart. **12:** *Errors* and *hidden faults,* likely inadvertent sins.

Ps 20: Prayer for the king's victory. A communal petition for the king's victory. Ps 21 seems to be a thanksgiving for the victory prayed for in this psalm. The first part (vv. 1–5) prays that the king will be victorious in battle, and the second (vv. 6–9) gives an assurance that he will be successful. **1:** *The LORD answer you* occurs as

3 May he remember all your offerings,
and regard with favor your burnt
sacrifices. *Selah*

4 May he grant you your heart's desire,
and fulfill all your plans.
5 May we shout for joy over your victory,
and in the name of our God set up our
banners.
May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

6 Now I know that the LORD will help his
anointed;
he will answer him from his holy
heaven
with mighty victories by his right
hand.
7 Some take pride in chariots, and some in
horses,
but our pride is in the name of the LORD
our God.
8 They will collapse and fall,
but we shall rise and stand upright.

9 Give victory to the king, O LORD;
answer us when we call.[a]

Psalm 21

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 In your strength the king rejoices,
O LORD,
and in your help how greatly he exults!
2 You have given him his heart's desire,
and have not withheld the request of
his lips. *Selah*
3 For you meet him with rich blessings;
you set a crown of fine gold on
his head.
4 He asked you for life; you gave it to him—
length of days forever and ever.
5 His glory is great through your help;
splendor and majesty you bestow on
him.
6 You bestow on him blessings forever;
you make him glad with the joy of your
presence.
7 For the king trusts in the LORD,
and through the steadfast love of the
Most High he shall not be moved.

8 Your hand will find out all your enemies;
your right hand will find out those who
hate you.
9 You will make them like a fiery furnace
when you appear.
The LORD will swallow them up in his
wrath,
and fire will consume them.
10 You will destroy their offspring from the
earth,
and their children from among
humankind.
11 If they plan evil against you,
if they devise mischief, they will not
succeed.
12 For you will put them to flight;
you will aim at their faces with your
bows.

13 Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength!
We will sing and praise your power.

[a] Gk: Heb *give victory, O LORD; let the King answer us when we call*

petition in v. 1, assurance in v. 6, and petition in v. 9. *Day of trouble,* a military crisis requiring the king to act as military commander. **3:** *Offerings* and *sacrifices* here regarded as a plea for divine favor. *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **6:** *Now I know,* the phrase elsewhere expresses great confidence (Job 19.25; Pss 41.11; 56.9); it may reflect a positive oracle that the king received. **7–8:** Victory lies with God rather than superior military technology; cf. 2 Chr 20.15; 32.7–8; Isa 31.1; Ps 44.3.

Ps 21: Thanksgiving for the king's victory. A royal thanksgiving, which could perhaps be regarded as a thanksgiving for the divine favor prayed for in Ps 20. The report of a victory gained with the LORD's help (vv. 1–7) is followed by an assurance of future help (vv. 8–12) and concluded by a prayer (v. 13). The king's military role was understood to implement divine justice in an often-hostile world. **1:** *Rejoices* and *exults,* Refers not only to the inner feelings of the king, but to the public celebration that would follow a major victory. **2:** *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n.

4–7: The king's divine-like qualities do not belong to him by right, but by the gift of God. **10:** *Destroy their offspring,* no one should be left to carry on the enemies' nefarious work. **13:** Such a victory will be an occasion for the entire community to rejoice in God.

Psalm 22

To the leader: according to The Deer of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

3 Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
4 In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
5 To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

6 But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
7 All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
8 "Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"

9 Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.
10 On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
11 Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

12 Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
13 they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
15 my mouth[a] is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.

16 For dogs are all around me;
a company of evildoers encircles me.
My hands and feet have shriveled;[b]
17 I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me;
18 they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

19 But you, O LORD, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
20 Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life[c] from the power of the dog!
21 Save me from the mouth of the lion!

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued[d] me.
22 I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;[e]

[a] Cn: Heb *strength*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Heb *my only one*
[d] Heb *answered*
[e] Or *kindred*

Ps 22: Plea to be delivered from relentless enemies. An individual petition remarkable for its intense expressions of anguish (vv. 1–2,6–8,12–18), vivid recollections of God's healing presence (vv. 3–5,9–11), lively gratitude for rescue (vv. 22–26), and trust in God's universal sovereignty (vv. 27–31). **Superscription:** *According to the Deer of the Dawn,* perhaps indicating the melody. **1–21:** The complaint is that the LORD, the patron of Israel's ancestors (vv. 3–5), has not rescued one who suffers even though he has been faithful (vv. 9–11). **1:** See Mk 15.34 par. **6:** The dehumanized psalmist is mocked by his enemies. **9–10:** Cf. Ps 71.6. **12–21:** The extensive and diverse metaphors for the supplicant's trouble express the great extent of his trouble. **12–13:** Enemies stalk the psalmist like wild beasts (Ps 7.2; Isa 56.9). The subhuman bestial world is contrasted with the human worshipers in the Temple (v. 22). **12:** *Bashan,* a fertile region in northern Transjordan famous for its cattle. **14:** *Poured out like water,* tears were conceived as welling up from the abdomen, that is, coming from the physical center of the person. **16:** *My hands and feet have shriveled,* textually obscure: lit., "like a lion my hands and feet"; NRSV reflects an emendation. **17–18:** *I can count all my bones,* here referring to his ribs: Robbers have stripped the psalmist of his clothes and he is emaciated. **22–31:** The psalmist attempts to motivate God to rescue him by promising that he

in the midst of the congregation I will
praise you:
23 You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of
Israel!
24 For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me,[a]
but heard when I[b] cried to him.

25 From you comes my praise in the great
congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who
fear him.
26 The poor[c] shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!

27 All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.[d]
28 For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.

29 To him,[e] indeed, shall all who sleep in[f]
the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down
to the dust,
and I shall live for him.[g]
30 Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about
the Lord,
31 and[h] proclaim his deliverance to a people
yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not
want.
2 He makes me lie down in green
pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;[i]
3 he restores my soul.[j]
He leads me in right paths[k]
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the darkest
valley,[l]
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

[a] Heb *him*
[b] Heb *he*
[c] Or *afflicted*
[d] Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *you*
[e] Cn: Heb *They have eaten and*
[f] Cn: Heb *all the fat ones*
[g] Compare Gk Syr Vg: Heb *and he who cannot keep himself alive*
[h] Compare Gk: Heb *it will be told about the Lord to the generation,* 31*they will come and*
[i] Heb *waters of rest*
[j] Or *life*
[k] Or *paths of righteousness*
[l] Or *the valley of the shadow of death*

will then give thanks among humans, in the *great congregation* (v. 25), likely the Temple in Jerusalem; the rescue of a single individual will then have larger, even universal (see v. 27) and future (vv. 30–31) ramifications. **22:** The psalmist will declare to others what God has done, thereby encouraging them to praise God. **27:** On praise of God by the nations, see, e.g., Pss 67.2–4; 86.9; 117.1. **29:** Worship by the dead is rare in Psalms; contrast Pss 6.5; 30.9; 88.10–12; 115.17.

Ps 23: The LORD as shepherd and host. The most beloved of the psalms, a song of trust. Though seemingly idyllic, evil lurks at the margin (vv. 4a,5b), and nature is sometimes dangerous (v. 4). In an agrarian society like ancient Israel, herding would be familiar to everyone. There could also be a subtle allusion to the Exodus traditions of the divine shepherd guiding Israel (e.g., Ps 78.43–55; Isa 40.11). The psalm combines two distinct images of God: shepherd (vv. 1–4) and host of a banquet (v. 5); and two grammatical persons used of God: *he* in vv. 1–3, *you* in vv. 4–6. **1:** *Shepherd,* a favorite title of ancient Near Eastern kings, connoting compassionate care (Pss 80.1; 95.7; 100.3; Isa 40.11; Jer 10.21; Ezek 34.11–16). Verse 1 can be paraphrased: Because the LORD is my shepherd I lack nothing. **2:** *Still waters,* not swiftly running, so the sheep can keep their footing as they drink from the pool. **5:** *Prepare a table,* the image of shepherd changes to that of host of a meal; cf. Ps 78.19. *In the presence of*

6 Surely[a] goodness and mercy[b] shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.[c]

Psalm 24

Of David. A Psalm.

1 The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
2 for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

3 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
4 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
5 They will receive blessing from the LORD,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.
6 Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.[d]
Selah

7 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
8 Who is the King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory. *Selah*

Psalm 25

Of David.

1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

4 Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.
5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.

6 Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

a Or *Only*
b Or *kindness*
c Heb *for length of days*
d Gk Syr: Heb *your face, O Jacob*

my enemies, the LORD's invitation to dine vindicates the psalmist as just, whereas the enemies are excluded. **6:** *Goodness and mercy shall follow* (lit., "pursue") *me,* replacing the enemies' pursuit.

Ps 24: The awesome majesty of the house of the LORD. A hymn celebrating the LORD's enthronement as king that begins, like Ps 15, with a demand of right conduct and loyalty. The psalm proceeds in three stages: the proclamation of the cosmic victory of the LORD (vv. 1–2), a scrutiny to make certain that only the loyal enter and welcome the Divine Warrior to his dwelling (vv. 3–6), and a call to the Temple gates to welcome God the king. **1–2:** Presupposed is the combat myth in which the storm god defeats chaotic Sea who threatens to destroy the world, creates the orderly universe, and erects a palace (temple) to commemorate the victory. Israel likely borrowed and transformed this myth from its Canaanite predecessors. **3–6:** Only those loyal to the victorious LORD are fit to share the fruits of victory; the scrutiny determines whether worshipers have been loyal; cf. Ps 15.2–5. **4:** *Lift up their souls to what is false,* similar to the commandment of the Decalogue, "You shall have no other gods before you" (Ex 20.3; Deut 5.7). **5:** *Blessing from the LORD,* the deity shares the fruits of victory. **6:** *Selah* (also v. 10), see Ps 3.2n. **7:** *The* Temple *gates* are personified and invited to lift up their heads in joy and join the chorus welcoming the triumphant Warrior; some scholars emend "gates" to "gatekeepers."

Ps 25: Prayer for forgiveness and guidance. An individual petition in acrostic form (see Ps 9–10n.), divided into three parts (vv. 1–7; 8–14; 15–22). The first and third parts are lengthy petitions in which "I" (the psalmist) addresses "you" (God); the middle part (with the exception of v. 11) is a lesson in the form of a hymn, speaking of God in the third person. **1:** *My soul* (Heb "nepesh") in its most literal sense the throat, face, and chest area,

7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

8 Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
9 He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.
10 All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

11 For your name's sake, O LORD,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.
12 Who are they that fear the LORD?
He will teach them the way that they should choose.

13 They will abide in prosperity,
and their children shall possess the land.
14 The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him,
and he makes his covenant known to them.
15 My eyes are ever toward the LORD,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

16 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
17 Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me[a] out of my distress.
18 Consider my affliction and my trouble,
and forgive all my sins.
19 Consider how many are my foes,
and with what violent hatred they hate me.
20 O guard my life, and deliver me;
do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.
21 May integrity and uprightness preserve me,
for I wait for you.

22 Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all its troubles.

Psalm 26

Of David.

1 Vindicate me, O LORD,
for I have walked in my integrity,
and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.
2 Prove me, O LORD, and try me;
test my heart and mind.
3 For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in faithfulness to you.[b]

4 I do not sit with the worthless,
nor do I consort with hypocrites;
5 I hate the company of evildoers,
and will not sit with the wicked.

6 I wash my hands in innocence,
and go around your altar, O LORD,
7 singing aloud a song of thanksgiving,
and telling all your wondrous deeds.

8 O LORD, I love the house in which you dwell,
and the place where your glory abides.

[a] Or *The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me*
[b] Or *in your faithfulness*

often rendered "soul" or "life" because one's vital signs are most palpable there. **8–14:** Apart from v. 11, the middle section is a lesson about divine guidance with allusions to the Exodus (*way*, *he leads*, *paths, covenant*), as suggested by v. 11, *pardon my guilt*, which cites Moses's plea in Ex 34.9. **15–22:** As motives to move God to help, the psalmist simply says *I am lonely* (v. 16), my foes are many (v. 19), and *I wait for you* (v. 21). **22:** At its conclusion, the psalm is generalized to the community; perhaps a later addition.

Ps 26: A declaration of righteousness and a plea for salvation and a declaration of righteousness. An individual petition of someone who feels unworthy, possibly a priest. "Walking" occurs at the psalm's beginning and end, suggesting participation in sacred processions. **1:** The priest asks God to *vindicate* his claims of right conduct. **4–5:** As in Pss 1 and 101, the worshiper *hates* (rejects) the company and the projects of the wicked. **4:** *Sit with* implies partnering (1 Sam 2.8; Ps 101.6). **6:** Washing is commanded in priestly rituals (Ex 30.21). **8–10:** In contrast to "hating" the wicked in vv. 4–5, the psalmist "loves," in the sense of choosing, God's house and ways.

9 Do not sweep me away with sinners,
nor my life with the bloodthirsty,
10 those in whose hands are evil devices,
and whose right hands are full of bribes.

11 But as for me, I walk in my integrity;
redeem me, and be gracious to me.
12 My foot stands on level ground;
in the great congregation I will bless the LORD.

Psalm 27

Of David.

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold[a] of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.

3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

4 One thing I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in his temple.

5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.

6 Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!
8 "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, do I seek.
9 Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!
10 If my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will take me up.

11 Teach me your way, O LORD,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.
12 Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.

13 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.

[a] Or *refuge*

11: Confident of God's acceptance, the psalmist resolves to continue walking the right path.

Ps 27: Longing to find the LORD in the Temple despite obstacles. The psalm begins as a song of trust (vv. 1–6) and becomes an individual petition (vv. 7–14). The two genres have been combined to express intense desire and courageous journeying. Mention of enemies and the desire to see God's face in the Temple unify these two parts. **1–3:** *Light* is associated with the sanctuary as in Pss 36.9; 43.3; 56.13; in antiquity kings and divinities were often depicted as emanating light. **2:** *Devour my flesh,* the enemies are compared to wild animals (Pss 7.2; 17.12). **4:** Three metaphors for desiring God: living in God's house (Ps 84.4), appreciating God's beauty (Ex 24.11), and seeking (*inquire*) an oracle. **5:** Three metaphors for hope, all referring to the Temple: *shelter*, *tent*, and *rock* (Ps 61.2). **6:** *Now,* the psalmist can now look down from a secure place upon the enemies that once posed a threat. **7–10:** A sudden shift to petition/lament as the psalmist becomes aware that enemies still pose a threat. **8:** *My heart says,* a unique variant of the idiom "to say in one's heart," connoting utter sincerity. On God's *face,* see Ps 17.13n. **10:** The image of God as parent is rare in Psalms (see, e.g., 103.13). **11:** *Lead me on a level path,* the psalmist asks to be protected on the journey. **13:** *In the land of the living,* better "in the land of life," an idiom for the

14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!

Psalm 28

Of David.

1 To you, O LORD, I call;
my rock, do not refuse to hear me,
for if you are silent to me,
I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.
2 Hear the voice of my supplication,
as I cry to you for help,
as I lift up my hands
toward your most holy sanctuary.[a]

3 Do not drag me away with the wicked,
with those who are workers of evil,
who speak peace with their neighbors,
while mischief is in their hearts.
4 Repay them according to their work,
and according to the evil of their deeds;
repay them according to the work of their hands;
render them their due reward.
5 Because they do not regard the works of the LORD,
or the work of his hands,
he will break them down and build them up no more.

6 Blessed be the LORD,
for he has heard the sound of my pleadings.
7 The LORD is my strength and my shield;
in him my heart trusts;
so I am helped, and my heart exults,
and with my song I give thanks to him.

8 The LORD is the strength of his people;
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.
9 O save your people, and bless your heritage;
be their shepherd, and carry them forever.

Psalm 29

A Psalm of David.

1 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,[b]
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;
worship the LORD in holy splendor.

3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over mighty waters.
4 The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

[a] Heb *your innermost sanctuary*
[b] Heb *sons of gods*

Temple as in Ps 52.5. **14:** Perhaps recited in response, as encouragement to the psalmist.

Ps 28: Plea for vindication by one falsely accused. An individual petition of an innocent person against false accusers (vv. 1–5), combined with a thanksgiving (vv. 6–7), and prayer for the people (vv. 8–9). The psalmist prays that God not be silent (v. 1) and allow false accusers to win the day. **1:** *The Pit,* a synonym for Sheol, the abode of the dead. **2:** *Lifting up hands* was a posture of prayer. **6–8:** *Blessed be the* LORD, the LORD has spoken, perhaps through an oracle, and the psalmist responds with intense joy. **7:** *Strength* and *shield* complement "rock" (v. 1). **8–9:** As in other psalms (e.g., 14; 20; 25), the conclusion moves from the individual to the community, and to its leader, the *anointed* king.

Ps 29: Acknowledging the LORD's might in the storm. A hymn in which heavenly beings praise the LORD of the storm who brings life-giving rain; many scholars think that this was a northern Canaanite psalm (see the places named in vv. 5–8), adapted by early Israel. **1:** The *heavenly beings* (lit., "sons of gods") are summoned to acknowledge the LORD returning victorious to the assembly (cf. 89.5–7). **2:** *In holy splendor,* perhaps "when the Holy One appears." **3–9:** Symbolizing a cosmic event, a massive storm roars in from the Mediterranean and hits the coast with deafening thunderclaps (*the voice of the* LORD, used seven times in this section), drenching rain, and lightning flashes. The luminous thundercloud is imagined as the LORD's chariot, and the thunder, rain, and lightning are his soldiers. They sweep across the trees and appear to shatter and shake the forested mountain; earthquake also accompanies a divine appearance or theophany (e.g., Pss 18.7; 114.7). **6:** *Sirion,* Mount Hermon

7 The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames
of fire.
8 The voice of the LORD shakes the
wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of
Kadesh.

9 The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to
whirl,[a]
and strips the forest bare;
and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.
11 May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with
peace!

Psalm 30

A Psalm. A Song at the dedication of the temple. Of David.

1 I will extol you, O LORD, for you have
drawn me up,
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.
2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
3 O LORD, you brought up my soul from
Sheol,
restored me to life from among those
gone down to the Pit.[b]

4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his
faithful ones,
and give thanks to his holy name.
5 For his anger is but for a moment;
his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

6 As for me, I said in my prosperity,
"I shall never be moved."
7 By your favor, O LORD,
you had established me as a strong
mountain;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.

8 To you, O LORD, I cried,
and to the LORD I made supplication:
9 "What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?
10 Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me!
O LORD, be my helper!"

11 You have turned my mourning into
dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,
12 so that my soul[c] may praise you and not
be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to
you forever.

[a] Or *causes the deer to calve*
[b] Or *that I should not go down to the Pit*
[c] Heb *that glory*

(see Deut 3.9), at the southern border of *Lebanon*. **8:** *Wilderness of Kadesh,* the desert east of the city of Kadesh in central western Syria. **10:** *Enthroned over the flood,* ancient myths sometimes depicted the storm god defeating hostile Sea and building his palace upon its body. **11:** The heavenly beings pray that the divine king would extend the fruits of victory to Israel, the LORD's special people.

Ps 30: Praise for deliverance. An individual thanksgiving with four parts: praise and thanks for deliverance and restoration (vv. 1–3), an invitation to others to join in (vv. 4–5), narrative of the crisis including the original prayer (vv. 6–10), and repetition of praise and thanks (vv. 11–12). It has a dual metaphor system: going down, death, silence; and rising up, life, praise. God moves the psalmist from one state to the other. The divine names ("the LORD" and "God") add up to twelve, the number of the tribes of Israel, suggesting that the healing is a type of what God does for all the tribes. **Superscription:** *At the dedication of the temple* was added when this psalm was sung at the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus in 164 BCE. **3:** Language of death and recovery is used by people who were saved by God from life-threatening problems. *Sheol . . . the Pit,* the abode of the dead. **6:** *I shall never be moved,* the psalmist admits that smugness preceded the crisis. Withdrawal of divine support led to collapse (cf. Ps 104.27–30). **9:** The theme that God should save a psalmist because the dead do not praise God is common in the Psalms (see Ps 6.5n.). **11–12:** The psalmist casts off mourning garments (*sackcloth*) to dance with joy.

Psalm 31

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.
2 Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.

3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.
5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

6 You hate[a] those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.
7 I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;
you have taken heed of my adversities,
8 and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.

9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.
10 For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,[b]
and my bones waste away.

11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror[c] to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
13 For I hear the whispering of many—
terror all around!—
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.

14 But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."
15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
16 Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.
17 Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD,
for I call on you;
let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.
18 Let the lying lips be stilled
that speak insolently against the righteous
with pride and contempt.

19 O how abundant is your goodness
that you have laid up for those who fear you,
and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of everyone!
20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them
from human plots;
you hold them safe under your shelter
from contentious tongues.

21 Blessed be the LORD,
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city under siege.

[a] One Heb Ms Gk Syr Jerome: MT *I hate*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *my iniquity*
[c] Cn: Heb *exceedingly*

Ps 31: Prayer for deliverance, and thanksgiving. An individual petition that combines features of a petition (vv. 1–4,9–18) and a thanksgiving (vv. 5–8,19–24). **2–4:** The metaphors for refuge are spatial: *rock, fortress* (lit., "safe house"). **9–13:** The psalm returns to direct petition. Sickness, or perhaps old age, has cut off the sufferer from family and friends. **16:** *Let your face shine,* a likely reference to the priestly blessing (Num 6.25), meaning to adopt an open countenance that looks directly and beneficently at the other person (see also Pss 4.6; 80.3). **17:** *Sheol,* the underworld, the abode of the dead. **19:** A major change in mood: leaving behind complaints, the psalmist expresses thanks. The quest for a "safe house" in v. 2 has been answered by God's granting admission

22 I had said in my alarm,
"I am driven far[a] from your sight."
But you heard my supplications
when I cried out to you for help.

23 Love the LORD, all you his saints.
The LORD preserves the faithful,
but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.
24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the LORD.

Psalm 32

Of David. A Maskil.

1 Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
2 Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

3 While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up[b] as by the heat of summer. *Selah*

5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

6 Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress,[c] the rush of mighty waters
shall not reach them.
7 You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. *Selah*

8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,
else it will not stay near you.

10 Many are the torments of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.
11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

[a] Another reading is *cut off*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Cn: Heb *at a time of finding only*

to the Temple. **23–24:** As often in the Psalms, at the end the petitioner mentions the broader community. **23:** *Saints,* better "faithful" or "loyal" ones.

Ps 32: Happy the one whose sin is forgiven. An individual thanksgiving. Verses 1–5 narrate the rescue for which thanks will be given in the proclamation to others (vv. 6–11). The psalm has three mutually reinforcing metaphors for sin and three for forgiveness: sin is a burden one has to bear or carry, forgiveness occurring when God bears it away; sin is an act that God keeps on seeing (it is "in God's face"), forgiveness occurring when God covers it so it can no longer be seen; sin is "imputing iniquity," judging someone is a sinner and withholding blessing, and forgiveness consists in changing that judgment. **Superscription:** *Maskil,* a technical term of uncertain significance. **1:** *Whose transgression is forgiven,* an indirect way of expressing God's action. The psalmist's feverish attempts to *cover* (lit., "hide") the sin prevented God from *cover*ing it (looking away from it). **4:** *Your hand was heavy upon me,* an idiom for punishment (see 1 Sam 5.6). *Selah* (also vv. 5,7), see Ps 3.2n. **6–11:** Deeply moved by the experience of God's mercy, the singer tells the faithful what they may not realize: sin need not destroy you or separate you from God. **9:** People can turn away like work animals who do not understand human speech, but joy results from forgiveness.

Psalm 33

1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous.
Praise befits the upright.
2 Praise the LORD with the lyre;
make melody to him with the harp of ten strings.
3 Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

4 For the word of the LORD is upright,
and all his work is done in faithfulness.
5 He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.

6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.
7 He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;
he put the deeps in storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.
11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

12 Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.

13 The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all humankind.
14 From where he sits enthroned he watches
all the inhabitants of the earth—
15 he who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.
16 A king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
17 The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save.

18 Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
19 to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.

20 Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and shield.
21 Our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
22 Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

Ps 33: Praise of the LORD who created the universe. A hymn praising the divine word that made the three-tiered universe and guides it even when humans try to pervert it to their ends. It is comprised of twenty-two lines, the number of letters of the Hebrew alphabet, but is not an alphabetic acrostic (cf. Lam 5). The first part (vv. 1–11) follows the conventions of a hymn, whereas the second part (vv. 12–22) concentrates on one tier of the three-tiered universe—events on earth. **1–11:** The conjunction *for* in vv. 4 and 9 introduces the motive for giving praise, in this case, God's *upright* and powerful *word* that has brought the universe into being (vv. 6–7; cf. Gen 1.6). That creative word determines the course of history, and no human word can contravene it (vv. 10–11). *Storehouses,* cf. Ps 135.7; Job 38.22. **12–22:** Though not mentioned by name, Israel is declared *happy* or fortunate (v. 12) simply by being chosen out of all the nations. When the LORD scrutinizes humanity, all purely human sources of strength are relativized (vv. 16–17; cf. v. 10; Ps 20.7n.). Israel's (and the nations') task is not to rely on human strength but to wait on the LORD's goodness and power. **20–22:** These verses are connected causally and suggest that God should save Israel because of Israel's trust in God.

Psalm 34

Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

1 I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.
3 O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together.

4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
5 Look to him, and be radiant;
so your[a] faces shall never be ashamed.
6 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,
and was saved from every trouble.
7 The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
8 O taste and see that the LORD is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.
9 O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.
10 The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

11 Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
13 Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
14 Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.
15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their cry.
16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD rescues them from them all.
20 He keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.
21 Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
22 The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Psalm 35

Of David.

1 Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;
fight against those who fight against me!
2 Take hold of shield and buckler,
and rise up to help me!

[a] Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *their*

Ps 34: Praise and acknowledgment of deliverance from danger. An individual thanksgiving in acrostic form (see Ps 9–10n.). Individual thanksgivings publicize a deliverance from trouble to encourage others to remain loyal to God. As a way of giving thanks, the psalmist promises to announce that rescue to others so that they too may acknowledge God's goodness. The didactic element is underlined in this psalm. **Superscription:** In 1 Sam 21.10–15, David feigned madness before Achish, not Abimelech. **8:** *Taste,* a metaphor for experience. **11–22:** Borrowing from the portrait of personified Wisdom (especially Prov 8–9), the healed psalmist teaches others how to gain life. "Life" here is long life resulting from righteous conduct, in contrast to the brief life of the wicked. **11:** *Fear of the LORD,* best rendered "revering the LORD," as the following verses show, this is expressed through action, and is not only a mental state. **16–17:** The psalm reads better if the order of these two verses is reversed, following the order of the alphabet found in Lam 2; 3; 4.

Ps 35: Prayer for deliverance from enemies. An individual petition in three sections (vv. 1–10; 11–18; 19–28). It uses many metaphors for enemies—soldiers (vv. 1–3), hunters (v. 7), and lions (v. 17)—and the imagery of war, lawsuit, and conspiracy to show that the whole world is arrayed against a lone individual. Positive petitions (vv. 1–3,17,22–24,27) alternate with imprecations (vv. 4–6,8,19,25–26), promises of thanksgiving

[3] Draw the spear and javelin
against my pursuers;
say to my soul,
"I am your salvation."

[4] Let them be put to shame and dishonor
who seek after my life.
Let them be turned back and confounded
who devise evil against me.
[5] Let them be like chaff before the wind,
with the angel of the LORD driving them on.
[6] Let their way be dark and slippery,
with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.

[7] For without cause they hid their net[a] for me;
without cause they dug a pit[b] for my life.
[8] Let ruin come on them unawares.
And let the net that they hid ensnare them;
let them fall in it—to their ruin.

[9] Then my soul shall rejoice in the LORD,
exulting in his deliverance.
[10] All my bones shall say,
"O LORD, who is like you?
You deliver the weak
from those too strong for them,
the weak and needy from those who despoil them."

[11] Malicious witnesses rise up;
they ask me about things I do not know.
[12] They repay me evil for good;
my soul is forlorn.
[13] But as for me, when they were sick,
I wore sackcloth;
I afflicted myself with fasting.
I prayed with head bowed[c] on my bosom,
[14] as though I grieved for a friend or a brother;
I went about as one who laments for a mother,
bowed down and in mourning.

[15] But at my stumbling they gathered in glee,
they gathered together against me;
ruffians whom I did not know
tore at me without ceasing;
[16] they impiously mocked more and more,[d]
gnashing at me with their teeth.

[17] How long, O LORD, will you look on?
Rescue me from their ravages,
my life from the lions!
[18] Then I will thank you in the great congregation;
in the mighty throng I will praise you.

[19] Do not let my treacherous enemies rejoice over me,
or those who hate me without cause wink the eye.
[20] For they do not speak peace,
but they conceive deceitful words
against those who are quiet in the land.
[21] They open wide their mouths against me;
they say, "Aha, Aha,
our eyes have seen it."

[22] You have seen, O LORD; do not be silent!
O Lord, do not be far from me!
[23] Wake up! Bestir yourself for my defense,
for my cause, my God and my Lord!
[24] Vindicate me, O LORD, my God,
according to your righteousness,
and do not let them rejoice over me.
[25] Do not let them say to themselves,
"Aha, we have our heart's desire."
Do not let them say, "We have swallowed you[e] up."

[a] Heb *a pit, their net*
[b] The word *pit* is transposed from the preceding line
[c] Or *My prayer turned back*
[d] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *like the profanest of mockers of a cake*
[e] Heb *him*

(vv. 9–10,18,28), and complaints (vv. 7,11–16). Each of the psalm's three sections concludes with a promise of praise (vv. 9–10,18,28). **4:** *Be put to shame and dishonor,* God is asked to bring about the rescue in full view of others so that everyone can see the psalmist is in the right. **5–6:** *The angel of the LORD* is God's emissary, effecting punishment. **7–8:** See Ps 7.15–16n. **21,25:** *Aha,* see Ps 40.15n. **23:** *Wake up,* see Ps 44.23n.

[26] Let all those who rejoice at my calamity
be put to shame and confusion;
let those who exalt themselves against me
be clothed with shame and dishonor.

[27] Let those who desire my vindication
shout for joy and be glad,
and say evermore,
"Great is the LORD,
who delights in the welfare of his
servant."
[28] Then my tongue shall tell of your
righteousness
and of your praise all day long.

Psalm 36

To the leader. Of David, the servant of the LORD.

[1] Transgression speaks to the wicked
deep in their hearts;
there is no fear of God
before their eyes.
[2] For they flatter themselves in their own
eyes
that their iniquity cannot be found out
and hated.
[3] The words of their mouths are mischief
and deceit;
they have ceased to act wisely and do
good.
[4] They plot mischief while on their beds;
they are set on a way that is not good;
they do not reject evil.

[5] Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to
the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.
[6] Your righteousness is like the mighty
mountains,
your judgments are like the great
deep;
you save humans and animals alike,
O LORD.

[7] How precious is your steadfast love,
O God!
All people may take refuge in the
shadow of your wings.
[8] They feast on the abundance of your
house,
and you give them drink from the river
of your delights.
[9] For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.

[10] O continue your steadfast love to those
who know you,
and your salvation to the upright of
heart!
[11] Do not let the foot of the arrogant tread
on me,
or the hand of the wicked drive me
away.
[12] There the evildoers lie prostrate;
they are thrust down, unable to rise.

Psalm 37

Of David.

[1] Do not fret because of the wicked;
do not be envious of wrongdoers,
[2] for they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.

[3] Trust in the LORD, and do good;
so you will live in the land, and enjoy
security.
[4] Take delight in the LORD,

Ps 36: God sustains the faithful. A song of trust with elements of an instruction. Instead of complaining about the attacks of the wicked, the psalmist gives a vivid portrait of the wicked person (vv. 1–4). The statement of trust (vv. 5–9) enlarges on the LORD's saving power, and becomes a petition to enjoy the LORD's protection (vv. 10–12). **1–5:** The self-centered individual is contrasted with the God-centered world. **4:** *While on their beds,* i.e., privately, at night; cf. Mic 2.1. **5–9:** The wicked are unaware that God works in all parts of the universe—sky, mountains (earth), and sea (vv. 5–6)—and especially in the Temple (*your house*) from which flows the *river of your delights* (v. 8); cf. Ps 46.4; 65.10; Ezek 47.1–2. **7:** *Shadow of your wings,* see Ps 17.8n. **9:** *In your light we see light,* enjoy life (cf. Job 3.16; Ps 49.19), which is made possible by the luminous God present in the Temple. **12:** *There,* possibly a reference to Zion and its Temple as in Pss 48.6; 76.3; 87.4.

Ps 37: Exhortation to courage and endurance. An instructional poem in acrostic form (see Ps 9–10n.), using aphorisms, exhortations, and personal experience to encourage others to a faithful life (see Pss 49; 78; 127; 128). **1–11:** One should maintain one's equanimity when the wicked prosper and are praised. Retribution is inevitable, however, for they will be shamed (their hopes will prove empty) and the righteous rewarded,

and he will give you the desires of your heart.

5 Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act.
6 He will make your vindication shine like the light,
and the justice of your cause like the noonday.

7 Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him;
do not fret over those who prosper in their way,
over those who carry out evil devices.

8 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath.
Do not fret—it leads only to evil.
9 For the wicked shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

10 Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more;
though you look diligently for their place, they will not be there.
11 But the meek shall inherit the land,
and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

12 The wicked plot against the righteous,
and gnash their teeth at them;
13 but the LORD laughs at the wicked,
for he sees that their day is coming.

14 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows
to bring down the poor and needy,
to kill those who walk uprightly;
15 their sword shall enter their own heart,
and their bows shall be broken.

16 Better is a little that the righteous person has
than the abundance of many wicked.

17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,
but the LORD upholds the righteous.

18 The LORD knows the days of the blameless,
and their heritage will abide forever;
19 they are not put to shame in evil times,
in the days of famine they have abundance.

20 But the wicked perish,
and the enemies of the LORD are like the glory of the pastures;
they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.

21 The wicked borrow, and do not pay back,
but the righteous are generous and keep giving;
22 for those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land,
but those cursed by him shall be cut off.

23 Our steps[a] are made firm by the LORD,
when he delights in our[b] way;
24 though we stumble,[c] we[d] shall not fall headlong,
for the LORD holds us[e] by the hand.

25 I have been young, and now am old,
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or their children begging bread.
26 They are ever giving liberally and lending,
and their children become a blessing.

[a] Heb *A man's steps*
[b] Heb *his*
[c] Heb *he stumbles*
[d] Heb *he*
[e] Heb *him*

somewhat unusually in the Psalms, with the precious gift of the land (vv. 3,9,11,22,29,34). **12–20:** The wicked try to attack the righteous, but the LORD defends them. **21–26:** The same Heb root in vv. 21 and 26 marks off the section (NRSV *borrow*, *lending*). To give to others is to show confidence in the LORD and eventually leads to a share in the LORD's land (vv. 21–22). **25:** *I have not seen the righteous forsaken,* an unusually strong affirmation

27 Depart from evil, and do good;
so you shall abide forever.
28 For the LORD loves justice;
he will not forsake his faithful ones.

The righteous shall be kept safe forever,
but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.
29 The righteous shall inherit the land,
and live in it forever.

30 The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom,
and their tongues speak justice.
31 The law of their God is in their hearts;
their steps do not slip.

32 The wicked watch for the righteous,
and seek to kill them.
33 The LORD will not abandon them to their power,
or let them be condemned when they are brought to trial.

34 Wait for the LORD, and keep to his way,
and he will exalt you to inherit the land;
you will look on the destruction of the wicked.

35 I have seen the wicked oppressing,
and towering like a cedar of Lebanon.[a]
36 Again I[b] passed by, and they were no more;
though I sought them, they could not be found.

37 Mark the blameless, and behold the upright,
for there is posterity for the peaceable.
38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed;
the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off.

39 The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
he is their refuge in the time of trouble.
40 The LORD helps them and rescues them;
he rescues them from the wicked, and saves them,
because they take refuge in him.

Psalm 38

A Psalm of David, for the memorial offering.

1 O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger,
or discipline me in your wrath.
2 For your arrows have sunk into me,
and your hand has come down on me.

3 There is no soundness in my flesh
because of your indignation;
there is no health in my bones
because of my sin.
4 For my iniquities have gone over my head;
they weigh like a burden too heavy for me.

5 My wounds grow foul and fester
because of my foolishness;
6 I am utterly bowed down and prostrate;
all day long I go around mourning.
7 For my loins are filled with burning,
and there is no soundness in my flesh.
8 I am utterly spent and crushed;
I groan because of the tumult of my heart.

9 O Lord, all my longing is known to you;
my sighing is not hidden from you.

[a] Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *he*

that over time divine governance will punish the wicked and uphold the just. **27–40:** Imperative verbs in vv. 27,34,37 dominate the section.

Ps 38: Confession of sin and plea for forgiveness. An individual petition in twenty-two verses (see Ps 33n.) notable for its vivid portrayal of anguish resulting from sin and of patient waiting for healing. People have interpreted the psalmist's illness as divine rejection and therefore keep their distance. Pleas to God in the second person singular (vv. 1–2,9–10,15–16,21–22) alternate with descriptions of physical collapse and vulnerability (vv. 3–8,11–14,17–20). It is similar to Ps 6 (see 6.1 and 38.1), but unlike Ps 6, where the psalmist is protesting his innocence, this psalmist freely admits his sins (vv. 3–4,18). **Superscription:** *For the memorial offering* (also Ps 70), meaning uncertain. **9–10:** The verses echo the anguish described in vv. 3–8.

10 My heart throbs, my strength fails me;
as for the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me.
11 My friends and companions stand aloof from my affliction,
and my neighbors stand far off.

12 Those who seek my life lay their snares;
those who seek to hurt me speak of ruin,
and meditate treachery all day long.

13 But I am like the deaf, I do not hear;
like the mute, who cannot speak.
14 Truly, I am like one who does not hear,
and in whose mouth is no retort.

15 But it is for you, O LORD, that I wait;
it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.
16 For I pray, "Only do not let them rejoice over me,
those who boast against me when my foot slips."

17 For I am ready to fall,
and my pain is ever with me.
18 I confess my iniquity;
I am sorry for my sin.
19 Those who are my foes without cause[a] are mighty,
and many are those who hate me wrongfully.
20 Those who render me evil for good
are my adversaries because I follow after good.

21 Do not forsake me, O LORD;
O my God, do not be far from me;
22 make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation.

Psalm 39

To the leader: to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

1 I said, "I will guard my ways
that I may not sin with my tongue;
I will keep a muzzle on my mouth
as long as the wicked are in my presence."
2 I was silent and still;
I held my peace to no avail;
my distress grew worse,
3 my heart became hot within me.
While I mused, the fire burned;
then I spoke with my tongue:

4 "LORD, let me know my end,
and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.
5 You have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight.
Surely everyone stands as a mere breath. *Selah*
6 Surely everyone goes about like a shadow.
Surely for nothing they are in turmoil;
they heap up, and do not know who will gather.

7 "And now, O Lord, what do I wait for?
My hope is in you.
8 Deliver me from all my transgressions.
Do not make me the scorn of the fool.
9 I am silent; I do not open my mouth,
for it is you who have done it.
10 Remove your stroke from me;
I am worn down by the blows[b] of your hand.

[a] Q Ms: MT *my living foes*
[b] Heb *hostility*

11: Cf. Ps 31.9–18n. **15–16:** The verses echo the anguish in vv. 11–14. **15:** The psalmist trusts God rather than humans. **21–22:** The closing petitions are similar in syntax to the opening petitions (vv. 1–2).

Ps 39: Plea that suffering might end. An individual petition. Forced to remain silent because enemies would misinterpret any utterance (vv. 1–3), the psalmist asks God how much longer the suffering will continue (vv. 4–6). Since the suffering comes from God, only God can end it (vv. 7–13). **Superscription:** *Jeduthun* (also in the superscriptions of Pss 62; 77), a Temple singer (1 Chr 25.1; etc.). **1:** *Sin with my tongue,* better rendered, "offend by my speech"; since the psalmist's words might lead others to conclude that the suffering is punishment for sins, the psalmist resolves to complain only to God. **4:** *Let me know my end,* better rendered, "Let me know the term (of my affliction), what the length of my days (of suffering) is," expressing the belief that divinely caused afflictions lasted for a predetermined period (cf. 2 Sam 24.13; Jer 25.11; Ps 74.9). To the psalmist, it is unfair of God to burden an already short life span with a lengthy affliction. **5:** *Selah* (also v. 11), see Ps 3.2n. **7:** *And now,*

11 "You chastise mortals
in punishment for sin,
consuming like a moth what is dear to them;
surely everyone is a mere breath. *Selah*

12 "Hear my prayer, O LORD,
and give ear to my cry;
do not hold your peace at my tears.
For I am your passing guest,
an alien, like all my forebears.
13 Turn your gaze away from me, that I may smile again,
before I depart and am no more."

Psalm 40

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
2 He drew me up from the desolate pit,[a]
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.

4 Happy are those who make
the LORD their trust,
who do not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after false gods.
5 You have multiplied, O LORD my God,
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you.
Were I to proclaim and tell of them,
they would be more than can be counted.

6 Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,
but you have given me an open ear.[b]
Burnt offering and sin offering
you have not required.
7 Then I said, "Here I am;
in the scroll of the book it is written of me.[c]
8 I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart."

9 I have told the glad news of deliverance
in the great congregation;
see, I have not restrained my lips,
as you know, O LORD.
10 I have not hidden your saving help within my heart,
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness
from the great congregation.

11 Do not, O LORD, withhold
your mercy from me;
let your steadfast love and your faithfulness
keep me safe forever.
12 For evils have encompassed me
without number;
my iniquities have overtaken me,
until I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails me.

13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;
O LORD, make haste to help me.

[a] Cn: Heb *pit of tumult*
[b] Heb *ears you have dug for me*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

signals the shift from complaint to petition. **12:** *Guest . . . alien,* see Lev 25.23; 1 Chr 29.15. **13:** A similar image is found in Job 7.19; in both cases, the sufferer asks God to look less closely, for if God scrutinizes people, they will surely be found guilty.

Ps 40: A thanksgiving with a plea for further help. A hybrid psalm of thanksgiving (vv. 1–10) and individual petition (vv. 11–17). After experiencing salvation, the psalmist faces further adversity. Verses 13–17 are duplicated in Ps 70. **1–3b:** Report of the rescue. **3:** *New song,* "new" refers to the startling new action celebrated in the song. **6–8:** Instead of the customary sacrifice offering, God asks for a self-offering through obedience; cf. 1 Sam 15.22; Ps 50.8–9; Mic 6.6–7. **7:** *Here I am,* the psalmist is totally available for the task (cf. Isa 6.8), in this case, to tell of the deliverance and its significance (vv. 9–10). *The scroll of the book*: variously interpreted, possibly some written expression of the divine will. The phrase is quoted in Heb 10.5–7. **8:** God's word is totally internalized. **11–17:** Acceptance of the task of proclamation puts the psalmist in fresh danger and in need of God's help.

14 Let all those be put to shame and confusion
who seek to snatch away my life;
let those be turned back and brought to dishonor
who desire my hurt.
15 Let those be appalled because of their shame
who say to me, "Aha, Aha!"

16 But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your salvation
say continually, "Great is the LORD!"
17 As for me, I am poor and needy,
but the Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
do not delay, O my God.

Psalm 41

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 Happy are those who consider the poor;[a]
the LORD delivers them in the day of trouble.
2 The LORD protects them and keeps them alive;
they are called happy in the land.
You do not give them up to the will of their enemies.
3 The LORD sustains them on their sickbed;
in their illness you heal all their infirmities.[b]

4 As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me;
heal me, for I have sinned against you."
5 My enemies wonder in malice
when I will die, and my name perish.
6 And when they come to see me, they utter empty words,
while their hearts gather mischief;
when they go out, they tell it abroad.
7 All who hate me whisper together about me;
they imagine the worst for me.

8 They think that a deadly thing has fastened on me,
that I will not rise again from where I lie.
9 Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted,
who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.
10 But you, O LORD, be gracious to me,
and raise me up, that I may repay them.

11 By this I know that you are pleased with me;
because my enemy has not triumphed over me.
12 But you have upheld me because of my integrity,
and set me in your presence forever.

13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Amen and Amen.

[a] Or *weak*
[b] Heb *you change all his bed*

14: *Shame,* violating accepted morality brought dishonor upon the violator. The prayer is that the enemies' schemes be publicly frustrated. **15:** *Aha, Aha,* malicious cries of triumph that the psalmist hopes will be proved foolish by God's judgment. **16:** God's help of this individual will encourage other righteous people. **17:** Psalms often depicts the supplicant as *poor* and *needy* (e.g., Pss 70.5; 86.1; 109.22).

Ps 41: Thanksgiving for rescue. A thanksgiving in which the psalmist in vv. 4–10 cites an earlier prayer uttered in pain as a kind of verbal votive offering. **1:** *Happy are those who consider the poor* (i.e., those who are attentive to the poor) is the psalmist's conclusion after a profound deliverance (like Ps 32.1). Those who help the needy are themselves helped in their need. **4–10:** The psalmist's earlier prayer shows fear of enemies who wanted the psalmist to die and leave behind no name, i.e., no children to carry on the family. **4:** The psalmist believes that past sin was the cause of illness. **10:** To be raised from the sickbed constitutes a demonstration of the psalmist's innocence to the enemies who wish the psalmist dead. **13:** Not a part of the psalm, but a doxology or blessing concluding Book I, the first of five editorial divisions of the Psalter; see also Pss 72.18–19; 89.52; 106.48; 150.1–6. The great majority of the previous psalms were ascribed to David; the following nine are not.

BOOK II PSALMS 42-72

Psalm 42

To the leader. A Maskil of the Korahites.

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?
3 My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"

4 These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,[a]
and led them in procession to the house
of God,
with glad shouts and songs of
thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.
5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help 6 and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.
7 Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.

8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast
love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God, my rock,
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?"
10 As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Psalm 43

1 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my
cause
against an ungodly people;
from those who are deceitful and unjust
deliver me!
2 For you are the God in whom I take
refuge;
why have you cast me off?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because of the oppression of the
enemy?

3 O send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me;

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

Ps 42–43: Longing to join the community in the Temple. This is the first psalm in the "Elohistic Psalter" (see Introduction). These two chapters form one poem as indicated by the identical refrain in 42.6,11 and 43.5, and petition to be in the Temple (like Pss 27; 63; 84). Here the sufferer, away from the Temple, complains of taunts by unbelievers (42.9–10) and pleads for a guide for the journey home. Distinctive is the psalmist's alternation between discouragement and resolve, despair and hope. **Superscription:** *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. *Korahites,* descendants of Korah, a Levite priest, a guild of Temple singers and composers who favored phrases such as *the living God* (Pss 42.2; 84.2), *the face of God* (Pss 42.2; 44.24; 88.14), and *refuge* (Pss 43.2; 46.1,7; 48.3); see further Introduction. **42.1–5:** The taunts of those who reject God depress the psalmist and awaken memories of past worship with believers. Verses 1–5 are unified by water imagery. **6–11:** Even in anger against God, the psalmist is able to hope (vv. 8,11b) and pray (vv. 8,9). **6:** *Land of Jordan and of Hermon,* northern sites, near the headwaters of the Jordan and far from Jerusalem. *Mizar,* precise location unknown. **7:** *Deep calls to deep,* the subterranean cosmic waters that symbolize chaos and death (cf. Jon 2.3–4; Ps 18.4–6). Being distant from the dwelling of the saving God is like being in the power of chaotic Sea. **43.1–5:** The tone changes and the prayer becomes more robust, asking God to send *your light and your truth*, qualities personified as heavenly beings able to lead the psalmist to God's shrine.

let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling.
4 Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy;
and I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Psalm 44

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Maskil.

1 We have heard with our ears, O God,
our ancestors have told us,
what deeds you performed in their days,
in the days of old:
2 you with your own hand drove out the nations,
but them you planted;
you afflicted the peoples,
but them you set free;
3 for not by their own sword did they win the land,
nor did their own arm give them victory;
but your right hand, and your arm,
and the light of your countenance,
for you delighted in them.

4 You are my King and my God;
you command[a] victories for Jacob.
5 Through you we push down our foes;
through your name we tread down our assailants.
6 For not in my bow do I trust,
nor can my sword save me.
7 But you have saved us from our foes,
and have put to confusion those who hate us.
8 In God we have boasted continually,
and we will give thanks to your name forever. *Selah*

9 Yet you have rejected us and abased us,
and have not gone out with our armies.
10 You made us turn back from the foe,
and our enemies have gotten spoil.
11 You have made us like sheep for slaughter,
and have scattered us among the nations.
12 You have sold your people for a trifle,
demanding no high price for them.

13 You have made us the taunt of our neighbors,
the derision and scorn of those around us.
14 You have made us a byword among the nations,
a laughingstock[b] among the peoples.
15 All day long my disgrace is before me,
and shame has covered my face
16 at the words of the taunters and revilers,
at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.

17 All this has come upon us,
yet we have not forgotten you,
or been false to your covenant.
18 Our heart has not turned back,
nor have our steps departed from your way,
19 yet you have broken us in the haunt of jackals,
and covered us with deep darkness.

20 If we had forgotten the name of our God,
or spread out our hands to a strange god,
21 would not God discover this?
For he knows the secrets of the heart.

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *You are my King, O God; command*
[b] Heb *a shaking of the head*

Ps 44: Prayer for recovery from national defeat. A communal petition on the occasion of a military defeat. Like Pss 77 and 89, it recalls the settling of the people in Canaan (vv. 1–3) to remind God to be faithful to that earlier moment, when God acted powerfully on behalf of Israel. Not conscious of having sinned, the community asks why God let them fall into the hands of their enemies. **Superscription:** *Korahites,* see Pss 42–43n. *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. **1–8:** Israel's founding moment was the Exodus-Conquest, though the singer singles out the Conquest. Then, as now, the people trusted entirely in God's protection. **8:** *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **9–16:** The complaint: You have given us into the hand of our enemies. **17–22:** We have done nothing to warrant your abandoning us.

[22] Because of you we are being killed all
day long,
and accounted as sheep for the
slaughter.

[23] Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Lord?
Awake, do not cast us off forever!
[24] Why do you hide your face?
Why do you forget our affliction and
oppression?
[25] For we sink down to the dust;
our bodies cling to the ground.
[26] Rise up, come to our help.
Redeem us for the sake of your
steadfast love.

Psalm 45

To the leader: according to Lilies. Of the Korahites. A Maskil. A love song.

[1] My heart overflows with a goodly theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready
scribe.

[2] You are the most handsome of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.
[3] Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty
one,
in your glory and majesty.

[4] In your majesty ride on victoriously
for the cause of truth and to defend[a] the
right;
let your right hand teach you dread
deeds.
[5] Your arrows are sharp
in the heart of the king's enemies;
the peoples fall under you.

[6] Your throne, O God,[b] endures forever and
ever.
Your royal scepter is a scepter of
equity;
[7] you love righteousness and hate
wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed
you
with the oil of gladness beyond your
companions;
[8] your robes are all fragrant with myrrh
and aloes and cassia.
From ivory palaces stringed instruments
make you glad;
[9] daughters of kings are among your
ladies of honor;
at your right hand stands the queen in
gold of Ophir.

[10] Hear, O daughter, consider and incline
your ear;
forget your people and your father's
house,
[11] and the king will desire your beauty.
Since he is your lord, bow to him;

[a] Cn: Heb *and the meekness of*
[b] Or *Your throne is a throne of God, it*

22: The community struggles with being God's people when God is silent before their pain. **23:** As in Pss 35.23; 59.4–5; 78.65; Isa 51.9 (but cf. Ps 121.3–4), the psalmist expresses frustration at God's inaction using the ancient Near Eastern motif of the sleeping god who needs to be awakened (see 1 Kings 18.27). **26–27:** In conclusion, the psalmist offers two motivations for God to intervene: Israel's terrible state, and God's steadfast love (Heb "ḥesed") toward Israel (see 5.7n.).

Ps 45: Celebration of the king's wedding. A song for the king's wedding to a foreign princess. Jewish tradition sees the singer as a model Torah scholar and the king as the Messiah. Christianity too sees a messianic reference; see Heb 1.8. **Superscription:** *According to Lilies,* probably a melody (also Pss 69; 80; cf. 60). *Korahites,* see Ps 42–43n. *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. **1–6:** After an invocation (v. 1), the court poet praises the king's beauty (*most handsome of men,* v. 2), which implies divine favor (as in Gen 39.6; 1 Sam 16.12; 17.42). Similarly, *grace is poured upon your lips* in v. 2 means to utter decisions made by a wise heart (as in Prov 22.11). Verses 3–6 speak of the king's military prowess: by his wisdom and military skill, the king is an instrument of divine justice. **6:** *O God,* if a reference to the king, the only time in the Bible that the Davidic king is divinized in this fashion; see also textual note *b* and v. 17n. **7–16:** As vv. 2–6 focused on the king as defender of the land, vv. 7–16 emphasize the divine choice of the king. **7:** The anointing of the king was the central act of the coronation ritual. *Gladness,* elsewhere associated with marriage as in Jer 7.34; 16.9; 25.10; 33.11. **8:** *Myrrh and aloes and cassia* evoke a sensuous and erotic mood (Prov 7.17–18; Song 1.13; 5.13). **9:** *The queen,* most likely the queen mother, since according to vv.

12 the people[a] of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts,
the richest of the people 13 with all kinds of wealth.

The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes;[b]
14 in many-colored robes she is led to the king;
behind her the virgins, her companions, follow.
15 With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.

16 In the place of ancestors you, O king,[c] shall have sons;
you will make them princes in all the earth.
17 I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations;
therefore the peoples will praise you forever and ever.

Psalm 46

To the leader. Of the Korahites. According to Alamoth. A Song.

1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present[d] help in trouble.
2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult. *Selah*

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
5 God is in the midst of the city;[e] it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
6 The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.[f] *Selah*

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
10 "Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth."
11 The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.[f] *Selah*

[a] Heb *daughter*
[b] Or *people.* [13]*All glorious is the princess within, gold embroidery is her clothing*
[c] Heb lacks *O king*
[d] Or *well proved*
[e] Heb *of it*
[f] Or *fortress*

13–14 the bride is "in her chamber" from which she will be led to the king. According to 1 Kings 2.19, the queen mother sat on the king's right as in Ps 45.9, so it is she who addresses the bride in vv. 10–12. *Ophir,* in southern Arabia (see Gen 10.29), a famous source of gold. **12:** *Tyre,* in Phoenicia, was known for its luxury items and fine craftsmanship. **17:** The court poet fulfills his task of making the king's name known, remarkably attributing to the king the type of praise elsewhere associated with God (e.g., Ps 145.21).

Ps 46: The glory of Mount Zion, residence of the LORD. A song of Zion, like Pss 48; 76; 84; and 122. The first of a cluster of three psalms about the LORD reigning in Jerusalem. A refrain (vv. 7,11) structures the poem. **Superscription:** *Korahites,* see Ps 42–43n. *Alamoth,* probably a melody; see 1 Chr 15.20. **1–3:** The psalmist trusts in Zion, the center of the world and residence of the LORD, which remains unshaken though the surrounding earth "totters" (NRSV *change*) and plunges into pre-creation chaos. **3:** *Selah* (also vv. 7,11), see Ps 3.2n. **4–7:** In contrast to the tumultuous and dangerous waters in vv. 2–3, the calm river of v. 4 is controlled by God to provide water and fertility for the holy city (see Ps 36.5–9n.). The attacks of the rebellious nations in v. 6 function as a historical complement to the cosmic disaster in vv. 2–3. Yet God's *voice,* thunder, defeats them. **9:** Rather than just defeating the enemies, as in most psalms, God ends war on *earth*. **10:** Stop what you are doing and embrace the peace the LORD has achieved. Zion is the place where God's victory is most visible and most appropriately praised.

Psalm 47

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

[1] Clap your hands, all you peoples;
shout to God with loud songs of joy.
[2] For the LORD, the Most High,
is awesome,
a great king over all the earth.
[3] He subdued peoples under us,
and nations under our feet.
[4] He chose our heritage for us,
the pride of Jacob whom he loves. *Selah*

[5] God has gone up with a shout,
the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
[6] Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises.
[7] For God is the king of all the earth;
sing praises with a psalm.[a]

[8] God is king over the nations;
God sits on his holy throne.
[9] The princes of the peoples gather
as the people of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth belong to God;
he is highly exalted.

Psalm 48

A Song. A Psalm of the Korahites.

[1] Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God.
His holy mountain, [2] beautiful in
elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.
[3] Within its citadels God
has shown himself a sure defense.

[4] Then the kings assembled,
they came on together.
[5] As soon as they saw it, they were
astounded;
they were in panic, they took to flight;
[6] trembling took hold of them there,
pains as of a woman in labor,
[7] as when an east wind shatters
the ships of Tarshish.
[8] As we have heard, so have we seen
in the city of the LORD of hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God establishes forever. *Selah*

[9] We ponder your steadfast love,
O God,
in the midst of your temple.
[10] Your name, O God, like your praise,
reaches to the ends of the earth.
Your right hand is filled with victory.

[a] Heb *Maskil*

Ps 47: Acclaim the LORD the king of heaven and earth! An enthronement hymn, like Pss 93; 95–99, celebrating the LORD reigning over heaven and earth. Some scholars have suggested that it was written for a New Year festival celebrating the LORD's kingship. **Superscription:** *Korahites,* see Ps 42–43n. **1–4:** Presupposed is the LORD's universal victory that is also celebrated in Pss 2; 46; 48; 76; 93. Israel's task is to offer a suitable welcome and receive the territory (*our heritage,* v. 4) that the victorious LORD assigns. **2:** *A great king,* better "the Great King," a title of suzerains in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Hittite kingdom. **4:** *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **5:** *Gone up,* ascended the throne as in 2 Sam 6.15; Isa 14.13. The *shout* and *trumpet* were part of the ritual proclaiming the new king (see 1 Kings 1.39–49). **8:** *Is king . . . sits,* perhaps better translated as actions in a ceremony: "has become king . . . has taken his seat on the throne." **9:** *Gather as the people of the God of Abraham,* an emendation yields "The princes of the peoples gather *with* the people of the God of Abraham." *Shields,* i.e., rulers (by metonymy).

Ps 48: A hymn to Zion, the place of God's peace. A song of Zion, like Pss 46; 76; 84; 122. Comparable Near Eastern texts describe how a particular god became the most high god by defeating chaos and then, after receiving the acclaim of the other heavenly beings, constructed a palace to memorialize the victory. Ps 48 seems to see earthly kings (v. 4) as representing the same chaotic power. **Superscription:** *Korahites,* see Ps 42–43n. **1–3:** Seven epithets are applied to Zion. *In the far north*, better "the heights of Zaphon," the mountain home of the storm god Baal (modern Jebel el-Aqraʿ on the coast of northern Syria). The LORD has taken over Baal's domain. **4–8:** Rather than describing a specific historical battle, the verses imagine the gathering of rebellious kingdoms against the LORD's governance of the universe. But this is no ordinary military victory: the nations needed only to see the magnificent Jerusalem, and they capitulated. **7:** *East wind,* the weapon of the storm god. *Tarshish,* location uncertain; perhaps Tarsus in southern Turkey or Tartessus in southern Spain. **8:** *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **9–14:** The Temple buildings memorialize the LORD's *steadfast love* (Heb "ḥesed") manifested in the victory

11 Let Mount Zion be glad,
let the towns[a] of Judah rejoice
because of your judgments.

12 Walk about Zion, go all around it,
count its towers,
13 consider well its ramparts;
go through its citadels,
that you may tell the next generation
14 that this is God,
our God forever and ever.
He will be our guide forever.

Psalm 49

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

1 Hear this, all you peoples;
give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
2 both low and high,
rich and poor together.
3 My mouth shall speak wisdom;
the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.
4 I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will solve my riddle to the music of the harp.

5 Why should I fear in times of trouble,
when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me,
6 those who trust in their wealth
and boast of the abundance of their riches?
7 Truly, no ransom avails for one's life,[b]
there is no price one can give to God for it.
8 For the ransom of life is costly,
and can never suffice,
9 that one should live on forever
and never see the grave.[c]

10 When we look at the wise, they die;
fool and dolt perish together
and leave their wealth to others.
11 Their graves[d] are their homes forever,
their dwelling places to all generations,
though they named lands their own.
12 Mortals cannot abide in their pomp;
they are like the animals that perish.

13 Such is the fate of the foolhardy,
the end of those[e] who are pleased with their lot. *Selah*
14 Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol;
Death shall be their shepherd;
straight to the grave they descend,[f]
and their form shall waste away;
Sheol shall be their home.[g]
15 But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol,
for he will receive me. *Selah*

16 Do not be afraid when some become rich,

[a] Heb *daughters*
[b] Another reading is *no one can ransom a brother*
[c] Heb *the pit*
[d] Gk Syr Compare Tg: Heb *their inward* (thought)
[e] Tg: Heb *after them*
[f] Cn: Heb *the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning*
[g] Meaning of Heb uncertain

that brought order and justice to the world. Military might is a means to justice, the right governance of the world. The psalm begins and ends (vv. 1–3,12–14) with the mountains and the buildings that remind visitors of the mercy and grandeur of God. **12–13:** *Walk about Zion . . . consider well its ramparts,* a command to contemplate the result of the divine victory just won, perhaps referring to a ritual procession through the city. **14:** The final word, *forever* (Heb "'al-mut"), is likely out of place here, belonging with the superscription of the following psalm as "Alamot" (Heb "'alamot"; see Ps 46n.).

Ps 49: An instruction on the limits of wealth. A wisdom psalm or instruction about the folly of relying on wealth rather than God. A refrain structures the poem and highlights its theme (vv. 12,20). The text is often obscure, as the textual notes attest. **Superscription:** *Korahites,* see Pss 42–43n. **1–4:** A formal call for attention like Deut 32.1–3 and Ps 78.1–4. The psalmist assumes the role of a wisdom teacher. **5–12:** Instead of calling on God for rescue from the arrogant wealthy, the psalmist reflects on the folly of relying on wealth. **12:** The psalmist's conclusion: wealth cannot stave off death. **13–20:** As the poem progresses, the tone grows bolder. **13:** *Selah* (also v. 15), see Ps 3.2n. **14:** *Sheol,* the abode of the dead. **15:** Though the wealthy seem to triumph, God will *ransom* and "take" (NRSV *receive*) the psalmist from the clutches of the underworld. The Heb word for "take" elsewhere describes God's lifting loyal servants to the safety of heaven (see Ps 73.24; Gen 5.24; 2 Kings 2.10).

when the wealth of their houses
increases.
17 For when they die they will carry
nothing away;
their wealth will not go down after
them.
18 Though in their lifetime they count
themselves happy
—for you are praised when you do well
for yourself—
19 they[a] will go to the company of their
ancestors,
who will never again see the light.
20 Mortals cannot abide in their pomp;
they are like the animals that perish.

Psalm 50

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 The mighty one, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its
setting.
2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.

3 Our God comes and does not keep
silence,
before him is a devouring fire,
and a mighty tempest all around him.
4 He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his
people:
5 "Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by
sacrifice!"
6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge. *Selah*

7 "Hear, O my people, and I will speak,
O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am God, your God.
8 Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt offerings are continually
before me.
9 I will not accept a bull from your house,
or goats from your folds.
10 For every wild animal of the forest is
mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.
11 I know all the birds of the air,[b]
and all that moves in the field is mine.

12 "If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for the world and all that is in it is mine.
13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls,
or drink the blood of goats?
14 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,[c]
and pay your vows to the Most High.
15 Call on me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify
me."

16 But to the wicked God says:
"What right have you to recite my
statutes,
or take my covenant on your lips?
17 For you hate discipline,
and you cast my words behind you.
18 You make friends with a thief when you
see one,
and you keep company with adulterers.

[a] Cn: Heb *you*
[b] Gk Syr Tg: Heb *mountains*
[c] Or *make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God*

Ps 50: A covenant renewal liturgy. The psalm seems to record a ceremony in which the people reaffirm their commitment to the Sinai covenant. It is similar to Pss 81 and 95. The poem is attributed to Asaph, one of David's musicians (1 Chr 6.39; 15.17; 16.5–7); the other Asaph psalms appear together as a collection in 73–83. **1–6:** God appears on Mount Zion, the site of the Temple. Zion may evoke the other great holy mountain where the covenant was originally made, Mount Sinai (Ex 19), where God made a covenant with Israel and now invites Israel to renew it on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, another holy mountain. **4:** *Heavens . . . earth,* ancient treaties and covenants invoked such primal pairs along with gods as witnesses (see, e.g., Deut 32.1), and they are appropriately invoked here as the people are questioned about their fidelity to the covenant. **5:** *My faithful ones,* better, "consecrated ones," those who have become God's people by entering into the covenant. **6:** *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **7–15:** On God's rejection of animal sacrifice, see Isa 1.10–17; Jer 6.20; Am 5.21–24. Aggressive rebukes and questions often preceded renewal of vows, e.g., Ps 81; Josh 24; 1 Sam 12. The goal was positive: to encourage repentance. **7:** *I am God, your God,* a paraphrase of the beginning of the Decalogue (Ex 20.2); perhaps the entire Decalogue was meant to be repeated at this point in the ritual. **14:** *A sacrifice of thanksgiving* was mostly eaten by the worshiper. **16–23**: Though not everyone is guilty of the sins named in this section, the whole congregation must

19 "You give your mouth free rein for evil,
and your tongue frames deceit.
20 You sit and speak against your kin;
you slander your own mother's child.
21 These things you have done and I have been silent;
you thought that I was one just like yourself.
But now I rebuke you, and lay the charge before you.

22 "Mark this, then, you who forget God,
or I will tear you apart, and there will be no one to deliver.
23 Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me;
to those who go the right way[a]
I will show the salvation of God."

Psalm 51

To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
5 Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
6 You desire truth in the inward being;[b]
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
9 Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right[c] spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing[d] spirit.

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
14 Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

15 O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;

[a] Heb *who set a way*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Or *steadfast*
[d] Or *generous*

listen to the rebukes, for each is a member of the community. Verses 8–13 rebuked sacrifices that were a substitute for sincere calling unto God; vv. 16–21 condemns the sins themselves. **22–23:** A final warning and blessing.

Ps 51: Prayer of repentance and renewal. An individual petition. **Superscription:** Attributed to David after the prophet Nathan rebuked him for adultery and murder (2 Sam 12), a reminder that all humans, even the most revered, must ask God for forgiveness. Like other psalm superscriptions, this is likely secondary: the psalm itself never refers explicitly to David's actions. The first section (vv. 1–9) is marked off by the repetition of "blot out" in vv. 1 and 9, and "wash" in vv. 2 and 7. The second section (vv. 10–19) is framed by the repetition of "heart," "God," and "spirit" in vv. 10 and 17. As in Ps 50, contrition is considered more valuable in God's sight than sacrifices; cf. Ps 69.30–31. **1–9:** Since the metaphor for sin in v. 1 is stain, the psalmist asks for cleansing and purifying what is soiled or defiled. **5:** *I was born guilty,* the psalmist was never without sin (cf. Ps 88.15); this is the closest statement in the Hebrew Bible resembling the later Christian idea of original sin. **7:** Branches of *hyssop*, a wild shrub, were used for sprinkling liquids in purification rituals (Lev 14.4; Num 19.6). **10–17:** The effects of forgiveness—interior renewal, nearness to God, an enlivened spirit, joy—will inspire the psalmist to

if I were to give a burnt offering, you
would not be pleased.
17 The sacrifice acceptable to God[a] is a
broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you
will not despise.

18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
19 then you will delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt
offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Psalm 52

To the leader. A Maskil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came to Saul and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."

1 Why do you boast, O mighty one,
of mischief done against the godly?[b]
All day long 2 you are plotting
destruction.
Your tongue is like a sharp razor,
you worker of treachery.
3 You love evil more than good,
and lying more than speaking the truth.
Selah
4 You love all words that devour,
O deceitful tongue.

5 But God will break you down forever;
he will snatch and tear you from your
tent;
he will uproot you from the land of the
living. *Selah*
6 The righteous will see, and fear,
and will laugh at the evildoer,[c] saying,
7 "See the one who would not take
refuge in God,
but trusted in abundant riches,
and sought refuge in wealth!"[d]

8 But I am like a green olive tree
in the house of God.
I trust in the steadfast love of God
forever and ever.
9 I will thank you forever,
because of what you have done.
In the presence of the faithful
I will proclaim[e] your name, for it is
good.

Psalm 53

To the leader: according to Mahalath. A Maskil of David.

1 Fools say in their hearts, "There is no
God."
They are corrupt, they commit
abominable acts;
there is no one who does good.

a Or *My sacrifice, O God,*
b Cn Compare Syr: Heb *the kindness of God*
c Heb *him*
d Syr Tg: Heb *in his destruction*
e Cn: Heb *wait for*

teach sinners (vv. 13–15), which is of more value than sacrifice (v. 17). **18–19:** Apparently an addition inspired by the statement that "a broken spirit" is an acceptable sacrifice (v. 17): the Temple will be rebuilt and then there will be sacrifices again. As in other psalms, a personal petition is turned into a national psalm, here reflecting the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

Ps 52: True confidence. A contrast between a self-confident wicked warrior and a person who trusts God. The psalmist denounces the arrogant (vv. 1–4), confidently awaits God's punishment of them (vv. 5–7), and concludes with a declaration of trust in God (vv. 8–9). It is similar to Ps 36. **Superscription:** *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. On Doeg's betrayal of David, see 1 Sam 21.1–8; 22.6–19. **1–4:** The psalm uses types, typical ways of behaving (e.g., the wicked plot against the good person), a style common in wisdom literature. **1:** *O mighty one,* sometimes applied to God, here it is ironically applied to the self-important deceiver whose days are numbered. **3:** *Selah* (also v. 5), see Ps 3.2n. **5–7:** Justice must not only be done, it must be seen. The sinner will be excluded from the Temple, but the psalmist will be "like a green olive tree in the house of God" (v. 8). **6:** By effecting justice in the world, God encourages people to act justly. There is a pun on similar-sounding Heb roots, "yr'" ("to fear") and "r'h" ("to see"). **8:** *But I*, abruptly shifts attention to the psalmist who enjoys the protection of the Temple. Ancient temples often had gardens that symbolized the life-giving capacity of the god worshiped there.

Ps 53: Refusal to be silenced by those who deny God's justice. A song of trust condemning those who deny God is active in the world and declaring trust in God who cares for the poor (among whom the psalmist wants to be counted). Psalm 53 is a near duplicate of Ps 14. A major difference is that this psalm is part of the "Elohistic

2 God looks down from heaven on humankind
to see if there are any who are wise,
who seek after God.

3 They have all fallen away, they are all alike perverse;
there is no one who does good,
no, not one.

4 Have they no knowledge, those evildoers,
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and do not call upon God?

5 There they shall be in great terror,
in terror such as has not been.
For God will scatter the bones of the ungodly;[a]
they will be put to shame,[b] for God has rejected them.

6 O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!
When God restores the fortunes of his people,
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

Psalm 54

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, "David is in hiding among us."

1 Save me, O God, by your name,
and vindicate me by your might.
2 Hear my prayer, O God;
give ear to the words of my mouth.

3 For the insolent have risen against me,
the ruthless seek my life;
they do not set God before them. *Selah*

4 But surely, God is my helper;
the Lord is the upholder of[c] my life.
5 He will repay my enemies for their evil.
In your faithfulness, put an end to them.

6 With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you;
I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good.
7 For he has delivered me from every trouble,
and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Psalm 55

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God;
do not hide yourself from my supplication.
2 Attend to me, and answer me;
I am troubled in my complaint.
I am distraught 3 by the noise of the enemy,
because of the clamor of the wicked.
For they bring[d] trouble upon me,
and in anger they cherish enmity against me.

4 My heart is in anguish within me,
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

[a] Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *him who encamps against you*
[b] Gk: Heb *you have put (them) to shame*
[c] Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *is of those who uphold* or *is with those who uphold*
[d] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *they cause to totter*

Psalter (Pss 42–83), which prefers the divine name "Elohim," translated "God," rather than "the Lord," and thus replaces many occurrences of "Lord" in Ps 14 with "God." See Ps 14 for commentary.

Ps 54: God's saving power. An individual petition that focuses on the power of God's name (vv. 1,6). **Superscription:** *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. On David's betrayal by the residents of Ziph, see 1 Sam 23.15–29. **1:** To invoke God's *name* is a way of expressing one's loyalty and sets up the expectation that God will come to the rescue. **3:** *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **4:** A strong statement of trust in God as *helper* and *upholder* who will punish the enemies. **6:** The psalmist offers God two motivations to help: a promise of a *freewill offering,* and to thank God publicly. **9:** As in many individual petitions, the psalmist is imagining that he has already been saved.

Ps 55: Plea to be delivered from violence and false friends. The petition of an individual emotionally distraught (vv. 4–8) by the violence of the community (*the city*, v. 9) and the deceit of a friend (vv. 12–15,22–23). In the second part (vv. 16–23), the psalmist finds solace in the hope that God will bring justice. **Superscription:** *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. **2:** The Heb of *O God . . . I am troubled* is echoed in v. 23 by *O God, will cast them down,* which

5 Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.
6 And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest;
7 truly, I would flee far away;
I would lodge in the wilderness; *Selah*
8 I would hurry to find a shelter for myself
from the raging wind and tempest."

9 Confuse, O Lord, confound their speech;
for I see violence and strife in the city.
10 Day and night they go around it on its walls,
and iniquity and trouble are within it;
11 ruin is in its midst;
oppression and fraud
do not depart from its marketplace.

12 It is not enemies who taunt me—
I could bear that;
it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me—
I could hide from them.
13 But it is you, my equal,
my companion, my familiar friend,
14 with whom I kept pleasant company;
we walked in the house of God with the throng.
15 Let death come upon them;
let them go down alive to Sheol;
for evil is in their homes and in their hearts.

16 But I call upon God,
and the Lord will save me.
17 Evening and morning and at noon
I utter my complaint and moan,
and he will hear my voice.
18 He will redeem me unharmed from the battle that I wage,
for many are arrayed against me.
19 God, who is enthroned from of old, *Selah*
will hear, and will humble them—
because they do not change,
and do not fear God.

20 My companion laid hands on a friend
and violated a covenant with me[a]
21 with speech smoother than butter,
but with a heart set on war;
with words that were softer than oil,
but in fact were drawn swords.

22 Cast your burden[b] on the Lord,
and he will sustain you;
he will never permit
the righteous to be moved.

23 But you, O God, will cast them down
into the lowest pit;
the bloodthirsty and treacherous
shall not live out half their days.
But I will trust in you.

Psalm 56

To the leader: according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths. Of David. A Miktam, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

1 Be gracious to me, O God, for people trample on me;
all day long foes oppress me;
2 my enemies trample on me all day long,
for many fight against me.
O Most High, 3 when I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.
4 In God, whose word I praise,

[a] Heb lacks *with me*
[b] Or *Cast what he has given you*

concludes the psalm. **6–7:** In contrast to most psalms, the supplicant does not find security in the Temple, and wants to flee far away *in the wilderness*, perhaps because intimate friends have proved untrustworthy (vv. 13–14). **7:** *Selah* (also v. 19), see Ps 3.2n. **12–15:** Harder to bear than societal corruption is the betrayal of a friend, a thought repeated in vv. 22–23. **12:** Not merely crying for revenge; the psalmist wants judgment on the wicked to be visible. **15:** *Alive,* in the prime of life (cf. Num 16.30; Ps 124.3). *Sheol,* the underworld, the abode of the dead. **17:** Either a reference to praying three times a day, as in later Judaism, or a figure of speech, meaning perpetual prayer. **22:** The psalmist is assured of divine protection, perhaps by a priest or prophet.

Ps 56: Trust in the midst of oppression. Petition of a victim of oppression, notable for its lengthy assertion of trust (vv. 2c–4,8–13). A refrain (vv. 4bc,11) structures the poem. **Superscription:** *The Dove on Far-off Terebinths,* probably the name of a melody. *Miktam,* a technical term of unknown meaning. The psalm is associated with David when the Philistines seized him in Gath (1 Sam 21.11–15). **4:** *Flesh,* a biblical expression for humans on

in God I trust; I am not afraid;
what can flesh do to me?

5 All day long they seek to injure my cause;
all their thoughts are against me for evil.
6 They stir up strife, they lurk,
they watch my steps.
As they hoped to have my life,
7 so repay[a] them for their crime;
in wrath cast down the peoples, O God!

8 You have kept count of my tossings;
put my tears in your bottle.
Are they not in your record?
9 Then my enemies will retreat
in the day when I call.
This I know, that[b] God is for me.
10 In God, whose word I praise,
in the LORD, whose word I praise,
11 in God I trust; I am not afraid.
What can a mere mortal do to me?

12 My vows to you I must perform, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you.
13 For you have delivered my soul from death,
and my feet from falling,
so that I may walk before God
in the light of life.

Psalm 57

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.

1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
until the destroying storms pass by.
2 I cry to God Most High,
to God who fulfills his purpose for me.
3 He will send from heaven and save me,
he will put to shame those who trample on me. *Selah*
God will send forth his steadfast love and his faithfulness.

4 I lie down among lions
that greedily devour[c] human prey;
their teeth are spears and arrows,
their tongues sharp swords.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory be over all the earth.

6 They set a net for my steps;
my soul was bowed down.
They dug a pit in my path,
but they have fallen into it themselves. *Selah*
7 My heart is steadfast, O God,
my heart is steadfast.
I will sing and make melody.
8 Awake, my soul!
Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn.
9 I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;

a Cn: Heb *rescue*
b Or *because*
c Cn: Heb *are aflame for*

their own, without divine help to aid them. **8:** *My tears in your bottle,* a striking image of God's care. A shepherd might keep track of his animals by putting pebbles in a bag. *Record,* the same Heb word is translated "book" elsewhere; see Ps 40.7n. With that statement, the tone changes to serene trust in God. **13:** *In the light of life,* in contrast to Sheol, the dark underworld.

Ps 57: A petition for God's faithfulness and a promise of praise. An individual petition divided by refrains (vv. 5,11) into two parts, and unified by mention of God's steadfast love and faithfulness (vv. 3,10). **Superscription**: *Do Not Destroy,* perhaps a melody. *Miktam,* a technical term of unknown meaning. *When he fled from Saul, in the cave,* see 1 Sam 24. **1:** *The shadow of your wings,* either the wings of the cherubim, protectors of the throne of God in the Temple (1 Kings 6.27; 8.6; Ps 17.8n.) or a comparison of the deity to a bird hovering protectively over its nestlings as in Deut 32.11 and some Egyptian divine images. **3:** *Steadfast love . . . faithfulness* (also v. 10): commonly paired, the two words express one concept, God's loving fidelity. *Selah* (also v. 6), see Ps 3.2n. **4:** The images of *lions* and weapons combine to express great danger, as do those of hunters in v. 6. The psalmist expresses vulnerability as being hunted. **6:** See 7.15–16n. **7–10:** With the light of dawn, danger disappears and the psalmist sings a song of thanksgiving in anticipation of salvation. **7:** A rare instance of a psalmist's internal monologue; cf. 42.5,11; 43.5; 108.1. **9:** The psalmist's declaration of a desire to acknowledge God widely is meant

I will sing praises to you among the nations.
10 For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens;
your faithfulness extends to the clouds.

11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory be over all the earth.

Psalm 58

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam.

1 Do you indeed decree what is right, you gods?[a]
Do you judge people fairly?
2 No, in your hearts you devise wrongs;
your hands deal out violence on earth.

3 The wicked go astray from the womb;
they err from their birth, speaking lies.
4 They have venom like the venom of a serpent,
like the deaf adder that stops its ear,
5 so that it does not hear the voice of charmers
or of the cunning enchanter.

6 O God, break the teeth in their mouths;
tear out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord!
7 Let them vanish like water that runs away;
like grass let them be trodden down[b] and wither.
8 Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime;
like the untimely birth that never sees the sun.
9 Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns,
whether green or ablaze, may he sweep them away!

10 The righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done;
they will bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.
11 People will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous;
surely there is a God who judges on earth."

Psalm 59

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam, when Saul ordered his house to be watched in order to kill him.

1 Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
protect me from those who rise up against me.
2 Deliver me from those who work evil;
from the bloodthirsty save me.

3 Even now they lie in wait for my life;
the mighty stir up strife against me.
For no transgression or sin of mine, O Lord,

[a] Or *mighty lords*
[b] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

to motivate God to save him. **10–11:** The psalmist is asking God to act as befits his character.

Ps 58: The importance of divine justice. Beginning with a contemptuous dismissal of evil "gods" who sponsor evil humans (vv. 1–5), the psalmist petitions God to break their power (vv. 6–9) and enable the just to enjoy peace (vv. 10–11), encouraging people to recognize that a just deity controls the world. The hunting imagery of Ps 57 continues in vv. 3–6. **Superscription:** *Do Not Destroy,* see Ps 57n. *Miktam,* a technical term of unknown meaning. **1:** *You gods,* refers either to wicked humans behaving arrogantly (as in 2 Kings 24.15; Ezek 17.13) or, more likely, to heavenly beings who rebelled against the Lord's absolute authority and incite humans to act against the Lord (vv. 3–5). Ps 82 is similar. **6–9:** With a wealth of metaphors (broken *teeth, water* disappearing into the dry ground, *trodden grass,* a dissolving *snail,* and a stillborn infant), the psalmist asks for a divine intervention that will restore God's original intentions. **10–11:** A successful intervention will let everyone know that there is a just god. *Bathe . . . in the blood,* the gory image expresses the totality of God's victory; cf. Ps 68.23; Isa 63.1–6.

Ps 59: Prayer against the enemies of the community. The designation of the enemies as "all the nations" (vv. 5,8), "the city" (vv. 6,14), and "known to the ends of the earth" (v. 13) suggests that the poem is a petition of the community, perhaps uttered by the king, the "I" voice in this psalm. The doubled structure of the poem (vv. 1–10,11–17; note the refrains in vv. 6,14 and 9,17) enables the sufferer to change from a simple desire for personal rescue to a passion for justice, hope, and eagerness to sing praise. **Superscription:** *Do Not Destroy,* see Ps 57n.

[4] for no fault of mine, they run and
make ready.

Rouse yourself, come to my help and see!
[5] You, LORD God of hosts, are God of
Israel.
Awake to punish all the nations;
spare none of those who treacherously
plot evil. *Selah*

[6] Each evening they come back,
howling like dogs
and prowling about the city.
[7] There they are, bellowing with their
mouths,
with sharp words[a] on their lips—
for "Who," they think,[b] "will hear us?"

[8] But you laugh at them, O LORD;
you hold all the nations in derision.
[9] O my strength, I will watch for you;
for you, O God, are my fortress.
[10] My God in his steadfast love will meet
me;
my God will let me look in triumph on
my enemies.

[11] Do not kill them, or my people may
forget;
make them totter by your power, and
bring them down,
O Lord, our shield.
[12] For the sin of their mouths, the words of
their lips,
let them be trapped in their pride.
For the cursing and lies that they utter,
[13] consume them in wrath;
consume them until they are no more.
Then it will be known to the ends of the
earth
that God rules over Jacob. *Selah*

[14] Each evening they come back,
howling like dogs
and prowling about the city.
[15] They roam about for food,
and growl if they do not get their fill.

[16] But I will sing of your might;
I will sing aloud of your steadfast love
in the morning.
For you have been a fortress for me
and a refuge in the day of my distress.
[17] O my strength, I will sing praises to you,
for you, O God, are my fortress,
the God who shows me steadfast love.

Psalm 60

To the leader: according to the Lily of the Covenant. A Miktam of David; for instruction; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and when Joab on his return killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

[1] O God, you have rejected us, broken our
defenses;
you have been angry; now restore us!
[2] You have caused the land to quake; you
have torn it open;
repair the cracks in it, for it is tottering.
[3] You have made your people suffer hard
things;
you have given us wine to drink that
made us reel.

[a] Heb *with swords*
[b] Heb lacks *they think*

Miktam, a technical term of unknown meaning. The episode is related in 1 Sam 19.11–17. **4:** *Rouse yourself,* see Ps 44.23n. **5:** *Selah* (also v. 13), see Ps 3.2n. **6–7** (cf. 14–15): The enemies are like dogs, not attacking but constantly yelping, and their cry is *Who will hear us?* i.e., God is unable to save the city. **8:** *But you* introduces the statement of praise in vv. 8–10 just as *but I* (v. 16) introduces the statement of praise in vv. 16–17. The words are similar to Ps 2.4, in a similar context of God mocking the nations for believing that he is powerless to save Israel. **11–13:** The psalmist wants God to make an object lesson out of the enemies. **16–17:** As is appropriate to this psalm, God is depicted metaphorically as *fortress, refuge,* and *strength*; see Ps 18.1–2. **16:** *In the morning*, see Ps 57.9–10. *Who shows me steadfast love* complements the military imagery that predominates.

Ps 60: May God grant victory! A community petition that God would be faithful to his ancient promise of land to his people (vv. 6–8) and support the beleaguered army defending it (vv. 9–11). Verses 5–12 also appear in Ps 108.6–13. **Superscription:** *According to the Lily of the Covenant,* see Ps 45n.; cf. Ps 80. *Miktam,* a technical term of unknown meaning. Israel's struggles with Aram-naharaim (in northeastern Syria) and Aram-zobah (an Aramean city-state) are told in 2 Sam 8.3–8 and 10.6–13; Joab was David's general. **1–5:** Complaint and petition.

4 You have set up a banner for those who
fear you,
to rally to it out of bowshot.[a] *Selah*
5 Give victory with your right hand, and
answer us,[b]
so that those whom you love may be
rescued.

6 God has promised in his sanctuary:[c]
"With exultation I will divide up
Shechem,
and portion out the Vale of
Succoth.
7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine;
Ephraim is my helmet;
Judah is my scepter.
8 Moab is my washbasin;
on Edom I hurl my shoe;
over Philistia I shout in triumph."

9 Who will bring me to the fortified city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
10 Have you not rejected us, O God?
You do not go out, O God, with our
armies.
11 O grant us help against the foe,
for human help is worthless.
12 With God we shall do valiantly;
it is he who will tread down our foes.

2 From the end of the earth I call to you,
when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock
that is higher than I;
3 for you are my refuge,
a strong tower against the enemy.

4 Let me abide in your tent forever,
find refuge under the shelter of your
wings. *Selah*
5 For you, O God, have heard my vows;
you have given me the heritage of those
who fear your name.

6 Prolong the life of the king;
may his years endure to all
generations!
7 May he be enthroned forever before God;
appoint steadfast love and faithfulness
to watch over him!

8 So I will always sing praises to your
name,
as I pay my vows day after day.

Psalm 61

To the leader: with stringed instruments. Of David.
1 Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.

[a] Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *because of the truth*
[b] Another reading is *me*
[c] Or *by his holiness*

4: *You have set up a banner,* best rendered as a petition: "Set up a banner so that we may rally to it." *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **6–8:** The psalmist cites an ancient oracle of land promise, probably uttered after a victory, in order to remind God to be faithful to it in the present crisis. *Shechem,* a major city in central Israel (*Ephraim,* the Northern Kingdom). *The Vale of Succoth,* in the east Jordan Valley. *Gilead* and *Manasseh,* Israelite territory in Transjordan. *Judah,* the Southern Kingdom. *Moab* and *Edom,* in southern Transjordan, and *Philistia,* on the southeastern Mediterranean coast, were areas subjected to Israel as vassals (see 2 Sam 8.11–12). *I hurl my shoe,* probably a reference to the legal gesture of claiming ownership attested in Ruth 4.7. **9–12:** Complaint and petition. **9:** *Who will bring me to the fortified city?* A prayer that God lead the commander of Israel's armies (perhaps the king) against their foes. *Fortified city,* a seemingly impregnable fort, possibly referring to Bozrah, the capital of Edom. **10:** Reprises v. 1. *Go out . . . with our armies,* according to 1 Sam 4, the Israelites carried the ark symbolizing God's presence into battle. **11:** See Pss 20.7–8n.; 44.3.

Ps 61: Plea to be in God's Temple. An individual, far away from the Temple, prays to be led there and enjoy its protection and nourishment. **2–4:** *From the end of the earth,* a remote place, far from the center in Jerusalem. *Rock, refuge, tower, tent, shelter of your wings,* all can refer to the Temple and its precincts; see also Ps 57.1n. **4:** *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **5:** *You have heard my vows,* best understood as an expression of confidence that God will hear his vows. **6:** The king, as God's anointed, was closely associated with the Temple; he also represented the people and so the psalmist's request is to join the people in their worship as in Pss 42–43.

Psalm 62

To the leader: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

[1] For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
[2] He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

[3] How long will you assail a person,
will you batter your victim, all of you,
as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
[4] Their only plan is to bring down a person of prominence.
They take pleasure in falsehood;
they bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse. *Selah*

[5] For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
[6] He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
[7] On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

[8] Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. *Selah*

[9] Those of low estate are but a breath,
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.
[10] Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

[11] Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
[12] and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all
according to their work.

Psalm 63

A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

[1] O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
[2] So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
[3] Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.
[4] So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.

[5] My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,[a]
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips

[a] Heb *with fat and fatness*

Ps 62: Trust in God the stronghold. A song of trust, recording the feelings of an individual beset by enemies. The psalm combines two kinds of statements: an exhortation to the self (vv. 1–2,5–7) and a rebuke to enemies (vv. 3–4). The inner dialogue shows the vulnerability of a believer caught in an unjust world. Refrains in vv. 1 and 5 help unify the poem and emphasize that the psalmist's attitude differs totally from that of the evildoers **Superscription:** *Jeduthun,* see Ps 39n. **3–4:** Instead of speaking *about* the enemies, the psalmist speaks (imaginatively) *to* the enemies (as in Pss 2.10–11; 4.2; 75.4–7). **4:** *Selah* (also v. 8), see Ps 3.2n. **8–10:** Lest others be intimidated and cease trusting, the palmist shares the hard-won conviction that nothing but God suffices. **9:** The good deeds of the evildoers are unsubstantial. **11:** *Once . . . twice,* numerical parallelism, where a number x is paralleled by x+1. This verse thus means that I heard the one thing that God spoke, *that power belongs to God.*

Ps 63: Longing for God. A song of desire to be protected from enemies (vv. 9–10) and be in God's house (vv. 2–5), like Pss 27; 42–43; 61; and 84. The psalm is a powerful expression of the deep human longing for God both in public ceremonies and private moments. **Superscription:** *In the wilderness of Judah,* see 1 Sam 23.14–15; 24.1. **1:** *My soul thirsts,* communion with God is expressed by metaphors of eating, seeing (v. 2), and praising (vv. 3–5). The Heb word for *soul* also means "throat area," so the verse is punning. **2:** *I have looked*: The NRSV translation assumes the psalmist is already in the Temple, but in similar psalms (e.g., 42–43; 84) being in the Temple is in the future, thus better: "I shall look upon." **3:** *Better than life,* experiencing God in the Temple is better than mere

6 when I think of you on my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
7 for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
8 My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.

9 But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth;
10 they shall be given over to the power of the sword,
they shall be prey for jackals.
11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by him shall exult,
for the mouths of liars will be stopped.

Psalm 64

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;
preserve my life from the dread enemy.
2 Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
from the scheming of evildoers,
3 who whet their tongues like swords,
who aim bitter words like arrows,
4 shooting from ambush at the blameless;
they shoot suddenly and without fear.
5 They hold fast to their evil purpose;
they talk of laying snares secretly,
thinking, "Who can see us?[a]
6 Who can search out our crimes?[b]
We have thought out a cunningly conceived plot."
For the human heart and mind are deep.

7 But God will shoot his arrow at them;
they will be wounded suddenly.
8 Because of their tongue he will bring them to ruin;[c]
all who see them will shake with horror.
9 Then everyone will fear;
they will tell what God has brought about,
and ponder what he has done.

10 Let the righteous rejoice in the LORD
and take refuge in him.
Let all the upright in heart glory.

Psalm 65

To the leader. A Psalm of David. A Song.

1 Praise is due to you,
O God, in Zion;
and to you shall vows be performed,

[a] Syr: Heb *them*
[b] Cn: Heb *They search out crimes*
[c] Cn: Heb *They will bring him to ruin, their tongue being against them*

existence elsewhere. **6:** *On my bed,* spontaneous private prayer, in contrast to commanded ritual performance as in Pss 4.4b–5a; 149.5b–6a. **6–11:** In contrast to first part of the psalm (vv. 1–5), which expresses the hope of being in the Temple, the second part (vv. 6–11) acknowledges that God has never ceased being the psalmist's God. *Shadow of your wings,* see Ps 57.1n. **11:** For a similar concluding prayer mentioning the king, see Ps 61.6n.

Ps 64: Protection from enemies' plots. A carefully constructed individual petition. Notable is its outrage at the secrecy of the evil and its insistence that conspiracies be unmasked so that's God's justice can be seen to be operating. The second part (vv. 6–10), the statement of hope and trust, reverses the key words of the first part (vv. 1–5): "arrows/arrow" in vv. 3b and 7a; "tongues/tongue" in vv. 3a and 8a; "suddenly" in vv. 4b and 7b; "shoot" in vv. 4a, 4b, and 7a; "fear" in vv. 4b and 9a; and "see" in vv. 5c and 8b. God will shoot arrows at those who have shot arrows at the righteous; those who use their tongues to attack the righteous and assert God's impotence will be ruined because of their tongue, that is, their words. Bringing back on evildoers the very evil they intended to inflict on others is a sure sign of divine justice. **9:** Like many individual petitions, the conclusion moves from the single person to the community, here stating that people will be in awe as they recognize God's just action.

Ps 65: Thanksgiving for God's enlivening the world. The psalmist gives thanks for all that God does in creating and sustaining the world and in choosing and nurturing Israel by making its land fertile. This good God dwells in the Temple where Israel is privileged to acknowledge God's endless benefits. **1–3:** In Hebrew, the opening lines begin with "to you," underlining the centrality of God, to whom all worship on Mount Zion

[2] O you who answer prayer!
To you all flesh shall come.
[3] When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,
you forgive our transgressions.
[4] Happy are those whom you choose and bring near
to live in your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
your holy temple.

[5] By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,
O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.
[6] By your[a] strength you established the mountains;
you are girded with might.
[7] You silence the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.
[8] Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

[9] You visit the earth and water it,
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it.
[10] You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
[11] You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.
[12] The pastures of the wilderness overflow,
the hills gird themselves with joy,
[13] the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

Psalm 66

To the leader. A Song. A Psalm.

[1] Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;
[2] sing the glory of his name;
give to him glorious praise.
[3] Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you.
[4] All the earth worships you;
they sing praises to you,
sing praises to your name." *Selah*

[5] Come and see what God has done:
he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.
[6] He turned the sea into dry land;
they passed through the river on foot.
There we rejoiced in him,
[7] who rules by his might forever,
whose eyes keep watch on the nations—
let the rebellious not exalt themselves. *Selah*

[8] Bless our God, O peoples,
let the sound of his praise be heard,
[9] who has kept us among the living,
and has not let our feet slip.
[10] For you, O God, have tested us;
you have tried us as silver is tried.

[a] Gk Jerome: Heb *his*

is directed. **2:** *All flesh,* all nations. **3:** *Forgive, bring near,* liturgical vocabulary. **5:** *Awesome deeds,* actions that elicit wonder. In Ps 106.22 the phrase refers to the Exodus miracles, and in Isa 5.8 to creation victory. **6–7:** The divine victory associated with creation: the *mountains* are placed in their bases (see Pss 89.12; 90.2) and the chaotic primeval waters are defeated (see Ps 89.9–13). **9–13:** One benefit of God's creation victory is that the once dangerous waters now fertilize the earth. The psalmist focuses on the waters that make the earth bloom and provide nourishment to humans. **9:** *River of God,* see Ps 36.5–9n. **12–13:** Earth is personified as in Pss 50.4; 96.11; 97.1.

Ps 66: Thanksgiving to God for help in danger. In this community thanksgiving, an individual calls upon the whole world (vv. 1–4,16–19) to acknowledge God's rescue of the people from danger (vv. 8–12) and promises to fulfill a vow made in that time of danger (vv. 13–15). **4:** *Selah* (also vv. 7,15), see Ps 3.2n. **5–6:** *Come and see,* when grave danger threatened, the psalmist called people to remember the great formative event of the Exodus (see Ex 14.21–22; Josh 4.23), assuming that God will be faithful to that past act. **10:** *Silver* ore was *tried* or refined by

11 You brought us into the net;
you laid burdens on our backs;
12 you let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.[a]

13 I will come into your house with burnt offerings;
I will pay you my vows,
14 those that my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatlings,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats. *Selah*

16 Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for me.
17 I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my tongue.
18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
19 But truly God has listened;
he has given heed to the words of my prayer.

20 Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me.

Psalm 67

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

1 May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
2 that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.
3 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*
5 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

6 The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
7 May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Psalm 68

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm. A Song.

1 Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered;
let those who hate him flee before him.
2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
as wax melts before the fire,
let the wicked perish before God.
3 But let the righteous be joyful;
let them exult before God;
let them be jubilant with joy.

[a] Cn Compare Gk Syr Jerome Tg: Heb *to a saturation*

heat, which separated the pure silver from other minerals. **16–20:** Ritual thanksgiving is not enough; the psalmist must proclaim God's mighty works to the world.

Ps 67: May the nations acknowledge God in our prosperity! In this communal petition, the psalmist prays that the nations may recognize how God has caused Israel to prosper, and has also guided the peoples and will judge them equitably. The nations should therefore praise God. "Bless" and "praise" are key words, repeated several times, emphasizing the theme of the psalm. Verses 1 and 5 are refrains. **1:** *Make his face to shine upon us,* a reworking of the priestly blessing in Num 6.24–26. Like the sun and moon, the face is a light shining in favor upon the people (Pss 31.16; 80.3,7,19). *Selah* (also v. 4), see Ps 3.2n. **3–5:** The center of the poem is v. 4, the only three-line verse: it is framed by vv. 3 and 5. **6:** *The earth has yielded,* better translated as a prayer, "May the earth yield its increase": the people pray for their continued prosperity so that their God might receive more honor.

Ps 68: The victorious LORD comes to the aid of Israel. Scholars do not agree on the meaning of many of the words and phrases of this psalm, and thus on its broader meaning or genre. It is perhaps best taken as a communal thanksgiving for God having defended the people against infertile fields and herds and attack. The battle-victory is described in cosmic terms, waged against "the depths of the sea" (v. 22), "wild animals," and "the herd of bulls" (v. 30), as well as "the kings of the armies" (v. 12). **1–6:** Sing to God setting out to battle.

4 Sing to God, sing praises to his name;
lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds[a]—
his name is the LORD—
be exultant before him.

5 Father of orphans and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.
6 God gives the desolate a home to live in;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.

7 O God, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness, *Selah*
8 the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
9 Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;
you restored your heritage when it languished;
10 your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.

11 The Lord gives the command;
great is the company of those[b] who bore the tidings:
12 "The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!"
The women at home divide the spoil,
13 though they stay among the sheepfolds—
the wings of a dove covered with silver,
its pinions with green gold.
14 When the Almighty[c] scattered kings there,
snow fell on Zalmon.

15 O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan;
O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!
16 Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountain,
at the mount that God desired for his abode,
where the LORD will reside forever?

17 With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand,
thousands upon thousands,
the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place.[d]
18 You ascended the high mount,
leading captives in your train
and receiving gifts from people,
even from those who rebel against the LORD God's abiding there.
19 Blessed be the Lord,
who daily bears us up;
God is our salvation. *Selah*
20 Our God is a God of salvation,
and to GOD, the Lord, belongs escape from death.

21 But God will shatter the heads of his enemies,
the hairy crown of those who walk in their guilty ways.
22 The Lord said,
"I will bring them back from Bashan,
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,

[a] Or *cast up a highway for him who rides through the deserts*
[b] Or *company of the women*
[c] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[d] Cn: Heb *The Lord among them Sinai in the holy* (place)

4: *Who rides upon the clouds,* God's storm-cloud chariot; see also vv. 33.7–14. **7:** *Selah* (also vv. 19,32), see Ps 3.2n. **7–8:** Cf. Judg 5.4–5. **15–23:** The LORD returns to his holy mountain residence, Mount Zion, having earlier appeared at Sinai (v. 8). **14–15:** *Snow fell on Zalmon,* meaning uncertain. *Zalmon* is perhaps a mountain in *Bashan,* in

23 so that you may bathe[a] your feet in
blood,
so that the tongues of your dogs may
have their share from the foe."

24 Your solemn processions are seen,[b]
O God,
the processions of my God, my King,
into the sanctuary—
25 the singers in front, the musicians last,
between them girls playing
tambourines:
26 "Bless God in the great congregation,
the LORD, O you who are of Israel's
fountain!"
27 There is Benjamin, the least of them, in
the lead,
the princes of Judah in a body,
the princes of Zebulun, the princes of
Naphtali.

28 Summon your might, O God;
show your strength, O God, as you have
done for us before.
29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem
kings bear gifts to you.
30 Rebuke the wild animals that live among
the reeds,
the herd of bulls with the calves of the
peoples.
Trample[c] under foot those who lust after
tribute;
scatter the peoples who delight in war.[d]
31 Let bronze be brought from Egypt;
let Ethiopia[e] hasten to stretch out its
hands to God.

32 Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth;
sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*
33 O rider in the heavens, the ancient
heavens;
listen, he sends out his voice, his
mighty voice.
34 Ascribe power to God,
whose majesty is over Israel;
and whose power is in the skies.
35 Awesome is God in his[f] sanctuary,
the God of Israel;
he gives power and strength to his
people.

Blessed be God!

Psalm 69

To the leader: according to Lilies. Of David.

1 Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to my neck.
2 I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me.
3 I am weary with my crying;
my throat is parched.
My eyes grow dim
with waiting for my God.

4 More in number than the hairs of my
head
are those who hate me without cause;
many are those who would destroy me,
my enemies who accuse me falsely.
What I did not steal
must I now restore?
5 O God, you know my folly;
the wrongs I have done are not hidden
from you.

6 Do not let those who hope in you be put
to shame because of me,
O Lord GOD of hosts;

a Gk Syr Tg: Heb *shatter*
b Or *have been seen*
c Cn: Heb *Trampling*
d Meaning of Heb of verse 30 is uncertain
e Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
f Gk: Heb *from your*

northern Transjordan. **23:** *Bathe . . . in blood,* see 58.10n. **24–31:** The tribes of Israel follow in procession. **32–35:** The nations are to bring tribute to the victorious LORD in the Temple and acknowledge God.

Ps 69: A loyal servant's prayer for deliverance. An unusually long individual petition, marked by deep commitment to God's cause. Verses 13d–29 repeat words occurring in vv. 1–13a, unifying the poem and lending it intensity. Another stylistic feature of the poem is the alternation between *I* (the psalmist) and *you* (God). **Superscription:** *According to Lilies,* see Ps 45n. **1–4:** References to waters unify vv. 1–3, and references to bodily organs (*throat, eyes, hairs of my head)* unify vv. 3–4. **5–12:** The psalmist asks for help promoting the honor of God's

do not let those who seek you be
dishonored because of me,
O God of Israel.
7 It is for your sake that I have borne
reproach,
that shame has covered my face.
8 I have become a stranger to my kindred,
an alien to my mother's children.

9 It is zeal for your house that has
consumed me;
the insults of those who insult you have
fallen on me.
10 When I humbled my soul with fasting,[a]
they insulted me for doing so.
11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword to them.
12 I am the subject of gossip for those who
sit in the gate,
and the drunkards make songs about
me.

13 But as for me, my prayer is to you,
O LORD.
At an acceptable time, O God,
in the abundance of your steadfast love,
answer me.
With your faithful help 14 rescue me
from sinking in the mire;
let me be delivered from my enemies
and from the deep waters.
15 Do not let the flood sweep over me,
or the deep swallow me up,
or the Pit close its mouth over me.

16 Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast
love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn
to me.
17 Do not hide your face from your servant,
for I am in distress—make haste to
answer me.
18 Draw near to me, redeem me,
set me free because of my enemies.

19 You know the insults I receive,
and my shame and dishonor;
my foes are all known to you.
20 Insults have broken my heart,
so that I am in despair.
I looked for pity, but there was none;
and for comforters, but I found none.
21 They gave me poison for food,
and for my thirst they gave me vinegar
to drink.

22 Let their table be a trap for them,
a snare for their allies.
23 Let their eyes be darkened so that they
cannot see,
and make their loins tremble
continually.
24 Pour out your indignation upon them,
and let your burning anger overtake
them.
25 May their camp be a desolation;
let no one live in their tents.
26 For they persecute those whom you have
struck down,
and those whom you have wounded,
they attack still more.[b]
27 Add guilt to their guilt;
may they have no acquittal from you.
28 Let them be blotted out of the book of
the living;
let them not be enrolled among the
righteous.
29 But I am lowly and in pain;
let your salvation, O God, protect me.

30 I will praise the name of God with a
song;
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.
31 This will please the LORD more than
an ox
or a bull with horns and hoofs.
32 Let the oppressed see it and be glad;
you who seek God, let your hearts
revive.

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *I wept, with fasting my soul*, or I *made my soul mourn with fasting*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *recount the pain of*

house (v. 9), though freely conceding personal weakness and folly (v. 5). **8:** See Ps 38.11; Job 19.13–15. **22–29:** The psalmist is less interested in personal vengeance than in being publicly vindicated as God's innocent and loyal servant. **28:** *The book of the living,* see Ps 40.7n. **30–31:** A verbal offering is superior to an animal one; cf. Ps 51.7–15n. **32–36:** The salvation of the supplicant is not for his own sake, but so others will praise God. A poor

33 For the LORD hears the needy,
and does not despise his own that are in bonds.

34 Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and everything that moves in them.
35 For God will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah;
and his servants shall live[a] there and possess it;
36 the children of his servants shall inherit it,
and those who love his name shall live in it.

Psalm 70

To the leader. Of David, for the memorial offering.

1 Be pleased, O God, to deliver me.
O LORD, make haste to help me!
2 Let those be put to shame and confusion
who seek my life.
Let those be turned back and brought to dishonor
who desire to hurt me.
3 Let those who say, "Aha, Aha!"
turn back because of their shame.

4 Let all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you.
Let those who love your salvation
say evermore, "God is great!"
5 But I am poor and needy;
hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay!

Psalm 71

1 In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
2 In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me and save me.
3 Be to me a rock of refuge,
a strong fortress,[b] to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.

4 Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.
5 For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
6 Upon you I have leaned from my birth;
it was you who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.

7 I have been like a portent to many,
but you are my strong refuge.
8 My mouth is filled with your praise,
and with your glory all day long.
9 Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
do not forsake me when my strength is spent.
10 For my enemies speak concerning me,
and those who watch for my life consult together.
11 They say, "Pursue and seize that person whom God has forsaken,
for there is no one to deliver."

[a] Syr: Heb *and they shall live*

[b] Gk Compare 31.3: Heb *to come continually you have commanded*

person is an affront to God who has promised to care for the needy. **35:** Perhaps a secondary reference to the attack of the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 701 BCE, or to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

Ps 70: A prayer that the psalmist's persecutors would be defeated. An individual petition that enemies be punished (vv. 1–3) and God-seekers experience the joy of salvation (vv. 4–5). It is also found with a few variants in Ps 40.13–17. **Superscription:** *For the memorial offering* (also Ps 38), meaning uncertain. **1–3:** *God, help,* and *make haste,* echoed in the final lines, bringing closure to the poem. **2:** *Shame,* violating accepted morality brought dishonor upon the violator. The prayer is that the enemies' schemes be publicly frustrated. **3:** *Aha, Aha,* see Ps 40.15n. **4:** God's help of this individual will encourage other righteous people. **5:** Psalms often depicts the supplicant as *poor* and needy as in the previous psalm.

Ps 71: An elderly person's plea for help. An individual petition that recycles material from Pss 22 and 31. Verses 9, 18, and 20 suggest the psalm of a person of mature years. Verses 1–13 and 14–24 seem to constitute its two parts, each with virtually the same number of Hebrew words. **3:** *Rock of refuge,* a massive rock formation, a frequent metaphor for God saving and helping someone. **6:** Cf. Ps 22.9–10. **7:** *A portent to many,* an example

12 O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, make haste to help me!
13 Let my accusers be put to shame and consumed;
let those who seek to hurt me
be covered with scorn and disgrace.
14 But I will hope continually,
and will praise you yet more and more.
15 My mouth will tell of your righteous acts,
of your deeds of salvation all day long,
though their number is past my knowledge.
16 I will come praising the mighty deeds of the Lord God,
I will praise your righteousness, yours alone.

17 O God, from my youth you have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
18 So even to old age and gray hairs,
O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might
to all the generations to come.[a]
Your power 19 and your righteousness,
O God,
reach the high heavens.

You who have done great things,
O God, who is like you?
20 You who have made me see many troubles and calamities
will revive me again;
from the depths of the earth
you will bring me up again.
21 You will increase my honor,
and comfort me once again.

22 I will also praise you with the harp
for your faithfulness, O my God;
I will sing praises to you with the lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.
23 My lips will shout for joy
when I sing praises to you;
my soul also, which you have rescued.
24 All day long my tongue will talk of your righteous help,
for those who tried to do me harm
have been put to shame, and disgraced.

Psalm 72

Of Solomon.

1 Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to a king's son.
2 May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.

5 May he live[b] while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.

[a] Gk Compare Syr: Heb *to a generation, to all that come*
[b] Gk: Heb *may they fear you*

of God's merciful care for loyal servants. **14–16:** The psalmist is unusually buoyant despite the troubles. **17–21:** The psalmist looks back at a long life, finds that God has always been faithful, and is inspired by such fidelity. **24:** As in many petitions, the person praying imagines that the prayer has already been heard and the problem rectified.

Ps 72: Prayer that the king may act justly and extend God's rule to all lands. A royal psalm that may have been used at the king's coronation or its anniversary. It views the Israelite king as the instrument of divine justice and protector of the poor (vv. 1–4,12–14), ensuring that the riches of creation are available to all (vv. 5–7); and he is the earthly agent of God's universal rule (vv. 8–11). Nonetheless, he is still a human being in constant need of divine help (vv. 1,15–17). **Superscription:** One of two psalms attributed to King Solomon (also Ps 127), perhaps because of the mention of "a king's son" in v. 1 and because an editor imagined that the land boundaries in v. 8 reflected the boundaries of Solomon's kingdom (see 1 Kings 4.24). **1–2:** *Justice, righteousness,* conformity to the divine will, which leads to *prosperity* (v. 2). **2:** The existence of the *poor* is contrary to the

7 In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

8 May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
9 May his foes[a] bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.
10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles
render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts.
11 May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service.

12 For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
13 He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
14 From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.

15 Long may he live!
May gold of Sheba be given to him.
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all day long.
16 May there be abundance of grain in the land;
may it wave on the tops of the mountains;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field.

17 May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun.
May all nations be blessed in him;[b]
may they pronounce him happy.

18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.
19 Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may his glory fill the whole earth.
Amen and Amen.

20 The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.

BOOK III PSALMS 73-89

Psalm 73

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 Truly God is good to the upright,[c]
to those who are pure in heart.
2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled;
my steps had nearly slipped.
3 For I was envious of the arrogant;
I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

4 For they have no pain;
their bodies are sound and sleek.
5 They are not in trouble as others are;
they are not plagued like other people.
6 Therefore pride is their necklace;
violence covers them like a garment.
7 Their eyes swell out with fatness;

[a] Cn: Heb *those who live in the wilderness*
[b] Or *bless themselves by him*
[c] Or *good to Israel*

divine will; the king will be especially caring for the poor (v. 4). **8–11:** As representative of the lord of the world, the Israelite king receives the tribute of all the kings of the world in God's name. **8:** *The River,* the Euphrates. **10:** *Tarshish,* see Ps 48.7n. *The isles*, the islands of the eastern Aegean Sea. *Sheba* and *Seba,* both in southwestern Arabia. **12–14:** A repetition of the royal responsibilities, emphasizing the poor, similar to 2–4. **15–17:** Another cycle of blessings, similar to 5–11. **18–19:** Not a part of the psalm, but a doxology or blessing concluding Book II, the second of five editorial divisions of the Psalter; see also Pss 41.13; 89.52; 106.48; 150.1–6. **20:** This verse suggests that at one time the book of Psalms, or at least the psalms attributed to David, ended here. (More than a dozen psalms also attributed to David follow.) This is important evidence for the growth of the book of Psalms over time.

Ps 73: Declaration of trust. Though sometimes classed as a wisdom psalm because it explores the problem of evil, the psalm actually records the psalmist's passage from despair at the apparent triumph of the wicked (vv. 3–12), through various stratagems to solve the problem (vv. 13–17), to a final appreciation of God's justice, nearness, and care (vv. 18–28). The psalm concludes that the wicked may triumph, but only temporarily. It opens a collection of psalms attributed to Asaph (73–83; see Ps 50n.). **3–11:** Verses 3–7 tell what the psalmist *sees*

their hearts overflow with follies.
[8] They scoff and speak with malice;
loftily they threaten oppression.
[9] They set their mouths against heaven,
and their tongues range over the earth.

[10] Therefore the people turn and praise them,[a]
and find no fault in them.[b]
[11] And they say, "How can God know?
Is there knowledge in the Most High?"
[12] Such are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in riches.
[13] All in vain I have kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence.
[14] For all day long I have been plagued,
and am punished every morning.

[15] If I had said, "I will talk on in this way,"
I would have been untrue to the circle of your children.
[16] But when I thought how to understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome task,
[17] until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then I perceived their end.
[18] Truly you set them in slippery places;
you make them fall to ruin.
[19] How they are destroyed in a moment,
swept away utterly by terrors!
[20] They are[c] like a dream when one awakes;
on awaking you despise their phantoms.

[21] When my soul was embittered,
when I was pricked in heart,
[22] I was stupid and ignorant;
I was like a brute beast toward you.
[23] Nevertheless I am continually with you;
you hold my right hand.
[24] You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me with honor.[d]
[25] Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you.
[26] My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength[e] of my heart and my portion forever.

[27] Indeed, those who are far from you will perish;
you put an end to those who are false to you.
[28] But for me it is good to be near God;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
to tell of all your works.

Psalm 74

A Maskil of Asaph.

[1] O God, why do you cast us off forever?
Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?
[2] Remember your congregation, which you acquired long ago,
which you redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage.
Remember Mount Zion, where you came to dwell.
[3] Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins;
the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary.

[a] Cn: Heb *his people return here*
[b] Cn: Heb *abundant waters are drained by them*
[c] Cn: Heb *Lord*
[d] Or *to glory*
[e] Heb *rock*

(evildoers' well-fed bodies) and vv. 8–11 tell what the psalmist *hears* (their arrogant words). **17:** Rejecting such strategies as criticizing God's injustice like Job (v. 15) or trying to reason about it (v. 16), the psalmist resolves to confront God in *the sanctuary,* where God is especially present, and there comes to understand the *end* of the wicked: they will be swept away suddenly (vv. 18–20). **21–22:** An admission of guilt, encouraging others not to entertain such *stupid* and *brute*-ish thoughts. **24:** *Receive me,* elevate to the security of God's domain, a metaphor derived from the elevation of Enoch (Gen 5.24), Elijah (2 Kings 2.11–12), and the psalmist in Ps 49.15.

Ps 74: The community begs God to restore the devastated Temple. A community petition that expresses pain over the immense punishment and abandonment symbolized by the ruined Temple (1–11), remembers in liturgical prayer God's primordial victory that created the world of which the Temple is a central part (vv. 12–17), and turns the experience into a triple prayer that God act now (vv. 18–19,20–21,22–23). It probably is to be dated sometime between the destruction of the Temple in 586 and its restoration in 520 BCE. **Superscription:** *Maskil,* see Ps 32n.

4 Your foes have roared within your holy
place;
they set up their emblems there.
5 At the upper entrance they hacked
the wooden trellis with axes.[a]
6 And then, with hatchets and hammers,
they smashed all its carved work.
7 They set your sanctuary on fire;
they desecrated the dwelling place of
your name,
bringing it to the ground.
8 They said to themselves, "We will utterly
subdue them";
they burned all the meeting places of
God in the land.

9 We do not see our emblems;
there is no longer any prophet,
and there is no one among us who
knows how long.
10 How long, O God, is the foe to scoff?
Is the enemy to revile your name forever?
11 Why do you hold back your hand;
why do you keep your hand in[b] your
bosom?

12 Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the earth.
13 You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the dragons in
the waters.
14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food[c] for the creatures
of the wilderness.
15 You cut openings for springs and torrents;
you dried up ever-flowing streams.
16 Yours is the day, yours also the night;
you established the luminaries[d] and the
sun.
17 You have fixed all the bounds of the
earth;
you made summer and winter.

18 Remember this, O LORD, how the enemy
scoffs,
and an impious people reviles your
name.
19 Do not deliver the soul of your dove to
the wild animals;
do not forget the life of your poor
forever.

20 Have regard for your[e] covenant,
for the dark places of the land are full of
the haunts of violence.
21 Do not let the downtrodden be put to
shame;
let the poor and needy praise your
name.
22 Rise up, O God, plead your cause;
remember how the impious scoff at you
all day long.
23 Do not forget the clamor of your foes,
the uproar of your adversaries that goes
up continually.

Psalm 75

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

1 We give thanks to you, O God;
we give thanks; your name is near.
People tell of your wondrous deeds.

[a] Cn Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn: Heb *do you consume your right hand from*
[c] Heb *food for the people*
[d] Or *moon;* Heb *light*
[e] Gk Syr: Heb *the*

Asaph, see Ps 73n. **4:** *Emblems,* better, "signs," as clarified by v. 9, a prophetic word telling when divine rescue will come; see Ps 13.1n. **12–17:** Since the Temple was often considered a part of God's orderly world (Pss 93.5; 96.8–10) its devastated state seems to call into question God's ability to rule the universe. The psalmist therefore reminds God of the triumphant act of creation, using a variant of a Canaanite creation story known from Ugarit about Baal defeating the watery chaos. **14:** The mythological creature *Leviathan,* known from Ugarit, represents primeval watery chaos; see also Isa 27.1; Job 3.8; 26.12–13; 41.1. **19:** *Your dove,* unclear; it may be an affectionate term for the king or the dove may be a symbol of vulnerability (Pss 11.1; 102.7; 124.7). **20:** In the *covenant* God gave assurances of Israel's perpetual existence (see, e.g., Pss 18.50; 89.3–4. **22–23:** In order to motivate God, the psalmist calls Israel's enemies *your* [God's] *foes*.

Ps 75: The community thanks God for putting down the wicked. A thanksgiving praising God (v. 1) for doing just deeds, in this case, punishing the wicked (vv. 2–5,6–8). The actual punishment is announced in an oracle of judgment with God speaking (vv. 2–5). **Superscription:** *Do Not Destroy,* see Ps 57n. *Asaph,* see Ps 73n.

2 At the set time that I appoint
I will judge with equity.
3 When the earth totters, with all its inhabitants,
it is I who keep its pillars steady. *Selah*
4 I say to the boastful, "Do not boast,"
and to the wicked, "Do not lift up your horn;
5 do not lift up your horn on high,
or speak with insolent neck."

6 For not from the east or from the west
and not from the wilderness comes lifting up;
7 but it is God who executes judgment,
putting down one and lifting up another.
8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup
with foaming wine, well mixed;
he will pour a draught from it,
and all the wicked of the earth
shall drain it down to the dregs.
9 But I will rejoice[a] forever;
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

10 All the horns of the wicked I will cut off,
but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

Psalm 76

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

1 In Judah God is known,
his name is great in Israel.
2 His abode has been established in Salem,
his dwelling place in Zion.
3 There he broke the flashing arrows,
the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war. *Selah*

4 Glorious are you, more majestic
than the everlasting mountains.[b]
5 The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil;
they sank into sleep;
none of the troops
was able to lift a hand.
6 At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
both rider and horse lay stunned.

7 But you indeed are awesome!
Who can stand before you
when once your anger is roused?
8 From the heavens you uttered judgment;
the earth feared and was still
9 when God rose up to establish judgment,
to save all the oppressed of the earth. *Selah*

10 Human wrath serves only to praise you,
when you bind the last bit of your[c] wrath around you.
11 Make vows to the LORD your God, and perform them;
let all who are around him bring gifts
to the one who is awesome,

[a] Gk: Heb *declare*
[b] Gk: Heb *the mountains of prey*
[c] Heb lacks *your*

3: *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **4:** *Lift*ing *up* a *horn* represents pride, arrogance, and victory. **6–8:** Expansion of the divine command, spoken perhaps by the king, the envoy of God. **8:** The *cup* (of the LORD's wrath in Isa 51.17; Jer 25.15) is a metaphor for punishment. **9–10:** The speaker accepts with joy the divine task of implementing justice.

Ps 76: God is acknowledged as victorious in the holy city. A song of Zion, celebrating it as the site where God won the victory that established the world as just and prosperous. **Superscription:** *Asaph,* see Ps 73n. **1–3:** By the creation-victory described in vv. 4–10, God is now recognized by all Israel as supreme over all other powers, and dwelling in *Salem* (i.e., Jerusalem; cf. Gen 14.18). **3:** *Selah* (also v. 9), see Ps 3.2n. **7–10:** The psalm presumes that the cosmic battle was fought at the base of Mount Zion; comparable religious texts also tell how the storm god defeated his enemies at the base of his holy mountain. After the battle, God established the rules of justice to which the universe must conform (8–9); even the typically noisy *rider and horse* (v. 6) and *the earth* (v. 8) were *still* and quiet. **10:** *Human wrath serves only to praise you,* better emended to read: "Even wrathful Edom praises you, the remnant of Hamath keeps your feast," referring to frequent enemies of Israel to the southeast and to the north, respectively. **11–12:** Because Zion is the site of the LORD's victory and of his dwelling, all nations must come there to pay homage. The pilgrimage of the nations is a significant theme in the Bible (Ps 102.22; Isa 2.1–4; Mic 4.1–3; Isa 60–62; 66.20–21).

12 who cuts off the spirit of princes,
who inspires fear in the kings of the earth.

Psalm 77

To the leader: according to Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A Psalm.

1 I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, that he may hear me.
2 In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;
my soul refuses to be comforted.
3 I think of God, and I moan;
I meditate, and my spirit faints. *Selah*

4 You keep my eyelids from closing;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
5 I consider the days of old,
and remember the years of long ago.
6 I commune[a] with my heart in the night;
I meditate and search my spirit:[b]
7 "Will the Lord spurn forever,
and never again be favorable?
8 Has his steadfast love ceased forever?
Are his promises at an end for all time?
9 Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?" *Selah*
10 And I say, "It is my grief
that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

11 I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD;
I will remember your wonders of old.
12 I will meditate on all your work,
and muse on your mighty deeds.
13 Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is so great as our God?
14 You are the God who works wonders;
you have displayed your might among the peoples.
15 With your strong arm you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. *Selah*

16 When the waters saw you, O God,
when the waters saw you, they were afraid;
the very deep trembled.
17 The clouds poured out water;
the skies thundered;
your arrows flashed on every side.
18 The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;
your lightnings lit up the world;
the earth trembled and shook.
19 Your way was through the sea,
your path, through the mighty waters;
yet your footprints were unseen.
20 You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *My music*
[b] Syr Jerome: Heb *my spirit searches*

Ps 77: The mighty acts of God in national trouble. Though often classed as an individual lament or petition, the psalm is best taken as a community petition in which a speaker expresses the personal distress of the community (vv. 1–10) and recalls God's past fidelity to the nation (vv. 11–20). **Superscription:** *Jeduthun,* see Ps 39n. *Asaph,* see Ps 73n. **3:** *Selah* (also vv. 9,15), see Ps 3.2n. **10:** *Right hand* connotes supreme power. That the LORD seems unable to save the elect people depresses the singer. **11–20:** Combining historical and cosmic language, the psalmist describes the Exodus from Egypt, Israel's great founding event. **11–12:** *Call to mind, remember, meditate, muse,* the verbs here seem to mean recite aloud as in a liturgical act to spur God to renew the ancient act that established the community. **15:** *The descendants of Jacob and Joseph* (i.e., the Israelites). **16–19:** Cf. Pss 18.7–15; 114.3–6. **19:** The fact that no visible trace of God's power was seen is a reminder that the acts of God do not require visible proof. **20:** On the mention of *Aaron* along with *Moses,* see also Ps 105.26.

Psalm 78

A Maskil of Asaph.

1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
2 I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
3 things that we have heard and known,
that our ancestors have told us.
4 We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.

5 He established a decree in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children;
6 that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and rise up and tell them to their children,
7 so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;
8 and that they should not be like their ancestors,
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,
whose spirit was not faithful to God.
9 The Ephraimites, armed with[a] the bow,
turned back on the day of battle.
10 They did not keep God's covenant,
but refused to walk according to his law.
11 They forgot what he had done,
and the miracles that he had shown them.
12 In the sight of their ancestors he worked marvels
in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan.
13 He divided the sea and let them pass through it,
and made the waters stand like a heap.
14 In the daytime he led them with a cloud,
and all night long with a fiery light.
15 He split rocks open in the wilderness,
and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep.
16 He made streams come out of the rock,
and caused waters to flow down like rivers.

17 Yet they sinned still more against him,
rebelling against the Most High in the desert.
18 They tested God in their heart
by demanding the food they craved.
19 They spoke against God, saying,
"Can God spread a table in the wilderness?
20 Even though he struck the rock so that water gushed out

[a] Heb *armed with shooting*

Ps 78: A lesson from history. Ps 78 juxtaposes two series of events in Israel's history (vv. 12–39,40–72) to demonstrate that the people's sin triggered divine punishment, but, even more important, to show that an offer of a new beginning comes after punishment. The first series of events is limited to those that took place "in the wilderness . . . in the desert" (v. 40; cf. Ex 14–Num 11); the second set is broader, including the conquest of Canaan, the founding of the national shrine at Shiloh, its rejection, culminating in the choice of Zion and of David. The psalmist's mention of the choice of Judah and David over the Northern Kingdom of Israel ("Ephraim" v. 62) suggests a time of composition when the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were separated (late tenth to late eighth centuries BCE). The psalm makes clear that history is not recalled for its own sake, but for didactic reasons (see vv. 6–8). **Superscription:** *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. *Asaph,* see Ps 73n. **1–11:** Like Moses in Deut 5 and 18.18–19, the psalmist promises to interpret the national tradition so that the hearers might respond properly to God's new gracious act: choosing David as king and Zion as the national shrine. **2:** *Parable,* better, "lesson." **9:** The *battle* is not specifically identified. **12–40:** Casting the wilderness traditions in a different order from the Pentateuch, the psalm mentions gracious act (vv. 12–16), rebellion (vv. 17–20), divine anger and punishment (vv. 21–31), and then, surprisingly, God's forgiveness (vv. 32–39). **12:** *Zoan,* a city in northern Egypt. **13:** Ex 14.21,29; 15.8. **14:** Ex 13.21–22; 14.19–20. **15–16:** Ex 17.6; Num 20.11; Isa 48.21. *The deep,* the chaotic waters vanquished by God, which served Israel's need for water; cf. Ps 104.5–14. **18–31:** On the provisioning of the people with food

and torrents overflowed,
can he also give bread,
or provide meat for his people?"

21 Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was
full of rage;
a fire was kindled against Jacob,
his anger mounted against Israel,
22 because they had no faith in God,
and did not trust his saving power.
23 Yet he commanded the skies above,
and opened the doors of heaven;
24 he rained down on them manna to eat,
and gave them the grain of heaven.
25 Mortals ate of the bread of angels;
he sent them food in abundance.
26 He caused the east wind to blow in the
heavens,
and by his power he led out the south
wind;
27 he rained flesh upon them like dust,
winged birds like the sand of the seas;
28 he let them fall within their camp,
all around their dwellings.
29 And they ate and were well filled,
for he gave them what they craved.
30 But before they had satisfied their
craving,
while the food was still in their mouths,
31 the anger of God rose against them
and he killed the strongest of them,
and laid low the flower of Israel.

32 In spite of all this they still sinned;
they did not believe in his wonders.
33 So he made their days vanish like a
breath,
and their years in terror.
34 When he killed them, they sought for
him;
they repented and sought God
earnestly.
35 They remembered that God was their
rock,
the Most High God their redeemer.
36 But they flattered him with their
mouths;
they lied to him with their tongues.
37 Their heart was not steadfast toward
him;
they were not true to his covenant.
38 Yet he, being compassionate,
forgave their iniquity,
and did not destroy them;
often he restrained his anger,
and did not stir up all his wrath.
39 He remembered that they were but flesh,
a wind that passes and does not come
again.
40 How often they rebelled against him in
the wilderness
and grieved him in the desert!
41 They tested God again and again,
and provoked the Holy One of Israel.
42 They did not keep in mind his power,
or the day when he redeemed them
from the foe;
43 when he displayed his signs in Egypt,
and his miracles in the fields of Zoan.
44 He turned their rivers to blood,
so that they could not drink of their
streams.
45 He sent among them swarms of flies,
which devoured them,
and frogs, which destroyed them.
46 He gave their crops to the caterpillar,
and the fruit of their labor to the
locust.
47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
and their sycamores with frost.
48 He gave over their cattle to the hail,
and their flocks to thunderbolts.
49 He let loose on them his fierce anger,
wrath, indignation, and distress,
a company of destroying angels.
50 He made a path for his anger;
he did not spare them from death,
but gave their lives over to the plague.
51 He struck all the firstborn in Egypt,
the first issue of their strength in the
tents of Ham.
52 Then he led out his people like sheep,
and guided them in the wilderness like
a flock.

after the Exodus, see Ex 16; Num 11. **40–54:** Traditions different from the first recital in vv. 12–39, but the same sequence: gracious act (vv. 40–55), rebellion (vv. 56–58), divine anger and punishment (vv. 59–64), forgiveness (vv. 65–72). Here too the traditions are not identical to what is preserved in the books of Exodus and Numbers. **43–51:** The plagues (Ex 7–11; Ps 105.26–36). **51:** *Ham,* Egypt; see Gen 10.6. **52–55:** Cf. Ex 15.13; Ps 77.20.

53 He led them in safety, so that they were
not afraid;
but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
54 And he brought them to his holy hill,
to the mountain that his right hand had
won.
55 He drove out nations before them;
he apportioned them for a possession
and settled the tribes of Israel in their
tents.

56 Yet they tested the Most High God,
and rebelled against him.
They did not observe his decrees,
57 but turned away and were faithless like
their ancestors;
they twisted like a treacherous bow.
58 For they provoked him to anger with
their high places;
they moved him to jealousy with their
idols.
59 When God heard, he was full of wrath,
and he utterly rejected Israel.
60 He abandoned his dwelling at Shiloh,
the tent where he dwelt among mortals,
61 and delivered his power to captivity,
his glory to the hand of the foe.
62 He gave his people to the sword,
and vented his wrath on his heritage.
63 Fire devoured their young men,
and their girls had no marriage song.
64 Their priests fell by the sword,
and their widows made no
lamentation.
65 Then the Lord awoke as from sleep,
like a warrior shouting because of wine.
66 He put his adversaries to rout;
he put them to everlasting disgrace.
67 He rejected the tent of Joseph,
he did not choose the tribe of
Ephraim;
68 but he chose the tribe of Judah,
Mount Zion, which he loves.
69 He built his sanctuary like the high
heavens,
like the earth, which he has founded
forever.
70 He chose his servant David,
and took him from the sheepfolds;
71 from tending the nursing ewes he
brought him
to be the shepherd of his people
Jacob,
of Israel, his inheritance.
72 With upright heart he tended them,
and guided them with skillful hand.

Psalm 79

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 O God, the nations have come into your
inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple;
they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.
2 They have given the bodies of your
servants
to the birds of the air for food,
the flesh of your faithful to the wild
animals of the earth.
3 They have poured out their blood like
water
all around Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury them.
4 We have become a taunt to our
neighbors,
mocked and derided by those
around us.

60: The ark of the covenant was in Shiloh according to 1 Sam 3–4 before it was brought to Jerusalem. Shiloh was likely destroyed by the Philistines; see also Jer 7.14; 26.6,9. **61:** *His power . . . his glory,* referring to the ark, captured by the Philistines (1 Sam 4–6). **67–68:** God rejected the Northern Kingdom of Israel (*Joseph, Ephraim*) in favor of the Southern Kingdom of *Judah*. **71–72:** The image of the king as *shepherd* of the people is common in the ancient Near East. The choice of David is presented as the climax of the psalm, but unlike the account in Samuel through Kings, he is chosen after the Temple is constructed: in the case of the psalm, chosen by God, not by Solomon.

Ps 79: A community petition for punishment for those dishonoring God. Though the prayer might seem concerned only with revenge, it actually seeks to maintain the community's relationship to God and uphold the divine honor. The NRSV division into four stanzas (vv. 1–4,5–7,8–10,11–13) is supported by the Hebrew word count of 36, 29, 36, and 29. The initial verses suggest that the psalm reflects the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonian army in 586 BCE. **Superscription:** *Asaph,* see Ps 73n. **1:** *Your inheritance,* the land given to Israel by God. **2:** Leaving bodies unburied shows the disrespect of victors and creates grief for those

5 How long, O LORD? Will you be angry
forever?
Will your jealous wrath burn like fire?
6 Pour out your anger on the nations
that do not know you,
and on the kingdoms
that do not call on your name.
7 For they have devoured Jacob
and laid waste his habitation.

8 Do not remember against us the
iniquities of our ancestors;
let your compassion come speedily to
meet us,
for we are brought very low.
9 Help us, O God of our salvation,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and forgive our sins,
for your name's sake.
10 Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Let the avenging of the outpoured blood of
your servants
be known among the nations before our
eyes.

11 Let the groans of the prisoners come
before you;
according to your great power preserve
those doomed to die.
12 Return sevenfold into the bosom of our
neighbors
the taunts with which they taunted you,
O Lord!
13 Then we your people, the flock of your
pasture,
will give thanks to you forever;
from generation to generation we will
recount your praise.

Psalm 80

To the leader: on Lilies, a Covenant. Of Asaph. A Psalm.

1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the
cherubim, shine forth
2 before Ephraim and Benjamin and
Manasseh.
Stir up your might,
and come to save us!

3 Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be
saved.

4 O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your
people's prayers?
5 You have fed them with the bread of
tears,
and given them tears to drink in full
measure.
6 You make us the scorn[a] of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.

7 Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be
saved.

[a] Syr: Heb *strife*

defeated. **5:** *How long?* Not necessarily a rhetorical question; see Ps 13.1n. **8:** *Do not remember the iniquities of our ancestors,* more accurately, "our past iniquities." The people do not deny they have sinned and deserve punishment, but object that their enemies have sinned much more by attacking the LORD's Temple and deserve immediate and severe punishment, and Judah deserves *compassion*. **9–13:** A set of reasons why God should respond. **11–13:** Like Pss 77 and 78, Ps 79 ends with—and Ps 80 begins with—the image of the divine shepherd, connecting these psalms "of Asaph."

Ps 80: Prayer that the shepherd of Israel would restore the people. A community petition: vv. 1–7 asks God to aid the northern tribes suffering from the effects of God's anger, vv. 8–13 recall Israel's founding event (the Exodus and settlement of Canaan) called into question by the enemies' triumph, and vv. 14–19 pray that God act now. The psalm imagines the founding event as the transplanting of a vine to Canaan; cf. Isa 5.1–7; Ezek 17.1–10. A refrain with variations in vv. 3,7,14,19 structures the poem. **Superscription:** *On Lilies,* see Ps 45n. *Covenant,* cf. Ps 60. *Asaph,* see Ps 73n. **1:** *Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh,* northern tribes separated from Judah since the schism of ca. 922 BCE. In 722, Assyria defeated the Northern Kingdom and seized its territory. God is imagined as *enthroned upon the cherubim* (i.e., present above the ark of covenant in the Temple). **4:** The epithet *God of hosts*, which refers to God with his heavenly army, is especially suitable here, since God is asked to fight on behalf

[8] You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and
planted it.
[9] You cleared the ground for it;
it took deep root and filled the land.
[10] The mountains were covered with its
shade,
the mighty cedars with its branches;
[11] it sent out its branches to the sea,
and its shoots to the River.
[12] Why then have you broken down its
walls,
so that all who pass along the way pluck
its fruit?
[13] The boar from the forest ravages it,
and all that move in the field feed
on it.

[14] Turn again, O God of hosts;
look down from heaven, and see;
have regard for this vine,
[15] the stock that your right hand
planted.[a]
[16] They have burned it with fire, they have
cut it down;[b]
may they perish at the rebuke of your
countenance.
[17] But let your hand be upon the one at
your right hand,
the one whom you made strong for
yourself.
[18] Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your
name.

[19] Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be
saved.

Psalm 81

To the leader: according to The Gittith. Of Asaph.

[1] Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob.
[2] Raise a song, sound the tambourine,
the sweet lyre with the harp.
[3] Blow the trumpet at the new moon,
at the full moon, on our festal day.
[4] For it is a statute for Israel,
an ordinance of the God of Jacob.
[5] He made it a decree in Joseph,
when he went out over[c] the land of
Egypt.

I hear a voice I had not known:
[6] "I relieved your[d] shoulder of the burden;
your[d] hands were freed from the basket.
[7] In distress you called, and I rescued you;
I answered you in the secret place of
thunder;
I tested you at the waters of Meribah.
Selah
[8] Hear, O my people, while I admonish you;
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!
[9] There shall be no strange god among you;
you shall not bow down to a foreign
god.
[10] I am the LORD your God,
who brought you up out of the land of
Egypt.
Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

[a] Heb adds from verse 17 *and upon the one whom you made strong for yourself*
[b] Cn: Heb *it is cut down*
[c] Or *against*
[d] Heb *his*

of Israel. *How long,* see 13.1n. **8–13:** Ex 15.17; Ps 44.2; and Ezek 19.10–14 also speak of the founding of Israel as a planting. **11:** *The River,* the Euphrates. **14–19:** *The one at your right hand* (the king).

Ps 81: Invitation to renew the covenant. A covenant renewal liturgy like Ps 50 in which the community is invited to renew the covenant (vv. 1–5b) and then is challenged with the consequences of disobedience (vv. 5c–16). **Superscription:** *Gittith,* see Ps 8n. *Asaph,* see Ps 73n. **3:** *New moon,* an important holy day; see Num 28.11–15; Isa 1.13. *Festal day,* the exact reference is uncertain; little is known about covenant renewal ceremonies in ancient Israel. **5:** *Joseph,* referring to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the principal constituents of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. *I hear a voice I had not known,* introduces an oracle in which God, speaking in the first person (vv. 6–10), describes the people's liberation from Egyptian bondage, their encounter with the LORD at Sinai, and guidance in the wilderness (vv. 6–7), and reminds the people of the commandment of loving the LORD alone (vv. 8–10). **7:** *The secret place of thunder,* likely Mount Sinai where God appeared in thunder (Ex 19.16,18; 20.18). For *the waters of Meribah*, see Ex 17.17; Num 20.13. *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **9–10:** A restatement of the beginning of the Decalogue (Ex 20.1–3). **9:** *Foreign god,* see Deut 32.12. **10:** To accept the LORD's food in the

11 "But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.
13 O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!
14 Then I would quickly subdue their enemies,
and turn my hand against their foes.
15 Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him,
and their doom would last forever.
16 I would feed you[a] with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

Psalm 82

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:
2 "How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah*
3 Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.
4 Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked."
5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk around in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6 I say, "You are gods,
children of the Most High, all of you;
7 nevertheless, you shall die like mortals,
and fall like any prince."[b]

8 Rise up, O God, judge the earth;
for all the nations belong to you!

Psalm 83

A Song. A Psalm of Asaph.

1 O God, do not keep silence;
do not hold your peace or be still, O God!
2 Even now your enemies are in tumult;
those who hate you have raised their heads.
3 They lay crafty plans against your people;
they consult together against those you protect.
4 They say, "Come, let us wipe them out as a nation;
let the name of Israel be remembered no more."

[a] Cn Compare verse 16b: Heb *he would feed him*
[b] Or *fall as one man, O princes*

wilderness is equivalently to accept the LORD as their God. **11–16:** Cf. Josh 24.19–21. Such language is meant to explain why all is not well with Israel in the psalmist's period. **16:** *Finest of the wheat,* see Deut 32.14; Ps 147.14. *Honey from the rock,* see Deut 32.13.

Ps 82: Petition for divine justice. As in Ps 29 (cf. Pss 58 and 75), the setting is the assembly of the heavenly beings, who were thought to rule the nations of the earth under God's supervision (cf. Deut 32.8–9). This psalm tells how these beings lost their authority by ruling unjustly, and how God took over their rule. A variant of this judgment scene is Ps 58. **Superscription:** *Asaph,* see Ps 73n. **1:** *Divine council,* in 1 Kings 22.19–22; Isa 6; 40.1–9, the assembly is thoroughly obedient to God. In Ps 82, however, some of the gods are summoned to trial, found guilty of misrule, and punished with mortality (i.e., loss of divine status). **2–4:** Acting both as prosecuting attorney and judge, God accuses them of not giving *justice to the weak*, i.e., not aiding them. **2:** *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **5:** Either a comment of the psalmist or the heavenly prosecutor. **6–7:** The verdict. **8:** The implication of what precedes: a call for *God*, now acting alone, to *judge* fairly.

Ps 83: A plea that God would protect the community. A community petition that God might protect the people from ten nations bent on annihilating Israel. Ten is symbolic for many as in Gen 5 (ten individuals before the Flood); Gen 31.7; Num 14.22; Job 19.3. The list reflects no single historical reality, but is cumulative, like the listing of enemies in Ezek 38–39, designating all enemies of God's people. Verse 1 is the opening plea, vv. 2–8 the complaint (a conspiracy against Israel), and vv. 9–18 the plea that God wipe out all enemies (vv. 9–12) using the weapons of storm (vv. 13–17), so God's holy name may be exalted on earth (v. 18). **Superscription:** *Asaph,* see Ps 73n. **4–8:** The psalmist cites the speech of conspirators (v. 4) as in Ex 1.10 and Ps 2.3.

5 They conspire with one accord;
against you they make a covenant—
6 the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,
Moab and the Hagrites,
7 Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
8 Assyria also has joined them;
they are the strong arm of the children
of Lot. *Selah*

9 Do to them as you did to Midian,
as to Sisera and Jabin at the Wadi
Kishon,
10 who were destroyed at En-dor,
who became dung for the ground.
11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb,
all their princes like Zebah and
Zalmunna,
12 who said, "Let us take the pastures of God
for our own possession."

13 O my God, make them like whirling
dust,[a]
like chaff before the wind.
14 As fire consumes the forest,
as the flame sets the mountains ablaze,
15 so pursue them with your tempest
and terrify them with your hurricane.
16 Fill their faces with shame,
so that they may seek your name,
O LORD.
17 Let them be put to shame and dismayed
forever;
let them perish in disgrace.
18 Let them know that you alone,
whose name is the LORD,
are the Most High over all the earth.

Psalm 84

To the leader: according to The Gittith. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

1 How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of hosts!
2 My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

3 Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.
4 Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise. *Selah*

5 Happy are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to
Zion.[b]
6 As they go through the valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
7 They go from strength to strength;
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

[a] Or *a tumbleweed*
[b] Heb lacks *to Zion*

6: *Edom,* the territory south and east of the Dead Sea. *Ishmaelites,* nomads (Gen 37.25) related to the Edomites (Gen 36.3,9–10). *Moab,* east of the Dead Sea. *Hagrites,* their territory was east of Gilead (1 Chr 5.10,19–20). **7:** *Gebal,* later known as Byblos, on the coast of Lebanon. *Ammon,* in central Transjordan. *Amalek,* a people dispossessed by Israel in Ex 17.8–16; they disappear from the Bible after the time of David (1 Sam 15 and 30.13–25). **8:** *Assyria* conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE and thereafter harassed Judah. *The children of Lot* were Moab and Ammon (Gen 19.36–38). *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **9–18:** May you show your enemies that you are again supreme, as you were in the past. The events in vv. 10–12 are narrated in Judg 4–8. **9:** *Midian,* a confederation of desert tribes. **10:** *En-dor,* near Mount Tabor in central Israel. **11:** *Oreb* and *Zeeb,* Midianite captains slain by Ephraimites (Judg 7.25; 8.3). *Zebah* and *Zalmunna,* Midianite kings slain by Gideon (Judg 8.4–21). **13–14:** These verses may have been accompanied by symbolic actions.

Ps 84: Longing for the Temple and a prayer for the Davidic king. A song of Zion, with emphasis on the desire to participate in its worship (cf. Pss 42–43; 63). **Superscription:** *Gittith,* see Ps 8n. *Korahites,* see Ps 42–43n. **1:** Lovely, better, "beloved" as in Isa 5.1; Deut 33.12. **3:** NRSV wrongly assumes birds' nests are at the altar, where birds' nests would never be allowed. The comparison is to a homeless bird finding a home for its young, suggesting: "As a sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, so my home" is at your altars. **4:** *Selah* (also v. 8), see Ps 3.2n. **5–7:** The joyous final stage of the journey to Zion. **6:** *Baca,* precise location unknown. **7:** *They go from strength to strength,* a puzzling phrase, perhaps "from rampart

[8] O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*
[9] Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed.

[10] For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the
house of my God
than live in the tents of wickedness.
[11] For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
he bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does the LORD withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
[12] O LORD of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

Psalm 85

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

[1] LORD, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
[2] You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you pardoned all their sin. *Selah*
[3] You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.

[4] Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us.
[5] Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all
generations?
[6] Will you not revive us again,
so that your people may rejoice in you?
[7] Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.

[8] Let me hear what God the LORD will
speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him
in their hearts.[a]
[9] Surely his salvation is at hand for those
who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

[10] Steadfast love and faithfulness will
meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each
other.
[11] Faithfulness will spring up from the
ground,
and righteousness will look down from
the sky.
[12] The LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.
[13] Righteousness will go before him,
and will make a path for his steps.

Psalm 86

A Prayer of David.

[1] Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.
[2] Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you;
save your servant who trusts in you.
You are my God; [3] be gracious to me,
O Lord,
for to you do I cry all day long.
[4] Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
[5] For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who
call on you.
[6] Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;
listen to my cry of supplication.

[a] Gk: Heb *but let them not turn back to folly*

to rampart," the outer and inner gates of Jerusalem. **9:** *Our shield, your anointed,* the Davidic king played an important role in the ceremonies in Zion.

Ps 85: A prayer for forgiveness. A community petition that God be merciful as in the past (vv. 1–3) and forgive this discouraged generation (vv. 4–13). The psalm may have been recited by those returning from exile. **Superscription:** *Korahites,* see Ps 42–43n. **2:** *Pardoned,* lit., "covered." *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **8:** Though the mode through which God spoke is unclear, worshipers expected to be able to discern the divine will, especially at the Temple. **10–13:** The effects of divine forgiveness on land and people are expressed in striking metaphors and personifications: courtiers greeting each other with exquisite courtesy (v. 10), the land itself growing righteousness like a plant (vv. 11–12), and messengers preparing for the LORD's arrival (v. 13); cf. Ps 89.14.

Ps 86: Desire for God as helper. An individual petition that concentrates on the psalmist's desire to be God's loyal servant (vv. 1–7); it celebrates God's incomparability (vv. 8–13) prior to asking for help in a particular need (vv. 16–17). **1:** *Incline your ear . . . answer me,* repeated in v. 7 (NRSV *call . . . answer*), which concludes the section. The poet is proud to be the servant of so responsive a LORD. *Poor and needy,* to express one's poverty makes a

7 In the day of my trouble I call on you,
for you will answer me.

8 There is none like you among the gods,
O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.
9 All the nations you have made shall
come
and bow down before you,
O Lord,
and shall glorify your name.
10 For you are great and do wondrous
things;
you alone are God.
11 Teach me your way, O LORD,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere
your name.
12 I give thanks to you, O Lord my God,
with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever.
13 For great is your steadfast love toward
me;
you have delivered my soul from the
depths of Sheol.

14 O God, the insolent rise up
against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life,
and they do not set you before
them.
15 But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and
gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in
steadfast love and faithfulness.
16 Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant;
save the child of your serving girl.
17 Show me a sign of your favor,
so that those who hate me may see it
and be put to shame,
because you, LORD, have helped me and
comforted me.

Psalm 87

Of the Korahites. A Psalm. A Song.

1 On the holy mount stands the city he
founded;
2 the LORD loves the gates of Zion
more than all the dwellings of
Jacob.
3 Glorious things are spoken of you,
O city of God. *Selah*

4 Among those who know me I mention
Rahab and Babylon;
Philistia too, and Tyre, with
Ethiopia[a]—
"This one was born there," they say.

5 And of Zion it shall be said,
"This one and that one were born
in it";
for the Most High himself will
establish it.
6 The LORD records, as he registers the
peoples,
"This one was born there." *Selah*

7 Singers and dancers alike say,
"All my springs are in you."

[a] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

claim against God, for God wants the faithful to enjoy the goods of creation. **8:** Cf. Pss 71.19; 89.6–7; Ex 15.11. **9:** See Ps 22.27n. **14–17:** Having praised the LORD's graciousness in vv. 1–7 and 8–13, the psalmist now asks for the same compassion and justice in the present need. **13:** *Sheol,* the abode of the dead. **15:** See Ex 34.6.

Ps 87: Zion, God's chosen city. A song of Zion, probably from the sixth or fifth century BCE, assuring exiled Israelites their true home is Zion (vv. 1–3), and welcoming returnees and the nations who bring them home (4–6). **Superscription:** *Korahites,* see Ps 42–43n. **3:** *Glorious things,* hymns sung in the city of God, as in Pss 48.1; 76.1. *Selah* (also v. 6), see Ps 3.2n. **4:** *Rahab,* probably Egypt (see Isa 30.7). *Philistia,* on the southeastern Mediterranean coast. *Tyre,* an important coastal city north of Israel, standing for Phoenicia (modern Lebanon). *This one was born there,* either Zion or the country where the exiles dwell. In the similar phrases in vv. 5 and 6, the referent is clearly Zion. Birth in a foreign country does not prevent one from calling Zion mother; cf. Isa 40–55 where Zion regains her husband and children. **7:** *All my springs,* citation of a song celebrating Zion as a source of fertility as in Ps 46.4.

Psalm 88

A Song. A Psalm of the Korahites. To the leader: according to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.

1 O LORD, God of my salvation,
when, at night, I cry out in your presence,
2 let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry.

3 For my soul is full of troubles,
and my life draws near to Sheol.
4 I am counted among those who go down to the Pit;
I am like those who have no help,
5 like those forsaken among the dead,
like the slain that lie in the grave,
like those whom you remember no more,
for they are cut off from your hand.
6 You have put me in the depths of the Pit,
in the regions dark and deep.
7 Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
and you overwhelm me with all your waves. *Selah*

8 You have caused my companions to shun me;
you have made me a thing of horror to them.
I am shut in so that I cannot escape;
9 my eye grows dim through sorrow.
Every day I call on you, O LORD;
I spread out my hands to you.
10 Do you work wonders for the dead?
Do the shades rise up to praise you? *Selah*
11 Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,
or your faithfulness in Abaddon?
12 Are your wonders known in the darkness,
or your saving help in the land of forgetfulness?

13 But I, O LORD, cry out to you;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
14 O LORD, why do you cast me off?
Why do you hide your face from me?
15 Wretched and close to death from my youth up,
I suffer your terrors; I am desperate.[a]
16 Your wrath has swept over me;
your dread assaults destroy me.
17 They surround me like a flood all day long;
from all sides they close in on me.
18 You have caused friend and neighbor to shun me;
my companions are in darkness.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

Ps 88: The prayer of a near-hopeless individual. Perhaps the bleakest individual petition in the Psalms, with no expressions of trust and, strikingly, no mention of enemies; God is regarded as the enemy. The poem has three sections (vv. 1–9a,9b–12,13–18), each introduced by a verb of crying and a mention of the LORD (vv. 1a, 9b,13a). The middle section develops the theme of God's withdrawal through six questions. **Superscription:** *Korahites,* see Ps 42–43n. *Mahalath Leannoth,* probably a melody. *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. *Heman the Ezrahite*, probably a Temple musician (see, e.g., 1 Chr 6.33); only this psalm is ascribed to him. **3–4:** *Sheol . . . the Pit,* the underworld where all go upon death; the psalmist already feels the dread chill of the place. **7:** *Your wrath,* the emphasis is not on God's emotional state but on its effect upon the psalmist—absence of divine favor and blessing. *Your waves,* Sheol was sometimes imagined as a watery place (e.g., Ps 42.7; Jon 2.3). *Selah* (also v. 10), see Ps 3.2n. **8:** The psalmist here and in vv. 16–18 feels that God is the direct cause of all of his problems. **11–12:** If I die, the psalmist is saying, I will be in the underworld where you are not praised; see Ps 6.5n. *Abaddon,* lit., "destruction," another name for the abode of the dead. **13–18:** Extending the thought of the first section, these verses detail the cruel behavior of God, asking *Why?* (v. 14). Yet the psalmist holds out the hope that God will return to him.

Psalm 89

A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

1 I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD,[a]
forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your
faithfulness to all generations.
2 I declare that your steadfast love is
established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the
heavens.

3 You said, "I have made a covenant with
my chosen one,
I have sworn to my servant David:
4 'I will establish your descendants forever,
and build your throne for all
generations.'" *Selah*

5 Let the heavens praise your wonders,
O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the
holy ones.
6 For who in the skies can be compared to
the LORD?
Who among the heavenly beings is like
the LORD,
7 a God feared in the council of the holy
ones,
great and awesome[b] above all that are
around him?
8 O LORD God of hosts,
who is as mighty as you, O LORD?
Your faithfulness surrounds you.
9 You rule the raging of the sea;
when its waves rise, you still them.
10 You crushed Rahab like a carcass;
you scattered your enemies with your
mighty arm.
11 The heavens are yours, the earth also is
yours;
the world and all that is in it—you have
founded them.
12 The north and the south[c]—you created
them;
Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your
name.
13 You have a mighty arm;
strong is your hand, high your right
hand.
14 Righteousness and justice are the
foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go
before you.
15 Happy are the people who know the
festal shout,
who walk, O LORD, in the light of your
countenance;
16 they exult in your name all day long,
and extol[d] your righteousness.
17 For you are the glory of their strength;
by your favor our horn is exalted.
18 For our shield belongs to the LORD,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.

19 Then you spoke in a vision to your
faithful one, and said:
"I have set the crown[e] on one who is
mighty,
I have exalted one chosen from the
people.

[a] Gk: Heb *the steadfast love of the* LORD
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *greatly awesome*
[c] Or *Zaphon and Yamin*
[d] Cn: Heb *are exalted in*
[e] Cn: Heb *help*

Ps 89: A plea that God will remain faithful to the covenant with David. Written when the king was important to national life (the tenth to the sixth centuries BCE), the community petition asks God to honor the ancient promise to give victory to the Davidic king (vv. 1–37), for that promise has been called into question by an ignominious defeat (vv. 38–51). **Superscription:** *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. *Ethan the Ezrahite,* according to 1 Chr 15.17,19, a Temple musician. Only this psalm is ascribed to him. **1:** *Steadfast love,* occurring seven times, Heb "ḥesed" underscores God's close relationship to the Davidic king. **1–4:** God's promise to David (see 2 Sam 7.16) is as rooted in creation as the never-failing cycle of the sun and moon (see vv. 36–37). **4:** *Selah* (also vv. 37,45,48), see Ps 3.2n. **5–14:** The heavenly assembly acknowledges the supremacy of the God who defeated Sea (vv. 9–10), arranged heaven and earth (vv. 11–12), and ascended to the throne (vv. 13–14). **6:** Cf. Pss 71.19; 86.8; Ex 15.11. **10:** *Rahab,* a name for the primeval chaos monster; Job 26.12; Isa 51.9. **12:** *The north,* i.e., Zaphon (see Ps 48.1–3n.); *south,* Heb "yamin," is probably to be emended to (Mount) Amanus, today the Nur mountains in south-central Turkey. *Tabor and Hermon,* two prominent mountains, in southern and northern Galilee respectively. **14:** Cf. Ps 85.10–14. **15–18:** Paralleling the celebration in the heavens is the celebration of God's victory on earth. **19–37:** Time is

20 I have found my servant David;
with my holy oil I have anointed him;
21 my hand shall always remain with him;
my arm also shall strengthen him.
22 The enemy shall not outwit him,
the wicked shall not humble him.
23 I will crush his foes before him
and strike down those who hate him.
24 My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him;
and in my name his horn shall be exalted.
25 I will set his hand on the sea
and his right hand on the rivers.
26 He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father,
my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'
27 I will make him the firstborn,
the highest of the kings of the earth.
28 Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him,
and my covenant with him will stand firm.
29 I will establish his line forever,
and his throne as long as the heavens endure.
30 If his children forsake my law
and do not walk according to my ordinances,
31 if they violate my statutes
and do not keep my commandments,
32 then I will punish their transgression with the rod
and their iniquity with scourges;
33 but I will not remove from him my steadfast love,
or be false to my faithfulness.
34 I will not violate my covenant,
or alter the word that went forth from my lips.
35 Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness;
I will not lie to David.
36 His line shall continue forever,
and his throne endure before me like the sun.
37 It shall be established forever like the moon,
an enduring witness in the skies." *Selah*

38 But now you have spurned and rejected him;
you are full of wrath against your anointed.
39 You have renounced the covenant with your servant;
you have defiled his crown in the dust.
40 You have broken through all his walls;
you have laid his strongholds in ruins.
41 All who pass by plunder him;
he has become the scorn of his neighbors.
42 You have exalted the right hand of his foes;
you have made all his enemies rejoice.
43 Moreover, you have turned back the edge of his sword,
and you have not supported him in battle.
44 You have removed the scepter from his hand,[a]
and hurled his throne to the ground.
45 You have cut short the days of his youth;
you have covered him with shame. *Selah*

46 How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever?
How long will your wrath burn like fire?
47 Remember how short my time is—[b]
for what vanity you have created all mortals!
48 Who can live and never see death?
Who can escape the power of Sheol? *Selah*

49 Lord, where is your steadfast love of old,
which by your faithfulness you swore to David?

[a] Cn: Heb *removed his cleanness*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

collapsed, and David is chosen as king and anointed immediately after the conquest of chaos, as a human king who represents the divine. **25:** The king shares the divine task of controlling the primeval forces of watery chaos. **28–37:** The promise to David is unconditional and eternal: as in 2 Sam 7.11–16, on which this is based; if one of David's descendants is unfaithful to the covenant, that king will be punished but the dynasty will not be rejected. **26–27:** Language of (divine) adoption; see 2 Sam 7.14; Ps 2.9. **38–51:** A Davidic king has suffered defeat, and the community speaker insists that God remember the promise of fidelity. **46:** *How long,* see Ps 13.1n. **48:** *Sheol,* the abode of the

50 Remember, O Lord, how your servant is taunted;
how I bear in my bosom the insults of the peoples,[a]
51 with which your enemies taunt, O LORD,
with which they taunted the footsteps of your anointed.

52 Blessed be the LORD forever.
Amen and Amen.

BOOK IV PSALMS 90-106

Psalm 90

A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place[b]
in all generations.
2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

3 You turn us[c] back to dust,
and say, "Turn back, you mortals."
4 For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.

5 You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;
6 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

7 For we are consumed by your anger;
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.
8 You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

9 For all our days pass away under your wrath;
our years come to an end[d] like a sigh.
10 The days of our life are seventy years,
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;
even then their span[e] is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

11 Who considers the power of your anger?
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.
12 So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.

13 Turn, O LORD! How long?
Have compassion on your servants!
14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

[a] Cn: Heb *bosom all of many peoples*
[b] Another reading is *our refuge*
[c] Heb *humankind*
[d] Syr: Heb *we bring our years to an end*
[e] Cn Compare Gk Syr Jerome Tg: Heb *pride*

dead. **52:** Not a part of the psalm but a doxology or blessing concluding Book III, the third of five editorial divisions of the Psalter; see also Pss 41.13; 72.18–19; 106.48; 150.1–6. It is possible that the book of Psalms at one point began with Psalm 2 and ended with this psalm, focusing on Davidic kingship.

Ps 90: A community prayer that God would rein in his wrath. Though scholars often assume the psalm as a meditation on human frailty and God's eternity, it is best viewed as a community petition complaining that God's wrath has lasted beyond a normal human life span and asking how much longer this unhappy state will continue (vv. 11–12). This interpretation rests on two pieces of evidence: ancient sufferers often sought to know exactly how long tribulations were fated to last (see Ps 13n.); and an improved translation of vv. 11–12: "Who knows the [predetermined] extent of your anger, . . . Teach us how to calculate our days [of affliction], let us bring that awareness into our minds." **Superscription:** The only psalm attributed to Moses, who often asked God to turn and have compassion (e.g., Ex 32.12) as in Ps 90.13. **1–6:** Divine eternity is contrasted with human mortality. **3:** God decreed mortality and a short life span for humans. **5–6:** *Like grass,* cf. Ps 102.11; Isa 40.6–8. **7–12:** The psalmist complains that it is unfair to live one's entire life in a period of divine wrath, i.e., withdrawal of divine blessing. *Seventy years . . . eighty,* numerical parallelism (see Ps 62.11n.). Even an exceptionally old person will never enjoy a period of blessing;. **13–17:** May God turn from wrath so the community might experience God as being near and favorable. Divine wrath was often seen as lasting for a definite time period (Jer 25.11 12). The speaker here asks that the time period be shortened or ended.

15 Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,
and as many years as we have seen evil.
16 Let your work be manifest to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.
17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and prosper for us the work of our hands—
O prosper the work of our hands!

Psalm 91

1 You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,[a]
2 will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."
3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
4 he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
5 You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
6 or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

7 A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
8 You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.

9 Because you have made the LORD your refuge,[b]
the Most High your dwelling place,
10 no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.

11 For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
12 On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.
13 You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

14 Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
15 When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.
16 With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

Psalm 92

A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath Day.

1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
2 to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[b] Cn: Heb *Because you, LORD, are my refuge; you have made*

Ps 91: Trust in God as protector. A song of trust that makes three promises of assistance, each of progressively decreasing length: vv.1–8; 9–13; 14–16. Through v.13, someone speaks in God's name; in vv. 14–16, God speaks in the first person. Striking imagery is used to show how the person who trusts God is protected, even when surrounded by death. **4:** *Pinions . . . wings,* possibly a reference to the winged cherubim guarding the Holy of Holies in the Temple (Ex 25.20; 1 Kings 6.23–28,32; Ezek 1.4–9), but more likely a reference to a protecting bird as in Egyptian iconography and Ex 19.4; Deut 32.10–12. **7:** *Thousand . . . ten thousand,* numerical parallelism; see Ps 62.11n. **9–13:** *His angels,* heavenly beings lead one through perils, as in Ex 23.20,23 and 32.34. Here they serve to explain how the lone individual is saved from the surrounding destruction. **14–16:** The last assurance is the most intense, for God speaks in the first person; there are seven verbs depicting God's protection. There is no demand for righteousness in order to be saved, only love and trust of God.

Ps 92: Thanksgiving for God's governance of the world. A thanksgiving for God's governance has been developed into a hymn that according to the superscription was recited on the sabbath day, perhaps because it deals with creation, and uses the name of God seven times, as is appropriate for the seventh day. **1:** *It is good*

[3] to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
[4] For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

[5] How great are your works, O LORD!
Your thoughts are very deep!
[6] The dullard cannot know,
the stupid cannot understand this:
[7] though the wicked sprout like grass
and all evildoers flourish,
they are doomed to destruction forever,
[8] but you, O LORD, are on high forever.
[9] For your enemies, O LORD,
for your enemies shall perish;
all evildoers shall be scattered.

[10] But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox;
you have poured over me[a] fresh oil.
[11] My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies;
my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants.

[12] The righteous flourish like the palm tree,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
[13] They are planted in the house of the LORD;
they flourish in the courts of our God.
[14] In old age they still produce fruit;
they are always green and full of sap,
[15] showing that the LORD is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

Psalm 93

[1] The LORD is king, he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed, he is girded with strength.
He has established the world; it shall never be moved;
[2] your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.

[3] The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their roaring.
[4] More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters,
more majestic than the waves[b] of the sea,
majestic on high is the LORD!

[5] Your decrees are very sure;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, forevermore.

Psalm 94

[1] O LORD, you God of vengeance,
you God of vengeance, shine forth!
[2] Rise up, O judge of the earth;
give to the proud what they deserve!
[3] O LORD, how long shall the wicked,
how long shall the wicked exult?

[4] They pour out their arrogant words;
all the evildoers boast.

[a] Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn: Heb *majestic are the waves*

to give thanks, indirectly suggesting: "Come let us give thanks." **6–11:** God's just rule works in hidden ways that the foolish do not grasp. **8:** The exact center of the poem, asserting God's triumph in a short, indirect, and reverential manner. **10:** *Horn,* a metaphor for strength. **12–15:** The righteous person is compared to a tree as in Pss 1.3; 52.8; Jer 17.8. The tree grows in the garden within the Jerusalem Temple. Ancient temples had orchards that symbolized the fertility that comes from God. The eventual flourishing of the righteous, like creation, testifies to God's power and righteousness.

Ps 93: The LORD is enthroned as supreme. Like Pss 95–99, Ps 93 hymns the LORD as sole king of the universe. Early Israel shared the ancient view that a deity became supreme by defeating chaos and creating a stable and fertile world. In hymns such as this, the LORD defeats chaos (vv. 3–4) and the victory brings an orderly world into being (v. 1c). It is possible that these psalms celebrating God's kingship were recited at a particular festival commemorating these events. **1:** On his return a victorious warrior would be *robed* in magnificent garments symbolizing the victory. **3–4:** A description of the cosmic battle in which the LORD uses the weapons of a storm (lightning, thunder, wind, rain) to defeat Sea's attempts to destroy the ordered world; cf. Pss 29; 76.12–14; 89.9–10; 104.1–6. **5:** The victorious king proclaims the *decrees* that will govern the new universe.

Ps 94: Rise up, O LORD, to bring justice. A community petition that God would directly rectify wrongs against Israel, distinctive for its vivid portrayal of the psalmist as a model of confidence in God. The Heb word for such

5 They crush your people, O LORD,
and afflict your heritage.
6 They kill the widow and the stranger,
they murder the orphan,
7 and they say, "The LORD does not see;
the God of Jacob does not perceive."

8 Understand, O dullest of the people;
fools, when will you be wise?
9 He who planted the ear, does he not
hear?
He who formed the eye, does he not see?
10 He who disciplines the nations,
he who teaches knowledge to humankind,
does he not chastise?
11 The LORD knows our thoughts,[a]
that they are but an empty breath.

12 Happy are those whom you discipline,
O LORD,
and whom you teach out of your law,
13 giving them respite from days of trouble,
until a pit is dug for the wicked.
14 For the LORD will not forsake his people;
he will not abandon his heritage;
15 for justice will return to the righteous,
and all the upright in heart will
follow it.

16 Who rises up for me against the wicked?
Who stands up for me against
evildoers?
17 If the LORD had not been my help,
my soul would soon have lived in the
land of silence.
18 When I thought, "My foot is slipping,"
your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.
19 When the cares of my heart are many,
your consolations cheer my soul.
20 Can wicked rulers be allied with you,
those who contrive mischief by statute?
21 They band together against the life of the
righteous,
and condemn the innocent to death.
22 But the LORD has become my stronghold,
and my God the rock of my refuge.
23 He will repay them for their iniquity
and wipe them out for their wickedness;
the LORD our God will wipe them out.

Psalm 95

1 O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of
our salvation!
2 Let us come into his presence with
thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with
songs of praise!
3 For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
4 In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his
also.
5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have
formed.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
7 For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

O that today you would listen to his voice!
8 Do not harden your hearts, as at
Meribah,

[a] Heb *the thoughts of humankind*

rectifying is "naqam" (v. 1), championing the poor; NRSV *vengeance* puts undue emphasis on revenge. The poem has a petition (vv. 1–2), complaint (vv. 3–7), questioning of God (vv. 3,20), challenge to the wicked (vv. 9–10,16), and statements of trust (vv. 17–18,22). The psalmist is confident (vv. 17–18), boldly addressing both God (vv. 1–3,12–13) and the wicked (8–11). **3:** *How long,* see Ps 13.1n. **6:** God is called upon here as "father of orphans and protector of widows" (Ps 68.5). **12:** As in Prov 3.12, a justification for the suffering of the seemingly innocent.

Ps 95: Worship and obedience to the glorious LORD. A hymn celebrating the LORD enthroned as supreme (see Ps 93n.). It invites Israel to sing (vv. 1–5), bow down before the LORD (vv. 6–7c), and become an obedient people (vv. 7d–11). Themes and phrases of Pss 95–99 are repeated with variations. **1:** *The rock,* a common metaphor for God—a massive cliff or mesa that serves as a refuge (*salvation*). **3:** *Great king,* a title of suzerains in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Hittite kingdom. **7:** *The sheep of his hand* connotes special love in that God does not delegate the care of Israel to others. **7d–11:** The tone and speaker change, and the community is told that as the LORD's own flock, they are held to a high standard (cf. Pss 50; 81.8–9). **8:** *Meribah,* a place in the wilderness, related by popular

as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
9 when your ancestors tested me,
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.
10 For forty years I loathed that generation
and said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray,
and they do not regard my ways."
11 Therefore in my anger I swore,
"They shall not enter my rest."

Psalm 96

1 O sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.
4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
6 Honor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
9 Worship the LORD in holy splendor;
tremble before him, all the earth.

10 Say among the nations, "The LORD is king!
The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.
He will judge the peoples with equity."
11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
12 let the field exult, and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
13 before the LORD; for he is coming,
for he is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with his truth.

Psalm 97

1 The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!
2 Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
3 Fire goes before him,
and consumes his adversaries on every side.
4 His lightnings light up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.

etymology to "place of strife"; *Massah,* another place in the wilderness, in popular etymology, "place of testing"; for both see Ex 17.1–7; Num 21.1–9. **10–11:** God's refusal to allow the first generation to enter the land (*my rest*) is told in Num 14 and Deut 1.34–2:15; here it serves as a reminder for the community to obey God.

Ps 96: Praise of the LORD who comes to judge the world. A hymn celebrating the LORD's kingship (see Ps 93n.) in which vv.1–6 begin with a thrice-repeated invitation to the whole world to sing, first the family of nations (vv. 7–10), and then heaven and earth (vv. 11–13). **1:** *New song,* celebrating God's arrival as a just king. **7:** *O families of the peoples,* the nations are to turn from their own deities, represented by *idols* (v. 5), to worship the LORD who has become king by creating the world (v. 10). How the nations are meant to know this is unclear, but many of these psalms address peoples who are not physically present. Verses 7–9 quote Ps 29.1–2, with changes in the groups addressed. Isa 2.2–4 is a memorable depiction of the nations acknowledging the LORD as supreme God. **10:** The LORD has gained royal supremacy by his powerful deeds. **13:** Only God, rather than any human king, *can judge the world with righteousness;* this is the cause of great rejoicing.

Ps 97: Rejoice in the LORD who reigns justly over heaven and earth! A hymn celebrating the LORD who comes to rule the earth (v. 1; see Ps 93n.). The LORD's triumph is manifested in storm and theophany imagery (vv. 2–5). Worshipers of other deities are shamed as they see the LORD triumphant (vv. 6–7). Zion and its surrounding towns rejoice at the coming of so exalted a God (vv. 8–9). The psalm ends with an exhortation to show reverence to the powerful LORD, who, as in the previous psalm, will govern justly (vv. 10–12).

5 The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the Lord of all the earth.

6 The heavens proclaim his righteousness;
and all the peoples behold his glory.
7 All worshipers of images are put to shame,
those who make their boast in worthless idols;
all gods bow down before him.
8 Zion hears and is glad,
and the towns[a] of Judah rejoice,
because of your judgments, O God.
9 For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.

10 The LORD loves those who hate[b] evil;
he guards the lives of his faithful;
he rescues them from the hand of the wicked.
11 Light dawns[c] for the righteous,
and joy for the upright in heart.
12 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!

Psalm 98

A Psalm.

1 O sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things.
His right hand and his holy arm
have gotten him victory.
2 The LORD has made known his victory;
he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.
3 He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.

4 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
5 Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.

7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.
8 Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy
9 at the presence of the LORD, for he is coming
to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

Psalm 99

1 The LORD is king; let the peoples tremble!
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!
2 The LORD is great in Zion;
he is exalted over all the peoples.

[a] Heb *daughters*
[b] Cn: Heb *You who love the LORD hate*
[c] Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *is sown*

Ps 98: Praise of the LORD, just and victorious ruler of the world. A hymn celebrating the victory of the LORD over the forces of evil, a victory that brought peace and justice to the world; see Ps 93n. Verses 1–3 invite Israel to sing praise, vv. 4–6 invite the inhabitants of the earth to join in the song, and vv. 7–9 invite the natural elements of the world. The poem begins by announcing that the LORD has won a great victory and ends by introducing the LORD to his new subjects. **1:** On *a new song,* see Ps 96.1. **4–8:** The noisy acclamation of God as king is modeled on a human coronation ceremony. **7–8:** For the participation of mountains and hills in the joy of Israel's redemption, see, e.g., Isa 44.23; 49.11 and Ps 114.4,6. **9:** *Judge,* not judgment at the end of time but judgment in the biblical sense of ruling justly now.

Ps 99: Announcement that the LORD the king rules with justice. The last of the enthronement hymns (Pss 93; 95–99) celebrates the LORD's enthronement, acknowledgment of the nations, and gracious communication of his decrees to Israel. Verses 1–5 call on the nations to recognize the LORD who establishes justice in the world, and vv. 6–9 describe how divine justice is mediated by Israel's traditions. Each section is concluded by the exhortation "Extol the LORD our God." **1:** *The cherubim*, composite animals, form a throne, on which God is

3 Let them praise your great and awesome
name.
Holy is he!
4 Mighty King,[a] lover of justice,
you have established equity;
you have executed justice
and righteousness in Jacob.
5 Extol the LORD our God;
worship at his footstool.
Holy is he!

6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
Samuel also was among those who
called on his name.
They cried to the LORD, and he
answered them.
7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;
they kept his decrees,
and the statutes that he gave them.

8 O LORD our God, you answered them;
you were a forgiving God to them,
but an avenger of their wrongdoings.
9 Extol the LORD our God,
and worship at his holy mountain;
for the LORD our God is holy.

Psalm 100

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the
earth.
2 Worship the LORD with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

3 Know that the LORD is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;[b]
we are his people, and the sheep of his
pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

5 For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 101

Of David. A Psalm.

1 I will sing of loyalty and of justice;
to you, O LORD, I will sing.
2 I will study the way that is blameless.
When shall I attain it?

I will walk with integrity of heart
within my house;
3 I will not set before my eyes
anything that is base.

I hate the work of those who fall away;
it shall not cling to me.
4 Perverseness of heart shall be far from
me;
I will know nothing of evil.

[a] Cn: Heb *And a king's strength*
[b] Another reading is *and not we ourselves*

enthroned; cf. 1 Sam 4.4; Ps 17.8n. **3:** *Holy is he!* The phrase appears again in v. 5 and is expanded climactically in v. 9. **4:** As in the other psalms about God's kingship, the emphasis is on divine justice. Human kings served as a type of supreme court; here God the king takes over this role, but unlike human kings, he adjudicates fairly and impartially. **5:** The *footstool* of the cherubim throne (see v. 1) was the ark of the covenant. **6:** Ancient leaders who mediated God's decrees to Israel. The mention of *Samuel* alongside *Moses and Aaron* is unusual. **7:** *Pillar of cloud,* see Num 11.25; 12.5. **9:** A variant of v. 5, forming a refrain focusing on Jerusalem and the Temple.

Ps 100: A call to the nations to worship the LORD. A hymn echoing the call to the nations in the enthronement psalms (Pss 93; 95–99). There are seven invitations to worship: *make a joyful noise*, *worship*, *come*, *know*, *enter*, *give thanks*, and *bless*. The motives for giving praise are introduced by *that* in v. 3a and *for* in v. 5a. Verses 1–3 and 4–5 are parallel sections, expressing a similar sentiment in different words. The pilgrimage of the nations to Mount Zion is also found in Pss 22.27; 76.11–12; Isa 2.1–4; 60–62; 66.18–23. The Psalter lays great stress on worshiping God with joy. **3:** *Sheep of his pasture,* sheep that the LORD personally pastures, not delegating it to anyone else, similar to Pss 74.1; 79.13; 95.7; Jer 23.1; Ezek 34.31.

Ps 101: Commitment to executing justice. Although not explicitly stated, the psalm was most likely recited by the king, who proclaimed a commitment to rule in a manner befitting his divine patron. Acknowledging the divine *loyalty and justice* (v. 1) that brought him to his throne, the king prays for the strength to fulfill his duties (v. 2ab). He makes twelve promises, being loyal (vv. 2c–4), forbidding abuses by members of the court (v. 5), appointing only God-fearing administrators (v. 6), expelling the wicked (v. 7), and administering a fair judicial

[5] One who secretly slanders a neighbor
I will destroy.
A haughty look and an arrogant heart
I will not tolerate.

[6] I will look with favor on the faithful in the land,
so that they may live with me;
whoever walks in the way that is blameless
shall minister to me.

[7] No one who practices deceit
shall remain in my house;
no one who utters lies
shall continue in my presence.

[8] Morning by morning I will destroy
all the wicked in the land,
cutting off all evildoers
from the city of the LORD.

Psalm 102

A prayer of one afflicted, when faint and pleading before the LORD.

[1] Hear my prayer, O LORD;
let my cry come to you.
[2] Do not hide your face from me
in the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me;
answer me speedily in the day when I call.

[3] For my days pass away like smoke,
and my bones burn like a furnace.
[4] My heart is stricken and withered like grass;
I am too wasted to eat my bread.
[5] Because of my loud groaning
my bones cling to my skin.
[6] I am like an owl of the wilderness,
like a little owl of the waste places.
[7] I lie awake;
I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.
[8] All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who deride me use my name for a curse.
[9] For I eat ashes like bread,
and mingle tears with my drink,
[10] because of your indignation and anger;
for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside.
[11] My days are like an evening shadow;
I wither away like grass.

[12] But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever;
your name endures to all generations.
[13] You will rise up and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to favor it;
the appointed time has come.
[14] For your servants hold its stones dear,
and have pity on its dust.
[15] The nations will fear the name of the LORD,
and all the kings of the earth your glory.
[16] For the LORD will build up Zion;
he will appear in his glory.
[17] He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and will not despise their prayer.

[18] Let this be recorded for a generation to come,
so that a people yet unborn may praise the LORD:

system (v. 8). Underlying the king's vows is the desire to be a good servant and ruler, blessed by his divine patron. **8:** *Morning by morning* (i.e., each morning). Sin was imagined as rampant during the night; justice comes with the morning sun as in Job 38.12–13. Ps 19 also associates the law with the all-seeing sun. *The city of the LORD* is Jerusalem, the royal city.

Ps 102: A plea for the restoration of the psalmist and of Zion. This individual petition blends personal and national complaints into a single prayer. Drawing a contrast between fragile mortal humans (vv. 3–11,23–24b) and the eternal LORD (vv. 12–22,24c–27), the psalm begs for the healing that will win for the LORD the praise of the nations (vv. 15,18–22) and nurture a new generation of Israelite worshipers (v. 28). There are three parallel sections: vv. 1–11: Hear me, for my days swiftly *pass away*; vv. 12–22: When you show *compassion*, all will honor you in your Temple; vv. 23–28: Do not make my short life even briefer, O Eternal One. The mixture of private petition and request for the restoration of Zion may suggest that private prayer is more efficacious if it includes broader, communal requests. **Superscription:** *A prayer of one afflicted, when faint and pleading before the LORD*, suggests that anyone afflicted may recite this prayer. **3–11:** The diverse figures of speech combine to express the psalmist's desperation. **11:** *Like grass,* cf. Ps 90.5–6; Isa 40.6–8. **13:** Implies that this is the *time* to rebuild the

19 that he looked down from his holy height,
from heaven the LORD looked at the earth,
20 to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to set free those who were doomed to die;
21 so that the name of the LORD may be declared in Zion,
and his praise in Jerusalem,
22 when peoples gather together,
and kingdoms, to worship the LORD.

23 He has broken my strength in midcourse;
he has shortened my days.
24 "O my God," I say, "do not take me away at the midpoint of my life,
you whose years endure throughout all generations."

25 Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
26 They will perish, but you endure;
they will all wear out like a garment.
You change them like clothing, and they pass away;
27 but you are the same, and your years have no end.
28 The children of your servants shall live secure;
their offspring shall be established in your presence.

Psalm 103

Of David.

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—
3 who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
5 who satisfies you with good as long as you live[a]
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

6 The LORD works vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
8 The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
10 He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.
13 As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

Temple, which would date the psalm in the early postexilic period (late sixth century BCE). **22:** For the idea of all nations worshiping at the Temple, see Ps 100n.

Ps 103: Praise to the LORD for forgiveness. As Ps 102 combined national and personal complaints into one petition, so Ps 103 blends personal and national benefits into one hymn. The poem draws two distinct parallels: God heals individuals (vv. 1–5) and the nation (vv. 6–14); God summons earthly beings (vv. 15–18) and heavenly beings (vv. 19–22) to give praise. **1–5:** The opening verses match the closing verses (19–22) in length and in the repeated *Bless!* **3–5:** The six blessings are essentially one: the healing of life-threatening forces. The first blessing mentioned, *who forgives all your iniquity*, is the key: God is fundamentally forgiving. *The Pit* is a poetic term for Sheol, the abode of the dead. Having been personally healed, the psalmist hopes that the nation will be similarly healed (vv. 6–14). **5:** *Renewed like the eagle's,* like the vigor that seems to come with the annual molting of the eagle. **8:** Echoes Ex 34.6, when God forgave Israel after their apostasy with the golden calf. The psalm views the events associated with the Exodus more as the forgiveness of Israel rather than the defeat of

14 For he knows how we were made;
he remembers that we are dust.

15 As for mortals, their days are like grass;
they flourish like a flower of the field;
16 for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.
17 But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,
18 to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.

19 The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.
20 Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
obedient to his spoken word.
21 Bless the LORD, all his hosts,
his ministers that do his will.
22 Bless the LORD, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.

Psalm 104

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
2 wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
3 you set the beams of your[a] chambers on the waters,
you make the clouds your[a] chariot,
you ride on the wings of the wind,
4 you make the winds your[a] messengers,
fire and flame your[a] ministers.

5 You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
6 You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
7 At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.
8 They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed for them.
9 You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.

10 You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
11 giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their thirst.
12 By the streams[b] the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.
13 From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

[a] Heb *his*
[b] Heb *By them*

Egypt. **14:** As *dust* (see Gen 2.7), people cannot be judged too harshly, and deserve divine compassion. **15–18:** Even though they are *grass* (see Ps 102.11n.), they receive God's *steadfast love* (Heb "ḥesed") and righteousness.

Ps 104: Praise to the LORD who made the universe beautiful and life-giving. The hymn praises divine wisdom through a series of vignettes (vv. 1–9,10–12,13–18,19–23,24–26), a reflection (vv. 27–30), and a prayer (vv. 31–35). God, luminous and triumphant (vv. 1–4), organizes the primordial waters (vv. 5–18,24–26) and darkness (vv. 19–23) into a harmonious whole that supports life (vv. 27–35). The depiction owes much to the mythology of neighboring cultures: the storm god who vanquishes Sea (vv. 1–18), and the Egyptian sun disk Aten whose rays illuminate the world (vv. 19–30); it also shares language and themes with Job 38–39. Psalms 103 and 104 begin and end similarly, but are very different in theme and tone. **1:** *Honor and majesty* are royal qualities. God is depicted in the psalm as a king who has constructed the superlative building project: the world. **2:** *Stretch out the heavens,* cf. Job 9.8; Isa 40.22; 42.5; Zech 12.1. **4:** Cf. Ps 148.8. **6–9:** The chaotic waters covered even the tops of mountains. God's "rebuke" (v. 7), that is, thunder, threw them into a panic (cf. Job 26.11; Pss 18.15; 76.6). Like panic-stricken soldiers, they retreated in disarray up mountains and down valleys until they arrived at the seashore, their new boundary. Never again will they cover the earth, which, freed of encompassing water, can support life. **9:** Cf. Job 38.8–11; Prov 8.29; Jer 5.22. **13:** See Pss 36.8n.; 65.9.

14 You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,[a]
to bring forth food from the earth,
15 and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart.
16 The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
17 In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has its home in the fir trees.
18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the coneys.
19 You have made the moon to mark the seasons;
the sun knows its time for setting.
20 You make darkness, and it is night,
when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.
21 The young lions roar for their prey,
seeking their food from God.
22 When the sun rises, they withdraw
and lie down in their dens.
23 People go out to their work
and to their labor until the evening.

24 O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.
26 There go the ships,
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

27 These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
28 when you give to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.
29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
30 When you send forth your spirit,[b] they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground.

31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works—
32 who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke.
33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
34 May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the LORD.
35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
and let the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 105

1 O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
2 Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wonderful works.
3 Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

[a] Or *to cultivate*
[b] Or *your breath*

19: See Gen 1.14. **21:** See Job 38.39. **24:** The psalm's key verse, summarizing the wonder of the world. **25:** Presumably the Mediterranean Sea. **26:** *Leviathan,* see Ps 74.14n. **27–30:** The world continues to depend on God. **29–30:** Cf. Gen 1.30; 2.7; 3.19. **31–32:** A prayer that God will continue to act beneficently. *Mountains . . . smoke,* see Ps 144.5. **35:** *Sinners* and *the wicked* destroy the harmony of the world.

Ps 105: Praise of the LORD who has acted wonderfully toward Israel. A hymn praising God's wondrous guidance of Israel, like Pss 135 and 136. It invites the offspring of Abraham and Jacob to praise and seek the LORD (vv. 1–6) who remembers the covenant (vv. 7–11), and then identifies Abraham in the land of Canaan (vv. 12–15; Gen 12–26): Joseph in the land of Egypt (vv. 16–22; Gen 37–47); Israel in Egypt (vv. 23–38; Ex 1–15); and Israel in the wilderness (vv. 39–45; Ex 16–17). In each case the land of Canaan is a symbol of God's generosity and fidelity. In every section after the invitation, a form of the key words "word/promise," "land," and "servant" (named) appear. The promise of land is realized differently in each one of the four periods, depending on where Israel is

4 Seek the LORD and his strength;
seek his presence continually.
5 Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he has uttered,
6 O offspring of his servant Abraham,[a]
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

7 He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
8 He is mindful of his covenant forever,
of the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
9 the covenant that he made with Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
10 which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
11 saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance."

12 When they were few in number,
of little account, and strangers in it,
13 wandering from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another people,
14 he allowed no one to oppress them;
he rebuked kings on their account,
15 saying, "Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm."

16 When he summoned famine against the land,
and broke every staff of bread,
17 he had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
18 His feet were hurt with fetters,
his neck was put in a collar of iron;
19 until what he had said came to pass,
the word of the LORD kept testing him.
20 The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free.
21 He made him lord of his house,
and ruler of all his possessions,
22 to instruct[b] his officials at his pleasure,
and to teach his elders wisdom.

23 Then Israel came to Egypt;
Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.
24 And the LORD made his people very fruitful,
and made them stronger than their foes,
25 whose hearts he then turned to hate his people,
to deal craftily with his servants.

26 He sent his servant Moses,
and Aaron whom he had chosen.
27 They performed his signs among them,
and miracles in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness, and made the land dark;
they rebelled[c] against his words.
29 He turned their waters into blood,
and caused their fish to die.
30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
even in the chambers of their kings.
31 He spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
and gnats throughout their country.
32 He gave them hail for rain,
and lightning that flashed through their land.
33 He struck their vines and fig trees,
and shattered the trees of their country.
34 He spoke, and the locusts came,
and young locusts without number;
35 they devoured all the vegetation in their land,
and ate up the fruit of their ground.
36 He struck down all the firstborn in their land,
the first issue of all their strength.

37 Then he brought Israel[d] out with silver and gold,
and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled.

a Another reading is *Israel* (compare 1 Chr 16.13)
b Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *to bind*
c Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *they did not rebel*
d Heb *them*

and who the servant is. Thus the promise of land is shown to be effective at all times and in all places. **15:** Abraham is called a *prophet* in Gen 20.7; none of the patriarchs is ever called *anointed* (Heb "mashiaḥ"). **18:** This is one of many cases in this psalm where the retelling of the past differs in detail from the narratives in the Torah. **26:** *Aaron* is mentioned in parallelism with *Moses*; cf. Ps 77.20. **27–36:** In terms of number and order, this differs

38 Egypt was glad when they departed,
for dread of them had fallen upon it.
39 He spread a cloud for a covering,
and fire to give light by night.
40 They asked, and he brought quails,
and gave them food from heaven in abundance.
41 He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a river.
42 For he remembered his holy promise,
and Abraham, his servant.

43 So he brought his people out with joy,
his chosen ones with singing.
44 He gave them the lands of the nations,
and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,
45 that they might keep his statutes
and observe his laws.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 106

1 Praise the LORD!
O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.
2 Who can utter the mighty doings of the LORD,
or declare all his praise?
3 Happy are those who observe justice,
who do righteousness at all times.

4 Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people;
help me when you deliver them;
5 that I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
that I may glory in your heritage.

6 Both we and our ancestors have sinned;
we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly.
7 Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt,
did not consider your wonderful works;
they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,
but rebelled against the Most High[a] at the Red Sea.[b]
8 Yet he saved them for his name's sake,
so that he might make known his mighty power.
9 He rebuked the Red Sea,[b] and it became dry;
he led them through the deep as through a desert.
10 So he saved them from the hand of the foe,
and delivered them from the hand of the enemy.
11 The waters covered their adversaries;
not one of them was left.
12 Then they believed his words;
they sang his praise.

13 But they soon forgot his works;
they did not wait for his counsel.
14 But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness,
and put God to the test in the desert;
15 he gave them what they asked,
but sent a wasting disease among them.

16 They were jealous of Moses in the camp,
and of Aaron, the holy one of the LORD.

[a] Cn Compare 78.17, 56: Heb *rebelled at the sea*
[b] Or *Sea of Reeds*

strikingly from the plague narrative in Ex 7–12. **38:** This differs from the account in Ex 14–15 of the Egyptians chasing after the Israelites, and drowning in the Red Sea. **42:** The relation between Israel and its land is permanent and unalterable, predicated on *his holy promise*. **45:** But the gift of the land depends on obedience to God. If written in the exilic period, this psalm would remind the people to return to God so that they might return to the land, and to remind God of his absolute, unalterable promise.

Ps 106: A confession of sin and record of divine forgiveness. A storytelling poem, describing seven occasions of sin and forgiveness (vv. 6–46). Seven seems to symbolize completeness. Each occasion is identified by a place name (noted in italic type): Rebellion and rescue *at the Red Sea* (vv. 6–12; Ex 14–15); testing God *in the desert* (vv. 13–15; Ex 16–17); jealousy of Moses *in the camp* (vv. 16–18; Num 16); the calf *at Horeb* and Moses's intercession (vv. 19–23; Ex 32); refusal to attack from the south and divine threat (vv. 23–27; Num 14), the sin with Baal of *Peor* and Phinehas's intercession (vv. 28–31; Num 25); sin *at the waters of Meribah* (vv. 32–33; Num

17 The earth opened and swallowed up
Dathan,
and covered the faction of Abiram.
18 Fire also broke out in their company;
the flame burned up the wicked.

19 They made a calf at Horeb
and worshiped a cast image.
20 They exchanged the glory of God[a]
for the image of an ox that eats
grass.
21 They forgot God, their Savior,
who had done great things in Egypt,
22 wondrous works in the land of Ham,
and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.[b]
23 Therefore he said he would destroy
them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him,
to turn away his wrath from destroying
them.

24 Then they despised the pleasant land,
having no faith in his promise.
25 They grumbled in their tents,
and did not obey the voice of the LORD.
26 Therefore he raised his hand and swore
to them
that he would make them fall in the
wilderness,
27 and would disperse[c] their descendants
among the nations,
scattering them over the lands.

28 Then they attached themselves to the
Baal of Peor,
and ate sacrifices offered to the dead;
29 they provoked the LORD to anger with
their deeds,
and a plague broke out among them.
30 Then Phinehas stood up and
interceded,
and the plague was stopped.
31 And that has been reckoned to him as
righteousness
from generation to generation forever.

32 They angered the LORD[d] at the waters of
Meribah,
and it went ill with Moses on their
account;
33 for they made his spirit bitter,
and he spoke words that were rash.

34 They did not destroy the peoples,
as the LORD commanded them,
35 but they mingled with the nations
and learned to do as they did.
36 They served their idols,
which became a snare to them.
37 They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons;
38 they poured out innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of
Canaan;
and the land was polluted with blood.
39 Thus they became unclean by their acts,
and prostituted themselves in their
doings.

40 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled
against his people,
and he abhorred his heritage;
41 he gave them into the hand of the
nations,
so that those who hated them ruled
over them.
42 Their enemies oppressed them,
and they were brought into subjection
under their power.

a Compare Gk Mss: Heb *exchanged their glory*
b Or *Sea of Reeds*
c Syr Compare Ezek 20.23: Heb *cause to fall*
d Heb *him*

20); sacrifice of children *in Canaan* (vv. 34–46). The seventh and climactic occasion is complex, for the sin is typical rather than a single act: the sacrifice of infants (vv. 34–39) represents the people's adoption of corrupt native ways. The punishment is also typical, a series of punishments (v. 41) and mercies. In terms of theme (history) and opening (*Praise the LORD*), this psalm is connected to the previous psalm, though its theme and understanding of the Israelite past is quite different from it. The past, presented in cycles of Israelite sin and divine forgiveness, is recounted in order call upon God to forgive again (v. 47). **19:** *Horeb,* an alternate name for Sinai. **22:** *Ham,* see Ps 78.51n. **24:** In other words, they heeded the spies who recommended against fighting the Canaanites. **37–38:** Exile is blamed on child-sacrifice, which made the land ritually impure; see 2 Kings 16.3; 21.6;

43 Many times he delivered them,
but they were rebellious in their purposes,
and were brought low through their iniquity.
44 Nevertheless he regarded their distress
when he heard their cry.
45 For their sake he remembered his covenant,
and showed compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
46 He caused them to be pitied
by all who held them captive.

47 Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.

48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
And let all the people say, "Amen."
Praise the LORD!

BOOK V PSALMS 107-150

Psalm 107

1 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.
2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
those he redeemed from trouble
3 and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.[a]

4 Some wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way to an inhabited town;
5 hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted within them.
6 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress;
7 he led them by a straight way,
until they reached an inhabited town.
8 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
9 For he satisfies the thirsty,
and the hungry he fills with good things.

10 Some sat in darkness and in gloom,
prisoners in misery and in irons,
11 for they had rebelled against the words of God,
and spurned the counsel of the Most High.
12 Their hearts were bowed down with hard labor;
they fell down, with no one to help.
13 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress;
14 he brought them out of darkness and gloom,
and broke their bonds asunder.
15 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
16 For he shatters the doors of bronze,
and cuts in two the bars of iron.

[a] Cn: Heb *sea*

Jer 19.5; Ezek 20.31; 23.37. **47:** A reference to the exile to Babylon in the early sixth century BCE. **48:** Not a part of the psalm but a doxology or blessing concluding Book IV, the fourth of five editorial divisions of the Psalter; see also Pss 41.13; 72.18–19; 89.52; 150.1–6.

Ps 107: Thanksgiving for bringing back the people from exile. This community thanksgiving logically follows the two pleas to end the exile in Pss 105 and 106. Psalm 107 provides four examples of divine deliverance (vv. 4–9; 10–16; 17–22; 23–32), followed by a final section (vv. 33–43) transposing the deliverance of vv. 4–32 into the daily governance of the land. In each panel a danger occurs (vv. 4–5;10–12; 17–18; 23–27), the afflicted cry out to the LORD (vv. 6; 13; 19; 28) who rescues them (vv. 6b–7; 13b–14; 19b–10; 28b–30), prompting them to respond with thanksgiving (vv. 8–9; 15–16; 21–22; 31–32). Verses 1–3 invited the returned exiles to give praise; vv. 4–32 depict the four rescued groups: those hungering and thirsting in the wilderness (vv. 4–9); prisoners (vv. 10–16); the sick (vv. 17–22); those caught in an ocean storm (vv. 23–32); these are all metaphorical for the tribulations of the Babylonian exile of the sixth century BCE, and the difficulties of returning by foot from Babylon. Verses 33–43 describe the LORD's rescue and governance of Israel. **2:** *The redeemed of the LORD,* in its only other biblical occurrence, the inhabitants of restored Zion (Isa 62.12). **11:** The exile was a punishment for Israel's

17 Some were sick[a] through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities endured affliction;
18 they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.
19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress;
20 he sent out his word and healed them,
and delivered them from destruction.
21 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
22 And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices,
and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

23 Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
24 they saw the deeds of the LORD,
his wondrous works in the deep.
25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
26 They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
27 they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
29 he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
30 Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
31 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
32 Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

33 He turns rivers into a desert,
springs of water into thirsty ground,
34 a fruitful land into a salty waste,
because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.
35 He turns a desert into pools of water,
a parched land into springs of water.
36 And there he lets the hungry live,
and they establish a town to live in;
37 they sow fields, and plant vineyards,
and get a fruitful yield.
38 By his blessing they multiply greatly,
and he does not let their cattle decrease.

39 When they are diminished and brought low
through oppression, trouble, and sorrow,
40 he pours contempt on princes
and makes them wander in trackless wastes;
41 but he raises up the needy out of distress,
and makes their families like flocks.
42 The upright see it and are glad;
and all wickedness stops its mouth.
43 Let those who are wise give heed to these things,
and consider the steadfast love of the LORD.

Psalm 108

A Song. A Psalm of David.

1 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;[b]
I will sing and make melody.
Awake, my soul![c]
2 Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn.

[a] Cn: Heb *fools*
[b] Heb Mss Gk Syr: MT lacks *my heart is steadfast*
[c] Compare 57.8: Heb *also my soul*

behavior. **35:** Cf. Isa 41.18; 43.19. **41–42:** Two main themes of psalms: the vindication of the needy, which leads to public recognition of God's greatness. **43:** The *wise* understand that the LORD's *steadfast love* (Heb "ḥesed") allows for periods of tribulation and defeat, but Israel will always be restored.

Ps 108: A prayer for victory. A community petition using material from other psalms; vv. 1–5 appear also in Ps 57.7–11, and vv. 6–13 appear in Ps 60.5–12. For detailed comments, see the annotations to those texts. In vv.

3 I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples,
and I will sing praises to you among the nations.
4 For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens,
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
and let your glory be over all the earth.
6 Give victory with your right hand, and answer me,
so that those whom you love may be rescued.

7 God has promised in his sanctuary:[a]
"With exultation I will divide up Shechem,
and portion out the Vale of Succoth.
8 Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine;
Ephraim is my helmet;
Judah is my scepter.
9 Moab is my washbasin;
on Edom I hurl my shoe;
over Philistia I shout in triumph."

10 Who will bring me to the fortified city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
11 Have you not rejected us, O God?
You do not go out, O God, with our armies.
12 O grant us help against the foe,
for human help is worthless.
13 With God we shall do valiantly;
it is he who will tread down our foes.

Psalm 109

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

1 Do not be silent, O God of my praise.
2 For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me,
speaking against me with lying tongues.
3 They beset me with words of hate,
and attack me without cause.
4 In return for my love they accuse me,
even while I make prayer for them.[b]
5 So they reward me evil for good,
and hatred for my love.

6 They say,[c] "Appoint a wicked man against him;
let an accuser stand on his right.
7 When he is tried, let him be found guilty;
let his prayer be counted as sin.
8 May his days be few;
may another seize his position.
9 May his children be orphans,
and his wife a widow.
10 May his children wander about and beg;
may they be driven out of[d] the ruins they inhabit.
11 May the creditor seize all that he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil.
12 May there be no one to do him a kindness,
nor anyone to pity his orphaned children.
13 May his posterity be cut off;
may his name be blotted out in the second generation.
14 May the iniquity of his father[e] be remembered before the LORD,
and do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out.

[a] Or *by his holiness*
[b] Syr: Heb *I prayer*
[c] Heb lacks *They say*
[d] Gk: Heb *and seek*
[e] Cn: Heb *fathers*

1–6, the psalmist resolves to praise God's love and faithfulness in response, it seems, to the promise of land in the ancient oracle cited in vv. 7–9. In vv. 10–13 the psalmist volunteers to join in the fight that would restore that territory to its rightful owner, the people of Israel.

Ps 109: Prayer for vindication. An urgent petition of an individual accused of exploiting the poor (v. 16) and who has therefore been cursed by enemies (vv. 6–19). Petitioners typically complain to God of their perilous plight; in this case the complaint is in the form of a quotation of the enemies' curses (twelve curses in vv. 6–19). NRSV adds *They* (the enemies) *say* in v. 6a to make clear the psalmist is citing the enemy's curses rather than personally cursing; others understand the curses to be those of the psalmist against his enemies. **6:** The Heb word for accuser, "satan," later was applied to the devil. **14:** Following Ex 34.7 ("visiting the iniquity of the

15 Let them be before the LORD continually,
and may his[a] memory be cut off from the earth.
16 For he did not remember to show kindness,
but pursued the poor and needy
and the brokenhearted to their death.
17 He loved to curse; let curses come on him.
He did not like blessing; may it be far from him.
18 He clothed himself with cursing as his coat,
may it soak into his body like water,
like oil into his bones.
19 May it be like a garment that he wraps around himself,
like a belt that he wears every day."

20 May that be the reward of my accusers from the LORD,
of those who speak evil against my life.
21 But you, O LORD my Lord,
act on my behalf for your name's sake;
because your steadfast love is good, deliver me.
22 For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is pierced within me.
23 I am gone like a shadow at evening;
I am shaken off like a locust.
24 My knees are weak through fasting;
my body has become gaunt.
25 I am an object of scorn to my accusers;
when they see me, they shake their heads.

26 Help me, O LORD my God!
Save me according to your steadfast love.
27 Let them know that this is your hand;
you, O LORD, have done it.
28 Let them curse, but you will bless.
Let my assailants be put to shame;[b] may your servant be glad.
29 May my accusers be clothed with dishonor;
may they be wrapped in their own shame as in a mantle.
30 With my mouth I will give great thanks to the LORD;
I will praise him in the midst of the throng.
31 For he stands at the right hand of the needy,
to save them from those who would condemn them to death.

Psalm 110

Of David. A Psalm.

1 The LORD says to my lord,
"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies your footstool."

2 The LORD sends out from Zion
your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your foes.
3 Your people will offer themselves willingly
on the day you lead your forces
on the holy mountains.[c]
From the womb of the morning,
like dew, your youth[d] will come to you.

[a] Gk: Heb *their*
[b] Gk: Heb *They have risen up and have been put to shame*
[c] Another reading is *in holy splendor*
[d] Cn: Heb *the dew of your youth*

parents upon the children") and other texts, may my enemy be subject to intergenerational punishment. **20:** A prayer that the curses fall on the enemies so as to demonstrate to all that the LORD has vindicated the psalmist; cf. also v. 29. **22:** *I am poor and needy,* far from persecuting the poor as the enemies have asserted (v. 16), the psalmist is personally poor and needy and thus has a claim on God's protection. **28:** For the psalmist, curses—the main theme of the beginning of the psalm—are not automatically effective but depend on God. **31:** *Right hand* links this psalm with the next (see 110.1).

Ps 110: Victory to the Davidic king. A royal psalm in which a court official cites a promise of victory made to the Davidic king in v. 1 and then elaborates the promise in vv. 2–7. Christian interpretation has understood the king's victory as prefiguring Jesus's resurrection and rule over the nations (Acts 2.34; 1 Cor 15.25; Heb 1.3,13). **1–3:** *Sit,* take your throne; *right hand* is the place of honor; *footstool*, victorious kings were depicted with their feet on their defeated foes' necks. **3:** Though very obscure, the general sense is clear: the king will lead the army and

4 The LORD has sworn and will not change
his mind,
"You are a priest forever according to
the order of Melchizedek."[a]

5 The Lord is at your right hand;
he will shatter kings on the day of his
wrath.
6 He will execute judgment among the
nations,
filling them with corpses;
he will shatter heads
over the wide earth.
7 He will drink from the stream by the path;
therefore he will lift up his head.

Psalm 111

1 Praise the LORD!
I will give thanks to the LORD with my
whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the
congregation.
2 Great are the works of the LORD,
studied by all who delight in them.
3 Full of honor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures forever.
4 He has gained renown by his wonderful
deeds;
the LORD is gracious and merciful.
5 He provides food for those who fear him;
he is ever mindful of his covenant.
6 He has shown his people the power of his
works,
in giving them the heritage of the
nations.
7 The works of his hands are faithful and
just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.
8 They are established forever and ever,
to be performed with faithfulness and
uprightness.
9 He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant
forever.
Holy and awesome is his name.
10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of
wisdom;
all those who practice it[b] have a good
understanding.
His praise endures forever.

Psalm 112

1 Praise the LORD!
Happy are those who fear the LORD,
who greatly delight in his
commandments.
2 Their descendants will be mighty in the
land;
the generation of the upright will be
blessed.
3 Wealth and riches are in their houses,
and their righteousness endures
forever.

[a] Or *forever, a rightful king by my edict*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *them*

defeat the LORD's enemies. **4–7:** *Melchizedek,* priest-king of pre-Israelite Jerusalem who greeted Abraham in Gen 14.17–20; the tradition is applied only here to the Davidic king. As elsewhere in the ancient Near East, Israelite kings are sometimes described as exercising priestly duties (e.g., 2 Sam 6.13–14; 8.18; 1 Kings 3.4). **7:** Obscure, possibly referring to a ritual of the warrior returning from victory.

Ps 111: Hymn to God's great deeds. Like the immediately following Ps 112 with which it is paired, Ps 111 is a twenty-two line poem in which each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Ps 111 praises the righteousness of the LORD, and Ps 112, the righteousness of a person living in accord with divine righteousness. **5:** *Food* may refer to the manna and quail that God provided in the wilderness (see Ex 16; Num 11; Ps 105.40). **7:** The verse is the transition from admiring the divine deeds (v. 2b) to imitating the God who did them (v. 10). **10:** *Fear of the LORD* (best rendered "revering the LORD"): see Ps 19.9; Prov 1.7; 9.10; etc.

Ps 112: Blessings on those who treasure God's acts and give to the poor. An instruction in acrostic form (see Pss 9–10n.) and a companion piece to Psalm 111, depicting the righteous person as one who ponders God's works (cf. Ps 111.2) and puts into practice God's precepts (cf. Ps 111.7). Just as Ps 111 praised the righteousness of the LORD, so Ps 112 praises the righteousness of a person living in accord with divine righteousness. The virtue singled out is mercy shown in giving to the poor (vv. 4,5,9). Paradoxically, generous givers do not deprive their children of an inheritance (vv. 2–3) nor suffer the shame that comes with poverty (vv. 6,8,10), for the LORD will recompense them. This psalm and Prov 19.17 influenced Jewish and Christian views of almsgiving (e.g., Dan 4.24; Matt 6.12). The refrains in v. 3b and 9b unify the poem. **1:** *Fear the LORD,* see Ps 110.10n. **3:** *And their righteous-*

4 They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.
5 It is well with those who deal generously and lend,
who conduct their affairs with justice.
6 For the righteous will never be moved;
they will be remembered forever.
7 They are not afraid of evil tidings;
their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.
8 Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.
9 They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn is exalted in honor.
10 The wicked see it and are angry;
they gnash their teeth and melt away;
the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

Psalm 113

1 Praise the LORD!
Praise, O servants of the LORD;
praise the name of the LORD.

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD
from this time on and forevermore.
3 From the rising of the sun to its setting
the name of the LORD is to be praised.
4 The LORD is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.
5 Who is like the LORD our God,
who is seated on high,
6 who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?
7 He raises the poor from the dust,
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
8 to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.
9 He gives the barren woman a home,
making her the joyous mother of children.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 114

1 When Israel went out from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
2 Judah became God's[a] sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.

3 The sea looked and fled;
Jordan turned back.
4 The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs.

5 Why is it, O sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you turn back?
6 O mountains, that you skip like rams?
O hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the LORD,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,

[a] Heb *his*

ness endures forever helps to join this psalm to Ps 111; see 111.3. **9:** *Horn,* a metaphor for strength.

Ps 113: A hymn to the God who lifts up the poor. Like other hymns, this one opens and closes with a call to praise, and specifically names those called to praise ("servants of the LORD," v. 1). Ps 113 concludes the three Hallelujah psalms (Pss 111–113) and begins the "Egyptian Hallel" (Heb "praise") psalms (113–118) sung at major Jewish festivals even though the Psalter does not suggest that they are a collection. Many scholars think that Pss 113–114 were sung before the Passover meal and Pss 115–118 after it. Images of "high" and "low" unify the psalm. **1:** It is uncertain if the *servants of the LORD* refers to all worshipers, or is a technical term for a specific group in the Temple. *The name* represents the person, here the LORD who rules earth and heaven (vv. 2–4). In some late biblical and in postbiblical texts, the *name* of God was used as a surrogate for God. **5–6:** A rhetorical question expecting the answer "No one." **7–9:** Two typical examples of divine ruling: enabling a *poor* man to sit with honor among the village elders, and giving a *barren woman* a child; cf. 1 Sam 2.4–8.

Ps 114: The wonder of the Exodus. A psalm with hymnlike features, celebrating the Exodus from Egypt and entry into the land. An apt Hallel psalm (Pss 113–118) with standard synonymous parallelism and internal repetition (vv. 3–4; 5–6). **1–4:** Somewhat abruptly, the psalm describes Israel leaving Egypt, passing through the sea (see Ex 14–15) to a safe land. Telescoping events, this poem has the people cross from Egypt over the Jordan directly into Canaan. **3:** *The sea* is parallel to *Jordan* and is personified as a defeated warrior (cf. Pss 77.16; 104.7).

[8] who turns the rock into a pool
of water,
the flint into a spring of water.

Psalm 115

[1] Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your
name give glory,
for the sake of your steadfast love and
your faithfulness.
[2] Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"

[3] Our God is in the heavens;
he does whatever he pleases.
[4] Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
[5] They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.
[6] They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
[7] They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
they make no sound in their throats.
[8] Those who make them are like them;
so are all who trust in them.

[9] O Israel, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their shield.
[10] O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their shield.
[11] You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their shield.

[12] The LORD has been mindful of us; he will
bless us;
he will bless the house of Israel;
he will bless the house of Aaron;
[13] he will bless those who fear the LORD,
both small and great.

[14] May the LORD give you increase,
both you and your children.
[15] May you be blessed by the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

[16] The heavens are the LORD's heavens,
but the earth he has given to human
beings.
[17] The dead do not praise the LORD,
nor do any that go down into silence.
[18] But we will bless the LORD
from this time on and forevermore.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 116

[1] I love the LORD, because he has heard
my voice and my supplications.
[2] Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I
live.

The LORD taunts sea and mountains as they tremble and flee (Ps 96.9; Deut 2.25). **8:** Possibly a reference to God providing water in the wilderness from a *rock* as in Ps 78.15,20; Ex 17.6; Num 20.11.

Ps 115: Show forth your glory to the nations. A community petition that the LORD in the heavens (v. 3), too powerful to be contained in earthly statues (vv. 4–8), might display his glory on earth and enable Israel to live in trust (vv. 9–18). **1:** *Not to us,* better, "Not for our sake, O LORD, not for our sake, but for the sake of your name display your glory." The Heb phrase, lit., "to give glory," actually means "display glory" as in Ezek 39.21. **2:** Enemies taunt that Israel's God is powerless. **3–8:** There are two contrasts: (1) between our God (singular) in the heavens and their gods (images, plural) on earth; (2) between God who acts and the gods who cannot. **3:** *Our God is in the heavens,* a bold response to the taunt *Where is their God?* (v. 2). Ridicule of divine images is common in exilic texts and later (e.g., Jer 10.1–16; Isa 40.18–20; 41.6–7; Bel; Let Jer). **9:** Those who trust in images will be frustrated (v. 8) while those who *trust in the LORD* will find a *help* and *shield* (vv. 9–11). **10:** *House of Aaron,* the priests, who claimed Aaron as their ancestor. **12–13:** The psalmist turns to God, asking for a blessing on the same three groups who were just exhorted (vv. 10–11) to trust in the LORD. **15:** *Who made heaven and earth,* see Ps 124.8n. **17:** According to the biblical worldview, all who died went down to Sheol, the underworld, where all was quiet; the dead could thus be called those *that go down into silence*. See also Ps 6.5n.

Ps 116: Thanksgiving to a saving God. An individual thanksgiving for having found a saving God rather than for a particular rescue. The psalmist is grateful that God is attentive (vv. 1–2) and merciful (vv. 5–6), and resolves to respond by acts of trust (vv. 7,9–11) and worship (vv. 12–19). There seem to be four sections: the rescue and the resulting relationship (vv. 1–4); the nature of God revealed by the rescue and the psalmist's response (vv. 5–8); resolve to live as a trusting client of the divine patron (vv. 9–11); resolve to offer appropriate ritual thanks (vv. 12–19). **1:** *I love the LORD,* in the sense of choose (Prov 12.1; 20.13; Isa 41.8); the Hebrew reads "I love that the

3 The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
4 Then I called on the name of the
LORD:
"O LORD, I pray, save my life!"

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
our God is merciful.
6 The LORD protects the simple;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
7 Return, O my soul, to your rest,
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with
you.

8 For you have delivered my soul from
death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling.
9 I walk before the LORD
in the land of the living.
10 I kept my faith, even when I said,
"I am greatly afflicted";
11 I said in my consternation,
"Everyone is a liar."

12 What shall I return to the LORD
for all his bounty to me?
13 I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD,
14 I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.
15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his faithful ones.
16 O LORD, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your
serving girl.
You have loosed my bonds.
17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the LORD.
18 I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people,
19 in the courts of the house of the LORD,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 117

1 Praise the LORD, all you nations!
Extol him, all you peoples!
2 For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD
endures forever.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 118

1 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!

2 Let Israel say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."
3 Let the house of Aaron say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."
4 Let those who fear the LORD say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."

5 Out of my distress I called on the LORD;
the LORD answered me and set me in a
broad place.
6 With the LORD on my side I do not fear.
What can mortals do to me?

LORD has heard. . . ." **3:** *Sheol,* the underworld, the abode of the dead. **6:** *Soul* refers to breathing or life-force. **13:** *Cup of salvation,* a drink offering poured out in thanksgiving. **14:** A person in a precarious situation could make a vow that would be fulfilled upon being saved. **15:** *Precious,* in the sense of "too precious, too costly" as in Ps 72.14, i.e., grievous in the LORD's sight. **17–18:** When in distress, the psalmist *vow*ed to offer *a thanksgiving sacrifice*.

Ps 117: Invitation to the nations to worship. This psalm, the Bible's shortest, is a hymn with an invitatory phrase repeated in the last verse; it gives the motive for praise—the LORD's steadfast love and faithfulness toward Israel—which is introduced by *for* (v. 2a). Israel is a showcase for the LORD's generosity and care.

Ps 118: Giving thanks in a solemn procession. A thanksgiving for a victory, spoken in the first person, possibly by the king speaking for the people. The salvation is described twice, in vv. 5–9 as a transfer from a tight spot ("my distress") to *a broad place* (v. 5), and in vv. 10–18 as a rescue from hostile nations. In vv. 10–18, we are to imagine a procession entering the Temple precincts, the leader asking for admittance (v. 19) and an officiant stating the qualifications necessary for entering (v. 20). In v. 21, the speaker, having arrived within the Temple, gives fresh thanks, and in vv. 22–27 the congregation takes up the praise. The final verse repeats the beginning, forming an inclusio. **1–4:** *His steadfast love,* a covenant term (Heb "ḥesed"); the speaker gives thanks for the LORD's fidelity to past promises of protection. **5:** *Distress,* lit., "restricted place."

7 The LORD is on my side to help me;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.
8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to put confidence in mortals.
9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to put confidence in princes.

10 All nations surrounded me;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!
11 They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!
12 They surrounded me like bees;
they blazed[a] like a fire of thorns;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!
13 I was pushed hard,[b] so that I was falling,
but the LORD helped me.
14 The LORD is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

15 There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:
"The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;
16 the right hand of the LORD is exalted;
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly."
17 I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.
18 The LORD has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

20 This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.

21 I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

22 The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
23 This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
24 This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.[c]
25 Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!
O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.[d]
We bless you from the house of the LORD.
27 The LORD is God,
and he has given us light.
Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.[e]

28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God, I will extol you.

29 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

Psalm 119

1 Happy are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD.
2 Happy are those who keep his decrees,
who seek him with their whole heart,
3 who also do no wrong,
but walk in his ways.

[a] Gk: Heb *were extinguished*
[b] Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *You pushed me hard*
[c] Or *in him*
[d] Or *Blessed in the name of the LORD is the one who comes*
[e] Meaning of Heb uncertain

12: *Bees,* a metaphor for enemies as in Deut 1.44. **14:** Copied from Ex 15.2. **22:** The unsuitable *stone* becomes the keystone at the top of the gate (v. 20); such a transformation from low to high is a sign of divine intervention (v. 23). **27:** *Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar* was probably a ritual instruction that accidentally became part of the psalm. The horns were four projections at the corners of the altar.

Ps 119: The grandeur and the necessity of divine teaching. An individual petition that the LORD's teaching (Heb "torah," NRSV "law") guide one's every moment: in danger and discouragement, in joy and exultation. The psalm is an elaborate acrostic (see Ps 9–10n.). Each of the twenty-two stanzas begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each stanza has eight verses and (usually) eight synonyms of "law," more accurately "authoritative teaching": "law," "word," "promise(s)," "ordinances," "statutes," "commandments," "decrees," and "precepts." Though for the most part synonymous in this psalm, each term may retain its own shade of

4 You have commanded your precepts
to be kept diligently.
5 O that my ways may be steadfast
in keeping your statutes!
6 Then I shall not be put to shame,
having my eyes fixed on all your
commandments.
7 I will praise you with an upright heart,
when I learn your righteous
ordinances.
8 I will observe your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me.

9 How can young people keep their way
pure?
By guarding it according to your
word.
10 With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your
commandments.
11 I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin against you.
12 Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes.
13 With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your mouth.
14 I delight in the way of your decrees
as much as in all riches.
15 I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

17 Deal bountifully with your servant,
so that I may live and observe your
word.
18 Open my eyes, so that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.
19 I live as an alien in the land;
do not hide your commandments from
me.
20 My soul is consumed with longing
for your ordinances at all times.
21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your
commandments;
22 take away from me their scorn and
contempt,
for I have kept your decrees.
23 Even though princes sit plotting against
me,
your servant will meditate on your
statutes.
24 Your decrees are my delight,
they are my counselors.

25 My soul clings to the dust;
revive me according to your word.
26 When I told of my ways, you answered
me;
teach me your statutes.
27 Make me understand the way of your
precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous
works.

meaning: illumination ("law," "word"), moral demand ("ordinances," "statutes," "commandments"), guidance ("decrees, precepts"), and promise ("promise"). The psalm presumes that human life involves continual conflict with evil, with definitive victory lying only in the future. The major weapon in the battle is the divine word, for its observance trains the passions, gives strength in temptation, and elevates the mind to God. The psalm is a petition, as seen in its multiple imperatives, as in v. 149. Often petitions and references to "torah," the two main themes, are combined in a single verse, as in v. 173. Yet, even after reading the entire psalm, it is uncertain exactly what "torah" means: if it refers to the law of Moses, it is odd that there is no mention of him or of Sinai.

Ps 119 is not connected to a specific situation. Relying on poetic art alone—acrostic form, interplay of synonyms of torah, and great length—the psalm is one long petition to live one's entire life in accord with God's word. The psalmist is portrayed as longing for God's word, wearied from not having it, nourished by it, stirred by the prospect of the life it contains. As if to underline the importance of key concepts, the Heb word for God's "steadfast love" ("ḥesed") occurs seven times, and the word for "servant" occurs twice-times seven—fourteen times. Seven often indicates completeness, rightness.

This is the longest chapter in the Bible, and is innovative in the manner that it refers to the Torah with words typically used of God, such as "love" (e.g., vv. 47,97), "truth" (v. 142), and "true" (v. 151). This reflects the growing importance of the Torah in the postexilic period, and anticipates the idea that the Torah is a stand-in for God, who is no longer regarded as imminent. **1:** *Law,* Heb "torah," better translated as "teaching" that is authoritative because of divine origin. **19:** *Alien,* see 39.12n. **84:** *How long,* see Ps 13.1n. **103:** Cf. Ps 19.10; Jer 15.16; Ezek 3.3. **135:** *Shine,* see Num 6.24–26.

28 My soul melts away for sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word.
29 Put false ways far from me;
and graciously teach me your law.
30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your ordinances before me.
31 I cling to your decrees, O Lord;
let me not be put to shame.
32 I run the way of your commandments,
for you enlarge my understanding.

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.
34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.
35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.
36 Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.
37 Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.
38 Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
39 Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your ordinances are good.
40 See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life.

41 Let your steadfast love come to me, O Lord,
your salvation according to your promise.
42 Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.
43 Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your ordinances.
44 I will keep your law continually,
forever and ever.
45 I shall walk at liberty,
for I have sought your precepts.
46 I will also speak of your decrees before kings,
and shall not be put to shame;
47 I find my delight in your commandments,
because I love them.
48 I revere your commandments, which I love,
and I will meditate on your statutes.

49 Remember your word to your servant,
in which you have made me hope.
50 This is my comfort in my distress,
that your promise gives me life.
51 The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from your law.
52 When I think of your ordinances from of old,
I take comfort, O Lord.
53 Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,
those who forsake your law.
54 Your statutes have been my songs
wherever I make my home.
55 I remember your name in the night, O Lord,
and keep your law.
56 This blessing has fallen to me,
for I have kept your precepts.

57 The Lord is my portion;
I promise to keep your words.
58 I implore your favor with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
59 When I think of your ways,
I turn my feet to your decrees;
60 I hurry and do not delay
to keep your commandments.
61 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me,
I do not forget your law.
62 At midnight I rise to praise you,
because of your righteous ordinances.
63 I am a companion of all who fear you,
of those who keep your precepts.
64 The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love;
teach me your statutes.

65 You have dealt well with your servant,
O Lord, according to your word.
66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
for I believe in your commandments.
67 Before I was humbled I went astray,
but now I keep your word.

68 You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.
69 The arrogant smear me with lies,
but with my whole heart I keep your precepts.
70 Their hearts are fat and gross,
but I delight in your law.
71 It is good for me that I was humbled,
so that I might learn your statutes.
72 The law of your mouth is better to me
than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

73 Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.
74 Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.
75 I know, O LORD, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.
76 Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your servant.
77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.
78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.
79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.
80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
so that I may not be put to shame.

81 My soul languishes for your salvation;
I hope in your word.
82 My eyes fail with watching for your promise;
I ask, "When will you comfort me?"
83 For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your statutes.
84 How long must your servant endure?
When will you judge those who persecute me?

85 The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me;
they flout your law.
86 All your commandments are enduring;
I am persecuted without cause; help me!
87 They have almost made an end of me on earth;
but I have not forsaken your precepts.
88 In your steadfast love spare my life,
so that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.

89 The LORD exists forever;
your word is firmly fixed in heaven.
90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations;
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
91 By your appointment they stand today,
for all things are your servants.
92 If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my misery.
93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given me life.
94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your precepts.
95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
but I consider your decrees.
96 I have seen a limit to all perfection,
but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

97 Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.
100 I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.
101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
102 I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.
103 How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
104 Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way.

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.
107 I am severely afflicted;
give me life, O LORD, according to your word.
108 Accept my offerings of praise, O LORD,
and teach me your ordinances.
109 I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
111 Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.

113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.
114 You are my hiding place and my shield;
I hope in your word.
115 Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commandments of my God.
116 Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live,
and let me not be put to shame in my hope.
117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your statutes continually.
118 You spurn all who go astray from your statutes;
for their cunning is in vain.
119 All the wicked of the earth you count as dross;
therefore I love your decrees.
120 My flesh trembles for fear of you,
and I am afraid of your judgments.

121 I have done what is just and right;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
122 Guarantee your servant's well-being;
do not let the godless oppress me.
123 My eyes fail from watching for your salvation,
and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.
124 Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love,
and teach me your statutes.
125 I am your servant; give me understanding,
so that I may know your decrees.
126 It is time for the LORD to act,
for your law has been broken.
127 Truly I love your commandments
more than gold, more than fine gold.
128 Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts;[a]
I hate every false way.

129 Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
130 The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
131 With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your commandments.
132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your custom toward those who love your name.
133 Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.
134 Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.
135 Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.
136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your law is not kept.

137 You are righteous, O LORD,
and your judgments are right.
138 You have appointed your decrees in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
139 My zeal consumes me
because my foes forget your words.
140 Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.
141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your precepts.
142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and your law is the truth.
143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me,
but your commandments are my delight.

[a] Gk Jerome: Meaning of Heb uncertain

144 Your decrees are righteous forever;
give me understanding that I may live.

145 With my whole heart I cry; answer me,
O LORD.
I will keep your statutes.
146 I cry to you; save me,
that I may observe your decrees.
147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I put my hope in your words.
148 My eyes are awake before each watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your promise.
149 In your steadfast love hear my voice;
O LORD, in your justice preserve my life.
150 Those who persecute me with evil purpose draw near;
they are far from your law.
151 Yet you are near, O LORD,
and all your commandments are true.
152 Long ago I learned from your decrees
that you have established them forever.

153 Look on my misery and rescue me,
for I do not forget your law.
154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your promise.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your statutes.
156 Great is your mercy, O LORD;
give me life according to your justice.
157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your decrees.
158 I look at the faithless with disgust,
because they do not keep your commands.
159 Consider how I love your precepts;
preserve my life according to your steadfast love.
160 The sum of your word is truth;
and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever.

161 Princes persecute me without cause,
but my heart stands in awe of your words.
162 I rejoice at your word
like one who finds great spoil.
163 I hate and abhor falsehood,
but I love your law.
164 Seven times a day I praise you
for your righteous ordinances.
165 Great peace have those who love your law;
nothing can make them stumble.
166 I hope for your salvation, O LORD,
and I fulfill your commandments.
167 My soul keeps your decrees;
I love them exceedingly.
168 I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

169 Let my cry come before you, O LORD;
give me understanding according to your word.
170 Let my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.
171 My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your statutes.
172 My tongue will sing of your promise,
for all your commandments are right.
173 Let your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
174 I long for your salvation, O LORD,
and your law is my delight.
175 Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances help me.
176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek out your servant,
for I do not forget your commandments.

Psalm 120

A Song of Ascents.

1 In my distress I cry to the LORD,
that he may answer me:
2 "Deliver me, O LORD,
from lying lips,
from a deceitful tongue."

3 What shall be given to you?
And what more shall be done to you,
you deceitful tongue?

Ps 120: Prayer for rescue from slanderers. This is the first of the collection of Songs of Ascents, Pss 120–134. The meaning of this superscription is debated; it may refer to the steplike parallelism in many of the poems (e.g., Ps 127.1: "unless the LORD builds the house . . . unless the LORD guards the city"), or to songs sung while going up or ascending to Jerusalem for pilgrimage. This psalm is an individual petition with the expected petitions for the punishment of enemies (vv. 3–4) and complaints (vv. 2–3,5–7), though without a statement of hope. The

4 A warrior's sharp arrows,
with glowing coals of the broom tree!

5 Woe is me, that I am an alien in
Meshech,
that I must live among the tents of
Kedar.
6 Too long have I had my dwelling
among those who hate peace.
7 I am for peace;
but when I speak,
they are for war.

Psalm 121

A Song of Ascents.

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
2 My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

3 He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
4 He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right
hand.
6 The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
8 The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

Psalm 122

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

1 I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD!"
2 Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together.
4 To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of
the LORD.
5 For there the thrones for judgment were
set up,
the thrones of the house of David.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who love you.
7 Peace be within your walls,
and security within your towers."
8 For the sake of my relatives and friends
I will say, "Peace be within you."

two complaints—slanderous attacks (vv. 2–4) and unwilling exile in a hostile country far from Jerusalem (vv. 5–7)—tell the same story with two metaphor systems (tongues as weapons, being in a distant, hostile land). Reputation, a community, and a home—all these have been taken from the psalmist. Others' words have become weapons (vv. 2–3,7) and the only rescue the psalmist can imagine is retaliation in military terms (vv. 3–4). **4:** *Broom,* a desert shrub. **5:** *Meshech . . . Kedar,* places far from Jerusalem in southern Asia Minor (see Ezek 38.2), and northern Arabia (Isa 21.13–17), symbolizing distance.

Ps 121: Confidence in God's care. A declaration of trust shaped by tight, steplike parallelism: "not slumber" links vv. 3–4; "keep" links vv. 3–5 and 7–8. "Coming" in v. 8 echoes "come" in v. 1, concluding the poem. Perhaps this was recited by a traveler, even a pilgrim to Zion who asks anxiously about God's protection, which is answered in v. 2; the answer is then is expanded upon by a priest conscious that the LORD dwells in Zion (vv. 3–8). God's careful protection is the dominant image; the LORD guides one's steps and does not slumber even when people sleep. **Superscription:** *Song of Ascents,* see Ps 120n. **1:** *Hills,* probably those around Jerusalem. **2:** *Who made heaven and earth,* see Ps 124.8n. **4:** *Slumber, sleep,* cf. Ps 44.3n. **5:** *The LORD is your keeper,* the exact center of the poem.

Ps 122: Longing to go to Zion and a prayer for its peace. A song of Zion celebrating the sacred city for its beautiful buildings (v. 3), worship in common (v. 4), and just legal decisions (v. 5). A pilgrim, awed by these features, concludes with a prayer for the welfare of the city (vv. 6–9). **Superscription:** *Song of Ascents,* see Ps 120n. **1:** *Go up,* Passover, Weeks (Pentecost), and Tabernacles were pilgrimage festivals, requiring heads of households to travel to Jerusalem (Ex 23.17; 34.23; Deut 16.16). *The house of the LORD,* the Temple (also v. 9). **5:** *Thrones of judgment,* Jerusalem was the city of the Davidic king; *judgment* can refer to legal decisions as well as to ordinary governance. **6–7:** The other pilgrims are probably being addressed here. **6:** *Pray for the peace of*

9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your good.

Psalm 123

A Song of Ascents.

1 To you I lift up my eyes,
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!
2 As the eyes of servants
look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a maid
to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the LORD our God,
until he has mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us,
for we have had more than enough of contempt.
4 Our soul has had more than its fill
of the scorn of those who are at ease,
of the contempt of the proud.

Psalm 124

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

1 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side
—let Israel now say—
2 if it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
when our enemies attacked us,
3 then they would have swallowed us up alive,
when their anger was kindled against us;
4 then the flood would have swept us away,
the torrent would have gone over us;
5 then over us would have gone
the raging waters.

6 Blessed be the LORD,
who has not given us
as prey to their teeth.
7 We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken,
and we have escaped.

8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 125

A Song of Ascents.

1 Those who trust in the LORD are like
Mount Zion,

Jerusalem, alliterative in Hebrew ("sha'alu shelom yerushalaim"). **9:** The concluding reference to *the house of the LORD* forms an inclusio with v. 1, emphasizing that it is the presence of God in the Temple that makes Jerusalem such a significant and holy city.

Ps 123: A plea for divine mercy. A community petition, perhaps composed in the Second Temple period when the nation felt the indignity (v. 3) of being a small state in the vast Persian empire. Feeling like a powerless slave (NRSV "servant," v. 2), the community speaker ("I" in v. 1) feels constricted, repeating a plea for divine mercy three times. The psalmist continues to hope, nonetheless, for the prayer is directed to the divine king "enthroned in the heavens" (v. 1). **Superscription:** *Song of Ascents,* see Ps 120n. **2:** *The eyes of a servant,* the metaphor of looking expectantly to the LORD is developed through servants looking at their masters; contrasts are maximized—male and female, plural and singular—to express completeness: all look to you. Female images of God are very rare in the Bible (e.g., Isa 49.14–16), especially in Psalms, making the comparison of God to *mistress* noteworthy.

Ps 124: Giving thanks after a narrow escape. A community thanksgiving notable for its simple theme: give thanks for we would have died if the LORD had not rescued us. The simple theme is mirrored by a simple structure: the first two verses begin "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side" and the next three begin with "then" followed by a complex step-parallelism. Such step-parallelism, common in the Songs of Ascents (see Ps 120n.), adds drama and movement. **1:** *Let Israel now say,* the singer provides the community with the proper words to express their intense relief and gratitude. **3–5:** The metaphors of devouring beasts and waters flooding the earth are used for the enemies. **7:** A totally different metaphor for the rescued nation: a *bird* flying upward to freedom from a broken trap, a perfect symbol of miraculous deliverance. **8:** *Who made heaven and earth,* a frequent postexilic epithet for God (see also Pss 115.15; 121.2; 146.6); here it emphasizes that God the powerful creator can still help Israel.

Ps 125: Prayer for Zion's purification from evildoers. A Zion song that, unlike most other such songs, prays that sinners be removed from its midst (vv. 4–5). Examples of such purifying judgments are Isa 1.21–28; 65; Zeph

which cannot be moved, but abides
forever.
2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people,
from this time on and forevermore.
3 For the scepter of wickedness shall not
rest
on the land allotted to the righteous,
so that the righteous might not stretch out
their hands to do wrong.
4 Do good, O LORD, to those who are good,
and to those who are upright in their
hearts.
5 But those who turn aside to their own
crooked ways
the LORD will lead away with evildoers.
Peace be upon Israel!

Psalm 126

A Song of Ascents.
1 When the LORD restored the fortunes of
Zion,[a]
we were like those who dream.
2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great things for
them."
3 The LORD has done great things
for us,
and we rejoiced.

4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses in the
Negeb.
5 May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
6 Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Psalm 127

A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.
1 Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the LORD guards the city,
the guard keeps watch in vain.
2 It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,

[a] Or *brought back those who returned to Zion*

3.11–13. Like other Songs of Ascents (Pss 122; 123; 124; 126; see Ps 120n.), Ps 125 has an opening statement (vv. 1–3) followed by a prayer (vv. 4–5). **2:** *The mountains,* the hills surrounding Jerusalem are an apt symbol of the powerful and ever-present LORD in Zion. **3:** A *scepter* wielded by an unjust ruler cannot *rest* (figuratively) on the land given to the righteous lest they be led to do wrong. **4:** Justice means upholding the righteous as well as punishing the wicked. **5:** *Peace be upon Israel!* is repeated later in this collection, in Ps 128.6.

Ps 126: A prayer for the return of all the exiles. A community prayer for the return of all exiles and the restoration of Israel. Like other Songs of Ascents (Pss 122–125; see 120n.), it has an opening statement (vv. 1–3) developed into a prayer (vv. 4–5). It also is characterized by step-parallelism: "restore the fortunes," "then," "the LORD has done great things," "shouts of joy," and the verb "bearing/carrying." The psalmist regards the return of the exiles from Babylon, where they had been deported in the early sixth century BCE, as a past event, yet prays for the return of all in the spirit of grand promises such as Isa 49. The book of Ezra suggests that in fact few returned from Babylon, the return was a disappointment, and the hyperbolic prophecies of Isa 40–55 were not fulfilled. **4:** *Restore our fortunes,* picks up "restored the fortunes" (v. 1) and prays for its completion. *The watercourses of the Negeb,* valleys in the arid south, dry except when a rare rainstorm creates torrents sweeping away all in their path, a bold metaphor for sudden transformation of infertile land. The metaphor is ironic, since such watercourses are destructive, yet it sets the stage for the positive water and agricultural imagery in the following verses.

Ps 127: An instruction and prayer for the house. This psalm does not fit the usual categories. It is a declaration that one of God's greatest blessings is children (in that culture, sons), and through its use of that theme, is a companion piece to Ps 128. Step-parallelism highlights the words *unless*, *in vain,* and *sons.* Hebrew wordplay unites vv. 1–2 and 3–5: "builds" ("yibneh") and ("bonaw") in v. 1, and "sons" ("banim") in vv. 3–4. Those same *sons* will protect the family head when he confronts enemies in the city gate, thereby linking v. 4 and v. 1cd (*guards the city*). **Superscription:** *Song of Ascents,* see Ps 120n. Since it deals with house building, and the Temple is often called "the house of the LORD," the psalm is ascribed to King Solomon (see Ps 72n.), who built the First Temple (see also v. 2n.). **1:** *House,* can refer both to the Temple and to the dynasty, as well as to a household. **2:** *Beloved* (Heb "yedid")

eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives sleep to his beloved.[a]

3 Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons of one's youth.
5 Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128

A Song of Ascents.

1 Happy is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways.
2 You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots around your table.
4 Thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the LORD.
5 The LORD bless you from Zion.
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.
6 May you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!

Psalm 129

A Song of Ascents.

1 "Often have they attacked me from my youth"
—let Israel now say—
2 "often have they attacked me from my youth,
yet they have not prevailed against me.
3 The plowers plowed on my back;
they made their furrows long."
4 The LORD is righteous;
he has cut the cords of the wicked.
5 May all who hate Zion
be put to shame and turned backward.
6 Let them be like the grass on the housetops
that withers before it grows up,
7 with which reapers do not fill their hands
or binders of sheaves their arms,
8 while those who pass by do not say,
"The blessing of the LORD be upon you!
We bless you in the name of the LORD!"

[a] Or *for he provides for his beloved during sleep*

recalls Solomon's birth name Jedidiah (Heb "yedidyah," 2 Sam 12.25). **3–5:** Asserting the uselessness of human effort alone to build a house and protect the city (vv. 1–2), vv. 3–5 declare that it is through sons that the LORD builds a house(hold) and protects the community. *The gate* was the setting for legal and commercial transactions; see, e.g., Ruth 4.1–12; Prov 30.23,31.

Ps 128: The blessings of the man who fears God. A companion piece to Ps 127, declaring that he "who fears the LORD" (v. 1) will flourish in his family (v. 3), national, and religious life (vv. 5–6). The three spheres were closely related, for the father was paterfamilias of the house, the king was paterfamilias of the house of Israel, and the LORD functioned as the patrimonial lord to whom Israel was bound through covenant. Correspondingly, the blessings include family (fruitful wife, many children), nation (prosperity of Jerusalem, seat of the dynasty), and God (font of blessings). Like several Songs of Ascents (see Ps 120n.), the poem has two parts: a statement of trust (vv. 1–4) and a prayer that builds on the statement (vv. 5–6). **1:** *Happy,* the result of a quality possessed or a choice made. **3:** The verse both expresses and reinforces the status of the father as head of the household. **6:** *Peace be upon Israel!* see Ps 125.5n.

Ps 129: Prayer against Zion's enemies. A community petition that the LORD punish those who have persecuted Israel. As often in Songs of Ascents (see Ps 120n.), step-parallelism highlights key phrases, *often have they attacked me from my youth* and *blessing/bless.* The complaint is not so much of present suffering but of relentless, unending sufferings *from my youth* (vv. 1,2), perhaps referring to Egyptian bondage (cf. Hos 2.15; Jer 2.2; Ezek 23.3). **3:** *Plowed on my back,* perhaps echoing Isa 51.23, which quotes Israel's tormentors in the exile. Thus the psalmist complains about the sufferings of being the LORD's people in the world, selecting two typical instances of suffering, one from the Exodus (vv. 1,2) and the other from the sixth-century BCE exile (v. 3). **6:** *Grass on the housetops,* weeds growing on mud-plastered roofs; cf. 2 Kings 19.26; Isa 37.27. **8:** Likely a standard blessing formula used in the postexilic period.

Psalm 130

A Song of Ascents.

[1] Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.
[2] Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

[3] If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
[4] But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

[5] I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
[6] my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.

[7] O Israel, hope in the LORD!
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.
[8] It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

Psalm 131

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

[1] O LORD, my heart is not lifted up,
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
[2] But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.[a]

[3] O Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time on and forevermore.

Psalm 132

A Song of Ascents.

[1] O LORD, remember in David's favor
all the hardships he endured;
[2] how he swore to the LORD
and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,
[3] "I will not enter my house
or get into my bed;
[4] I will not give sleep to my eyes

[a] Or *my soul within me is like a weaned child*

Ps 130: Waiting for the LORD's redemption. An individual petition seeking rescue "out of the depths" (v. 1), but seeming even more intent on simply being heard by God. The usual statement of trust takes the form of resolutions to wait for the LORD (vv. 5–6), and the other common feature of petitions, teaching others to revere the LORD, appears in vv. 7–8. Verses 1–6 detail the psalmist's desire to be heard, and vv. 7–8 detail the psalmist's and Israel's waiting for the redeeming LORD (vv. 5–8). **Superscription:** *Song of Ascents,* see Ps 120n. **1:** *Out of the depths,* God seems too distant to hear the psalmist's voice. **4:** At the middle of the psalm, the psalmist reminds God of his forgiving nature. **5–6:** *Wait,* repeated three times in step-parallelism; waiting expectantly is a form of prayer. The psalmist is waiting either for an oracle or some other divine intervention.

Ps 131: Waiting for the LORD like a child. A declaration of trust with an extraordinary central metaphor: a weaned child, in that culture a three- to five-year-old. The poem is framed by its opening and closing occurrences of "the LORD" and its opening and closing statements, the first put negatively ("my heart is not lifted up") and the second put positively ("I have calmed and quieted my soul"). The threefold denial in v. 1 and the doubled affirmation in v. 2 show deep feeling. Verse 3, as in many other psalms, moves from the individual to the community, here inviting all Israel to imitate the singer's calm and trust. **Superscription:** *Song of Ascents,* see Ps 120n. **2:** *Like a weaned child with its mother,* the singer, like the child, has been nurtured daily and would not doubt the mother's further care. The image of God as female is the second in the Songs of Ascents; cf. Ps 123.2.

Ps 132: Bringing the Davidic king to reign in Zion. A royal psalm narrating in four stanzas David's desire to be affirmed as king and to transfer the ark-throne of the LORD to Zion. It may have been written in the tenth century BCE in celebration of the transfer of the ark from its temporary location in Kiriath-jearim (cf. 1 Sam 6), or during the postexilic period when there was a deep desire to restore the traditional kingship. In vv. 1–5, David swears to provide a dwelling place for the LORD; in vv. 6–10, the ark is found and taken solemnly to Jerusalem; in vv. 11–13, the LORD swears to give David an eternal dynasty and ratifies the choice of Zion; vv. 14–18 affirm and expand these choices. Each of the four stanzas has five couplets and each contains the name "David"; the last line of each stanza is linked to the first line of the following stanza by repetition ("find/found" in vv. 5 and 6; "David" in vv. 10 and 11; "desired" in vv. 13 and 14). In both structure and content, it is quite atypical of the Songs of Ascents (see Ps 120n.). **2–5:** An extensive elaboration of 2 Sam 7.2. **2:** *The Mighty One of Jacob* (also v.

or slumber to my eyelids,
5 until I find a place for the LORD,
a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

6 We heard of it in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields of Jaar.
7 "Let us go to his dwelling place;
let us worship at his footstool."

8 Rise up, O LORD, and go to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.
9 Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,
and let your faithful shout for joy.
10 For your servant David's sake
do not turn away the face of your anointed one.

11 The LORD swore to David a sure oath
from which he will not turn back:
"One of the sons of your body
I will set on your throne.
12 If your sons keep my covenant
and my decrees that I shall teach them,
their sons also, forevermore,
shall sit on your throne."

13 For the LORD has chosen Zion;
he has desired it for his habitation:
14 "This is my resting place forever;
here I will reside, for I have desired it.
15 I will abundantly bless its provisions;
I will satisfy its poor with bread.
16 Its priests I will clothe with salvation,
and its faithful will shout for joy.
17 There I will cause a horn to sprout up for David;
I have prepared a lamp for my anointed one.
18 His enemies I will clothe with disgrace,
but on him, his crown will gleam."

Psalm 133

A Song of Ascents.
1 How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
2 It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.
3 It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the LORD ordained his blessing,
life forevermore.

Psalm 134

A Song of Ascents.
1 Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD,

5), see Gen 49.24; Isa 1.24; 49.26. **6–10:** The singer asks that the LORD allow the sacred ark to be brought to Zion (vv. 6–9) and support the Davidic kingship (v. 10; cf. v. 1). **6–7:** A poetic version of the discovery of the ark of the covenant, the visible symbol of God's presence, and its transfer to Jerusalem; cf. 2 Sam 6. **6:** *Ephrathah,* near Bethlehem, in Judah. *Jaar,* a variant of Kiriath-jearim (1 Sam 7.1–2). **7:** The ark was the *footstool* component of the divine cherubim throne; cf. Ps 99.5. **8:** Cf. Num 10.35–36. **11–14:** The first request is answered in vv. 11–12 and the second in vv. 13–14. This is a paraphrase of 1 Sam 7.5–17, though that passage (like Ps 89.28–37) makes an unconditional promise of dynasty to David, while in this psalm (v. 12: *If your sons*) it is conditional. The choice of Zion, however, is presented as unconditional and eternal (v. 14). **17:** *Horn,* a symbol of strength. *Lamp,* cf. 2 Sam 21.17.

Ps 133: The divine gift of unity. A song of Zion like several Songs of Ascents (Pss 122; 125; 128; 129; 132; see Ps 120n.). Like them, it has step-parallelism: "running down" three times in vv. 2–3 (NRSV "falls on" in v. 3). Like Ps 122, it celebrates Jerusalem as the place where the tribes of Israel happily gather on holy days. The famous first line of Ps 133 recalls Ps 122.4. The references to Aaron and Zion, although somewhat obscure, connect it to the previous psalm. **1:** *Oil* was used for washing in antiquity, and in the ordination rite of priests (Lev 8.12) and thus stirs thoughts of joyous Temple celebrations that bring the community together. The abundance of oil in the ceremonies evokes the plentiful dew of Mount Herman in the north that was so important in the agricultural life of Israel.

Ps 134: Come, bless the LORD. The final Song of Ascents (see Ps 120n.) is a blessing, similar to the blessings concluding each of the five books of the Psalms. It mentions themes prominent in the collection such as the Temple in Zion and its ceremonies. It is also similar to the opening and closing of the following psalm. The repeated invitation "Bless the LORD" and the response to it in v. 3 provides structure. **1:** It is uncertain exactly

who stand by night in the house of the LORD!
2 Lift up your hands to the holy place,
and bless the LORD.

3 May the LORD, maker of heaven and earth,
bless you from Zion.

Psalm 135

1 Praise the LORD!
Praise the name of the LORD;
give praise, O servants of the LORD,
2 you that stand in the house of the LORD,
in the courts of the house of our God.
3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
sing to his name, for he is gracious.
4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself,
Israel as his own possession.

5 For I know that the LORD is great;
our Lord is above all gods.
6 Whatever the LORD pleases he does,
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all deeps.
7 He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth;
he makes lightnings for the rain
and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

8 He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,
both human beings and animals;
9 he sent signs and wonders
into your midst, O Egypt,
against Pharaoh and all his servants.
10 He struck down many nations
and killed mighty kings—
11 Sihon, king of the Amorites,
and Og, king of Bashan,
and all the kingdoms of Canaan—
12 and gave their land as a heritage,
a heritage to his people Israel.

13 Your name, O LORD, endures forever,
your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages.
14 For the LORD will vindicate his people,
and have compassion on his servants.

15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
16 They have mouths, but they do not speak;
they have eyes, but they do not see;
17 they have ears, but they do not hear,
and there is no breath in their mouths.
18 Those who make them
and all who trust them
shall become like them.

19 O house of Israel, bless the LORD!
O house of Aaron, bless the LORD!

which group is meant by *all you servants of the LORD, who stand by night in the house of the LORD!* **2:** *Lift*ing *up hands* was the position of prayer in antiquity.

Ps 135: Praise of the LORD who brought Israel to its land. A hymn praising the LORD the creator for defeating Pharaoh and the nations who held the land intended for Israel. It forms a pair with Ps 136. Ps 135 is also linked to Ps 134 by addressing "servants of the LORD" in their opening verses and by their similar endings. The psalm has drawn heavily on earlier tradition (e.g., v. 4 from Deut 7.6; v. 7 from Jer 10.13). These borrowings, late linguistic features, and the attack on images (vv. 15–18) were characteristic of postexilic times when the concept of authoritative scripture was developing. Ps 135 has a concentric or sandwich structure: "Praise the LORD / Blessed is the LORD" is the frame (vv. 1a, 21b), within which vv. 1b–4 match 19–20, and vv. 5–7 match 15–18; the center is vv. 8–14, which describe the LORD's great acts on behalf of Israel. **4:** *Possession,* Heb "segullah," something treasured and set apart ("stashed") by a god or a king. **5:** *I know,* a confession of faith like that in Ex 18.10–11. *Above all gods,* see Pss 29.1; 89.6–8. **6–7:** God's actions in nature are a preface to his actions in history; both illustrate God's immense power. *Storehouse,* cf. Ps 33.11; Job 38.22. **8–14:** The great founding act of Israel was the Exodus and its aftermath, here presented in two panels, as in Ps 114 linking Exodus and Conquest. The first concerns Egypt (i.e., the Exodus proper) and the second concerns the Transjordanian kings Sihon and Og, and the kingdoms of Canaan (i.e., the conquest). **8:** See Ex 12.29. **9:** A reference to the plagues; see Ex 7.3; Deut 6.22. **11:** *Sihon* (king of the Amorites, in central Transjordan) and *Og* (king of Bashan in northern Transjordan), see Num 21.21–35; Deut 2.24–3.7. **12:** *Heritage,* Canaan as a land that is to be inherited by successive generations of Israelites. **13:** A restatement of Ex 3.15. **15–18:** Cf. Ps 115.4–11. **19–20:** Similar to and likely based on Ps 118.3–4.

20 O house of Levi, bless the LORD!
You that fear the LORD, bless the LORD!
21 Blessed be the LORD from Zion,
he who resides in Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 136

1 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.
2 O give thanks to the God of gods,
for his steadfast love endures forever.
3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

4 who alone does great wonders,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
5 who by understanding made the heavens,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
6 who spread out the earth on the waters,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
7 who made the great lights,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
8 the sun to rule over the day,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
9 the moon and stars to rule over the night,
for his steadfast love endures forever;

10 who struck Egypt through their
firstborn,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
11 and brought Israel out from among them,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
12 with a strong hand and an outstretched
arm,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
13 who divided the Red Sea[a] in two,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
14 and made Israel pass through the midst
of it,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
15 but overthrew Pharaoh and his army in
the Red Sea,[a]
for his steadfast love endures forever;
16 who led his people through the
wilderness,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
17 who struck down great kings,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
18 and killed famous kings,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
19 Sihon, king of the Amorites,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
20 and Og, king of Bashan,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
21 and gave their land as a heritage,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
22 a heritage to his servant Israel,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

23 It is he who remembered us in our low
estate,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
24 and rescued us from our foes,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
25 who gives food to all flesh,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

26 O give thanks to the God of heaven,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

[a] Or *Sea of Reeds*

Ps 136: Praise of the LORD who created the world and Israel. A hymn telling of the creation of the world and of the Exodus and Conquest, the holy people designed to motivate Israel to give praise, and perhaps for God to remember Israel in its "low estate" (v. 23), when it is persecuted and suffers from famine (vv. 24–25). Pss 135 and 136 share vocabulary and a similar view of sacred history, though Ps 136 uniquely preserves the antiphonal reply "for his steadfast love endures forever" (twenty-six times), which was frequently used in ritual in the postexilic period (see Ezra 3.11; 1 Chr 16.34; Ps 118.1–4). **1–3:** *Give thanks to the LORD/God* (vv. 1–3,26) opens and closes Ps 136 and also Ps 118 (vv. 1,29), suggesting that Pss 113–118 and 135–136 were meant to frame the Songs of Ascents (Pss 120–134). As the psalm progresses, each new stage of divine activity is introduced by the participle form of the verb (vv. 4a, 5a, 6a, 7a, 10a, 13a, 16a, and 17a). The psalm narrates a single series of divine actions, beginning with creation and ending with deliverance and guidance into the land. **7–9:** Cf. Gen 1.16. **10–22:** Like Ps 135, Ps 136 connects the Exodus from Egypt with the acquisition of land in Canaan. **19–20:** *Sihon . . . and Og,* see Ps 135.11n. **23–25:** Changes in syntax and grammatical person (from third to second person) indicate the shift from recital of the past to speaking of Israel dwelling in the land of Canaan. In Canaan, God still wondrously protects and feeds the people.

Psalm 137

1 By the rivers of Babylon—
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.
2 On the willows[a] there
we hung up our harps.
3 For there our captors
asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth,
saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

4 How could we sing the LORD's song
in a foreign land?
5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
6 Let my tongue cling to the roof of my
mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy.

7 Remember, O LORD, against the
Edomites
the day of Jerusalem's fall,
how they said, "Tear it down! Tear it
down!
Down to its foundations!"
8 O daughter Babylon, you devastator![b]
Happy shall they be who pay you back
what you have done to us!
9 Happy shall they be who take your little
ones
and dash them against the rock!

Psalm 138

Of David.
1 I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole
heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
2 I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for
your steadfast love and your
faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and
your word
above everything.[c]
3 On the day I called, you
answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.[d]

4 All the kings of the earth shall praise you,
O LORD,
for they have heard the words of your
mouth.
5 They shall sing of the ways of the LORD,
for great is the glory of the LORD.
6 For though the LORD is high, he regards
the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives from far
away.

[a] Or *poplars*
[b] Or *you who are devastated*
[c] Cn: Heb *you have exalted your word above all your name*
[d] Syr Compare Gk Tg: Heb *you made me arrogant in my soul with strength*

Ps 137: A lament over destroyed Jerusalem. A community petition that complains vigorously of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The first stanza (vv. 1–3) is framed by "Zion," the second (vv. 4–6) by "Jerusalem," and the third, a cry for justice against Edom and Babylon, the enemies responsible for the destruction. The last stanza, repugnant to modern readers and often omitted in modern uses of the psalm, is the cry of one singer who feels acutely the dishonor inflicted by an arrogant empire and its helpers. **1:** *Rivers,* irrigation canals. **3:** *Mirth,* to be understood as "songs of joy," abstract for concrete. Such songs (e.g., Pss 46; 48; 76; 84; 122) told of the grandeur of Zion where the LORD defeated enemy kings and dwelled in the midst of Israel. It is humiliating to sing them now especially to people who laugh at them. **5:** Wordplay: the Heb word "shakaḥ" is a homonym for two different verbs in the verse: *forget* and *wither*. **5–6:** *Hand* and *tongue* are the means of making music. **7:** *Edom,* south of the Dead Sea, Edom was an ally in the Babylonian destruction of the city (Lam 4.21; Ezek 25.12–14; 36.5; Ob 8–14). **8:** *Babylon,* by poetic justice, it will suffer what it forced others to suffer.

Ps 138: From personal to universal thanks. An individual thanksgiving that gives thanks for a rescue (vv. 1–3), invites the kings of the world to offer their praise (vv. 4–6), and asserts confidence in the LORD's future protection (vv. 7–8). The first in a small collection of David psalms (Pss 138–145). **1:** *Before the gods,* either the heavenly beings who serve in the court of the Most High God (see Ps 29.1n.), or the "gods" of the kings mentioned in vv. 4–6. **4–5:** So wonderful has been God's protection that kings, representing the nations, should

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
8 The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Psalm 139

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
3 You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
4 Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
5 You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

7 Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

13 For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
17 How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
18 I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
I come to the end[a]—I am still with you.

19 O that you would kill the wicked, O God,
and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—

[a] Or *I awake*

offer praise (cf. Pss 67.3–5; 126.2). Exactly what is meant by *the words of your mouth* is unclear. **8:** As v. 3 sums up the psalmist's past relationship, this verse sums up the psalmist's hope that the relationship will continue.

Ps 139: A request for guidance from a powerful God. Although often classed as an individual petition, the poem is unique, recording an individual's experience of God, first primarily as powerful (vv. 1–12), and then primarily as nurturing and intimate (vv. 13–18). Only after experiencing the range of God's power and beauty does the psalmist comprehend his or her own place and the malice of sin (vv. 19–24). **2:** *Sit down . . . rise up,* i.e., always; a merism, in which the ends of a spectrum represent the entire spectrum. **8:** *Sheol,* the abode of the dead. **9:** That is, if I travel a long distance, leaving at dawn in the east and move farthest west. **13:** *For it was you,* better "It was surely you." The perspective suddenly shifts from outside to inside as the psalmist realizes that the divine power that seemed to loom over life and constrict it (vv. 1–12) also gives life and shapes it already in the maternal womb. Delicacy, growth, and "maternal" involvement are also God's work. **14:** The psalmist's own creation is as wondrous as the other great deeds of the LORD (e.g., Pss 65.5; 106.22; 145.6). **16:** *In your book,* see Ps 40.7n. **18:** No longer feeling alone and judged, the psalmist knows God is near and has been so from the beginning. God's great power and omnipresence (vv. 1–12) are complemented by nearness and personal care (vv. 13–18). **19–24:** The psalmist expresses solidarity with God, whom he asks for protection from wicked enemies.

20 those who speak of you maliciously,
and lift themselves up against you for evil![a]
21 Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
24 See if there is any wicked[b] way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.[c]

Psalm 140

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 Deliver me, O LORD, from evildoers;
protect me from those who are violent,
2 who plan evil things in their minds
and stir up wars continually.
3 They make their tongue sharp as a snake's,
and under their lips is the venom of vipers. *Selah*

4 Guard me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;
protect me from the violent
who have planned my downfall.
5 The arrogant have hidden a trap for me,
and with cords they have spread a net,[d]
along the road they have set snares for me. *Selah*

6 I say to the LORD, "You are my God;
give ear, O LORD, to the voice of my supplications."
7 O LORD, my Lord, my strong deliverer,
you have covered my head in the day of battle.
8 Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;
do not further their evil plot.[e] *Selah*

9 Those who surround me lift up their heads;[f]
let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them!
10 Let burning coals fall on them!
Let them be flung into pits, no more to rise!
11 Do not let the slanderer be established in the land;
let evil speedily hunt down the violent!

12 I know that the LORD maintains the cause of the needy,
and executes justice for the poor.
13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name;
the upright shall live in your presence.

Psalm 141

A Psalm of David.

1 I call upon you, O LORD; come quickly to me;
give ear to my voice when I call to you.
2 Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,

[a] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *hurtful*
[c] Or *the ancient way.* Compare Jer 6.16
[d] Or *they have spread cords as a net*
[e] Heb adds *they are exalted*
[f] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *those who surround me are uplifted in head*; Heb divides verses 8 and 9 differently

Ps 140: Petition, complaint, and hope. An individual petition that helps the sufferer move from pain to peaceful hope. NRSV correctly marks the stanzas: vv. 1–3,4–5,6–8,9–11,12–13 on the basis of their syntax, content, and word count. Verses 1–3 and 4–5 are paired by their syntax, each beginning with similar petitions and descriptions of enemies, and each section ends with *Selah*, which typically marks a disjunction (see Ps 3.2n.). Verses 6–8 are distinct by their initial verb "I say" and assertions of loyalty to the LORD; vv. 9–11 reverse the order of previous sections by beginning with a complaint (v. 9a) and ending with a petition (vv. 9b–11). The final section, vv. 12–13, the statement of trust, is marked by its initial verb *I know*. **6:** *I say,* shifts from petition to confession that the LORD has been loyal in the past. **7:** *Covered my head,* protected my head. **12:** *I know,* affirming God's fidelity as in Jon 4.2; Pss 20.6; 56.9; 135.5. The psalmist wants to be counted among the *needy* and *poor* whom the LORD always helps. *Surely* emphasizes the psalmist's triumphant hope that the righteous will be rescued.

Ps 141: Save me from my own evil impulses and from evil companions. An individual petition. Verses 1–2 ask God to give special attention to the psalmist's plea, and vv. 3–4 beg to be kept from sin and evil companions (vv.

and the lifting up of my hands as an
evening sacrifice.

3 Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD;
keep watch over the door of my
lips.
4 Do not turn my heart to any evil,
to busy myself with wicked deeds
in company with those who work
iniquity;
do not let me eat of their delicacies.

5 Let the righteous strike me;
let the faithful correct me.
Never let the oil of the wicked anoint my
head,[a]
for my prayer is continually[b] against
their wicked deeds.
6 When they are given over to those who
shall condemn them,
then they shall learn that my words
were pleasant.
7 Like a rock that one breaks apart and
shatters on the land,
so shall their bones be strewn at the
mouth of Sheol.[c]

8 But my eyes are turned toward you,
O GOD, my Lord;
in you I seek refuge; do not leave me
defenseless.
9 Keep me from the trap that they have laid
for me,
and from the snares of evildoers.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
while I alone escape.

Psalm 142

A Maskil of David. When he was in the cave.
A Prayer.

1 With my voice I cry to the LORD;
with my voice I make supplication to
the LORD.
2 I pour out my complaint before him;
I tell my trouble before him.
3 When my spirit is faint,
you know my way.

In the path where I walk
they have hidden a trap for me.
4 Look on my right hand and see—
there is no one who takes notice of me;
no refuge remains to me;
no one cares for me.

5 I cry to you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."
6 Give heed to my cry,
for I am brought very low.

Save me from my persecutors,
for they are too strong for me.
7 Bring me out of prison,
so that I may give thanks to your name.
The righteous will surround me,
for you will deal bountifully with me.

[a] Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn: Heb *for continually and my prayer*
[c] Meaning of Heb of verses 5-7 is uncertain

3–4). Verses 5–7 are textually uncertain; vv. 8–10 express total trust in God and hope of future protection. **2:** The psalmist's prayer is compared to two regular sacrifices in the Temple, incense in the morning (cf. Ex 30.7–8) and the sacrifice of a lamb in the evening (cf. Ex 29.38–42) **4:** *Eat of their delicacies,* share their fellowship; cf. Ps 41.9. **7:** Some scholars suggest that *like a rock that one breaks apart and shatters on the land* was accompanied with the ritual shattering of a rock. *Sheol,* the abode of the dead. **10:** See Ps 7.15–16n.

Ps 142: Prayer for God's help. An individual petition that proceeds in two stages: the first stage (vv. 1–4) simply lists the peril and danger and declares there is no one else to turn to, and the second (vv. 5–7), with more confidence, calls God "my refuge, my portion in the land of the living" (v. 5) and promises praise. **Superscription:** *Maskil,* see Ps 32n. *In the cave,* most likely referring to the story of David fleeing from Saul (1 Sam 24). **4:** Loyal friends customarily stood at one's *right hand* (Ps 109.31), but no one is there for the psalmist. **5:** For the first time, the psalmist addresses God, using two impressive metaphors that illustrate God's ability to help at this time of crisis. *Refuge* is elsewhere parallel to mighty rock (Pss 62.7; 91.2; 94.22). *Portion* means a share in land (cf. Josh 18.5,6,9), which in that agrarian society was the source of food and clothing. *You are . . . my portion,* cf. Num 18.20. **7:** As a motivation for divine help, *so that I may give thanks to your name* is similar to Ps 86.12; these psalmists assume that God wants to be thanked, and this motivates divine behavior.

Psalm 143

A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD;
give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness;
answer me in your righteousness.
2 Do not enter into judgment with your servant,
for no one living is righteous before you.

3 For the enemy has pursued me,
crushing my life to the ground,
making me sit in darkness like those long dead.
4 Therefore my spirit faints within me;
my heart within me is appalled.

5 I remember the days of old,
I think about all your deeds,
I meditate on the works of your hands.
6 I stretch out my hands to you;
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. *Selah*

7 Answer me quickly, O LORD;
my spirit fails.
Do not hide your face from me,
or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.
8 Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning,
for in you I put my trust.
Teach me the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul.

9 Save me, O LORD, from my enemies;
I have fled to you for refuge.[a]

10 Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.
Let your good spirit lead me
on a level path.

11 For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life.
In your righteousness bring me out of trouble.
12 In your steadfast love cut off my enemies,
and destroy all my adversaries,
for I am your servant.

Psalm 144

Of David.

1 Blessed be the LORD, my rock,
who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle;
2 my rock[b] and my fortress,
my stronghold and my deliverer,
my shield, in whom I take refuge,
who subdues the peoples[c] under me.

3 O LORD, what are human beings that you regard them,
or mortals that you think of them?
4 They are like a breath;
their days are like a passing shadow.

5 Bow your heavens, O LORD, and come down;
touch the mountains so that they smoke.

[a] One Heb Ms Gk: MT *to you I have hidden*
[b] With 18.2 and 2 Sam 22.2: Heb *my steadfast love*
[c] Heb Mss Syr Aquila Jerome: MT *my people*

Ps 143: A plea that God would act out of fidelity to a loyal servant. An individual petition that requests divine attention and deliverance from enemies, insisting that no person is righteous before God. Though old material has been recycled, Ps 143 establishes the idea that dealings with God must be based on divine faithfulness and righteousness (vv. 1–2,10c–12), rather than on human actions. **5:** *The days of old* refer to God's great actions in creation and history; see Ps 77.11–12. **6:** *Thirsts,* see Pss 42.1; 63.1. *Selah,* see Ps 3.2n. **7:** *Do not hide your face from me* refers to the idea that God on occasion, for no reason, ignores innocent supplicants. *The Pit,* a synonym for Sheol, the abode of the dead. **8:** *Morning* was an especially propitious time for a good judgment (see Ps 90.14). **11:** Since the psalmist is assuming a relationship with God that depends on divine mercy rather than fair judgment of human actions, he evokes God's name (reputation), as in some prophetic literature (e.g., Ezek 20.9) and some psalms (e.g., 23.3).

Ps 144: A request for divine assistance. A psalm in which an individual, possibly the king (v. 10), asks for divine assistance and general peace and security. The psalm seems late because it quotes other psalms, in which case it would have in mind a king of the Davidic dynasty or a future hoped-for king. **1:** *Blessed be the LORD,* a formula for praising God for a beneficial act, in this case for equipping the supplicant to wage war. **3:** Cf. Ps 8.4; Job 7.17. **4:** Cf. Pss 102.11; 109.23. **5:** The beginning of the verse is taken from 2 Sam 22.10, Ps 18.10.

6 Make the lightning flash and scatter
them;
send out your arrows and rout them.
7 Stretch out your hand from on high;
set me free and rescue me from the
mighty waters,
from the hand of aliens,
8 whose mouths speak lies,
and whose right hands are false.

9 I will sing a new song to you, O God;
upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to
you,
10 the one who gives victory to kings,
who rescues his servant David.
11 Rescue me from the cruel sword,
and deliver me from the hand of
aliens,
whose mouths speak lies,
and whose right hands are false.

12 May our sons in their youth
be like plants full grown,
our daughters like corner pillars,
cut for the building of a palace.
13 May our barns be filled,
with produce of every kind;
may our sheep increase by thousands,
by tens of thousands in our fields,
14 and may our cattle be heavy with
young.
May there be no breach in the walls,[a] no
exile,
and no cry of distress in our streets.

15 Happy are the people to whom such
blessings fall;
happy are the people whose God is the
LORD.

Psalm 145

Praise. Of David.

1 I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
2 Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name forever and ever.
3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be
praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.

4 One generation shall laud your works to
another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
5 On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will
meditate.
6 The might of your awesome deeds shall
be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.
7 They shall celebrate the fame of your
abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your
righteousness.

8 The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in
steadfast love.

[a] Heb lacks *in the walls*

7: *Mighty waters . . . the hands of aliens,* a mixture of cosmic language and historical language, the first referring to the waters of chaos and the second to human agents. **9–10:** The verses may allude to King David who was renowned as a musician and a warrior. **12–15:** In an agrarian society, political peace and agricultural fertility go together; this psalm seems to assume a period of *distress*. This blessing that the psalmist requests would be suitable for a royal psalm since the king protects the land from invaders and blesses its fertility (cf. Ps 72.3–7).

Ps 145: Praise of the goodness of the LORD the king. A hymn ending the Davidic collection (Pss 138–145) and establishing the mood of praise that predominates in the hymns of Pss 146–150. The Psalter will conclude in a symphony of praise. It is an acrostic (see Ps 9–10n.), although the fourteenth letter ("nun") is missing in the Hebrew text. The singer's own voice is prominent: "I will extol you, my God" (vv. 1–2) and "My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD" (v. 21). In vv. 3–7, one generation tells the next of the acts of the LORD. Verse 8, "the LORD is gracious and merciful," emphasizes the loving governance behind those acts (vv. 11–13) and the generosity toward human beings (vv. 10–20). The final verse (v. 21) reprises and extends the first. **1:** *My king,* most of the attributes mentioned in the psalm are connected to royalty; this initial reference also points forward to the four occurrences of *kingdom* in vv. 11–13. *Your name,* your presence. **4:** *One generation shall laud your works to another,* like the process of education in Ps 78.4 (cf. Ex 13.8,14; Deut 6.20). The children experience the effects of the mighty deeds of old that are constantly renewed. **5:** Glory, *splendor,* and *majesty* are royal qualities that God as king possesses. **8:** Citation of the divine attributes in Ex 34.6.

9 The LORD is good to all,
and his compassion is over all that he has made.

10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your faithful shall bless you.
11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power,
12 to make known to all people your[a] mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your[b] kingdom.
13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The LORD is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.[c]
14 The LORD upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.
15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
16 You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
17 The LORD is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.
18 The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
19 He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry, and saves them.
20 The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

21 My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

Psalm 146

1 Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD, O my soul!
2 I will praise the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

3 Do not put your trust in princes,
in mortals, in whom there is no help.
4 When their breath departs, they return to the earth;
on that very day their plans perish.

5 Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God,
6 who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;
7 who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;
8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.
9 The LORD watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

[a] Gk Jerome Syr: Heb *his*
[b] Heb *his*
[c] These two lines supplied by Q Ms Gk Syr

11: *Your kingdom,* occurs four times at the psalm's center in vv. 11–13. The contexts make clear that the word means active rule, reigning, rather than static kingdom. **13:** Cf. Dan 4.3. **14–16:** Cf. Pss 104.27; 146.7–8. **17–18:** The word *all* appears twice in each of these verses, and another three times before the psalm concludes, for a total of seventeen times, emphasizing God's incomparability.

Ps 146: Praise of the LORD, savior of the downtrodden. A hymn, like Pss 147–150; together, these five psalms form the concluding doxology to the entire book of Psalms. Each of these hymns begins and ends with "Praise the LORD" (Heb "halelu-yah," in English "Hallelujah"). The singer in Ps 146 engages in an inner dialogue ("O my soul!" v. 1b) before addressing the community in v. 3. Such reflection enables the singer to appreciate the vanity of human resources (vv. 3–4) and the compassion of the LORD's governance of the world (vv. 5–9). **5:** In contrast to placing one's hopes in human helpers, weak and mortal (vv. 3–4), the psalmist's hopes are in the LORD, already covenanted to Israel, the powerful and just creator and judge (vv. 6–7). **6:** *Who made heaven and earth,* see Ps 124.8n. **7–9:** All the LORD's actions here are rescues of beleaguered individuals, inspiring the psalmist to hope for and praise rescues in the future. **9:** God's justice is complete; he even *brings to ruin the way of the wicked,*

[10] The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 147

[1] Praise the LORD!
How good it is to sing praises to our God;
for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.
[2] The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.
[3] He heals the brokenhearted,
and binds up their wounds.
[4] He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
[5] Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.
[6] The LORD lifts up the downtrodden;
he casts the wicked to the ground.

[7] Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre.
[8] He covers the heavens with clouds,
prepares rain for the earth,
makes grass grow on the hills.
[9] He gives to the animals their food,
and to the young ravens when they cry.
[10] His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner;[a]
[11] but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.
[12] Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion!
[13] For he strengthens the bars of your gates;
he blesses your children within you.
[14] He grants peace[b] within your borders;
he fills you with the finest of wheat.
[15] He sends out his command to the earth;
his word runs swiftly.
[16] He gives snow like wool;
he scatters frost like ashes.
[17] He hurls down hail like crumbs—
who can stand before his cold?
[18] He sends out his word, and melts them;
he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow.
[19] He declares his word to Jacob,
his statutes and ordinances to Israel.
[20] He has not dealt thus with any other nation;
they do not know his ordinances.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 148

[1] Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!
[2] Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!

[a] Heb *legs of a person*
[b] Or *prosperity*

before their plans reach fruition. **10:** These aspects of God—creator, righteous judge—are related to his kingship, mentioned explicitly only in the final verse. This connects Pss 145 and 146.

Ps 147: Praise the LORD who restores Jerusalem. The second of the five hymns concluding the Psalms. Each of its three sections (vv. 1–6,7–11, and 12–20) begins with an invitation in the imperative to praise the LORD and lists the divine acts for which praise is to be given. Verses 1–6 cite the LORD's restoration of Jerusalem and gathering of exiles; vv. 7–11 cite the LORD's control of fertility for the nurture of humans, and vv. 12–20 cite the LORD's gift to Israel of his powerful word. Written for a scattered, malnourished, and demoralized people, most likely in the exilic or postexilic period, the psalm teaches them how to see divine purpose and give thanks. **4:** Creating the heavens and rebuilding Zion are parallel works as in Isa 51.16, for God ensures that the original creation continues. **7–11:** Again directing creation to benefit Israel, God restores the devastated lands to provide food. **7:** It is unclear if *thanksgiving* is a sacrifice or verbal thanks. **15–20:** These verses have seven terms for the word of God, some repeated: *command*, *word*, *statutes*, *ordinances*. **19–20:** The LORD spoke *his word* at Sinai and afterward. It made Israel distinctive then (Deut 4.5–8) and does so now, for God *has not dealt thus with any other nation* (v. 20a). The Torah here is recognized as Israel's special gift from God.

Ps 148: Let heaven and earth praise the LORD. The third of the five hymns that make up the doxology concluding the Psalms. More formal than the two preceding psalms, it employs the verb "to praise" twelve times, "LORD" four times, and "the name (of the LORD)" three times; it is neatly composed of two almost equal panels,

[3] Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!
[4] Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!

[5] Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for he commanded and they were created.
[6] He established them forever and ever;
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.[a]

[7] Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,
[8] fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!

[9] Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
[10] Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!

[11] Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
[12] Young men and women alike,
old and young together!

[13] Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.
[14] He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 149

[1] Praise the LORD!
Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the faithful.
[2] Let Israel be glad in its Maker;
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.
[3] Let them praise his name with dancing,
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.
[4] For the LORD takes pleasure in his people;
he adorns the humble with victory.
[5] Let the faithful exult in glory;
let them sing for joy on their couches.
[6] Let the high praises of God be in their throats
and two-edged swords in their hands,

[a] Or *he set a law that cannot pass away*

vv. 1–6, introduced by "Praise the LORD from the heavens," and vv. 7–14, introduced by "Praise the LORD from the earth." Unlike other hymns, it focuses on the groups invited to praise, the inhabitants of heaven (vv. 1–4), and the inhabitants of earth (vv. 7–12). The divine acts meriting praise are mentioned only briefly: for the first group (vv. 5–6), the motive for giving praise is that the LORD created them and assigned them all their tasks; for the second (v. 13), the motive is that the LORD's name and glory are exalted above heaven and earth. **3:** This may recall other ancient cultures, in which astral bodies were deities. **5:** *For he commanded and they were created,* the psalm recognizes here and elsewhere the orderly Priestly story of creation by word in Gen 1, emphasizing that God continues to have this role in the universe. **7–8:** Somewhat autonomous deities in surrounding cultures, but under God's strict control here. **14:** *Horn,* a symbol of strength. After all nature and all the peoples of the earth are summoned to give praise to the LORD, Israel is mentioned in climactic place as his special people.

Ps 149: Praise for Israel's task in the world. This fourth hymn in the series of five concluding the Psalms may disturb readers by its apparent call to vengeance against foreigners. Ps 149 develops the ideas of two psalms, the immediately preceding Ps 148, which singles out Israel as having a mission to proclaim the supremacy of the LORD to the nations (Ps 148.14), and Ps 2 (second from the beginning as Ps 149 is second from the last) in which the Davidic king is given authority to subdue the nations. Ps 149 transposes the royal role of Ps 2 to the entire nation (as in Isa 55.3). Ps 149 has two stanzas, vv. 1–4 and 5–9, the first inviting praise for the LORD's victory and the second equating that praise metaphorically with weapons of war against the rebellious kings. **1:** *New song,* as in Isa 42.10 and other psalms (e.g., 33.3; 96.1; 98.1); here in response to creation, for Israel is *glad in its Maker* (v. 1a); the act establishes the kingship of the LORD. In the previous psalm, God as king is creating the universe, while here he creates Israel. **5:** *On their couches,* symbolizes private (in contrast to public) expression as in Pss 4.4; 6.6; 36.4; Hos 7.14. **6:** Wielding a *sword* (and the other military actions in vv. 7–9) develops a traditional theme of the Israelite king and the people representing the LORD's kingship over the world, which often meant conflict with the nations (cf. Pss 2; 46; 48). Here that tradition can be understood as a metaphor for proclaiming

7 to execute vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,
8 to bind their kings with fetters
and their nobles with chains of iron,
9 to execute on them the judgment
decreed.
This is glory for all his faithful ones.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 150

1 Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament![a]
2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his surpassing
greatness!

3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
5 Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
6 Let everything that breathes praise the
LORD!
Praise the LORD!

[a] Or *dome*

the LORD's sovereignty over kings and nations by Israel's faithful worship of the LORD alone. The conjunction *and* seems to make the statements of v. 6a and 6b parallel: praising God is like wielding a sword. Israel has the task of embodying divine sovereignty and rendering it visible in the world. This unmasks false gods and invites the nations to join in God's praise and recognition of Israel. **7:** *Vengeance,* best rendered "retribution" for the kings' refusal to recognize their true suzerain. **9:** *Judgment decreed,* the ultimate triumph of the LORD.

Ps 150: Climactic praise for the LORD's total sovereignty. The last of the final five hymns ending the Psalms. All the verses except the final one (v. 6) begin with the same verb in the imperative mood: *Praise him!* The verb occurs thirteen times in this final outburst of praise. Each of the first four of the five books of the Psalms ends with a one- or two-verse doxology (Pss 41.13; 72.18–19; 89.52; 106.48), and it is fitting that a whole poem be the final doxology that notes where (v. 1), why (v. 2), and how (v. 3–5) God should be praised. The invitation extends throughout the whole poem; the poem is one long invitation to give praise. The group summoned to give praise, whom most psalms name almost immediately, is not revealed until the end, and it is vast: "everything that breathes" (v. 6). It goes beyond Israel to the entire human race, even to animals. The vast reach of the poem is a reminder that the call of one people is made in view of God's creation of all.

PROVERBS

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

The English title Proverbs comes from the Latin title *Proverbia* in the Vulgate. In Jewish tradition, Proverbs (Heb "mishlē"), shortened from The Proverbs of Solomon (Heb "mishlē shelomoh"; cf. 1.1; 10.1; 25.1), belongs to the Writings, the third division of the Tanakh. Grouped together with Psalms and Job, the book is one of the three poetical books. The order of the three varies in early manuscripts, with Proverbs either after Psalms and Job or between them.

The Septuagint (LXX) groups together Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon as the books of Solomon, and locates them in that order between Psalms and Job. Christian canons share the order of Proverbs-Ecclesiastes-Song of Solomon, but locate all three after Job and Psalms.

AUTHORSHIP AND COMPOSITION

Proverbs is attributed to Solomon (1.1; 10.1; 25.1), the second and last king of the united monarchy (ca. 966–926 BCE) and the quintessential sage of Israel. Tradition says that Solomon received his wisdom from God, composed thousands of proverbs, and instructed people from near and far who came to learn from him (1 Kings 3–4, 10). At the same time, Solomon's larger-than-life status as a patron and author of wisdom literature cautions against interpreting claims of his authorship as historically reliable. Like David with the psalms and Moses with the Torah/Pentateuch, Solomon is identified conventionally with Israel's wisdom. Other wisdom texts are also ascribed to him, such as Ecclesiastes (1.1,12) and Wisdom of Solomon.

The composition of Proverbs occurred over centuries. Chapters 10–30 are thought to be the oldest sections of the book, consisting largely of originally oral folk proverbs that "sages"—namely, counselors and educators associated with the royal court—gathered and edited, starting perhaps as early as the time of Solomon. Reference to "the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah" (25.1) suggests that work on the book continued in the late eighth to early seventh centuries BCE , possibly as part of Hezekiah's religious and political reforms. Finally, chs 1–9 and 31 were added in the early postexilic period (late sixth to early fifth centuries BCE) as the community rebuilt after the Babylonian exile. Proverbs thus reflects Israel's wisdom traditions as interpreted and reinterpreted, often at significant moments in the life of the community.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The book of Proverbs contains hundreds of proverbs. A "proverb" is a statement of an apparent truth that is based on human experience and endures in the life of a community over time. The term encompasses a wide variety of speech, from one-line sayings to extended poems. In Proverbs, the most prevalent form is the two-line proverb: the first line makes an observation or claim, which the second line develops, contrasts, or motivates. While a proverb's brevity and parallel structure convey precision, its details captivate and complicate interpretation. Vivid metaphors and similes are abundant, as is the use of wordplay, alliteration (repetition of the same or similar consonants in a line or group of lines), assonance (repetition of the same vowel), ambiguity, irony, and humor. A proverb often has several possible meanings and may "mean" differently depending on who says it and how, to whom, and in what circumstances. That is, proverbs are contingent claims, not universally applicable moralisms. Wise people need to know both the proverbs and how to read the world so that they use the proverbs rightly.

Superscriptions or titles organize the proverbs into sections, each of which has a distinct character. Chapters 1–9, "the proverbs of Solomon," are long didactic poems by a father to his son(s) (NRSV "child[ren]" obscures the gender specificity) that serve as a prologue to the book, and introduce Wisdom personified as a woman and her negative counterpart, the "strange" woman or personified Folly. Other portions of Proverbs likewise suppose father-to-son instruction (e.g., 19.27; 23.15–16,19,26; 24.13,21; 27.11), and mothers teach as well (1.8; 6.20; 31.1–9,26). That many ancient Egyptian wisdom texts are also a father's words to his son—several apparently actually so—indicates that the family or household setting was common, even standard, for education in the ancient Near East. Moreover, there is little compelling evidence for the existence of schools in Israel prior to the Hellenistic period (note Ben Sira's "house of study," Sir 51.23). In short, the education of children,

especially sons, was done by parents, particularly the father. The instructions on the whole assume and convey a patriarchal worldview.

Proverbs 10.1–22.16, also "proverbs of Solomon," is comprised mostly of two-line proverbs and develops many of the same themes. Two shorter sections are attributed to "the wise" (22.17–24.22; 24.23–34); the first is an artful adaptation of the Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope*, a text from the late second millennium BCE that presents thirty instructions of Amenemope to his youngest son. Chapters 25–29, more "proverbs of Solomon" edited by Hezekiah's officials, focus on the royal court and government. The two sections that follow are ascribed to the otherwise unknown foreigners Agur (30.1–33) and the mother of King Lemuel (31.1–9). The book ends with a tribute to "a woman of substance" that is an alphabetic acrostic, a poem in which each successive line begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The outline of the book is:

"The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel" (1.1–9.18)
"The proverbs of Solomon" (10.1–22.16)
"The words of the wise" (22.17–24.22)
"These also are sayings of the wise" (24.23–34)
"These are other proverbs of Solomon that the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah copied" (25.1–29.27)
"The words of Agur son of Jaqeh" (30.1–33)
"The words of Lemuel, king of Massa, which his mother taught him" (31.1–9)
The woman of substance (31.10–31)

Reading proverbs that are gathered in a collection invites additional interpretation. Features like catchwords, metaphors, or sounds that animate one proverb may extend to create units of two or more (e.g., 11.10–11; 13.7–8). A shared theme or "inclusio," the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning and ending of a unit, may invite reading a group of proverbs together (e.g., 3.13–18; 10.1–5). These connections highlight how proverbs can comment on one another and, as such, generate conversations across the book.

Proverbs may also be read as a literary whole. Remarkably similar portraits of two women, Wisdom (chs 1–9) and a woman of substance (31.10–31), frame the book, suggesting they should be identified with each other. Readers begin in the position of a silent son urged by his father to love Wisdom and accept the invitation to her house (Prov 1–9) and become, in the end, an esteemed adult who lives there (31.10–31). The sections of Proverbs in between contribute to readers' maturation in various ways, including movement from Israelite to international wisdom (e.g., Agur, Lemuel's mother), an increasing variety of genres, heightening debate and contradiction between proverbs, and an expanding purview from household to creation. Proverbs thereby forms readers by its content and arrangement.

INTERPRETATION AND RECEPTION

The author of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus, early second century BCE) clearly knew Proverbs and used it extensively. Fragments of Proverbs were found at Qumran (4Q102; 4Q103), and several of the community's wisdom texts draw on and develop Proverbs' depictions of personified Folly (4Q184) and Wisdom (e.g., 4Q185; 4Q525; 11QPsa). Proverbs also influenced Wisdom of Solomon (first century CE) and *Pirqe Avot*, the *Sayings of the Fathers*, a collection of proverbs in the Mishnah. In the medieval period, Jewish ethical wills or testaments by parents to instruct their children to imitate Proverbs, as does the Geniza Wisdom Book.

The figure of personified Wisdom particularly captivates imaginations. The books of Baruch and Sirach identify her with Torah (Bar 4.1; Sir 24.23). Wisdom of Solomon describes her as the "spirit of Sophia," the breath of the power of God (cf. Wis 7.7–10.18). Kabbalistic writings of medieval Judaism drew from depictions of her to portray the Shekhinah, the female element in divinity, as did the Talmud and midrash to depict Knesset Yisrael, the personification of the community of Israel.

Early Christians described the person and work of Jesus Christ using language and imagery associated with Wisdom (e.g., John 1.1–18; Col 1.15–20; Heb 1.1–3). Indeed, Prov 8.22–31 was a source of contention in the controversy between orthodox and Arian Christians about the nature of Christ's relationship with God. The controversy resulted in the condemnation of Arius and his thinking by the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE.

Christine Roy Yoder

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David,
king of Israel:

[2] For learning about wisdom and
instruction,
for understanding words of insight,
[3] for gaining instruction in wise dealing,
righteousness, justice, and equity;
[4] to teach shrewdness to the simple,
knowledge and prudence to the young—
[5] let the wise also hear and gain in
learning,
and the discerning acquire skill,
[6] to understand a proverb and a figure,
the words of the wise and their riddles.

[7] The fear of the LORD is the beginning of
knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

[8] Hear, my child, your father's instruction,
and do not reject your mother's
teaching;
[9] for they are a fair garland for your head,
and pendants for your neck.
[10] My child, if sinners entice you,
do not consent.
[11] If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in
wait for blood;
let us wantonly ambush the innocent;
[12] like Sheol let us swallow them alive
and whole, like those who go down to
the Pit.
[13] We shall find all kinds of costly things;
we shall fill our houses with booty.
[14] Throw in your lot among us;
we will all have one purse"—
[15] my child, do not walk in their way,
keep your foot from their paths;
[16] for their feet run to evil,
and they hurry to shed blood.
[17] For in vain is the net baited
while the bird is looking on;
[18] yet they lie in wait—to kill themselves!
and set an ambush—for their
own lives!

1.1–9.18: The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel. 1.1–7: Title and Prologue. **1:** *Solomon,* see Introduction. **2–6:** The book's aims and audience. **2:** *Instruction* (Heb "musar"), authoritative verbal or physical correction or warning. **3:** *Righteousness, justice, and equity*, encompass honest and just behaviors (cf. 2.9). **4:** Proverbs, like many ancient Near Eastern wisdom texts, is intended primarily for young men approaching adulthood. *Simple . . . young* are naïve and prone to foolishness, but teachable. **5:** *Let the wise . . . discerning* summons advanced students to study the book. **6:** *Figure*, crafted speech, perhaps a poem or parable (Hab 2.6; Sir 47.17); *riddles*, puzzling speech that requires skill to decipher (e.g., Judg 14.14–19). **7:** The book's motto. *Fear of the LORD* is reverence for and obedience to God that motivates virtuous behavior and fosters individual and communal well-being (e.g., 2.5; 8.13; 9.10; 10.27; 14.2,26–27; 15.16,33; 16.6). The expression frames chs 1–9 (1.7; 9.10) and the book as a whole (31.30). *Beginning* (Heb "re'shit") can be understood temporally (i.e., starting point) and qualitatively (i.e., best expression). Thus wisdom begins with and leads to fear of the LORD.

1.8–19: Warning about a street gang. 8–9: Chapters 1–9 are a father's instructions to his son(s), the setting of most ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature and several other proverbs in the book (19.27; 23.15–16,19; 24.13,21; 27.11; cf. Eccl 12.12). *Your mother's teaching* (cf. 6.20) makes clear this is household education. The father begins most instructions with a call to attention (e.g., 3.1–2,21–22; 4.1–2,20–22; 5.1–2,7; 6.20; 7.1–3,24). **9:** *Fair garland . . . pendants*. Wisdom is described frequently as an adornment for the body, suggesting its value and beauty; adornments may also represent and remind the wearer of important commitments (e.g., 3.1,21–22; 4.9; 6.20–21; 7.1–3; Sir 6.29–31). See similar language for the commandments (e.g., Deut 6.6–8; Ex 13.9). **10:** *Sinners,* lit., "those who miss the mark" and stray from wise paths. **12:** *Sheol . . . Pit*, also called Abaddon ("Destruction," cf. 15.11), the underworld and realm of the dead, characterized by an insatiable hunger for human life (e.g., 27.20; 30.15–16; cf. Hab 2.5; Isa 5.14). **14:** *Lot*, a stone or dice cast to divide spoils (16.33; 18.18; e.g., Ps 22.18) and a metaphor for fate (e.g., Ps 16.5; Isa 57.6). **15:** *Way . . . paths,* a metaphor for a pattern of behavior, one's course in life. Chapters 1–9 distinguish between two kinds of paths: the way of wisdom/righteousness/life and the way of folly/wickedness/death (e.g., 2.8–9,12–13,15,18–20; 3.6,17,23). **17:** A two-line proverb. *The bird* can represent the youth, who should now recognize and avoid the gang's trap, and the gang, who spread and bait the net only to plunge into it. **18–19:** *Such is the end*, wickedness is self-destructive (e.g., 5.22–23). *Gain*, profits acquired unjustly (e.g., 15.27; 28.16; Ex 18.21; 1 Sam 8.3). Proverbs is always suspicious of quick money (e.g., 13.11; 28.20,22; 21.6).

19 Such is the end[a] of all who are greedy for gain;
it takes away the life of its possessors.

20 Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.
21 At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
22 "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?
23 Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known to you.
24 Because I have called and you refused,
have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,
25 and because you have ignored all my counsel
and would have none of my reproof,
26 I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when panic strikes you,
27 when panic strikes you like a storm,
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come upon you.
28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.
29 Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the LORD,
30 would have none of my counsel,
and despised all my reproof,
31 therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way
and be sated with their own devices.
32 For waywardness kills the simple,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;
33 but those who listen to me will be secure
and will live at ease, without dread of disaster."

2 My child, if you accept my words
and treasure up my commandments within you,
2 making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
3 if you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for understanding;
4 if you seek it like silver,
and search for it as for hidden treasures—
5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD gives wisdom;

[a] Gk: Heb *are the ways*

1.20–33: Wisdom's first speech. Wisdom, personified as a woman, cries out in the *street . . . the squares . . . the busiest corner . . . the entrance of the city gates*, the hub of city life. City gates and nearby squares would bustle with merchants and people coming and going, while elders arbitrated matters of justice (e.g., Deut 21.19; 25.7; Ruth 4.1–12). Wisdom here resembles a prophet; she calls to a specific community, and announces and justifies judgment against it (e.g., Jer 7; 20; Zech 7). See also 3.13–20; 4.1–9; 5.15–20; 7.4–5; 8.1–9.6. **22:** *Simple*, see 1.4n. *Scoffers* are arrogant and mock anyone who tries to teach them (e.g., 9.7–8; 13.1; 14.6; 15.12; 21.4). *Fools* are thick-headed and rely on their misguided wits (e.g., 14.16; 28.26; 29.11). Wisdom challenges the confused affections of all three. **23:** *Reproof*, a critical rebuke intended to change a person's behavior; a valued form of instruction in Proverbs (e.g., 1.30; 3.11; 5.12; 12.1; 15.5,31–32; 29.1). **28:** *Seek . . . find*, a motif for the search for wisdom (e.g., 2.4–5; 3.13; 8.17,35). **31–33:** *Eat the fruit of their way*, a frequent metaphor for the act-consequence or retributive worldview (e.g., 13.2; 14.14; 18.20–21).

2.1–22: Search for wisdom. A twenty-two-line chapter, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet (cf. 31.10–31), that describes the search for wisdom as a process of collaboration: if the youth seeks wisdom wholeheartedly, then God grants it, and the youth enjoys wisdom's advantages. **1–4**: The search. **2:** *Heart* (Heb "leb"), the inner self, seat of cognition (i.e., the mind) and emotion, the conscience (e.g., v. 10; 3.1; 4.4; 16.23; 23.33). **4:** Comparison of wisdom favorably to *silver* and other precious metals, *hidden treasures*, and jewels signals its rarity and surpassing value (e.g., 3.14–15; 8.10–11,19; cf. Job 28.15–19). **5–11:** Wisdom is divine gift. **5:** *Fear of the LORD*, see 1.7n. *Knowledge of God*, recognizing God's ways and conducting oneself accordingly (cf. 9.10; Hos 4.1–2; 6.6; Jer 22.16; Isa 58.2). **6:** *From God's mouth*, the gift or spirit of discernment and understanding (cf. Job 22.22; 32.8;

from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly,
8 guarding the paths of justice
and preserving the way of his faithful ones.
9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice
and equity, every good path;
10 for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
11 prudence will watch over you;
and understanding will guard you.
12 It will save you from the way of evil,
from those who speak perversely,
13 who forsake the paths of uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness,
14 who rejoice in doing evil
and delight in the perverseness of evil;
15 those whose paths are crooked,
and who are devious in their ways.

16 You will be saved from the loose[a] woman,
from the adulteress with her smooth words,
17 who forsakes the partner of her youth
and forgets her sacred covenant;
18 for her way[b] leads down to death,
and her paths to the shades;
19 those who go to her never come back,
nor do they regain the paths of life.

20 Therefore walk in the way of the good,
and keep to the paths of the just.
21 For the upright will abide in the land,
and the innocent will remain in it;
22 but the wicked will be cut off from the land,
and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

3 My child, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments;
2 for length of days and years of life
and abundant welfare they will give you.

3 Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 So you will find favor and good repute
in the sight of God and of people.

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.

[a] Heb *strange*
[b] Cn: Heb *house*

Sir 6.18–37; 11.15; 24.3). **8–9:** *Paths . . . way*, see 1.15n. *Righteousness, justice, and equity*, see 1.3n. **10:** *Heart*, see v. 2; *soul* (Heb "nephesh"), the throat and windpipe, seat of appetites, emotions, and desires (e.g., 3.22; 21.10; Song 1.7; 3.1; 6.12; Job 30.25). **12–19**: Wisdom's protection. **16–19**: The first description of the "strange" woman (5.1–23; 6.20–35; 7.1–27; 9.13–18; cf. 22.14; 23.27). The father identifies her as "other" without saying exactly what makes her so. **16:** *Loose* (Heb "zarah"), an outsider to family or community, often considered threatening or forbidden (e.g., Deut 25.5; Hos 7.8–9; Isa 29.5; Jer 2.25). *Adulteress* (Heb "nokriyyah"), lit., a foreigner, usually a non-Israelite, but possibly anyone outside of one's family (e.g., Deut 17.15; Judg 19.12; Gen 31.15). *Smooth*, i.e., flattering but false, cf. 5.3; 6.24; 7.21. **17:** *Partner of her youth . . . sacred covenant* may refer to her husband and marriage agreement (cf. Mal 2.14), and to God and divine law (cf. Jer 3.4; Deut 31.26; Josh 3.3). **18**: *Shades*, the dead who inhabit Sheol (see 1.12n.). **21–22**: *The land*, a specific region (e.g., the Promised Land, Deut 4.10), the world (Isa 18.3), or "this world" (i.e., the land of the living, Ps 37.8–11). **22:** *Treacherous*, i.e., deceptive and unreliable (11.3,6; translated *faithless* in 21.18; 22.12; 25.19).

3.1–35: The sages' worldview. The chapter highlights how the sages understand the world to work, namely, that by God's wisdom, God created the world, giving it shape, meaningful order, and coherence that God continues to uphold. The wise and righteous align themselves with God's wisdom and flourish as a result; the foolish and wicked suffer and are expelled eventually from the world. Should the wicked prosper from time to time, as they do, it is an exception and not the rule (e.g., 10:1–2n.). **1–12:** Trust and honor God, six two-verse commands. **2:** *Length of days and years of life*, wisdom is associated with health and longevity (e.g., 3.18; 8.25; 9.11). **3:** *Loyalty and faithfulness* is God's toward the youth (cf., Gen 24.27; Ruth 2.20). On instruction as adornment,

6 In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from
evil.
8 It will be a healing for your flesh
and a refreshment for your body.

9 Honor the LORD with your substance
and with the first fruits of all your
produce;
10 then your barns will be filled with
plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with
wine.

11 My child, do not despise the LORD's
discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
12 for the LORD reproves the one he loves,
as a father the son in whom he
delights.

13 Happy are those who find wisdom,
and those who get understanding,
14 for her income is better than silver,
and her revenue better than gold.
15 She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare
with her.
16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold
of her;
those who hold her fast are called
happy.

19 The LORD by wisdom founded the
earth;
by understanding he established the
heavens;
20 by his knowledge the deeps broke open,
and the clouds drop down the dew.
21 My child, do not let these escape from
your sight:
keep sound wisdom and prudence,
22 and they will be life for your soul
and adornment for your neck.
23 Then you will walk on your way
securely
and your foot will not stumble.
24 If you sit down,[a] you will not be afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will be
sweet.

[a] Gk: Heb *lie down*

see 1.9n. *Write . . . on the tablet of your heart*, make the teachings indelibly part of oneself; see 2.2n.; Jer 31.33–34. **7:** *Wise in your own eyes*, overly confident about one's insight, self-deluded (cf. 26.5,16; 28.11,26; Isa 5.21; Jer 9.23–24). The wise are humble (e.g., 11.2; 15.33; 18.12; 22.4; Sir 3.17–24). **8:** *Refreshment for your body,* lit., "drink for your bones." Moist bones signify vitality (e.g., Job 21.23–24; Isa 58.11); dry bones denote despair (17.22; Ezek 37.1–14). **9–10:** Israel dedicated the *first fruits* of harvest to God in thanksgiving (Ex 23.15–16,19; Lev 23.9–14; Deut 26.1–11). Mention of religious practices and festivals is rare in Proverbs but frequent in other ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature.

3.13–20: Tribute to Wisdom framed by the word *happy* (Heb "'ashre"), i.e., fortunate or blessed (vv. 13,18). Happy proverbs or beatitudes commend an attribute or experience by observing the well-being of its possessor (e.g., 8.32,34; 28.14; Job 5.17; Ps 1.1–3; Mt 5.3–11; Lk 6.20–23). **14–15:** *Silver . . . gold . . . jewels*, see 2.4n. **16:** *In her right hand . . . left hand* evokes Egyptian depictions of gods holding symbols of their blessings. Maat, goddess of truth and justice, holds in one hand a scepter that represents prosperity and honor and, in the other, the ankh or symbol of life. **18:** *Tree of life*, a mythological image in the ancient Near East. Typically, the tree is in bloom with animals or people gathered around it to revere, touch, or eat from it. In the Hebrew Bible, the tree of life appears only in Proverbs and in Genesis in the garden of Eden (Gen 2.9; 3.22–24). Proverbs identifies the tree with other sources of well-being, including righteous speech (11.30), a fulfilled desire (13.12), and a gentle tongue (15.4). Revelation 22.2 attributes healing properties to the tree of life in the city of God's new creation. **19–20:** Wisdom as the instrument or agent by which God created the world; see 8.22–31; Ps 104.24; Jer 10.12; 51.15.

3.21–35: Wisdom's benefits, five prohibitions, and different fates. 21–26: Wisdom's security (e.g., 1.33; 2.7–8; 4.11–12). **22:** *Adornment*, see 1.9n. **23:** *Way*, see 1.15n. Fools and the wicked stumble on their paths (e.g., 1.10–19;

25 Do not be afraid of sudden panic,
or of the storm that strikes the wicked;
26 for the LORD will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being caught.

27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,[a]
when it is in your power to do it.
28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again,
tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you.
29 Do not plan harm against your neighbor who lives trustingly beside you.
30 Do not quarrel with anyone without cause,
when no harm has been done to you.
31 Do not envy the violent
and do not choose any of their ways;
32 for the perverse are an abomination to the LORD,
but the upright are in his confidence.
33 The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the abode of the righteous.
34 Toward the scorners he is scornful,
but to the humble he shows favor.
35 The wise will inherit honor,
but stubborn fools, disgrace.

4 Listen, children, to a father's instruction,
and be attentive, that you may gain[b] insight;
2 for I give you good precepts:
do not forsake my teaching.
3 When I was a son with my father,
tender, and my mother's favorite,
4 he taught me, and said to me,
"Let your heart hold fast my words;
keep my commandments, and live.
5 Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget,
nor turn away
from the words of my mouth.
6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;
love her, and she will guard you.
7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom,
and whatever else you get, get insight.
8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you;
she will honor you if you embrace her.
9 She will place on your head a fair garland;
she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."

10 Hear, my child, and accept my words,
that the years of your life may be many.
11 I have taught you the way of wisdom;
I have led you in the paths of uprightness.
12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered;
and if you run, you will not stumble.
13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go;
guard her, for she is your life.
14 Do not enter the path of the wicked,
and do not walk in the way of evildoers.
15 Avoid it; do not go on it;
turn away from it and pass on.
16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong;
they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.
17 For they eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.

[a] Heb *from its owners*
[b] Heb *know*

4.19; 5.22). **25:** *Panic . . . storm*, see 1.26–27; Isa 47.11. **27–32:** Five prohibitions about how not to treat others. **32:** *Abomination to the LORD*, what God loathes, often wrongs that go unnoticed and for which reparations are difficult to obtain (e.g., false weights and measures [11.1; 20.10,23], lying [12.22)], scoffing [24.9], and corrupting justice [17.15]). **33–35:** Fates of the wicked and upright. **33:** *House*, variously the structure, its inhabitants, all of a person's property, and descendants (e.g., Gen 7.1; 1 Sam 27.3). **34:** *Humility*, see 3.7n.

4.1–9: Get Wisdom. The father recalls his father's instruction. **1:** *Children* (lit., "sons"), the address of more than one son occurs occasionally in chs 1–9 (5.7; 7.24; 8.32–33). **5,7:** *Get* (Heb "qanah"), i.e., to buy with cash or exchange of goods (e.g., 17.16; Gen 47.19). The verb also refers to marriage (Ruth 4.5,10). Most marriages in the ancient Near East were negotiated as business arrangements between two families. **6–8:** *Do not forsake . . . love . . . embrace* depicts Wisdom as a beloved wife (5.15–20; 7.4; cf. 31.10–31). **9:** *Garland . . . crown*, symbols of favor, authority, and marriage (cf. Isa 61.10; 62.3; Song 3.11). On Wisdom as adornment, see 1.9n.

4.10–19: Two paths. 11: *Way . . . paths*, see 1.15n. **13:** *She is your life*. Reference to the masculine noun *instruction* (see 1.2n.) in the feminine suggests it is a name for Wisdom (cf. 4.6–8). **17:** *Eat . . . drink,* what people consume,

18 But the path of the righteous is like the
light of dawn,
which shines brighter and brighter until
full day.
19 The way of the wicked is like deep
darkness;
they do not know what they stumble
over.
20 My child, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.
21 Do not let them escape from your sight;
keep them within your heart.
22 For they are life to those who find them,
and healing to all their flesh.
23 Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life.
24 Put away from you crooked speech,
and put devious talk far from you.
25 Let your eyes look directly forward,
and your gaze be straight before you.
26 Keep straight the path of your feet,
and all your ways will be sure.
27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left;
turn your foot away from evil.

5 My child, be attentive to my wisdom;
incline your ear to my understanding,
2 so that you may hold on to prudence,
and your lips may guard knowledge.
3 For the lips of a loose[a] woman drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil;
4 but in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
sharp as a two-edged sword.
5 Her feet go down to death;
her steps follow the path to Sheol.
6 She does not keep straight to the path of
life;
her ways wander, and she does not
know it.

7 And now, my child,[b] listen to me,
and do not depart from the words of my
mouth.
8 Keep your way far from her,
and do not go near the door of her
house;
9 or you will give your honor to others,
and your years to the merciless,
10 and strangers will take their fill of your
wealth,
and your labors will go to the house of
an alien;
11 and at the end of your life you will groan,
when your flesh and body are
consumed,
12 and you say, "Oh, how I hated discipline,
and my heart despised reproof!
13 I did not listen to the voice of my
teachers
or incline my ear to my instructors.
14 Now I am at the point of utter ruin
in the public assembly."

15 Drink water from your own cistern,
flowing water from your own well.
16 Should your springs be scattered abroad,
streams of water in the streets?
17 Let them be for yourself alone,
and not for sharing with strangers.
18 Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,

[a] Heb *strange*
[b] Gk Vg: Heb *children*

literally and metaphorically, reveals their character (e.g., 9.5,17; 23.3,6; 31.27; cf. Job 15.16; 34.7). **18–19:** *Light . . . dark* reinforces the contrast between the two paths, as do hazards on the way of the wicked (cf. Job 18.8–11).

4.20–27: Anatomy of the wise features five organs of the body particularly important in Proverbs: ears, eyes, heart, mouth, and feet. **23:** *Heart*, see 2.2n.

5.1–14: The "strange" woman, see 2.16–19. **3:** *Honey*, a sweetener and an antibiotic in medicines and ointments; symbolic for sensual delight and enlightenment (e.g., 5.3; 16.24; 24.13; 25.16,27; Sir 24.20; cf. 1 Sam 14.24–30). Her speech initially resembles a lover's, delightfully sweet and smooth (e.g., Song 4.11; 5.16; 7.9). **4:** *Wormwood*, a bitter plant (e.g., Jer 9.15; 23.15; Lam 3.19; Am 6.12). **5:** *Sheol,* see 1.12n. **6:** *Path . . . ways*, see 1.15n. Fools and the wicked are willfully oblivious to where they are going (e.g., 4.19; 12.15). **9–10:** *Others . . . alien*, undeserving "others" not in the youth's family.

5.15–23: The wife of your youth described as water and waterworks, metaphors for female lovers in ancient Near Eastern love poetry (e.g., Song 4.12,15). Eating and drinking are metaphors for sex (9.17). Later wisdom texts identify Wisdom as the wife of one's youth (e.g., Sir 15.2–3; Wis 8.2). **15:** *Cistern*, a reservoir to store runoff rainwater. **16–17:** *Scattered abroad . . . in the streets*, a warning that the husband must be sexually exclusive with

19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe.
May her breasts satisfy you at all times;
may you be intoxicated always by her love.
20 Why should you be intoxicated, my son, by another woman
and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?
21 For human ways are under the eyes of the LORD,
and he examines all their paths.
22 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare them,
and they are caught in the toils of their sin.
23 They die for lack of discipline,
and because of their great folly they are lost.

6 My child, if you have given your pledge to your neighbor,
if you have bound yourself to another,[a]
2 you are snared by the utterance of your lips,[b]
caught by the words of your mouth.
3 So do this, my child, and save yourself,
for you have come into your neighbor's power:
go, hurry,[c] and plead with your neighbor.
4 Give your eyes no sleep
and your eyelids no slumber;
5 save yourself like a gazelle from the hunter,[d]
like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

6 Go to the ant, you lazybones;
consider its ways, and be wise.
7 Without having any chief
or officer or ruler,
8 it prepares its food in summer,
and gathers its sustenance in harvest.
9 How long will you lie there, O lazybones?
When will you rise from your sleep?
10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest,
11 and poverty will come upon you like a robber,
and want, like an armed warrior.

12 A scoundrel and a villain
goes around with crooked speech,
13 winking the eyes, shuffling the feet,
pointing the fingers,
14 with perverted mind devising evil,
continually sowing discord;
15 on such a one calamity will descend suddenly;
in a moment, damage beyond repair.

16 There are six things that the LORD hates,
seven that are an abomination to him:
17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood,
18 a heart that devises wicked plans,
feet that hurry to run to evil,
19 a lying witness who testifies falsely,
and one who sows discord in a family.

[a] Or *a stranger*
[b] Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *the words of your mouth*
[c] Or *humble yourself*
[d] Cn: Heb *from the hand*

his wife or risk that she will not remain his alone (e.g., Job 31.9–10; Sir 25.25). **19–20:** *Deer . . . doe*, animal imagery for lovers is common in ancient love poetry (e.g., Song 2.9,17; 4.5; 7.3). **21:** *Eyes of the LORD*, see 15.3; 22.12; Zech 4.10. **22–23:** See 1.10–19.

6.1–19: Admonitions. 1–5: Caution against providing surety (i.e., guaranteeing loans). Proverbs regards the practice as too risky, particularly when the debtor is a stranger (11.15; 17.18; 20.16; 22.26–27; but cf. Sir 8.13). **4:** Cf. Ps 132.4. **6–8:** *Go to the ant*, one of many proverbs that teach by observing the natural world (e.g., 30.18–19,24–28,29–31; Job 12.7–9; cf. 1 Kings 4.33). **9–11:** Warnings about laziness (vs. diligence) are frequent in book (10.4,26; 12.24,27; 13.4; 15.19; 18.9; 19.15,24; 20.4; 21.25; 22.13; 24.30–34; 26.13–16). **12–15:** Caution about the *scoundrel*, a person of questionable character. **13:** Body language reveals character. *Winking the eyes*, i.e., regarding others with envy or hatred (Ps 35.19), or squinting while scheming trouble (10.10; 16.30). **16–19:** *Six . . . seven*, a numerical proverb (see 30.1–33n.) about *abominations* to God (see 3.32n.). **17:** *Haughty eyes* indicate arrogance (e.g., 21.4; 30.13). *Hands that shed innocent blood,* i.e., commit murder (e.g., Deut 19.10–13; 21.1–9; Jer 7.5–7). *Heart*, see 2.2n.

20 My child, keep your father's
commandment,
and do not forsake your mother's
teaching.
21 Bind them upon your heart always;
tie them around your neck.
22 When you walk, they[a] will lead you;
when you lie down, they[a] will watch
over you;
and when you awake, they[a] will talk
with you.
23 For the commandment is a lamp and the
teaching a light,
and the reproofs of discipline are the
way of life,
24 to preserve you from the wife of
another,[b]
from the smooth tongue of the
adulteress.
25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
and do not let her capture you with her
eyelashes;
26 for a prostitute's fee is only a loaf of
bread,[c]
but the wife of another stalks a man's
very life.
27 Can fire be carried in the bosom
without burning one's clothes?
28 Or can one walk on hot coals
without scorching the feet?
29 So is he who sleeps with his neighbor's
wife;
no one who touches her will go
unpunished.
30 Thieves are not despised who steal only
to satisfy their appetite when they are
hungry.
31 Yet if they are caught, they will pay
sevenfold;
they will forfeit all the goods of their
house.
32 But he who commits adultery has no
sense;
he who does it destroys himself.
33 He will get wounds and dishonor,
and his disgrace will not be wiped away.
34 For jealousy arouses a husband's fury,
and he shows no restraint when he
takes revenge.
35 He will accept no compensation,
and refuses a bribe no matter how great.

7 My child, keep my words
and store up my commandments with
you;
2 keep my commandments and live,
keep my teachings as the apple of your
eye;
3 bind them on your fingers,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"
and call insight your intimate friend,
5 that they may keep you from the loose[d]
woman,

[a] Heb *it*
[b] Gk: MT *the evil woman*
[c] Cn Compare Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *for because of a harlot to a piece of bread*
[d] Heb *strange*

6.20–35: Warning against adultery, defined in ancient Israel as sex between an engaged or married woman and any man who is not her husband. **20:** *Father . . . mother,* see 1.8–9n. **21:** On Wisdom as adornment, see 1.9n. **22:** *They,* lit., "she." Parental instructions are personified as a woman who cares for her companion constantly (e.g., 4.6). **23:** Teaching as a *lamp . . . light* recalls the psalmist's similar description of God's word (Ps 119.105). **24–26,29:** The "strange" woman (see 2.16n.) is described as "the evil woman" (see textual note *a*, on the next page) and another's wife. **25:** *Capture you with her eyelashes*. A woman who "traps" her lover with her eyes and hair is a trope in ancient Near Eastern love poetry (e.g., Song 7.5; cf. Sir 26.9). **26:** Comparison of a notably low *prostitute's fee* (less than in Gen 38.17; cf. Sir 26.22) to the high cost of adultery suggests the warning is not about sex principally but the damage done by adultery to family and community, especially in patrilineal cultures (i.e., those tracing descent through the male line) like ancient Israel. Adultery raises questions about paternity and risks the passing of the family inheritance to illegitimate heirs. Deut 22.22 and Lev 20.10 designate adultery a capital offense. **29–32:** *Sevenfold*, an extreme penalty for a petty thief (cf. Ex 22.1–4,7). **33–35:** *Jealousy* drives the wronged husband to physically and unrelentingly attack the adulterer; see 27.4.

7.1–27: Another warning about the "strange" woman (see 2.16–22; 5.1–23; 6.20–35). **2:** The *apple of your eye* or pupil, the center and means of vision, a metaphor for what one loves and protects (e.g., Deut 32.10; Ps 17.8). **3:** On teaching as adornment, see 1.9n. **4:** *Sister*, a term of endearment for a female lover in ancient Near Eastern

from the adulteress with her smooth
words.

6 For at the window of my house
I looked out through my lattice,
7 and I saw among the simple ones,
I observed among the youths,
a young man without sense,
8 passing along the street near her corner,
taking the road to her house
9 in the twilight, in the evening,
at the time of night and darkness.

10 Then a woman comes toward him,
decked out like a prostitute, wily of
heart.[a]
11 She is loud and wayward;
her feet do not stay at home;
12 now in the street, now in the squares,
and at every corner she lies in wait.
13 She seizes him and kisses him,
and with impudent face she says to him:
14 "I had to offer sacrifices,
and today I have paid my vows;
15 so now I have come out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have found
you!
16 I have decked my couch with coverings,
colored spreads of Egyptian linen;
17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,
aloes, and cinnamon.
18 Come, let us take our fill of love until
morning;
let us delight ourselves with love.
19 For my husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey.
20 He took a bag of money with him;
he will not come home until full moon."

21 With much seductive speech she
persuades him;
with her smooth talk she compels him.
22 Right away he follows her,
and goes like an ox to the slaughter,
or bounds like a stag toward the trap[b]
23 until an arrow pierces its entrails.
He is like a bird rushing into a snare,
not knowing that it will cost him his
life.

24 And now, my children, listen to me,
and be attentive to the words of my
mouth.
25 Do not let your hearts turn aside to her
ways;
do not stray into her paths.
26 For many are those she has laid low,
and numerous are her victims.
27 Her house is the way to Sheol,
going down to the chambers of death.

8 Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her
voice?
2 On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
3 beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries
out:

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

love poetry (e.g., Song 4.9–10,12; 5.1–2). **5:** *Loose . . . adulteress,* see 2.16n. **6:** Peering through a *window . . . lattice* with expectation or curiosity (Gen 26.8; Judg 5.28; 2 Sam 6.16; 2 Kings 9.30–32). **7:** *Simple . . . youths*, see 1.4n. **8–9:** *Twilight . . . evening*, when people still move about the city. *Night and darkness*, when people, including lovers, can move discreetly and conceal themselves (e.g., Gen 30.15–17; Song 3.1–4; Job 24.15). **10:** *Decked out like a prostitute*, perhaps she covers her face with a veil (Gen 38.14–15; cf. Job 24.15). **11:** *Loud,* see 9.13. *Feet,* perhaps a play on words, since *feet* is a euphemism for genitalia (e.g., Deut 28.57; Ezek 16.25). **12:** *Street . . . squares,* the woman and Wisdom frequent the same places; see 1.20–21; 8.2–3; 9.3,14. **14–20:** Her invitation. **14:** *Sacrifices . . . vows* suggests she is pious and honest (e.g., Pss 50.14; 66.13; Isa 19.21; Jon 2.9). Sacrifices of well-being (so Hebrew, cf. Lev 7.15–17; 19.5) implies she has fresh meat for dinner, a rarity (see 9.2n.); to eat with her helps her to fulfill her religious obligation. **16–17:** Her *bed* is thick with luxurious fabrics and sensual aromas: *linen* from Egypt (e.g., Isa 3.23; Ezek 16.10,13); *myrrh*, an aromatic resin (Ps 45.9; Song 1.13; 4.14; 5.5,13); *aloe* from India; and *cinnamon* from Sri Lanka (Ex 30.23; Song 4.14). **18:** *Take our fill*, eating and drinking are metaphors for sex (cf. 9.17; 30.20; Song 5.1). **21:** *Smooth talk*, see 5.1n. **24:** *Children*, see 4.1n. **27:** *Sheol,* see 1.12n.

8.1–36: Wisdom's self-revelation. The most developed poem about Wisdom in chs 1–9 (see 1.20–33; 3.13–18; 4.5–9; 7.4–5). Compare Sir 24.1–22; Wis 7.7–10.18. **2–3:** *Heights*, perhaps the elevated administrative

4 "To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.
5 O simple ones, learn prudence;
acquire intelligence, you who lack it.
6 Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right;
7 for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
8 All the words of my mouth are righteous;
there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.
9 They are all straight to one who understands
and right to those who find knowledge.
10 Take my instruction instead of silver,
and knowledge rather than choice gold;
11 for wisdom is better than jewels,
and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.
12 I, wisdom, live with prudence,[a]
and I attain knowledge and discretion.
13 The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the way of evil
and perverted speech I hate.
14 I have good advice and sound wisdom;
I have insight, I have strength.
15 By me kings reign,
and rulers decree what is just;
16 by me rulers rule,
and nobles, all who govern rightly.
17 I love those who love me,
and those who seek me diligently find me.
18 Riches and honor are with me,
enduring wealth and prosperity.
19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold,
and my yield than choice silver.
20 I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,
21 endowing with wealth those who love me,
and filling their treasuries.
22 The LORD created me at the beginning[b] of his work,[c]
the first of his acts of long ago.
23 Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
24 When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—
26 when he had not yet made earth and fields,[a]
or the world's first bits of soil.
27 When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
28 when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
29 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *me as the beginning*
[c] Heb *way*

section of ancient cities (cf. 9.3,14). *Way . . . crossroads . . . gates*, see 1.20–21n. **4–5:** She calls first to everyone (*people . . . all who live*) and then, as in 1.22, to the *simple* (see 1.4n.) and fools (*you who lack it*). **6–11:** The integrity of Wisdom's speech. **7:** *Abomination* (i.e., something loathed); see 3.32n. **10–11:** See 2.4n. **12–14:** Wisdom's character. **13:** *Fear of the LORD*, see. 1.7n. Her affections mirror God's. **15–16:** Wisdom inspires all just government; see 16.12–13n.; cf. Solomon's prayer for wisdom (1 Kings 3.6–-15). **17:** *Love . . . seek . . . find,* she reciprocates affection and is accessible to those who search for her (in contrast, see Job 28). **18–21:** Wisdom's benefits. **19:** See 2.4n. **20:** *Way . . . paths*, see 1.15n. **22–31:** Wisdom, God, and creation (see 3.19–20). Wisdom is clear that she was with God at creation, but the exact nature of their relationship and her role is uncertain. **22:** The meaning of the Heb verb ("qanah") translated *created* is debated. Usually translated "to acquire" (see 4.5,7n.), it can also mean "to create," particularly when God is the subject (e.g., Gen 14.19; Deut 32.6; Ps 139.13). **23:** *Set up* is likewise contested, perhaps "poured out" (Heb "nasak"), as with the anointing of a king (see Ps 2.6), or "woven, formed" (Heb "sakak"), as in knit together (see Ps 139.13; Job 10.11). **24:** *Depths*, i.e., the primeval ocean (Gen 1.2). **27:** *Circle on the face of the deep*, i.e., the horizon. **28–29:** Cf. Job 38.8–10; Ps 104.9.

30 then I was beside him, like a master
worker;[a]
and I was daily his[b] delight,
rejoicing before him always,
31 rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

32 "And now, my children, listen to me:
happy are those who keep my ways.
33 Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
34 Happy is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
35 For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the LORD;
36 but those who miss me injure themselves;
all who hate me love death."

9 Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars.
2 She has slaughtered her animals, she has
mixed her wine,
she has also set her table.
3 She has sent out her servant-girls, she
calls
from the highest places in the town,
4 "You that are simple, turn in here!"
To those without sense she says,
5 "Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
6 Lay aside immaturity,[c] and live,
and walk in the way of insight."

7 Whoever corrects a scoffer wins abuse;
whoever rebukes the wicked gets hurt.
8 A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate
you;
the wise, when rebuked, will love you.
9 Give instruction[d] to the wise, and they
will become wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will gain in
learning.
10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of
wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is
insight.
11 For by me your days will be multiplied,
and years will be added to your life.
12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself;
if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

13 The foolish woman is loud;
she is ignorant and knows nothing.
14 She sits at the door of her house,
on a seat at the high places of the town,
15 calling to those who pass by,
who are going straight on their way,
16 "You who are simple, turn in here!"
And to those without sense she says,
17 "Stolen water is sweet,
and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."
18 But they do not know that the dead[e] are
there,
that her guests are in the depths of
Sheol.

[a] Another reading is *little child*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *his*
[c] Or *simpleness*
[d] Heb lacks *instruction*
[e] Heb *shades*

30: *Master worker* (Heb "'amon") is also unclear. Alternative translations are "faithful one" and "nurtured one, child." **32:** *My children*, see 1.8–9n. **34:** *At my gates . . . my doors*, where a lover waits expectantly for his beloved in ancient Near Eastern love poetry (e.g., Song 2.9; Sir 14.20,22–25).

9.1–6: Wisdom's house and invitation. To build a house(hold) is a mark of wisdom, see 14.1n.; 24.3. **1:** *Seven pillars*, a round number that connotes many, completeness (e.g., 6.16–19; 24.16; 26.16). **2:** *Slaughtered her animals . . . mixed her wine*. Meat was a delicacy reserved for special occasions; see Gen 18.7–8; 43.16; 1 Sam 25.2–35. Wine was mixed with spices; see 9.5; Song 8.2. **3:** *Highest places*, see 8.2n. **4:** *Simple*, see 1.4n.; 1.22. **5:** *Immaturity* is described as an impediment one can choose to discard, see 1.22n.

9.7–12: Counsel for teachers. 7–8: *Scoffer*, see 1.22n. **10:** Reiteration of the book's motto; see 1.7n. **11:** *By me*, first-person-singular speech suggests that this is a misplaced conclusion to wisdom's invitation (vv. 1–6; cf. 8.15–16). *Days . . . years*, see 3.2n.

9.13–18: Folly's house and invitation. 14: *High places*, see 8.2n. She and Wisdom are in many of the same places; see v. 3. **16:** The first line of her invitation is identical to Wisdom's (v. 4). *Simple*, see 1.4n. **17:** *Stolen water*, a metaphor for a woman who is engaged or married to another man; see 5.15–23n. Eating and drinking are metaphors for sex (cf. 7.18; 30.20; Song 5.1). **18:** *Dead*, see 2.18n. *Sheol*, see 1.12n.

10 The proverbs of Solomon.

A wise child makes a glad father,
but a foolish child is a mother's grief.
2 Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit,
but righteousness delivers from death.
3 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry,
but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.
4 A slack hand causes poverty,
but the hand of the diligent makes rich.
5 A child who gathers in summer is prudent,
but a child who sleeps in harvest brings shame.
6 Blessings are on the head of the righteous,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
7 The memory of the righteous is a blessing,
but the name of the wicked will rot.
8 The wise of heart will heed commandments,
but a babbling fool will come to ruin.
9 Whoever walks in integrity walks securely,
but whoever follows perverse ways will be found out.
10 Whoever winks the eye causes trouble,
but the one who rebukes boldly makes peace.[a]
11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
12 Hatred stirs up strife,
but love covers all offenses.
13 On the lips of one who has understanding wisdom is found,
but a rod is for the back of one who lacks sense.
14 The wise lay up knowledge,
but the babbling of a fool brings ruin near.
15 The wealth of the rich is their fortress;
the poverty of the poor is their ruin.
16 The wage of the righteous leads to life,
the gain of the wicked to sin.
17 Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life,
but one who rejects a rebuke goes astray.
18 Lying lips conceal hatred,
and whoever utters slander is a fool.
19 When words are many, transgression is not lacking,
but the prudent are restrained in speech.
20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver;
the mind of the wicked is of little worth.
21 The lips of the righteous feed many,
but fools die for lack of sense.

[a] Gk: Heb *but a babbling fool will come to ruin*

10.1–22.16: The proverbs of Solomon. Comprised predominantly of two-line proverbs, the oldest section of Proverbs can be divided into 10.1–15.33, which features antithetical proverbs, and 16.1–22.16, which includes a mix of proverbial forms. **10.1:** *Proverbs of Solomon,* see Introduction. Many proverbs name the effects of wise and foolish sons (NRSV "child") on their parents (e.g., 17.21,25; 19.26; 23.15–16,24–25; 27.11; 28.7; 29.3). **2–3:** In the sages' worldview, the wise and righteous align themselves with God's wisdom and flourish as a result. The foolish and wicked suffer and are expelled eventually from the world; see v. 30; 11.4; 12.3,7; cf. Job 21.18; 27.13–23; Ps 1.4. **2:** Unjust gain, see 1.18–9n. **4:** Laziness, see 6.9–11n. **5:** See v. 1n.; cf. 6.6–8. **6:** *Blessings . . . on the head* reveal favor; cf. 11.26; Gen 49.26; Deut 33.16. **7:** The sages emphasize the value of a good name in life and after death, see 22.1; Eccl 7.1; Job 18.13,15–19; Sir 41.11–13; cf. Isa 56.5; Ps 112.6. **8:** Fools talk and refuse to listen, see v. 14; 12.23; cf. Eccl 10.12–14a. **9:** *Walks . . . ways*, see 1.15n. **10:** *Winks the eye*, see 6.13n. **11:** *Fountain of life*, a metaphor for the mouth (i.e., speech) of the righteous, wise teaching (13.14), fear of the LORD (14.27; see 1.7n.), and wisdom (16.22). **13:** *Rod*, physical discipline was part of ancient Near Eastern education (e.g., 13.24; 17.10; 19.29; 22.15; 23.13; 26.3). **15:** Wealth and poverty are important and complicated topics in Proverbs. Wealth can be an unqualified benefit (e.g., v. 22; 22.4; 24.3–4) and a liability (e.g., 11.4,28; cf. Eccl 5.13–16; 6.1–2). The sages at times attribute poverty to laziness (e.g., v. 4; 6.9–11n.; 12.24; 20.13; 24.33–34), but elsewhere point to violence, extortion, and deceit (e.g., 11.1,16; 13.23; 21.6). **17:** *Instruction*, see 1.2n. *Path*, see 1.15n. **18–20:** Wise versus foolish speech is a persistent theme, e.g., vv. 6,11. **20:** *Choice silver*, see 8.19n. A *tongue* is the shape of a bar of precious metal (e.g., Josh 7.21,24).

22 The blessing of the LORD makes rich,
and he adds no sorrow with it.[a]
23 Doing wrong is like sport to a fool,
but wise conduct is pleasure to a person
of understanding.
24 What the wicked dread will come upon
them,
but the desire of the righteous will be
granted.
25 When the tempest passes, the wicked
are no more,
but the righteous are established forever.
26 Like vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to
the eyes,
so are the lazy to their employers.
27 The fear of the LORD prolongs life,
but the years of the wicked will be
short.
28 The hope of the righteous ends in
gladness,
but the expectation of the wicked
comes to nothing.
29 The way of the LORD is a stronghold for
the upright,
but destruction for evildoers.
30 The righteous will never be removed,
but the wicked will not remain in the
land.
31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth
wisdom,
but the perverse tongue will be cut off.
32 The lips of the righteous know what is
acceptable,
but the mouth of the wicked what is
perverse.

11 A false balance is an abomination to
the LORD,
but an accurate weight is his delight.
2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace;
but wisdom is with the humble.
3 The integrity of the upright guides them,
but the crookedness of the treacherous
destroys them.
4 Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,
but righteousness delivers from death.
5 The righteousness of the blameless keeps
their ways straight,
but the wicked fall by their own
wickedness.
6 The righteousness of the upright saves
them,
but the treacherous are taken captive by
their schemes.
7 When the wicked die, their hope
perishes,
and the expectation of the godless
comes to nothing.
8 The righteous are delivered from trouble,
and the wicked get into it instead.
9 With their mouths the godless would
destroy their neighbors,
but by knowledge the righteous are
delivered.
10 When it goes well with the righteous, the
city rejoices;
and when the wicked perish, there is
jubilation.
11 By the blessing of the upright a city is
exalted,
but it is overthrown by the mouth of the
wicked.
12 Whoever belittles another lacks sense,
but an intelligent person remains silent.
13 A gossip goes about telling secrets,
but one who is trustworthy in spirit
keeps a confidence.
14 Where there is no guidance, a nation[b]
falls,
but in an abundance of counselors
there is safety.
15 To guarantee loans for a stranger brings
trouble,
but there is safety in refusing to do so.

[a] Or *and toil adds nothing to it*
[b] Or *an army*

24–25: See 10.2–3n. **26:** *Lazy*, see 6.9–11n. **27:** *Fear of the LORD*, see 1.7n. **30:** See 2.21–22n.

11.1: Justice in the marketplace requires use of reliable weights and measures; see 16.11; 20.10,23; cf. Lev 19.35–36; Deut 25.13–16; Am 8.5; Mic 6.1–11; Ezek 45.10; Hos 12.7. *Abomination to the LORD*, see 3.32n. **2:** *Pride* precedes a fall, cf. 16.18; 18.3,12. *Humility*, see 3.7n. **3–8:** Fates of *the righteous* and *the wicked*; see 10.2–3n. **3:** *Treacherous*, see 2.22n. **4:** See 10.2. *Day of wrath*, when God judges all nations and exacts punishment on a cosmic scale (Job 21.30; Zeph 1.15,18; Ezek 7.19; cf. Ps 49.7). **9–11:** Effects of the righteous and wicked on others, cf. 28.12; 29.2. **12–13:** Silence as smart, in contrast to belittling and gossiping about others (e.g., 25.9–10). **13:** *Gossip*, see 16.28n. **14:** Wise, strategic advice can be a matter of survival, see 15.22; 20.18; 24.6. **15:** See 6.1–5n.

16 A gracious woman gets honor,
but she who hates virtue is covered with shame.[a]
The timid become destitute,[b]
but the aggressive gain riches.
17 Those who are kind reward themselves,
but the cruel do themselves harm.
18 The wicked earn no real gain,
but those who sow righteousness get a true reward.
19 Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live,
but whoever pursues evil will die.
20 Crooked minds are an abomination to the LORD,
but those of blameless ways are his delight.
21 Be assured, the wicked will not go unpunished,
but those who are righteous will escape.
22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout
is a beautiful woman without good sense.
23 The desire of the righteous ends only in good;
the expectation of the wicked in wrath.
24 Some give freely, yet grow all the richer;
others withhold what is due, and only suffer want.
25 A generous person will be enriched,
and one who gives water will get water.
26 The people curse those who hold back grain,
but a blessing is on the head of those who sell it.
27 Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor,
but evil comes to the one who searches for it.
28 Those who trust in their riches will wither,[c]
but the righteous will flourish like green leaves.
29 Those who trouble their households will inherit wind,
and the fool will be servant to the wise.
30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
but violence[d] takes lives away.
31 If the righteous are repaid on earth,
how much more the wicked and the sinner!

12 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but those who hate to be rebuked are stupid.
2 The good obtain favor from the LORD,
but those who devise evil he condemns.
3 No one finds security by wickedness,
but the root of the righteous will never be moved.
4 A good wife is the crown of her husband,
but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones.
5 The thoughts of the righteous are just;
the advice of the wicked is treacherous.
6 The words of the wicked are a deadly ambush,
but the speech of the upright delivers them.
7 The wicked are overthrown and are no more,
but the house of the righteous will stand.
8 One is commended for good sense,
but a perverse mind is despised.
9 Better to be despised and have a servant,
than to be self-important and lack food.

[a] Compare Gk Syr: Heb lacks *but she… shame*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *The timid… destitute*
[c] Cn: Heb *fall*
[d] Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *a wise man*

16: MT juxtaposes lines a and d for the comparison of *a gracious woman* with *aggressive* men; NRSV follows the Septuagint, which adds lines b and c. **18–19,21:** See 10.2–3n. **20:** *Abomination to the LORD*, see 3.32n. **22:** *Pig*, considered an unclean animal (see Deut 14.8). **24–25:** A paradox of generosity, cf. Eccl 11.1–2. **26:** *Those who hold back grain,* wealthy landholders or officials who regulate food distribution and hold back for more profit (e.g., Gen 42.6; Deut 2.28; Am 8.5–6). *Blessing on the head*, see 10.6n. **28:** On the righteous as flourishing trees, see v. 30; Pss 1.3; 92.12–14. **29:** *House*, see 3.33n. **30:** *Tree of life*, see 3.18n.; cf. v. 28.

12:1: The objects of affections matter; see 1.22n. *Discipline* (see 1.2n.), one form of which is *reproof* (see 1.23n.). **2–3:** See 10.2–3n. *Root of the righteous*, see 11.28n. **4:** *Good wife*, lit., "woman of substance" (Heb "'eshet ḥayil"; see 31.3n.,10–31). Several proverbs encourage finding such a wife; see 14.1; 19.14; 18.22. *Crown*, a symbol of dignity; used elsewhere to describe wisdom and her benefits (4.9; 14.24; cf. Sir 6.31), gray hair (16.31), and grandchildren (17.6). *Bones*, see 3.8n. **6:** See 1.10–19. **7:** See 10.2–3n. **9:** Heb "qalah" (*be despised*) usually means

10 The righteous know the needs of their animals,
but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.
11 Those who till their land will have plenty of food,
but those who follow worthless pursuits have no sense.
12 The wicked covet the proceeds of wickedness,[a]
but the root of the righteous bears fruit.
13 The evil are ensnared by the transgression of their lips,
but the righteous escape from trouble.
14 From the fruit of the mouth one is filled with good things,
and manual labor has its reward.
15 Fools think their own way is right,
but the wise listen to advice.
16 Fools show their anger at once,
but the prudent ignore an insult.
17 Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence,
but a false witness speaks deceitfully.
18 Rash words are like sword thrusts,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
19 Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.
20 Deceit is in the mind of those who plan evil,
but those who counsel peace have joy.
21 No harm happens to the righteous,
but the wicked are filled with trouble.
22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD,
but those who act faithfully are his delight.
23 One who is clever conceals knowledge,
but the mind of a fool[b] broadcasts folly.
24 The hand of the diligent will rule,
while the lazy will be put to forced labor.
25 Anxiety weighs down the human heart,
but a good word cheers it up.
26 The righteous gives good advice to friends,[c]
but the way of the wicked leads astray.
27 The lazy do not roast[d] their game,
but the diligent obtain precious wealth.[d]
28 In the path of righteousness there is life,
in walking its path there is no death.

13 A wise child loves discipline,[e]
but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.
2 From the fruit of their words good persons eat good things,
but the desire of the treacherous is for wrongdoing.
3 Those who guard their mouths preserve their lives;
those who open wide their lips come to ruin.
4 The appetite of the lazy craves, and gets nothing,
while the appetite of the diligent is richly supplied.
5 The righteous hate falsehood,
but the wicked act shamefully and disgracefully.
6 Righteousness guards one whose way is upright,
but sin overthrows the wicked.
7 Some pretend to be rich, yet have nothing;
others pretend to be poor, yet have great wealth.

[a] Or *covet the catch of the wicked*
[b] Heb *the heart of fools*
[c] Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Cn: Heb *A wise child the discipline of his father*

"to be of little account, lightly esteemed" (e.g., Isa 3.5; 16.14). One of many "better than" or relative proverbs (e.g., 15.16–17; 16.8,19,32; 17.1,12; 19.1,22; 21.9,19; 22.1; 25.24; 27.5,10c; 28.6); cf. Eccl 4.6,13; 7.1–3; 9.4; Sir 10.27. **10:** See 27.23–27n.; cf. Ex 23.12; Deut 22.6; 25.4. **11:** See 28.19; for a different claim, cf. 13.23. **12:** *Root of the righteous*, see 11.28n. **13:** See 10.2–3n. **14:** Words and thoughts were thought to be stored in the belly; hence descriptions of speech as fruit or food; see 13.2; 18.8 (=26.22),20–21. **15:** See 3.7n. **16:** Many proverbs urge self-restraint and patience, particularly with regard to anger (14.17,29; 15.18; 17.27; 19.11; 25.15,28). **17:** *Honest evidence . . . false witness*, one of many proverbs that urge telling the truth in everyday and legal settings; see 6.19; 14.5,25; 19.5,9; 21.28; 24.28; 25.18. **18:** Speech as a weapon, cf. 25.18; 26.18–19; 30.14. **22:** *Abomination to the LORD*, see 3.32n. **24:** *Diligent . . . lazy*, see 6.9–11n. **25:** Anxiety and the need for good cheer, cf. 15.13; 17.22; 18.14. *Heart*, see 2.2n.

13.1 *Discipline*, see 1.2n. *Scoffer*, see 1.22n. **2:** See 12.14n. **4:** *Lazy . . . diligent*, see 10.4n. **7–8:** Ironies about

8 Wealth is a ransom for a person's life,
but the poor get no threats.
9 The light of the righteous rejoices,
but the lamp of the wicked goes out.
10 By insolence the heedless make strife,
but wisdom is with those who take advice.
11 Wealth hastily gotten[a] will dwindle,
but those who gather little by little will increase it.
12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.
13 Those who despise the word bring destruction on themselves,
but those who respect the commandment will be rewarded.
14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,
so that one may avoid the snares of death.
15 Good sense wins favor,
but the way of the faithless is their ruin.[b]
16 The clever do all things intelligently,
but the fool displays folly.
17 A bad messenger brings trouble,
but a faithful envoy, healing.
18 Poverty and disgrace are for the one who ignores instruction,
but one who heeds reproof is honored.
19 A desire realized is sweet to the soul,
but to turn away from evil is an abomination to fools.
20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise,
but the companion of fools suffers harm.
21 Misfortune pursues sinners,
but prosperity rewards the righteous.
22 The good leave an inheritance to their children's children,
but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.
23 The field of the poor may yield much food,
but it is swept away through injustice.
24 Those who spare the rod hate their children,
but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.
25 The righteous have enough to satisfy their appetite,
but the belly of the wicked is empty.

14 The wise woman[c] builds her house,
but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.
2 Those who walk uprightly fear the LORD,
but one who is devious in conduct despises him.
3 The talk of fools is a rod for their backs,[d]
but the lips of the wise preserve them.
4 Where there are no oxen, there is no grain;
abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.
5 A faithful witness does not lie,
but a false witness breathes out lies.
6 A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain,
but knowledge is easy for one who understands.
7 Leave the presence of a fool,
for there you do not find words of knowledge.
8 It is the wisdom of the clever to understand where they go,
but the folly of fools misleads.

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *from vanity*
[b] Cn Compare Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *is enduring*
[c] Heb *Wisdom of women*
[d] Cn: Heb a *rod of pride*

wealth and poverty, see 10.15n. **9:** *Lamp*, a metaphor for life (e.g., 20.20; 24.20; Job 18.5–6). **11:** *Wealth hastily gotten*, see 1.18–19n. **12:** *Tree of life*, see 3.18n. **13:** See 10.2–3n.; cf. v. 18. **14:** *Fountain of life*, see 10.11n. **15:** *Faithless*, see 2.22n. **17:** *Messengers* were essential and highly valued in the ancient world. People relied on them to represent and communicate for them across vast distances, see 22.21; 25.13; 26.6. **18:** See v. 13. **19:** See v. 12. *Soul*, see 2.10n. **21–22:** Punishment and reward extend to future generations; see Job 27.3–18. **23:** *Poverty*, see 10.15n. **24:** *Rod*, see 10.13n.

14.1: A *wise woman* who builds a house complements proverbs about the good wife (see 12.4n.), and evokes Wisdom (9.1–6) and the woman of substance (31.10–31; cf. 14.1). **2:** *Fear of the LORD*, see 1.7n. **3:** In the fool's mouth is a *rod of pride* (so Hebrew) that can harm others (cf. 10.31). **4:** *Oxen*, draft animals in the ancient Near East. Farmers used wooden-frame plows pulled by oxen to plow the fields (cf. Deut 22.10; 1 Kings 19.19). **5:** Faithful witness, see 12.17n. **6:** *Scoffer*, see 1.22n. Surprisingly here the scoffer seeks wisdom (cf. 1.28).

9 Fools mock at the guilt offering,[a]
but the upright enjoy God's favor.
10 The heart knows its own bitterness,
and no stranger shares its joy.
11 The house of the wicked is destroyed,
but the tent of the upright flourishes.
12 There is a way that seems right to a person,
but its end is the way to death.[b]
13 Even in laughter the heart is sad,
and the end of joy is grief.
14 The perverse get what their ways deserve,
and the good, what their deeds deserve.[c]
15 The simple believe everything,
but the clever consider their steps.
16 The wise are cautious and turn away from evil,
but the fool throws off restraint and is careless.
17 One who is quick-tempered acts foolishly,
and the schemer is hated.
18 The simple are adorned with[d] folly,
but the clever are crowned with knowledge.
19 The evil bow down before the good,
the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
20 The poor are disliked even by their neighbors,
but the rich have many friends.
21 Those who despise their neighbors are sinners,
but happy are those who are kind to the poor.
22 Do they not err that plan evil?
Those who plan good find loyalty and faithfulness.
23 In all toil there is profit,
but mere talk leads only to poverty.
24 The crown of the wise is their wisdom,[e]
but folly is the garland[f] of fools.
25 A truthful witness saves lives,
but one who utters lies is a betrayer.
26 In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence,
and one's children will have a refuge.
27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
so that one may avoid the snares of death.
28 The glory of a king is a multitude of people;
without people a prince is ruined.
29 Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding,
but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly.
30 A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh,
but passion makes the bones rot.
31 Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker,
but those who are kind to the needy honor him.
32 The wicked are overthrown by their evildoing,
but the righteous find a refuge in their integrity.[g]
33 Wisdom is at home in the mind of one who has understanding,
but it is not[h] known in the heart of fools.
34 Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin is a reproach to any people.
35 A servant who deals wisely has the king's favor,
but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *ways of death*
[c] Cn: Heb *from upon him*
[d] Or *inherit*
[e] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *riches*
[f] Cn: Heb *is the folly*
[g] Gk Syr: Heb *in their death*
[h] Gk Syr: Heb lacks *not*

9: *Guilt offering*, see Lev 5.14–6.1–7. **10,13:** *Heart*, see 2.22n. **11:** See 10.2–3n. **12:** See 16.25. **13:** Incongruities like joy and pain can coexist, (e.g., Eccl 7.1–4). **15:** *Simple*, see 1.4n. **17:** *Quick-tempered*, see 12.16n. **18–19:** Esteem brought by wisdom. **18:** On wisdom as adornment, see 1.9n. *Crowned*, see 12.4n. **20–21:** One proverb about common social reactions to the rich and poor (v. 20), and a second that condemns it (v. 21; see 10.15n.; cf. v. 31; 17.5; 22.22; 29.13). **24:** *Crown*, see 12.4n. **26–27:** *Fear of the LORD*, see 1.7n. *Fountain of life*, see 10.11n. **28:** The first of many proverbs about kings (e.g., 14.35; 16.10,12–15; 19.12; 20.2,8,26,28). **29:** *Anger*, see 12.16n. **30:** *Bones*, see 3.8n. **31:** That everyone shares the same creator motivates respect for and generosity to the poor; see 17.5; 19.17; 21.13; 22.2; 29.13 (cf. 22.16; 28.27).

15 A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.
2 The tongue of the wise dispenses
knowledge,[c]
but the mouths of fools pour out folly.
3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
keeping watch on the evil and the good.
4 A gentle tongue is a tree of life,
but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.
5 A fool despises a parent's instruction,
but the one who heeds admonition is
prudent.
6 In the house of the righteous there is
much treasure,
but trouble befalls the income of the
wicked.
7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the minds of fools.
8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an
abomination to the LORD,
but the prayer of the upright is his
delight.
9 The way of the wicked is an abomination
to the LORD,
but he loves the one who pursues
righteousness.
10 There is severe discipline for one who
forsakes the way,
but one who hates a rebuke will die.
11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the
LORD,
how much more human hearts!
12 Scoffers do not like to be rebuked;
they will not go to the wise.
13 A glad heart makes a cheerful
countenance,
but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.
14 The mind of one who has understanding
seeks knowledge,
but the mouths of fools feed on folly.
15 All the days of the poor are hard,
but a cheerful heart has a continual
feast.
16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD
than great treasure and trouble with it.
17 Better is a dinner of vegetables where
love is
than a fatted ox and hatred with it.
18 Those who are hot-tempered stir up strife,
but those who are slow to anger calm
contention.
19 The way of the lazy is overgrown with
thorns,
but the path of the upright is a level
highway.
20 A wise child makes a glad father,
but the foolish despise their mothers.
21 Folly is a joy to one who has no sense,
but a person of understanding walks
straight ahead.
22 Without counsel, plans go wrong,
but with many advisers they succeed.
23 To make an apt answer is a joy to
anyone,
and a word in season, how good it is!
24 For the wise the path of life leads
upward,
in order to avoid Sheol below.
25 The LORD tears down the house of the
proud,
but maintains the widow's boundaries.
26 Evil plans are an abomination to the LORD,
but gracious words are pure.
27 Those who are greedy for unjust gain
make trouble for their households,
but those who hate bribes will live.
28 The mind of the righteous ponders how
to answer,
but the mouth of the wicked pours out
evil.

[c] Cn: Heb *makes knowledge good*

15.1,4: Gentle speech, see 25.15n. **3:** *Eyes of the LORD*, see 5.21n. **4:** *Tree of life*, see 3.18n. **8–9:** *Abomination to the LORD*, see 3.32n. **8:** Proverbs refers rarely to worship and rituals; see v. 29; 3.9–10; 7.14; 15.29; 21.3,27; 28.9. **11:** *Sheol and Abaddon*, see 1.12n. *Heart*, see 2.22n. **12:** *Scoffers*, see 1.22n. **16–17:** *Better than*, see 12.9n. *Fear of the LORD*, see 1.7n. Meat was a rare delicacy; see 9.2. **18:** *Anger*, see 12.16n. **19:** *Path . . . way*, see 1.15n. **20:** See 10.1n. **22:** See 11.14n. **23:** *An apt answer* (i.e., fitting for the time); see 25.11–12n.; cf. Eccl 3.1–9. **24:** *Sheol*, see 1.12n. **25:** Moving boundary stones that marked the ownership of land was illegal; see 22.28; 23.10–11; 25.25; Deut 19.14; 27.17; Isa 5.8; Hos 5.10. On divine protection of widows, among the most vulnerable members of society, see Pss 68.5; 146.9. *Light to the eyes*, see 15.30n. **26:** *Abomination to the LORD*, see 3.32n. **27:** *Unjust gain*, see 1.18–19n. *Bribes*, see 17.8n. **30:** *Refreshes the body*, lit., "fattens the bones," see 3.8n.

29 The Lord is far from the wicked,
but he hears the prayer of the righteous.
30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,
and good news refreshes the body.
31 The ear that heeds wholesome admonition
will lodge among the wise.
32 Those who ignore instruction despise themselves,
but those who heed admonition gain understanding.
33 The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom,
and humility goes before honor.

16 The plans of the mind belong to mortals,
but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.
2 All one's ways may be pure in one's own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the spirit.
3 Commit your work to the Lord,
and your plans will be established.
4 The Lord has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.
5 All those who are arrogant are an abomination to the Lord;
be assured, they will not go unpunished.
6 By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for,
and by the fear of the Lord one avoids evil.
7 When the ways of people please the Lord,
he causes even their enemies to be at peace with them.
8 Better is a little with righteousness
than large income with injustice.
9 The human mind plans the way,
but the Lord directs the steps.
10 Inspired decisions are on the lips of a king;
his mouth does not sin in judgment.
11 Honest balances and scales are the Lord's;
all the weights in the bag are his work.
12 It is an abomination to kings to do evil,
for the throne is established by righteousness.
13 Righteous lips are the delight of a king,
and he loves those who speak what is right.
14 A king's wrath is a messenger of death,
and whoever is wise will appease it.
15 In the light of a king's face there is life,
and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain.
16 How much better to get wisdom than gold!
To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.
17 The highway of the upright avoids evil;
those who guard their way preserve their lives.
18 Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.
19 It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor
than to divide the spoil with the proud.
20 Those who are attentive to a matter will prosper,
and happy are those who trust in the Lord.
21 The wise of heart is called perceptive,
and pleasant speech increases persuasiveness.
22 Wisdom is a fountain of life to one who has it,
but folly is the punishment of fools.

33: *Fear of the Lord*, see 1.7n. *Humility* is a prerequisite for honor; see 3.7n.

16.1–9: Proverbs about God's sovereignty. **1:** *Mind* (see 2.2n.) and tongue are connected intimately (e.g., 10.20; 16.23; 17.20); see v. 9. **2:** *Ways*, see 1.15n. *In one's own eyes*, see 3.7n. *Spirit* (Heb "ruaḥ"), lit., "breath," a person's temperament (cf. 1.23; 15.13; 18.14). *The Lord weighs*, i.e., examines (21.2; 24.12; cf. 17.3). **4:** *Its purpose*, i.e., when God has need of it; see Sir 39.16–35. **5:** *Arrogant*, see 3.7n. *Abomination to the Lord*, see 3.32n. **6:** *Loyalty and faithfulness*, see 3.33; 14.22. *Fear of the Lord*, see 1.7n. **8:** *Better than*, see 12.9n. **9:** See v. 1. **10–15:** Proverbs about the king. **11:** *Balances . . . scales*, see 11.1n. **12–13:** *Abomination to kings*, i.e., they loathe it. Kings were responsible for establishing and maintaining justice (e.g., 20.8; 25.5; 29.4, 14). **14:** The king's wrath was ferocious and potentially devastating (cf. 14.35; 19.12; 20.2; 24.21–22). **15:** *Spring rain* to nourish the first crops was considered a blessing from God (Deut 11.14; Joel 2.23; cf. Jer 3.3). **16–24:** Various virtues. **16:** *Gold . . . silver*, see 2.4n. **18–19:** See 11.2n. **21:** *Pleasant speech*, lit., "sweet lips"; see v. 24. Contrast the strange woman's flattering speech (see 2.16n.; 5.3; 7.5,22). **22:** *Fountain of life*,

23 The mind of the wise makes their speech judicious,
and adds persuasiveness to their lips.
24 Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to the body.
25 Sometimes there is a way that seems to be right,
but in the end it is the way to death.
26 The appetite of workers works for them;
their hunger urges them on.
27 Scoundrels concoct evil,
and their speech is like a scorching fire.
28 A perverse person spreads strife,
and a whisperer separates close friends.
29 The violent entice their neighbors,
and lead them in a way that is not good.
30 One who winks the eyes plans[a] perverse things;
one who compresses the lips brings evil to pass.
31 Gray hair is a crown of glory;
it is gained in a righteous life.
32 One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
and one whose temper is controlled than one who captures a city.
33 The lot is cast into the lap,
but the decision is the LORD's alone.

17 Better is a dry morsel with quiet
than a house full of feasting with strife.
2 A slave who deals wisely will rule over a child who acts shamefully,
and will share the inheritance as one of the family.
3 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold,
but the LORD tests the heart.
4 An evildoer listens to wicked lips;
and a liar gives heed to a mischievous tongue.
5 Those who mock the poor insult their Maker;
those who are glad at calamity will not go unpunished.
6 Grandchildren are the crown of the aged,
and the glory of children is their parents.
7 Fine speech is not becoming to a fool;
still less is false speech to a ruler.[b]
8 A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of those who give it;
wherever they turn they prosper.
9 One who forgives an affront fosters friendship,
but one who dwells on disputes will alienate a friend.
10 A rebuke strikes deeper into a discerning person
than a hundred blows into a fool.
11 Evil people seek only rebellion,
but a cruel messenger will be sent against them.
12 Better to meet a she-bear robbed of its cubs
than to confront a fool immersed in folly.
13 Evil will not depart from the house
of one who returns evil for good.
14 The beginning of strife is like letting out water;
so stop before the quarrel breaks out.
15 One who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the righteous
are both alike an abomination to the LORD.

[a] Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *to plan*
[b] Or *a noble person*

see 10.11n. **24:** *Soul*, see 2.10n. **25:** See 14.12. **26:** The relentless press of hunger, see Eccl 6.7. **27–30:** Three dangerous types of people (cf. 6.12–19). **27:** *Scoundrel*, see 6.12–15. Scorching speech, see 26.18–19. **28:** *Whisperer*, i.e., a gossip; see 11.13; 17.9; 18.8; 20.19; 26.22; Sir 27.16–21. **30:** Body language hints at character. *Winks the eyes*, see 6.13n. **31:** *Crown*, see 12.4n. **32:** See 14.29n. **33:** *Lot*, see 1.14n.

17.1: *Better than*, see 12.9n.; cf. 15.16–17. **2:** Wisdom can upset household and communal codes; see 19.10; 30.21–23. **3:** *Crucible*, a container used to extract precious metals from ore. The metal is melted at high heat, refined by pouring off its impurities or dross (cf. 25.4–5), and tested for purity (cf. 27.21). **5:** See 14.31n. **6:** *Crown*, see 12.4n. **7:** *Not becoming*, i.e., not fitting, incongruous, cf. 19.10; 26.1. **8:** Belief that a bribe is effective proves to be self-delusion—so *in the eyes* (cf. 3.7n.). Gifts can be useful to gain favor (e.g., 18.18; 19.6; 21.14), but bribes used toward wrong ends are forbidden (see v. 23; 15.27; cf. Ex 23.8; Deut 16.19). **9:** See 10.12. **10:** *Rebuke*, see 1.23n. The law forbade more than forty blows for any offense (Deut 25.1–3). **12:** *She-bear robbed of her cubs*, the epitome of fierce, unrelenting rage (2 Sam 17.8; Hos 13.8). **15:** *Abomination to the LORD*, see 3.32n.

16 Why should fools have a price in hand
to buy wisdom, when they have no
mind to learn?
17 A friend loves at all times,
and kinsfolk are born to share
adversity.
18 It is senseless to give a pledge,
to become surety for a neighbor.
19 One who loves transgression loves strife;
one who builds a high threshold invites
broken bones.
20 The crooked of mind do not prosper,
and the perverse of tongue fall into
calamity.
21 The one who begets a fool gets trouble;
the parent of a fool has no joy.
22 A cheerful heart is a good medicine,
but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.
23 The wicked accept a concealed bribe
to pervert the ways of justice.
24 The discerning person looks to wisdom,
but the eyes of a fool to the ends of the
earth.
25 Foolish children are a grief to their
father
and bitterness to her who bore them.
26 To impose a fine on the innocent is not
right,
or to flog the noble for their integrity.
27 One who spares words is knowledgeable;
one who is cool in spirit has
understanding.
28 Even fools who keep silent are
considered wise;
when they close their lips, they are
deemed intelligent.

18 The one who lives alone is self-
indulgent,
showing contempt for all who have
sound judgment.[a]
2 A fool takes no pleasure in
understanding,
but only in expressing personal opinion.
3 When wickedness comes, contempt
comes also;
and with dishonor comes disgrace.
4 The words of the mouth are deep waters;
the fountain of wisdom is a gushing
stream.
5 It is not right to be partial to the guilty,
or to subvert the innocent in judgment.
6 A fool's lips bring strife,
and a fool's mouth invites a flogging.
7 The mouths of fools are their ruin,
and their lips a snare to themselves.
8 The words of a whisperer are like
delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the
body.
9 One who is slack in work
is close kin to a vandal.
10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
the righteous run into it and are safe.
11 The wealth of the rich is their strong
city;
in their imagination it is like a high wall.
12 Before destruction one's heart is
haughty,
but humility goes before honor.
13 If one gives answer before hearing,
it is folly and shame.
14 The human spirit will endure sickness;
but a broken spirit—who can bear?
15 An intelligent mind acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks
knowledge.
16 A gift opens doors;
it gives access to the great.
17 The one who first states a case seems
right,
until the other comes and cross-
examines.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

18: *Surety*, see 6.1–5n. **20:** See 10.2–3n. **21,25:** See 10.1n. **22:** *Spirit*, see 16.2n. *Bones*, see 3.8n. **23:** See v. 8n. **27–28:** Silence is a virtue of the wise (e.g., 10.19; 12.23; 13.3; 15.28), but not a fail-safe indication of wisdom.

18.1: *Lives alone*, i.e., deliberately separates from the community. **2:** See 12.23; Eccl 10.3. **3:** See 11.2n. **4:** *Mouth,* see 10.11n. *Deep waters* denote quantity, cool refreshment, and mystery—even chaos (20.5; cf. Ps 64.6). **5:** *To be partial*, see 24.23–25n.; cf. 17.26. **6–8:** Effects of foolish speech, see 10.13–14; 12.13; 13.3; 14.3,8. **8:** See 26.22. On *words* as food, see 12.14n. *Whisperer*, see 16.28n. **9:** *Slack in work*, see 6.9–11n. **10–11:** A proverb pair that contrasts the certain security of the *name of the* LORD (e.g., Pss 20.2; 54.3; 61.3) to the unreliable security of wealth (cf. 10.15–16; 11.4; 28.11). **12:** *Haughty*, see 11.2n. *Humility*, see 3.7n. **14:** See 17.22n. **16:** See 17.8n. **17–18:** Warning to hear all sides of a dispute before making a decision. Some disputes may require lots to decide them (see 1.14n.),

18 Casting the lot puts an end to disputes
and decides between powerful
contenders.
19 An ally offended is stronger than a city;[a]
such quarreling is like the bars of a
castle.
20 From the fruit of the mouth one's
stomach is satisfied;
the yield of the lips brings satisfaction.
21 Death and life are in the power of the
tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruits.
22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
and obtains favor from the LORD.
23 The poor use entreaties,
but the rich answer roughly.
24 Some[b] friends play at friendship[c]
but a true friend sticks closer than one's
nearest kin.

19 Better the poor walking in integrity
than one perverse of speech who is a
fool.
2 Desire without knowledge is not good,
and one who moves too hurriedly
misses the way.
3 One's own folly leads to ruin,
yet the heart rages against the LORD.
4 Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.
5 A false witness will not go unpunished,
and a liar will not escape.
6 Many seek the favor of the generous,
and everyone is a friend to a giver of
gifts.
7 If the poor are hated even by their kin,
how much more are they shunned by
their friends!
When they call after them, they are not
there.[d]
8 To get wisdom is to love oneself;
to keep understanding is to prosper.
9 A false witness will not go unpunished,
and the liar will perish.
10 It is not fitting for a fool to live in
luxury,
much less for a slave to rule over
princes.
11 Those with good sense are slow to anger,
and it is their glory to overlook an
offense.
12 A king's anger is like the growling of a
lion,
but his favor is like dew on the grass.
13 A stupid child is ruin to a father,
and a wife's quarreling is a continual
dripping of rain.
14 House and wealth are inherited from
parents,
but a prudent wife is from the LORD.
15 Laziness brings on deep sleep;
an idle person will suffer hunger.
16 Those who keep the commandment will
live;
those who are heedless of their ways
will die.
17 Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the
LORD,
and will be repaid in full.
18 Discipline your children while there is
hope;
do not set your heart on their
destruction.
19 A violent tempered person will pay the
penalty;
if you effect a rescue, you will only have
to do it again.[d]

[a] Gk Syr Vg Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Syr Tg: Heb *A man of*
[c] Cn Compare Syr Vg Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain

i.e., trusting divine guidance. **19:** *Bars of a castle*, perhaps iron bars used to secure the gates (e.g., 1 Sam 23.7). **20–21:** See v. 8n. **22:** See 12.4n. **23:** Observation or condemnation of callousness to *the poor*; see 14.31n.

19.1 *Better than*, see 12.9n. **3:** Fools refuse to take responsibility for themselves (cf. Sir 15.11–20). **4:** The impact of *wealth* on relationships; see vv. 6–7; 14.20–21; 10.15n. **5:** *False witness,* see 12.17n. See v. 9. **8:** See 10.2–3n.; cf. 15.32. **10:** *Not fitting*, see 17.7n. A portrait of the world turned upside down; see 30.21–22; Eccl 10.6–7. **11:** *Anger,* see 12.16n. **12:** Royal wrath and favor as forces of nature (cf. 16.14–15; 20.2). Kings were associated with lions in the ancient Near East (e.g., Judg 14.5–6; 1 Sam 7.34–36; 1 Kings 10.19–20; Jer 50.17; Ezek 32.2–3). **13–14:** Sources of household suffering and joy from a male perspective. *Contentious wife*, see 21.9,19; 25.24; 27.15–16. *Wise wife*, see 12.4n. **15:** *Laziness*, see 6.9–11n. **16:** *Commandment* (Heb "mitswah") in Proverbs typically refers to wisdom instruction (e.g., 2.1; 3.1; 4.4; 6.20,23; 13.13). **17:** See 14.31n. **19:** *Violent tempered*, see 12.16n.

20 Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom for the future.
21 The human mind may devise many plans,
but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established.
22 What is desirable in a person is loyalty,
and it is better to be poor than a liar.
23 The fear of the LORD is life indeed;
filled with it one rests secure
and suffers no harm.
24 The lazy person buries a hand in the dish,
and will not even bring it back to the mouth.
25 Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence;
reprove the intelligent, and they will gain knowledge.
26 Those who do violence to their father and chase away their mother
are children who cause shame and bring reproach.
27 Cease straying, my child, from the words of knowledge,
in order that you may hear instruction.
28 A worthless witness mocks at justice,
and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.
29 Condemnation is ready for scoffers,
and flogging for the backs of fools.

20 Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler,
and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.
2 The dread anger of a king is like the growling of a lion;
anyone who provokes him to anger forfeits life itself.
3 It is honorable to refrain from strife,
but every fool is quick to quarrel.
4 The lazy person does not plow in season;
harvest comes, and there is nothing to be found.
5 The purposes in the human mind are like deep water,
but the intelligent will draw them out.
6 Many proclaim themselves loyal,
but who can find one worthy of trust?
7 The righteous walk in integrity—
happy are the children who follow them!
8 A king who sits on the throne of judgment
winnows all evil with his eyes.
9 Who can say, "I have made my heart clean;
I am pure from my sin"?
10 Diverse weights and diverse measures
are both alike an abomination to the LORD.
11 Even children make themselves known by their acts,
by whether what they do is pure and right.
12 The hearing ear and the seeing eye—
the LORD has made them both.
13 Do not love sleep, or else you will come to poverty;
open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread.
14 "Bad, bad," says the buyer,
then goes away and boasts.
15 There is gold, and abundance of costly stones;
but the lips informed by knowledge are a precious jewel.
16 Take the garment of one who has given surety for a stranger;
seize the pledge given as surety for foreigners.

21: God's sovereignty, see 16.1–9; 20.24; 21.30–31. **22:** *Better than*, see 12.9n. **23:** *Fear of the LORD*, see 1.7n. **24:** *Laziness*, see 6.9–11n., cf. 26.15. **25:** *Scoffer . . . simple*, see 1.22n.; 9.7–12; 15.12; 21.11. **26:** See 28.24n.

20.1: *Wine* and *strong drink* (distilled wine or beer) personified as types of troublemakers they create. Proverbs condemns drunkenness but not drinking alcohol (cf. 9.2,5; 23.19–21,29–35; 31.4–7; Sir 31.30–31,39–40). **2:** King's anger, see 19.12n. **4:** *Lazy*, see 6.9–11n. **5:** *Deep water,* see 18.4n. **6:** *Who can find*, a rhetorical question that suggests trustworthy people are few and far between (cf. 31.10; Eccl 7.24). **7:** See 13.22. **8:** *Winnow*, to throw threshed grain into the air with a wooden shovel or fork so the wind can separate its components—grain, straw, chaff—by weight (Ps 1.4; Isa 41.15–16). **10:** *Weights . . . measures*, see 11.1n.; cf. v. 23. *Abomination to the LORD*, see 3.32n. **13:** *Do not love sleep*, see 6.9–11n. **14:** A haggler dismisses a product to lower its price, and then boasts about his cunning (cf. 25.14; 27.2). **15:** *Gold . . . stones . . . jewel*, see 2.4n. **16:** *Surety*, see 6.1–5n.;

17 Bread gained by deceit is sweet,
but afterward the mouth will be full of gravel.
18 Plans are established by taking advice;
wage war by following wise guidance.
19 A gossip reveals secrets;
therefore do not associate with a babbler.
20 If you curse father or mother,
your lamp will go out in utter darkness.
21 An estate quickly acquired in the beginning
will not be blessed in the end.
22 Do not say, "I will repay evil";
wait for the LORD, and he will help you.
23 Differing weights are an abomination to the LORD,
and false scales are not good.
24 All our steps are ordered by the LORD;
how then can we understand our own ways?
25 It is a snare for one to say rashly, "It is holy,"
and begin to reflect only after making a vow.
26 A wise king winnows the wicked,
and drives the wheel over them.
27 The human spirit is the lamp of the LORD,
searching every inmost part.
28 Loyalty and faithfulness preserve the king,
and his throne is upheld by righteousness.[a]
29 The glory of youths is their strength,
but the beauty of the aged is their gray hair.
30 Blows that wound cleanse away evil;
beatings make clean the innermost parts.

21 The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD;
he turns it wherever he will.
2 All deeds are right in the sight of the doer,
but the LORD weighs the heart.
3 To do righteousness and justice
is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.
4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart—
the lamp of the wicked—are sin.
5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance,
but everyone who is hasty comes only to want.
6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue
is a fleeting vapor and a snare[b] of death.
7 The violence of the wicked will sweep them away,
because they refuse to do what is just.
8 The way of the guilty is crooked,
but the conduct of the pure is right.
9 It is better to live in a corner of the housetop
than in a house shared with a contentious wife.
10 The souls of the wicked desire evil;
their neighbors find no mercy in their eyes.
11 When a scoffer is punished, the simple become wiser;
when the wise are instructed, they increase in knowledge.

[a] Gk: Heb *loyalty*
[b] Gk: Heb *seekers*

cf. 27.13. **17:** *Bread gained by deceit*, i.e., stolen food or a steady diet of dishonesty; cf. 9.17; 8.18; 26.22. **18:** See 11.14n. **19:** *Gossip*, see 16.28n. **20:** Cursing parents was a capital offense; see Ex 21.17; Lev 20.9; cf. Deut 27.16. *Lamp will go out*, see 13.9n. **21:** *Quickly acquired,* i.e., inalienable family property wrongfully seized from another (e.g., 1 Kings 21) or claimed prematurely; see 1.18–19n. **22:** Even pondering revenge is forbidden; retribution belongs to God. See 24.29; cf. Lev 19.18; Ex 23.4; Rom 12.20–21. **23:** See v. 10; 11.1n. **24:** See 16.1,3–4, 9; 21.30–31. **25:** *It is holy*, a vow that consecrates a treasured item to God and offers it to the temple. Vows must be paid (cf. Num 30.3; Deut 23.22–24; Ps 50.14; Eccl 4.17–5.5; Sir 18.22–23). **26:** See v. 8. *Wheel*, the heavy wheel or drum rolled over grain to thresh it (Isa 28.27). **27:** *Lamp*, see 13.9n. **28:** See 16.12–13n.; 25.5; 29.14. **29:** See 16.31. **30:** Physical discipline was part of ancient Near Eastern education; see 10.13n.

21.1–2: God directs and examines human hearts. *Streams of water*, channels used to irrigate dry land (cf. Isa 32.2). *Weighs the heart*, see 16.2n. **4:** *Lamp*, see 13.9n. **5–7:** Comparisons of diligent and deceitful and violent means and ends. **6:** Unjustly acquired wealth, see 1.18–19n. *Fleeting vapor* (Heb "hebel"), i.e., ephemeral (e.g., Ps 144.4; Job 7.16; Eccl 1.2 ["vanity"]). **7:** See 10.2–3n. **9:** *Contentious wife*, see 19.13–14n. **11:** See 19.25.

12 The Righteous One observes the house of the wicked;
he casts the wicked down to ruin.
13 If you close your ear to the cry of the poor,
you will cry out and not be heard.
14 A gift in secret averts anger;
and a concealed bribe in the bosom, strong wrath.
15 When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous,
but dismay to evildoers.
16 Whoever wanders from the way of understanding
will rest in the assembly of the dead.
17 Whoever loves pleasure will suffer want;
whoever loves wine and oil will not be rich.
18 The wicked is a ransom for the righteous,
and the faithless for the upright.
19 It is better to live in a desert land
than with a contentious and fretful wife.
20 Precious treasure remains[a] in the house of the wise,
but the fool devours it.
21 Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness
will find life[b] and honor.
22 One wise person went up against a city of warriors
and brought down the stronghold in which they trusted.
23 To watch over mouth and tongue
is to keep out of trouble.
24 The proud, haughty person, named "Scoffer,"
acts with arrogant pride.
25 The craving of the lazy person is fatal,
for lazy hands refuse to labor.
26 All day long the wicked covet,[c]
but the righteous give and do not hold back.
27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination;
how much more when brought with evil intent.
28 A false witness will perish,
but a good listener will testify successfully.
29 The wicked put on a bold face,
but the upright give thought to[d] their ways.
30 No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel,
can avail against the LORD.
31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the LORD.

22 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
and favor is better than silver or gold.
2 The rich and the poor have this in common:
the LORD is the maker of them all.
3 The clever see danger and hide;
but the simple go on, and suffer for it.
4 The reward for humility and fear of the LORD
is riches and honor and life.
5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse;
the cautious will keep far from them.
6 Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray.
7 The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of the lender.
8 Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,
and the rod of anger will fail.

[a] Gk: Heb *and oil*
[b] Gk: Heb *life and righteousness*
[c] Gk: Heb *all day long one covets covetously*
[d] Another reading is *establish*

12: *Righteous One,* i.e., God; see 22.12; Isa 24.16. **13:** See 14.31n. **14:** *Gift . . . bribe*, see 17.8n. **16:** *Assembly of the dead*, i.e., Sheol, see 1.12n. **18:** *Ransom*, a payment to buy someone out of trouble; the person can be innocent (e.g., 6.35; Ex 30.12,15–16; Num 31.50; Isa 43.3). *Faithless*, see 2.22n. See 11.8. **19:** See v. 9. **22:** Wisdom proves stronger than physical and military might, see 20.18; 24.5–6; Eccl 9.13–18. **23:** See 13.3; 18.21. **24:** *Scoffer*, see 1.22n. **25:** *Lazy*, see 6.9–11n. **27:** *Abomination*, see 3.32n. **28:** *False witness,* see 12.17n. **29:** *Bold face*, i.e., defiant, see 7.13. **30–31:** Limits of human wisdom before God, see 16.1–9; 19.21.

22.1: *Good name*, see 10.7n. **2:** See 14.31n. **3:** See 27.12. **4–5:** See 10.2–3n. **4:** *Fear of the LORD*, see 1.7n. **7:** Economic disparities fuel disparities in power and position; see 6.1–5. **8:** *Sow . . . reap*, a metaphor for acts

9 Those who are generous are blessed,
for they share their bread with the poor.
10 Drive out a scoffer, and strife goes out;
quarreling and abuse will cease.
11 Those who love a pure heart and are
gracious in speech
will have the king as a friend.
12 The eyes of the LORD keep watch over
knowledge,
but he overthrows the words of the
faithless.
13 The lazy person says, "There is a lion
outside!
I shall be killed in the streets!"
14 The mouth of a loose[a] woman is a deep
pit;
he with whom the LORD is angry falls
into it.
15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a boy,
but the rod of discipline drives it far
away.
16 Oppressing the poor in order to enrich
oneself,
and giving to the rich, will lead only to
loss.

17 The words of the wise:

Incline your ear and hear my words,[b]
and apply your mind to my teaching;
18 for it will be pleasant if you keep them
within you,
if all of them are ready on your lips.
19 So that your trust may be in the LORD,
I have made them known to you
today—yes, to you.
20 Have I not written for you thirty sayings
of admonition and knowledge,
21 to show you what is right and true,
so that you may give a true answer to
those who sent you?

22 Do not rob the poor because they are
poor,
or crush the afflicted at the gate;
23 for the LORD pleads their cause
and despoils of life those who despoil
them.
24 Make no friends with those given to
anger,
and do not associate with hotheads,
25 or you may learn their ways
and entangle yourself in a snare.
26 Do not be one of those who give
pledges,
who become surety for debts.
27 If you have nothing with which to pay,
why should your bed be taken from
under you?
28 Do not remove the ancient landmark
that your ancestors set up.
29 Do you see those who are skillful in their
work?
They will serve kings;
they will not serve common people.

23 When you sit down to eat with a ruler,
observe carefully what[c] is before you,
2 and put a knife to your throat
if you have a big appetite.
3 Do not desire the ruler's[d] delicacies,
for they are deceptive food.

[a] Heb *strange*
[b] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise*
[c] Or *who*
[d] Heb *his*

and consequences (e.g., 1.31; 11.18). **10:** *Scoffer,* see 1.22n. **12:** *Faithless*, see 2.22n. **13:** No excuse is too absurd for *the lazy*; see 26.13. **14:** *Loose*, i.e., "strange" woman, see 2.16n.; cf. 23.27. **15:** *Rod of discipline*, see 10.13n. **16:** *Give to the rich*, perhaps as a gift or bribe, see 17.8n.

22.17–24.22: The words of the wise. An artful adaptation of the Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope*; see Introduction. Sages in the ancient Near East honed their thoughts on the wisdom literature of neighboring cultures (see 30.1–33; 31.1–9). **17–21:** Direct address and a call to attention recall chs 1–9; see 1.8–9n.; cf. 23.19. **20:** *Thirty sayings*, the number of instructions contained in *Amenemope*. **21:** *Give a true answer to those who sent you*, i.e., be an honest and reliable messenger; see 13.17n. **22–23:** *Poor,* see 14.31n. *At the gate*, the site of the market and legal proceedings, see 1.20–21n. **24–25**: Cautions about anger, see 12.16n. *Amenemope* warns about the "heated man" or hothead. **26-27:** *Surety*, see 6.1–5n. The law stipulated that debtors' cloaks had to be returned to them at night (e.g., Ex 22.25–26; Deut 24.12–13), but no provision existed for guarantors. **28:** *Ancient landmark*, see 15.25n.; cf. 23.10–11. **23.1–3:** Warning against showing envy or greed in the presence of superiors (cf. Sir 31.12–

4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich;
be wise enough to desist.
5 When your eyes light upon it, it is gone;
for suddenly it takes wings to itself,
flying like an eagle toward heaven.
6 Do not eat the bread of the stingy;
do not desire their delicacies;
7 for like a hair in the throat, so are they.[a]
"Eat and drink!" they say to you;
but they do not mean it.
8 You will vomit up the little you have eaten,
and you will waste your pleasant words.
9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,
who will only despise the wisdom of your words.
10 Do not remove an ancient landmark
or encroach on the fields of orphans,
11 for their redeemer is strong;
he will plead their cause against you.
12 Apply your mind to instruction
and your ear to words of knowledge.
13 Do not withhold discipline from your children;
if you beat them with a rod, they will not die.
14 If you beat them with the rod,
you will save their lives from Sheol.
15 My child, if your heart is wise,
my heart too will be glad.
16 My soul will rejoice
when your lips speak what is right.
17 Do not let your heart envy sinners,
but always continue in the fear of the Lord.
18 Surely there is a future,
and your hope will not be cut off.

19 Hear, my child, and be wise,
and direct your mind in the way.
20 Do not be among winebibbers,
or among gluttonous eaters of meat;
21 for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,
and drowsiness will clothe them with rags.

22 Listen to your father who begot you,
and do not despise your mother when she is old.
23 Buy truth, and do not sell it;
buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.
24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice;
he who begets a wise son will be glad in him.
25 Let your father and mother be glad;
let her who bore you rejoice.

26 My child, give me your heart,
and let your eyes observe[b] my ways.
27 For a prostitute is a deep pit;
an adulteress[c] is a narrow well.
28 She lies in wait like a robber
and increases the number of the faithless.

29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has strife? Who has complaining?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?
30 Those who linger late over wine,
those who keep trying mixed wines.
31 Do not look at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup
and goes down smoothly.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Another reading is *delight in*
[c] Heb *an alien woman*

32.13). **4–5:** Cautions about undue striving for wealth which then proves fleeting, see Eccl 2.1–11; 4.7–8; 5.10–17. **6–8:** The stingy host, see Sir 31.12–21. **10–11:** *Ancient landmark*, see 15.25n., 22.28. *Redeemer*, a relative obligated to protect another family member, usually by buying back ancestral land sold or forfeited, buying out of slavery, or avenging his murder (e.g., Lev 25.25; Ruth 4.3–4). God is the redeemer for those without one (e.g., Deut 10.17–18; Ps 68.4–6). **13–14:** *Discipline* (Heb "musar"), see 1.2n. *The rod*, see 10.13n. *Sheol*, see 1.12n. **15–16:** Parental joy (see 10.1n.) used to motivate behavior; cf. vv. 22–25. **17–18:** One of several cautions about envying wrongdoers (e.g., 3.31; 24.1,19–20; cf. Pss 37.1; 73). *Fear of the Lord*, see 1.7n. Wisdom and longevity, see 3.2n. **19–21:** Gluttony and drunkenness characterize a rebellious son in Deut 21.20. The language may be standard for rebellious behavior, see 28.7. **22–25:** See vv. 15–16. **23:** *Buy wisdom*, see 4.5,7n. **26–28:** Brief warnings about the "strange" woman in chs 1–9 (see esp. 6.26; 7.10). *Deep pit* evokes Sheol; see 1.12n.; cf. 22.14. *Lies in wait*, see 1.11; 7.12. **29–35:** Warning against drunkenness; see 20.1n. **29–30:** Perhaps an old riddle (see 1.6n.). *Mixed wines,* see 9.2n.

32 At the last it bites like a serpent,
and stings like an adder.
33 Your eyes will see strange things,
and your mind utter perverse things.
34 You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea,
like one who lies on the top of a mast.[a]
35 "They struck me," you will say,[b] "but I was not hurt;
they beat me, but I did not feel it.
When shall I awake?
I will seek another drink."

24 Do not envy the wicked,
nor desire to be with them;
2 for their minds devise violence,
and their lips talk of mischief.

3 By wisdom a house is built,
and by understanding it is established;
4 by knowledge the rooms are filled
with all precious and pleasant riches.
5 Wise warriors are mightier than strong ones,[c]
and those who have knowledge than those who have strength;
6 for by wise guidance you can wage your war,
and in abundance of counselors there is victory.
7 Wisdom is too high for fools;
in the gate they do not open their mouths.

8 Whoever plans to do evil
will be called a mischief-maker.
9 The devising of folly is sin,
and the scoffer is an abomination to all.

10 If you faint in the day of adversity,
your strength being small;
11 if you hold back from rescuing those taken away to death,
those who go staggering to the slaughter;
12 if you say, "Look, we did not know this"—
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it?
And will he not repay all according to their deeds?

13 My child, eat honey, for it is good,
and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.
14 Know that wisdom is such to your soul;
if you find it, you will find a future,
and your hope will not be cut off.

15 Do not lie in wait like an outlaw against the home of the righteous;
do no violence to the place where the righteous live;
16 for though they fall seven times, they will rise again;
but the wicked are overthrown by calamity.

17 Do not rejoice when your enemies fall,
and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble,
18 or else the LORD will see it and be displeased,
and turn away his anger from them.

19 Do not fret because of evildoers.
Do not envy the wicked;
20 for the evil have no future;
the lamp of the wicked will go out.

21 My child, fear the LORD and the king,
and do not disobey either of them;[d]

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb lacks *you will say*
[c] Gk Compare Syr Tg: Heb *A wise man is strength*
[d] Gk: Heb *do not associate with those who change*

34–35: Drunkenness is compared to seasickness, and clinging to the rigging on the mast as the ship tosses about. **24.1–2:** *Envy*, see 23.17–18n.; cf. vv. 19–20. **3–4:** *Wisdom* is necessary to build a *house*; see 3.33n. Wisdom builds a house (9.1–6), as does the woman of substance (31.10–31; cf. 14.1). **5–6:** See 21.22n. **6:** *Wise guidance*, see 11.14n. **7:** *Gate*, the site of the market and legal proceedings; see 1.20–21n. **8–9:** *Scoffer*, see 1.22n. **10–12:** Warning against failure to act when others are in peril. *Weighs the heart*, see 16.2n.; cf. 21.2. **13–14:** *Honey*, see 5.3n. *Soul*, see 2.10n. **15–16:** See 1.10–19; 7.12,21–27. *Seven* signifies many, completeness. The righteous know hardship but get up again; see Pss 20.7–8; 34.19. **17–18:** Caution against enjoyment of another's suffering, see Job 31.29; Ps 35.11–16,19. **19–20:** *Envy*, see 23.17–18n.; cf. vv. 1–2. *Lamp*, see 13.9n.; cf. 21.4. **21–22:** *Fear of the LORD*, see 1.7n. Royal anger, see 16.14n.

22 for disaster comes from them suddenly,
and who knows the ruin that both can bring?

23 These also are sayings of the wise:

Partiality in judging is not good.
24 Whoever says to the wicked, "You are innocent,"
will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations;
25 but those who rebuke the wicked will have delight,
and a good blessing will come upon them.
26 One who gives an honest answer
gives a kiss on the lips.

27 Prepare your work outside,
get everything ready for you in the field;
and after that build your house.

28 Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause,
and do not deceive with your lips.
29 Do not say, "I will do to others as they have done to me;
I will pay them back for what they have done."

30 I passed by the field of one who was lazy,
by the vineyard of a stupid person;
31 and see, it was all overgrown with thorns;
the ground was covered with nettles,
and its stone wall was broken down.
32 Then I saw and considered it;
I looked and received instruction.
33 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest,
34 and poverty will come upon you like a robber,
and want, like an armed warrior.

25 These are other proverbs of Solomon that the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah copied.

2 It is the glory of God to conceal things,
but the glory of kings is to search things out.
3 Like the heavens for height, like the earth for depth,
so the mind of kings is unsearchable.
4 Take away the dross from the silver,
and the smith has material for a vessel;
5 take away the wicked from the presence of the king,
and his throne will be established in righteousness.
6 Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence
or stand in the place of the great;
7 for it is better to be told, "Come up here,"
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

What your eyes have seen
8 do not hastily bring into court;
for[a] what will you do in the end,
when your neighbor puts you to shame?
9 Argue your case with your neighbor directly,

[a] Cn: Heb *or else*

24.23–34: These also are sayings of the wise. An appendix to the words of the wise in 22.17–24.22. **23–25:** Warnings against distorting justice. **23:** *Partiality in judging*, i.e., judging on the basis of recognition or impression (e.g., Deut 1.16–17; 16.19–20). **26:** *Kiss on the lips*, a gesture of devotion and respect. **27:** The importance of priorities to ensure success (e.g., 6.6–8). **28:** *False witness*, see 12.17n. **29:** See 20.22n. **30–34:** *Lazy*, see 6.9–11n. For construction of a vineyard, see Isa 5.1–2.

25.1–29.27: These are other proverbs of Solomon that the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah copied. **1:** *Solomon*, see Introduction. *Hezekiah*, king of Judah from ca. 715–687 BCE, was renowned for instituting religious and political reforms (2 Kings 18.1–20.21). *Officials*, likely court scribes who transmitted proverbs by collecting, copying, and editing them. Like 10.1–22.16, this section has two subunits, chs 25–27 and 28–29. **2–7:** Proverbs about God, the king, and the royal court. **2–3:** Divine concealment and mystery, see Deut 29.29. **4–5:** *Dross*, impurities separated from metal by smelting (i.e., melting at high temperatures; the impurities float to the surface and can be skimmed or poured off). *King . . . righteousness*, see 16.12–13n. **6-7b:** Caution against self-promotion; see 22.29; Sir 11.1; 13.9–10. **7c–10:** On gossip, see 16.28n.

and do not disclose another's secret;
10 or else someone who hears you will
bring shame upon you,
and your ill repute will have no end.

11 A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a setting of
silver.
12 Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold
is a wise rebuke to a listening ear.
13 Like the cold of snow in the time of
harvest
are faithful messengers to those who
send them;
they refresh the spirit of their masters.
14 Like clouds and wind without rain
is one who boasts of a gift never given.
15 With patience a ruler may be persuaded,
and a soft tongue can break bones.
16 If you have found honey, eat only
enough for you,
or else, having too much, you will
vomit it.
17 Let your foot be seldom in your
neighbor's house,
otherwise the neighbor will become
weary of you and hate you.
18 Like a war club, a sword, or a sharp arrow
is one who bears false witness against a
neighbor.
19 Like a bad tooth or a lame foot
is trust in a faithless person in time of
trouble.
20 Like vinegar on a wound[a]
is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.
Like a moth in clothing or a worm in wood,
sorrow gnaws at the human heart.[b]
21 If your enemies are hungry, give them
bread to eat;
and if they are thirsty, give them water
to drink;
22 for you will heap coals of fire on their
heads,
and the LORD will reward you.
23 The north wind produces rain,
and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.
24 It is better to live in a corner of the
housetop
than in a house shared with a
contentious wife.
25 Like cold water to a thirsty soul,
so is good news from a far country.
26 Like a muddied spring or a polluted
fountain
are the righteous who give way before
the wicked.
27 It is not good to eat much honey,
or to seek honor on top of honor.
28 Like a city breached, without walls,
is one who lacks self-control.

26 Like snow in summer or rain in
harvest,
so honor is not fitting for a fool.
2 Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a
swallow in its flying,
an undeserved curse goes nowhere.
3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the
donkey,
and a rod for the back of fools.
4 Do not answer fools according to their
folly,
or you will be a fool yourself.
5 Answer fools according to their folly,
or they will be wise in their own eyes.
6 It is like cutting off one's foot and
drinking down violence,
to send a message by a fool.
7 The legs of a disabled person hang limp;

[a] Gk: Heb *Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, like vinegar on lye*
[b] Gk Syr Tg: Heb lacks *Like a moth . . . human heart*

11–12: Beauty and value of eloquence. **12:** *Rebuke*, see 1.23n. On wisdom as jewelry, see 1.9n. **13:** *Harvest* of wheat and barley was in the heat of early summer (May-June; e.g., Ruth 2.22). *Messenger*, see 13.17n. **15:** The power of patient counsel, see 12.18; 15.1,4; 16.24. **16–17:** Caution against too much of a good thing; see v. 27; Sir 37.27–31. *Honey*, see 5.3n. **18:** *False witness*, see 12.17n. **19:** *Faithless*, see 2.22n. **21–22**: *Heap coals of fire on their heads*, a metaphor for causing pain, likely here shame in the face of kindness. Warnings against seeking revenge, see 20.22n.; cf. Lev 19.18; Ex 23.4; Rom 12.20–21. **23:** *Rain* as unpleasant, see 19.13; 28.3. **24:** *Contentious wife*, see 19.13–14n. **25:** *Good news* brought by a messenger, see 13.17n. *Soul*, see 2.10n. **27:** See vv. 6–7b,16–17. *Honey*, see 5.3n.; 25.16. **28:** *Self-control*, see 16.32; 29.11. **26.1–12:** Proverbs about fools. **1:** *Not suitable*, see 17.7n. **3:** *Rod*, see 10.13n. **4–5:** Contradictory proverbs about whether to speak to fools. The wise must discern which proverb is appropriate in a given circumstance (e.g., 15.23; 25.11). **6:** *Message*, see 13.17n.

so does a proverb in the mouth of a fool.
8 It is like binding a stone in a sling
to give honor to a fool.
9 Like a thornbush brandished by the hand
of a drunkard
is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.
10 Like an archer who wounds everybody
is one who hires a passing fool or
drunkard.[a]
11 Like a dog that returns to its vomit
is a fool who reverts to his folly.
12 Do you see persons wise in their own
eyes?
There is more hope for fools than for
them.
13 The lazy person says, "There is a lion in
the road!
There is a lion in the streets!"
14 As a door turns on its hinges,
so does a lazy person in bed.
15 The lazy person buries a hand in the
dish,
and is too tired to bring it back to the
mouth.
16 The lazy person is wiser in self-esteem
than seven who can answer
discreetly.
17 Like somebody who takes a passing dog
by the ears
is one who meddles in the quarrel of
another.
18 Like a maniac who shoots deadly
firebrands and arrows,
19 so is one who deceives a neighbor
and says, "I am only joking!"
20 For lack of wood the fire goes out,
and where there is no whisperer,
quarreling ceases.
21 As charcoal is to hot embers and wood
to fire,
so is a quarrelsome person for kindling
strife.
22 The words of a whisperer are like
delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the
body.
23 Like the glaze[b] covering an earthen
vessel
are smooth[c] lips with an evil heart.
24 An enemy dissembles in speaking
while harboring deceit within;
25 when an enemy speaks graciously, do
not believe it,
for there are seven abominations
concealed within;
26 though hatred is covered with guile,
the enemy's wickedness will be exposed
in the assembly.
27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,
and a stone will come back on the one
who starts it rolling.
28 A lying tongue hates its victims,
and a flattering mouth works ruin.

27 Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may
bring.
2 Let another praise you, and not your own
mouth—
a stranger, and not your own lips.
3 A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty,
but a fool's provocation is heavier than
both.
4 Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming,
but who is able to stand before
jealousy?
5 Better is open rebuke
than hidden love.
6 Well meant are the wounds a friend
inflicts,
but profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn: Heb *silver of dross*
[c] Gk: Heb *burning*

11: *Dog*, regarded in the ancient Near East as a dirty scavenger; ancient Israelites did not commonly domesticate dogs (e.g., 26.17; 1 Kings 21.19,23–24; Eccl 9.4; but see Job 30.1). **12:** *Wise in their own eyes*, see 3.7n. **13–16:** The lazy person (see 6.9–11n.). **13:** See 22.13. **15:** See 19.24. **16:** *Seven*, a round number signifying many (e.g., 6.16–19; 24.16). **17–28:** Proverbs about various troublemakers. **17:** *Dog*, see v.11n. **18–19:** *Firebrands* (i.e., deadly darts). Deception as a weapon, see 25.18. **20–22:** *Fire*, a metaphor for conflict. **22:** See 18.8n. **23–25:** False friends. **23:** *Glaze*, lit., "silver of dross," a cheap coating that makes a vessel appear attractive and valuable, but actually cheapens and weakens it. *Smooth*, lit., "burning"; see v. 18. **27:** See Eccl 10.8–9; Sir 27.25–27. **27.2:** *Another . . . stranger*, terms used negatively to describe the "strange" woman in chs 1–9; see 2.16n. **3–4:** *Anger*, see 12.16n.; cf. Sir 22.14–15. Proverbs always portrays *jealousy* as destructive (e.g., 6.34–35; 14.30; cf. Song 8.6–7). **5–6:** *Rebuke*,

7 The sated appetite spurns honey,
but to a ravenous appetite even the bitter is sweet.
8 Like a bird that strays from its nest
is one who strays from home.
9 Perfume and incense make the heart glad,
but the soul is torn by trouble.[a]
10 Do not forsake your friend or the friend of your parent;
do not go to the house of your kindred in the day of your calamity.
Better is a neighbor who is nearby
than kindred who are far away.
11 Be wise, my child, and make my heart glad,
so that I may answer whoever reproaches me.
12 The clever see danger and hide;
but the simple go on, and suffer for it.
13 Take the garment of one who has given surety for a stranger;
seize the pledge given as surety for foreigners.[b]
14 Whoever blesses a neighbor with a loud voice,
rising early in the morning,
will be counted as cursing.
15 A continual dripping on a rainy day
and a contentious wife are alike;
16 to restrain her is to restrain the wind
or to grasp oil in the right hand.[c]
17 Iron sharpens iron,
and one person sharpens the wits[d] of another.
18 Anyone who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit,
and anyone who takes care of a master will be honored.
19 Just as water reflects the face,
so one human heart reflects another.
20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied,
and human eyes are never satisfied.
21 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold,
so a person is tested[e] by being praised.
22 Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle
along with crushed grain,
but the folly will not be driven out.

23 Know well the condition of your flocks,
and give attention to your herds;
24 for riches do not last forever,
nor a crown for all generations.
25 When the grass is gone, and new growth appears,
and the herbage of the mountains is gathered,
26 the lambs will provide your clothing,
and the goats the price of a field;
27 there will be enough goats' milk for your food,
for the food of your household
and nourishment for your servant-girls.

28 The wicked flee when no one pursues,
but the righteous are as bold as a lion.
2 When a land rebels
it has many rulers;
but with an intelligent ruler
there is lasting order.[c]
3 A ruler[f] who oppresses the poor
is a beating rain that leaves no food.
4 Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
but those who keep the law struggle against them.
5 The evil do not understand justice,

[a] Gk: Heb *the sweetness of a friend is better than one's own counsel*
[b] Vg and 20.16: Heb *for a foreign woman*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Heb *face*
[e] Heb lacks *is tested*
[f] Cn: Heb *A poor person*

see 1.23n. **7:** *Honey*, see 5.3n. **9b:** Sweetness of a friend's advice (see textual note *a*), see 16.21; 24.13–14. **10:** Friendship in times of crisis, see 17.17; 18.24. **11:** See 23.15–16n.; cf. Ps 127.4–5; Sir 30.2. **12:** See 22.3. **13:** *Surety*, see 6.1–5n.; cf. 20.16. **15–16:** *Contentious wife*, see 19.13–14n. **18:** *Eat its fruit*, see 1.31–33n. **20:** *Sheol . . . Abaddon*, see 1.12n. **21–22:** See 17.3n. **23–27:** A concluding poem (cf. 24.30–34) that elaborates on 12.10.

28.1–29.27: Similar to 10.1–15.33, a series of largely antithetical proverbs that contrast the righteous and wicked. Persistent is concern about power and just government. **28.1:** *Flee when no one pursues* suggests fear and guilt (cf. Lev 26.17,36). *Bold as a lion*, cf. 19.12n. **3:** *A poor person who oppresses the poor* (so Hebrew; see textual note *f*) makes sense; the downtrodden can take advantage of one another. **4:** *Law* (Heb "torah") in Proverbs refers to

but those who seek the LORD
understand it completely.
6 Better to be poor and walk in integrity
than to be crooked in one's ways even
though rich.
7 Those who keep the law are wise children,
but companions of gluttons shame their
parents.
8 One who augments wealth by exorbitant
interest
gathers it for another who is kind to the
poor.
9 When one will not listen to the law,
even one's prayers are an abomination.
10 Those who mislead the upright into evil
ways
will fall into pits of their own making,
but the blameless will have a goodly
inheritance.
11 The rich is wise in self-esteem,
but an intelligent poor person sees
through the pose.
12 When the righteous triumph, there is
great glory,
but when the wicked prevail, people go
into hiding.
13 No one who conceals transgressions will
prosper,
but one who confesses and forsakes
them will obtain mercy.
14 Happy is the one who is never without
fear,
but one who is hard-hearted will fall
into calamity.
15 Like a roaring lion or a charging bear
is a wicked ruler over a poor people.
16 A ruler who lacks understanding is a
cruel oppressor;
but one who hates unjust gain will
enjoy a long life.
17 If someone is burdened with the blood
of another,
let that killer be a fugitive until death;
let no one offer assistance.
18 One who walks in integrity will be safe,
but whoever follows crooked ways will
fall into the Pit.[a]
19 Anyone who tills the land will have
plenty of bread,
but one who follows worthless pursuits
will have plenty of poverty.
20 The faithful will abound with
blessings,
but one who is in a hurry to be rich will
not go unpunished.
21 To show partiality is not good—
yet for a piece of bread a person may do
wrong.
22 The miser is in a hurry to get rich
and does not know that loss is sure to
come.
23 Whoever rebukes a person will
afterward find more favor
than one who flatters with the tongue.
24 Anyone who robs father or mother
and says, "That is no crime,"
is partner to a thug.
25 The greedy person stirs up strife,
but whoever trusts in the LORD will be
enriched.
26 Those who trust in their own wits are
fools;
but those who walk in wisdom come
through safely.
27 Whoever gives to the poor will lack
nothing,
but one who turns a blind eye will get
many a curse.

[a] Syr: Heb *fall all at once*

wisdom instruction (e.g., 3.1; 4.4; 6.20,23) and may evoke the law of Moses. **6:** See 19.1n.; cf. 15.16; 16.8. **7:** *Law*, see v. 4n. *Gluttons*, see 23.19–21n. **8:** Israelites were not to charge interest on loans to one another (Ex 22.25; Deut 23.19–20; Ezek 18.8,13; cf. Neh 5.1–13). **9:** *Abomination*, see 3.32n. **10:** *Fall into pits of their own making,* see 1.10–19. **11:** *Self-esteem*, lit., "wise in his own eyes"; see 3.7n. *Sees through the pose*, lit., "searches him out"; see 25.2. **12:** Public well-being hinges on who has power; see v. 28; 29.2,16. **13:** The only clear reference to repentance and mercy in the book; see Pss 32; 103.13; Isa 49.15; Jer 6.23. **14:** Some fears promote well-being. *Hard-hearted*, i.e., obstinate; see 29.1; cf. Ex 7.3; Ps 95.8; Ezek 3.7. **15–16:** Two proverbs about unjust rulers. **15:** *Lion*, 28.1n. **16:** *Unjust gain*, see 10.2n. **17:** *Be a fugitive until death*, lit., "flee to a pit," likely an allusion to Sheol, see 1.12n. **19:** See 12.11n. **20:** *Hurry to be rich*, see 1.18–19n.; v. 22; cf. Sir 11.10. **21:** *Partiality*, see 24.23–24n. **22:** *Hurry to get rich*, see 1.18–19n.; cf. v. 20. **23:** *Rebuke*, see 1.23n. *Flatters*, lit., "makes the tongue smooth," see 2.16; 5.3; 7.5; 29.5. **24:** Crimes against *father or mother* are particularly egregious; see 19.26; 20.20; 30.11,17. **27:** Generosity to *the poor*, see 14.31n.

28 When the wicked prevail, people go into
hiding;
but when they perish, the righteous
increase.

29 One who is often reproved, yet
remains stubborn,
will suddenly be broken beyond
healing.
2 When the righteous are in authority, the
people rejoice;
but when the wicked rule, the people
groan.
3 A child who loves wisdom makes a parent
glad,
but to keep company with prostitutes is
to squander one's substance.
4 By justice a king gives stability to the
land,
but one who makes heavy exactions
ruins it.
5 Whoever flatters a neighbor
is spreading a net for the neighbor's
feet.
6 In the transgression of the evil there is a
snare,
but the righteous sing and rejoice.
7 The righteous know the rights of the
poor;
the wicked have no such
understanding.
8 Scoffers set a city aflame,
but the wise turn away wrath.
9 If the wise go to law with fools,
there is ranting and ridicule without
relief.
10 The bloodthirsty hate the blameless,
and they seek the life of the
upright.
11 A fool gives full vent to anger,
but the wise quietly holds it back.
12 If a ruler listens to falsehood,
all his officials will be wicked.
13 The poor and the oppressor have this in
common:
the LORD gives light to the eyes
of both.
14 If a king judges the poor with equity,
his throne will be established forever.
15 The rod and reproof give wisdom,
but a mother is disgraced by a neglected
child.
16 When the wicked are in authority,
transgression increases,
but the righteous will look upon their
downfall.
17 Discipline your children, and they will
give you rest;
they will give delight to your heart.
18 Where there is no prophecy, the people
cast off restraint,
but happy are those who keep the law.
19 By mere words servants are not
disciplined,
for though they understand, they will
not give heed.
20 Do you see someone who is hasty in
speech?
There is more hope for a fool than for
anyone like that.
21 A slave pampered from childhood
will come to a bad end.[a]
22 One given to anger stirs up strife,
and the hothead causes much
transgression.
23 A person's pride will bring humiliation,
but one who is lowly in spirit will
obtain honor.
24 To be a partner of a thief is to hate one's
own life;
one hears the victim's curse, but
discloses nothing.[b]

[a] Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

28: See v. 12n. **29.1:** *Reproof*, see 1.23n. *Stubborn*, see 28.14n. **2:** See 28.12n. **3:** See 10.1n. *Keeps company with prostitutes . . . squander*, see 31.3; Sir 9.1–9. **5–6:** *Flattery*, see 28.23n. The wicked ensnare themselves; see 1.10–19; 12.13. **7:** *Rights of the poor*, justice and legal rights due to them (e.g., 31.5,8; Deut 17.8; Isa 10.2; Jer 5.28). **11:** *Anger*, see 12.16n. **13:** See 14.31n. *Give light to the eyes*, i.e., give life; see 15.30. **14:** See 16.12–13n. **15:** *Rod*, see 10.13n. *Reproof*, see 1.23n. **16:** See 28.12n. **17:** *Delight to your heart*, lit., "delicacies for your appetite" (Heb "nephesh"; see 2.10n.). **18:** *There is no prophecy* (Heb "ḥazon"), i.e., vision or revelation; see 1 Sam 3.1; Ps 74.9; Lam 2.9; Ezek 7.26. *Law*, see 28.4n. **20:** See 26.12. Proverbs cautions against *haste* (e.g., 19.2; 21.5), particularly when speaking (e.g., 10.19; 17.27). **22:** See 15.18n. **23:** *Pride*, see 11.2n. *Lowly in spirit*, i.e., humble, see 3.7n. **24:** *Hears the victim's curse*, i.e., the victim's charge of the crime, which requires those who know

25 The fear of others[a] lays a snare,
but one who trusts in the LORD is secure.
26 Many seek the favor of a ruler,
but it is from the LORD that one gets justice.
27 The unjust are an abomination to the righteous,
but the upright are an abomination to the wicked.

30 The words of Agur son of Jakeh. An oracle.
Thus says the man: I am weary, O God,
I am weary, O God. How can I prevail?[b]
2 Surely I am too stupid to be human;
I do not have human understanding.
3 I have not learned wisdom,
nor have I knowledge of the holy ones.[c]
4 Who has ascended to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of the hand?
Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is the person's name?
And what is the name of the person's child?
Surely you know!

5 Every word of God proves true;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
6 Do not add to his words,
or else he will rebuke you, and you will be found a liar.

7 Two things I ask of you;
do not deny them to me before I die:
8 Remove far from me falsehood and lying;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that I need,
9 or I shall be full, and deny you,
and say, "Who is the LORD?"
or I shall be poor, and steal,
and profane the name of my God.

10 Do not slander a servant to a master,
or the servant will curse you, and you will be held guilty.

11 There are those who curse their fathers
and do not bless their mothers.
12 There are those who are pure in their own eyes
yet are not cleansed of their filthiness.
13 There are those—how lofty are their eyes,
how high their eyelids lift!—
14 there are those whose teeth are swords,
whose teeth are knives,
to devour the poor from off the earth,
the needy from among mortals.

15 The leech[d] has two daughters;
"Give, give," they cry.

a Or *human fear*
b Or *I am spent.* Meaning of Heb uncertain
c Or *Holy One*
d Meaning of Heb uncertain

something about the matter to testify or be subject to punishment (Lev 5.1; cf. Judg 17.2–3). **27:** *Abomination*, see 3.32n.

30.1–33: The words of Agur, son of Jaqeh, an otherwise unknown sage. The latter portion of the chapter (vv. 15–33) is comprised largely of numerical proverbs, in which two numbers occur in parallel (x and x+1) and the second number governs the content (vv. 15–16,18–19,21–23,24–28,29–31; cf. 6.16–19; Job 5.19–22; Sir 25.7–11). **1:** The Hebrew of this verse is difficult, prompting the slight emendation of one word (NRSV *oracle*) to read "the Massaite," that is, as the ethnic designation of a north Arabian people descended from Ishmael (Gen 25.14; 1 Chr 1.30; cf. 31.1n.). *Thus says the man*, lit., "oracle of the man," a phrase found elsewhere in the last words of David (2 Sam 23.1) and oracles of Balaam (Num 24.3–15). An *oracle* is a genre common to prophecy, an utterance inspired by God (e.g., Jer 23.4, 11–12; Isa 56.8; Zech 12.1). **2–3:** *Stupid*, brutish, more like an animal than like God; see 12.1; Pss 22.6; 73.22; 92.5–6; Job 25.4–6. **4:** Rhetorical questions to which the answer is "only God"; see Job 38–41; Isa 40.12–14. *Child*, lit., "son," a student of wisdom: in this case, Agur. See 1.8–9n. **5–6:** *True*, i.e., pure, as with precious metals refined by smelting. *Do not add*, see Deut 4.2; 12.32. **7–9:** The only prayer in Proverbs. **10:** *Slander*, accusations made secretly against another; see Ps 101.5. **11–14:** A list of wretched people. Cursing one's parents was a capital offense; see Ex 21.17; Deut 27.16. **13:** High or lifted eyes, see 6.17n. **15–16:** *Leech*, a blood-

Three things are never satisfied;
four never say, "Enough":
16 Sheol, the barren womb,
the earth ever thirsty for water,
and the fire that never says, "Enough."[a]

17 The eye that mocks a father
and scorns to obey a mother
will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley
and eaten by the vultures.

18 Three things are too wonderful for me;
four I do not understand:
19 the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a snake on a rock,
the way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of a man with a girl.

20 This is the way of an adulteress:
she eats, and wipes her mouth,
and says, "I have done no wrong."

21 Under three things the earth trembles;
under four it cannot bear up:
22 a slave when he becomes king,
and a fool when glutted with food;
23 an unloved woman when she gets a husband,
and a maid when she succeeds her mistress.

24 Four things on earth are small,
yet they are exceedingly wise:
25 the ants are a people without strength,
yet they provide their food in the summer;
26 the badgers are a people without power,
yet they make their homes in the rocks;
27 the locusts have no king,
yet all of them march in rank;
28 the lizard[b] can be grasped in the hand,
yet it is found in kings' palaces.

29 Three things are stately in their stride;
four are stately in their gait:
30 the lion, which is mightiest among wild animals
and does not turn back before any;
31 the strutting rooster,[c] the he-goat,
and a king striding before[a] his people.

32 If you have been foolish, exalting yourself,
or if you have been devising evil,
put your hand on your mouth.
33 For as pressing milk produces curds,
and pressing the nose produces blood,
so pressing anger produces strife.

31 The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him:

2 No, my son! No, son of my womb!
No, son of my vows!
3 Do not give your strength to women,
your ways to those who destroy kings.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *spider*
[c] Gk Syr Tg Compare Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

sucking worm with *two daughters*, or suckers to attach and draw blood. *Sheol*, see 1.12n. **17:** *Ravens . . . vultures*, carrion birds. **18–19:** A numerical proverb about four *ways*, or movements, that are graceful without evident mechanics and (usually) leave no trace behind (cf. Wis 5.9–12). Heb "'almah" (NRSV *girl*) is a "young woman"; see Gen 24.43; Ex 2.8; Song 1.3; 6.8; Isa 7.14. **20:** Eating is a metaphor for sex; see 9.17n. **21–23:** World-turned-upside-down situations, see 19.10. *Maid . . . mistress*, see Hagar and Sarah (Gen 16; 21) and Rachel and Bilhah (Gen 30.1–23). **24–28:** Small and wise creatures, described as *people*. *Ant*, see 6.6–8n. Without leadership, *locusts* move swiftly in vast swarms (e.g., Ex 10; Judg 6.5; Joel 2.7–8). **29–31:** *King* as lion, see 19.12n. **32–33:** *Anger*, see 12.16n.

31.1–9: The words of Lemuel, king of Massa, which his mother taught him, the only known ancient Near Eastern wisdom text attributed to a woman, though Proverbs refers to mothers as teachers (1.8; 6.20; 31.26). **1:** *Lemuel* is otherwise unknown in the Hebrew Bible and, like Agur (30.1–33), is likely a Massaite (Heb "massa'" can be translated as *oracle* or as the ethnic designation Massaite, see 30.1n.). **2:** *Son of my vows*, compare Hannah's vow (1 Sam 1.11,28). **3:** Heb "ḥayil" (*strength*, cf. v. 10) refers variously to physical strength (e.g., 1 Sam 2.4; Eccl 10.10), wealth and property (e.g., 13.22; Isa 30.6; Jer 15.13), capacity (e.g., Gen 47.6; Ex 18.21), and bravery (e.g., Judg 11.1; 1 Chr 5.24). Men with "ḥayil" in the Hebrew Bible tend to be well regarded and affluent—as kings, landowners, and persons who serve with courage and loyalty, often in the military (e.g., Ex 18.25; Ruth 2.1; 2 Sam 23.20; 2 Kings 15.20). They are persons of "substance," namely, strength, capacity, wealth, and skill.

4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel,
it is not for kings to drink wine,
or for rulers to desire[a] strong drink;
5 or else they will drink and forget what has been decreed,
and will pervert the rights of all the afflicted.
6 Give strong drink to one who is perishing,
and wine to those in bitter distress;
7 let them drink and forget their poverty,
and remember their misery no more.
8 Speak out for those who cannot speak,
for the rights of all the destitute.[b]
9 Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.

10 A capable wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
11 The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
12 She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.
13 She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
14 She is like the ships of the merchant,
she brings her food from far away.
15 She rises while it is still night
and provides food for her household
and tasks for her servant-girls.
16 She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
17 She girds herself with strength,
and makes her arms strong.
18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
19 She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.
20 She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to the needy.
21 She is not afraid for her household when it snows,
for all her household are clothed in crimson.
22 She makes herself coverings;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.
23 Her husband is known in the city gates,
taking his seat among the elders of the land.
24 She makes linen garments and sells them;
she supplies the merchant with sashes.
25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.
26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
27 She looks well to the ways of her household,
and does not eat the bread of idleness.

[a] Cn: Heb *where*
[b] Heb *all children of passing away*

See 31.10–31. **4–7:** See 20.1n. Inebriated leaders pose particular dangers to the community (e.g., Esth 1.5–22; Eccl 10.16–17; Isa 5.11–12,22–23). **8–9:** *Those who cannot speak*, the most vulnerable in society; see 16.12–13n.

31:10–31: The woman of substance, an alphabetic acrostic (each successive line begins with the next letter of the twenty-two-letter Hebrew alphabet) that celebrates the attributes and activities of a woman with "ḥayil" (v. 10; see 12.4n., 31.3n.). Her activities are consistent with those of affluent and moderately wealthy women of the commercial class in the postexilic period. She also closely resembles Wisdom in chs 1–9; see Introduction. **10:** *Who can find* (see 20.6n.) suggests that such a woman is rare (only elsewhere in 12.4; Ruth 3.11). Like Wisdom, her value surpasses that of jewels, see 2.4n. **11–12:** *Gain*, i.e., loot (1.13; 16.19), hints at the woman's warrior-like traits (vv. 15,17). **13:** Spinning and weaving were emblematic of women's skill in the ancient Near East (vv. 19,21–22,24; e.g., Judg 16.14). **16:** She independently identifies and purchases property, and plants a *vineyard* to make it productive, see 20.30–34n. **17:** *Girds herself*, tucks up the skirts of a garment to prepare for difficult work; often done by warriors (e.g., Ex 12.11; 2 Kings 4.29; 9.1; Deut 1.41; 1 Sam 25.13). **19:** *Distaff . . . spindle*, tools for spinning and weaving; see v. 13n. **21–22:** *Crimson . . . fine linen . . . purple*, marks of wealth, quality, and luxury; see 2 Sam 1.24; Jer 4.30; Isa 3.23. *Coverings* are elegant covers, like those of the "strange" woman in 7.16. **23:** *City gates*, the center of commerce and justice; see 1.21n. **26:** Compare Wisdom's teaching, 8.6–10. **27:** *Bread of*

28 Her children rise up and call her happy;
her husband too, and he praises her:
29 "Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all."
30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the LORD is to
be praised.
31 Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the city
gates.

idleness, see 4.17n. **28:** *Rise up*, a gesture that signals the importance of their declaration (e.g., Jer 1.17; Mic 6.1). **30:** The woman is the epitome of *fear of the LORD*; see 1.7n.

ECCLESIASTES

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND CANONICAL STATUS

The name of the book is derived from the word used for the teacher who speaks in the book. In Hebrew the word is *Qohelet(h)*, meaning "gatherer," though Luther translated it as "Preacher." In the Septuagint (LXX), translators into ancient Greek used *Ekklēsiastēs*, which refers to a member of an assembly. That term, transliterated into Latin, became the book's title in Christian tradition.

Passages at the beginning and end of the book present it as a literary collection of teachings attributed to the primary speaker (1.2; 12.9–10), but suggest it was compiled by someone else. The editorial superscription (1.1) and a brief royal autobiography (1.12–2.26) associate the speaking subject with Solomon, the final king of Israel's short-lived United Monarchy (ca. 968–928 BCE), who was renowned for his wisdom (see 1 Kings 3–4). Solomon, however, is never named explicitly, but only indirectly evoked as the "son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1.1; see also 1.12). Since the speaker does not elsewhere present himself as a king, and the editorial postscript describes him as a teacher rather than a king (12.9–14), the royal persona appears to be more rhetorical than historical.

Ancient rabbinic writings describe debates among Jewish religious leaders about Ecclesiastes. Apparently some questioned its sacred status by asking whether it, like other sacred texts, "makes the hands unclean" (see *m. Yadayim* 3.5). According to one rabbi, "Qohelet does not render the hands unclean because it contains only the wisdom of Solomon" *(b. Meg.* 7a). Others replied that Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs (1 Kings 5.12) but wrote down only a small portion of those, including Ecclesiastes, suggesting the latter's special, divine inspiration. Others questioned the book's intellectual value with expressions of discomfort about the book's contradictions. Still others challenged its moral value. The *Pesikta de Rab Kahana* reports that earlier sages considered suppressing the book because it might "encourage hedonism" (8.1) and "smacked of heresy" (24.14). Such debates are memories recorded at a later time, after Ecclesiastes had secured its place in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, and so might have as much to do with ongoing struggles over the book's controversial content.

Located in the Writings (Ketubim) section of the Tanakh and among the wisdom and poetical books of the Old Testament, Ecclesiastes shares much in content, forms, and concerns with other books of wisdom literature, such as Proverbs and Job. Ecclesiastes is also part of the Megillot—the five scrolls recited at major Jewish holidays—and is read at the annual fall festival of booths (Sukkot).

LITERARY HISTORY AND DATING

While the message of Ecclesiastes is difficult and contested, its textual history is relatively uncomplicated. Despite its traditional associations with Solomon, most scholars date Ecclesiastes sometime during the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods (ca. 450–250 BCE). The presence of two Persian loanwords (Heb *pardes* in 2.5 and *pitgam* in 8.11), the influence of Aramaic, and various grammatical characteristics of postexilic Hebrew strongly suggest that it was written after the rise of Persian rule across southwest Asia in 539 BCE. The absence of Greek words leads some to date Ecclesiastes prior to Alexander the Great's conquest of the Levant (ca. 330 BCE). However, other scholars detect the influence of Greek philosophical thought, and so date it to the early Hellenistic Period (ca. 300 BCE). While there are no discernible references to historical events in Ecclesiastes, the frequent mentions of a volatile economy, intermittent interruptions in landholding by the authorities, and concerns about inheritances suggest a time of economic and cultural change which many scholars associate with the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods.

The earliest manuscript fragment of Ecclesiastes happens to be one of the oldest of the Dead Sea Scrolls, likely written around 175 BCE (4QQoh^{a}). Allusions to Ecclesiastes in the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach also show that it was widely known by the early second century BCE. Another Dead Sea Scroll fragment shows that the Hebrew text circulated in multiple, slightly different forms in its earliest stages. The earliest known Greek translation, preserved in the Septuagint (LXX), reflects Hebrew syntax more clearly than other LXX texts and suggests a concern to facilitate rabbinic-style exegesis even in Greek-speaking Jewish communities that did not read Hebrew.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

Scholars have offered many different proposals concerning the book's overall structure. Perhaps the only area of agreement concerns the first and final chapters, which clearly frame the book's contents. Several elements in the first chapter repeat in the twelfth, including editorial remarks in 1.1 and 12.9–14, the motto ("vanity of vanities") in 1.2 and 12.8, and poems comparing nature and humanity in 1.3–11 and 12.1–7. Different sections of the book achieve a sense of unity through various means. In 1.12–2.26, the narrator adopts a royal persona. Chapter 3 achieves coherence by focusing on timeliness and order. Chapter 7, a collection of proverbs, exhibits a formal unity. Although some themes, such as wisdom and folly, death, enjoyment, and inheritance, appear consistently throughout the book, some scholars propose a division between two halves: 1.1–6.9 focuses more on the conditions of the world, and 6.10–12.14 on human abilities and inabilities to comprehend these conditions. But coherence and structure appear unsystematically, in erratic patterns. This random, fleeting sense of unity fits the book's overall perspective on the world as without any underlying or overarching cohesion.

In contrast to traditional teachings as in Proverbs or Sirach, Ecclesiastes describes the world as a place of vibrant ephemerality. God is the agent responsible for constituting the world as a place of unpredictability, and creating humans with fundamental limitations. Ecclesiastes counsels readers not to strive for ideals of fullness, stability, or wisdom. Humans should instead invest in social relationships and productive labor while they are capable of enjoying their desires.

HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION AND RECEPTION

Ecclesiastes has a dynamic history of use and influence by religious and nonreligious communities. Many early Jewish and Christian interpreters used Solomon's life as a template through which to read the text. While the Talmud claims that Hezekiah and his scribes were responsible for Ecclesiastes (*b. B. Bat.* 14b–15a), rabbinic literature overwhelmingly presents the book as a product of Solomon's later years, after he repented of idolatry and became disillusioned with his life (cf. *Song Rabbah* and *Qohelet Rabbah*). One medieval Jewish tradition suggests that God took the throne from the elderly Solomon, who then wrote Ecclesiastes while struggling and homeless (*Targum Qohelet* 1.12). Most early and medieval Christian theologians transformed Ecclesiastes's impious teachings into a series of exhortations to ignore the transient material world and focus on the divine. Many modern readers, however, have found in Ecclesiastes deep resonances with contemporary philosophical movements such as existentialism and pessimism. After twentieth-century horrors such as the Shoah, Ecclesiastes's bitter but honest realism resonates with many who feel skeptical about the world's moral coherence.

Davis Hankins and Brennan W. Breed

1 The words of the Teacher,[a] the son of
David, king in Jerusalem.
2 Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher,[a]
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.
3 What do people gain from all the toil
at which they toil under the sun?
4 A generation goes, and a generation
comes,
but the earth remains forever.
5 The sun rises and the sun goes down,
and hurries to the place where it rises.
6 The wind blows to the south,
and goes around to the north;
round and round goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.
7 All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they continue to flow.
8 All things[b] are wearisome;
more than one can express;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
or the ear filled with hearing.
9 What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be
done;
there is nothing new under
the sun.
10 Is there a thing of which it is said,
"See, this is new"?
It has already been,
in the ages before us.
11 The people of long ago are not
remembered,
nor will there be any remembrance
of people yet to come
by those who come after them.

[a] Heb *Qoheleth,* traditionally rendered *Preacher*
[b] Or *words*

1.1: Editor's introduction. *The Teacher* (Heb "qohelet") is the title adopted by the primary speaker in the book (see vv. 2,12), referred to in these notes as Qohelet. Although the Hebrew form is a feminine singular participle that literally means a female "gatherer," it is typically treated as a masculine subject, as here where the speaker is characterized as *son of David, king in Jerusalem*. "Son of David" could refer to any descendant of David (cf. 2 Chr 32.33), but traditionally indicates Solomon, who succeeded David on the throne. Solomon is closely associated with wisdom (see 1 Kings 3–4) and other poetical and wisdom books including Proverbs and the Song of Songs. The association with Solomon is relevant for the royal autobiography in 1.12–2.26, but subsequently fades as Qohelet speaks as a sage (see 12.9–10) rather than as a king.

1.2: The book's motto. Repeated at the end of the book in 12.8. *Vanity* (Heb "hebel") occurs thirty-seven times in Ecclesiastes, and is perhaps its most important term. The Heb word describes wind, breath, and vapor, but often refers metaphorically to the fleeting nature of such things as life or beauty (e.g., Job 7.16; Pss 39.5; 78.33; Prov 31.30), the ineffective character of knowledge, labor, or wealth (e.g., Job 9.29; 21.34; Ps 94.11; Prov 13.11), or the unreliability and emptiness of non-Israelite gods and peoples (e.g., Deut 32.21; Isa 30.7; Lam 4.17). Qohelet uses "hebel" in similar ways; but "breath," though fleeting, is constitutive of life itself. By recognizing and embracing the reality of this condition, enjoyment of life is possible. *Vanity of vanities*, a superlative construction, like "holy of holies" for the holiest space.

1.3–11: Qohelet's introductory poem. The poem focuses on endless activity and striving without finality, the ephemerality of life, the inevitable finality of death, and the ultimate decay of all that exists (cf. 9.11–12). **3:** *Gain* (Heb "yitron") is primarily an economic term, often translated as value or profit. The question appears to be rhetorical, assuming the answer, "none." *Toil* is often a negative term for hard or oppressive labor (see 4.6,8), but Qohelet also uses it in more neutral or even positive references to productive labor (see 2.21; 3.13; 5.18–19). *Under the sun* is similar to "under the heavens" (1.13–14), which refers to everything in the world (see 2.3; 3.1; Gen 1.9; Ex 17.14). Qohelet usually uses *under the sun* more specifically to refer to human experiences and knowledge "under the heavens." This question reappears, and is answered in different ways, in 2.10–11,22–23; 3.9; 5.16. **4–11:** A beautiful example of Hebrew lyric poetry, whose repetitive character evokes what it describes: the ephemerality of everything and of the finality and oblivion brought by death. These conditions extend from the natural world to the human intellect, and from the past to the future. **7–8:** The human *eye* and *ear* are never *filled*, or at capacity: like the earth's *rivers*, they continue to function without a break until the moment of death. **9–11:** In light of vv. 3–8, *there is nothing new* suggests that the world will always be like this—incomplete and constantly moving. The denial of *remembrance* (v. 11; see Eccl 9.5) is at odds with the importance of preserving memory in many biblical texts (e.g., Deut 5.15; 6.12; 8.11). A provocative tension exists between the idea that *there is nothing new* and the denial of *remembrance*.

12 I, the Teacher,[a] when king over Israel in
Jerusalem, 13 applied my mind to seek and to
search out by wisdom all that is done under
heaven; it is an unhappy business that God
has given to human beings to be busy with.
14 I saw all the deeds that are done under the
sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after
wind.[b]

15 What is crooked cannot be made
straight,
and what is lacking cannot be
counted.

16 I said to myself, "I have acquired great
wisdom, surpassing all who were over
Jerusalem before me; and my mind has had
great experience of wisdom and knowl-
edge." 17 And I applied my mind to know
wisdom and to know madness and folly.
I perceived that this also is but a chasing
after wind.[b]

18 For in much wisdom is much vexation,
and those who increase knowledge
increase sorrow.

2 I said to myself, "Come now, I will make
a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself." But
again, this also was vanity. 2 I said of laugh-
ter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use
is it?" 3 I searched with my mind how to
cheer my body with wine—my mind still
guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay
hold on folly, until I might see what was
good for mortals to do under heaven dur-
ing the few days of their life. 4 I made great
works; I built houses and planted vine-
yards for myself; 5 I made myself gardens
and parks, and planted in them all kinds
of fruit trees. 6 I made myself pools from
which to water the forest of growing trees.
7 I bought male and female slaves, and had
slaves who were born in my house; I also
had great possessions of herds and flocks,
more than any who had been before me in
Jerusalem. 8 I also gathered for myself silver
and gold and the treasure of kings and of
the provinces; I got singers, both men and
women, and delights of the flesh, and many
concubines.[c]

9 So I became great and surpassed all
who were before me in Jerusalem; also my
wisdom remained with me. 10 Whatever
my eyes desired I did not keep from them;
I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my
heart found pleasure in all my toil, and
this was my reward for all my toil. 11 Then I
considered all that my hands had done and
the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all
was vanity and a chasing after wind,[b] and
there was nothing to be gained under the
sun.

[a] Heb *Qoheleth*, traditionally rendered *Preacher*
[b] Or *a feeding on wind*. See Hos 12.1
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

1.12–2.26: A royal pursuit of satisfaction. Creatively recalling accounts of royal courts in the ancient Near East, Qohelet adopts the persona of a king who enjoys unlimited access to precious objects and pleasurable activities. In this persona, Qohelet undertakes a thought experiment to test the hypothesis that "all is vanity" (v. 14). Qohelet discovers that the imperial desire for pleasure and posterity is frustrated by "vanity" that marks everything (2.11) and mortality that faces everyone (2.15–17). The king concludes that he hates life (2.17) and labor (2.18) and is left with despair (2.20) about the pain and vexation of human life "under the sun" (2.22–23). **1.13–14:** The experiment's inevitable conclusion, stated at the outset. **13:** *Under heaven,* see 1.3n. *Unhappy business*, better "disturbing preoccupation," a condition that Qohelet describes repeatedly (see 3.14; 4.8). **14:** *Under the sun,* see 1.3n. *Chasing after wind* describes a futile endeavor, but the Heb word concerns shepherding, suggesting that this is more about gathering or guarding the wind than chasing after it (cf. Hos 12.2; Sir 34.1–2). **15:** With similar language, 7.13 attributes such crookedness to God. **16:** If Qohelet speaks as Solomon, *all who were over Jerusalem before me* would be a rather modest comparison with David alone, or perhaps a reference to the regimes of Canaanite rulers prior to David's conquest of the city. **17:** Sages do not usually attempt *to know madness and folly*, but perhaps any search for truth must also seek to comprehend errors, even reaching truth through failure, as in Qohelet's search for fulfillment in hedonism (2.4–10). See also 2.3,12; 7.16–18. **18:** Qohelet uses proverbs in various ways (cf. v. 15). Whereas he seems to endorse this proverb, elsewhere he quotes proverbs that seem at odds with his teachings (e.g., 2.14). See 6.10–7.14n. **2.3:** See 1.17n. **4–11:** In their inscriptions, ancient Near Eastern rulers catalogued accomplishments to display their status and to elicit recognition. The conclusion in v. 11 undercuts this purpose and suggests a parody of royal propaganda and the excessive acquisi-

12 So I turned to consider wisdom and
madness and folly; for what can the one do
who comes after the king? Only what has
already been done. 13 Then I saw that wisdom
excels folly as light excels darkness.

14 The wise have eyes in their head,
but fools walk in darkness.

Yet I perceived that the same fate befalls
all of them. 15 Then I said to myself, "What
happens to the fool will happen to me also;
why then have I been so very wise?" And I
said to myself that this also is vanity. 16 For
there is no enduring remembrance of the
wise or of fools, seeing that in the days to
come all will have been long forgotten. How
can the wise die just like fools? 17 So I hated
life, because what is done under the sun was
grievous to me; for all is vanity and a chasing
after wind.[a]

18 I hated all my toil in which I had toiled
under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to
those who come after me 19 —and who knows
whether they will be wise or foolish? Yet they
will be master of all for which I toiled and
used my wisdom under the sun. This also is
vanity. 20 So I turned and gave my heart up to
despair concerning all the toil of my labors
under the sun, 21 because sometimes one who
has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and
skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another
who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and
a great evil. 22 What do mortals get from all
the toil and strain with which they toil under
the sun? 23 For all their days are full of pain,
and their work is a vexation; even at night
their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

24 There is nothing better for mortals
than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment
in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the
hand of God; 25 for apart from him[b] who
can eat or who can have enjoyment? 26 For
to the one who pleases him God gives
wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the
sinner he gives the work of gathering and
heaping, only to give to one who pleases
God. This also is vanity and a chasing after
wind.[a]

3 For everything there is a season, and a
time for every matter under heaven:
2 a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up
what is planted;
3 a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build
up;
4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
5 a time to throw away stones, and a time
to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain
from embracing;
6 a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
7 a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to
speak;
8 a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

[a] Or *a feeding on wind.* See Hos 12.1
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *apart from me*

tions of kings. The verse echoes phrases from 1.2–17. **12–21: The equalizing effects of death. 14–15:** *The same fate*, i.e., death. A view contrary to Prov 8.35–36; 9.11; etc., which claim that wisdom prolongs life and protects from death. **16–17:** *No enduring remembrance,* see 1.9–11n. **18–21:** Just as there is lack of control in life, so in death one does not know if heirs will be *wise or foolish*. **22–23:** *What do mortals get?* See 1.3n. A negative conclusion to the efforts described in 2.1–21. **24–26:** The first of numerous passages where Qohelet commends enjoyment in eating and drinking (cf. 3.12–15,22; 5.18; 9.7–10). After characterizing all the products of his labor as vanity (v. 11), and concluding that he hated all his toil (v. 18), Qohelet surprisingly proclaims that humans can also *find enjoyment in their toil*. Elsewhere, Qohelet states his perspective more clearly (see 9.1–12n.). **24:** *The hand of God*, that is, such enjoyment is not within one's own control but something God determines. **26:** God can arbitrarily give the possibility of enjoyment to those who are somehow favored, but not to the s*inner,* a term that may simply mean "the one who misses out," the loser (cf. 7.26; 9.2,18; Prov 8.36; 13.22; 14.21; 19.2; 20.2). Thus the joy that Qohelet commends remains marked by the conditions of *vanity* (cf. 1.2n.).

3.1–15: The cause of human desire. 1–8: A poem asserting there is "a time" for twenty-eight activities, presented in fourteen antithetical pairs. Although some pairs are closely associated (e.g., those in v. 4), there is no clear structure other than a recurring contrast between life and death.**1:** *Matter*, perhaps better "purpose"

[9] What gain have the workers from their toil? [10] I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. [11] He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. [12] I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; [13] moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. [14] I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. [15] That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by.[a]

[16] Moreover I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness, wickedness was there as well. [17] I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work. [18] I said in my heart with regard to human beings that God is testing them to show that they are but animals. [19] For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity. [20] All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. [21] Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth? [22] So I saw that there is nothing better than that all should enjoy their work, for that is their lot; who can bring them to see what will be after them?

4 Again I saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. Look, the tears of the oppressed—with no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power—with no one to comfort them. [2] And I thought the dead, who have already died, more fortunate than the living, who are still alive; [3] but better than both is the one who has not yet been, and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

[a] Heb *what is pursued*

or "volition" or "pleasure" (cf. 5.4; 8.3; 12.1). **9:** See 1.3n. **10–15:** A commentary on 3.1–8. People generally have a sense that suitable times exist for particular events, but the unpredictability of future conditions prevents anyone from being certain about which moment is right for which event. **10:** *Business*, see 1.13n. **11:** *Suitable*, lit., "beautiful." *A sense of past and future*, an expansionistic translation of one Heb word ("'olam"), usually translated "eternity." Humans may sense that their lives participate in a divine drama that they cannot fully grasp, but this is no mere limitation; it is rather a necessary consequence of their God-given condition. This condition prevents full knowledge, yet keeps humans busy (v. 10), and relates in some way to their capacities *to be happy and enjoy* and *take pleasure* (vv. 12–13). **13:** See 2.24n.,26n. **14:** *Endures forever*, another expansionistic translation of Heb "'olam" (see v. 11n.); lit., "everything God does is for eternity." God created this unalterable condition so that humans will feel fear before God. Qohelet thus correlates the human fear of God, the desire to know what cannot be known, and the state of being perpetually occupied (v. 10). **15b:** A terse summary of Qohelet's commentary on the poem in 3.1–8; lit., "God seeks what is pursued." Qohelet may mean that God designed the entire cosmos, including humans, to be in constant motion, with no clear goal (cf. 1.3–11); thus, God aims to produce the ceaseless act of pursuit. In relation to 3.10–15, God has created humans as perpetually desirous beings, driven to pursue life passionately, and capable of enjoying the pursuit.

3.16–22: One fate for all. Qohelet asserts that there must be a final judgment of the righteous and wicked, but concludes that no one can know anything about it. People do know, however, that humans and animals alike (v. 19) "go to one place"— "the dust" (v. 20). Sheol is the traditional Hebrew name for the dusty underworld into which all people were assumed to descend at death. Some may believe in a beatific afterlife for humans (v. 21), but Qohelet refuses to speculate. **22:** As in 2.24–26, even though the future remains unknowable and no one can *see* beyond their death, humans remain capable of enjoying their labor while living.

4.1–16: Labor and relationships. A series of comparisons highlighting relative advantages that do not yield lasting differences. This chapter's four main sections (vv. 1–3,4–6,7–12,13–16) all focus on the relationships among individuals, their labor, and other people. **1:** *Oppressions* refers to the powerful seizing the wages and goods of the poor (Deut 24.14; 1 Sam 12.3–4; Jer 21.12; Hos 12.7; Am 4.1; Mic 2.2). *No one to comfort*, a refrain in Lam 1. Oppression damages the oppressor and the oppressed: both lack *comfort*. **2–3:** *The dead . . . more fortunate.*

4 Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work
come from one person's envy of another. This
also is vanity and a chasing after wind.[a]
5 Fools fold their hands
and consume their own flesh.
6 Better is a handful with quiet
than two handfuls with toil,
and a chasing after wind.[a]
7 Again, I saw vanity under the sun: 8 the
case of solitary individuals, without sons or
brothers; yet there is no end to all their toil,
and their eyes are never satisfied with riches.
"For whom am I toiling," they ask, "and
depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is
vanity and an unhappy business.
9 Two are better than one, because they
have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they
fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one
who is alone and falls and does not have
another to help. 11 Again, if two lie together,
they keep warm; but how can one keep warm
alone? 12 And though one might prevail
against another, two will withstand one. A
threefold cord is not quickly broken.
13 Better is a poor but wise youth than
an old but foolish king, who will no longer
take advice. 14 One can indeed come out of
prison to reign, even though born poor in the
kingdom. 15 I saw all the living who, moving
about under the sun, follow that[b] youth who
replaced the king;[c] 16 there was no end to all
those people whom he led. Yet those who
come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this
also is vanity and a chasing after wind.[a]

5 [d] Guard your steps when you go to the
house of God; to draw near to listen is
better than the sacrifice offered by fools; for
they do not know how to keep from doing
evil.[e] 2 [f]Never be rash with your mouth, nor
let your heart be quick to utter a word before
God, for God is in heaven, and you upon
earth; therefore let your words be few.
3 For dreams come with many cares, and a
fool's voice with many words.
4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay
fulfilling it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Ful-
fill what you vow. 5 It is better that you should
not vow than that you should vow and not ful-
fill it. 6 Do not let your mouth lead you into sin,
and do not say before the messenger that it was
a mistake; why should God be angry at your
words, and destroy the work of your hands?
7 With many dreams come vanities and a
multitude of words;[g] but fear God.

[a] Or *a feeding on wind.* See Hos 12.1
[b] Heb *the second*
[c] Heb *him*
[d] Ch 4.17 in Heb
[e] Cn: Heb *they do not know how to do evil*
[f] Ch 5.1 in Heb
[g] Meaning of Heb uncertain

Oppression, especially when unwitnessed, can be so severe as to make death preferable to life. A rare perspective in the Bible, but also found in Job (see Job 3). **4–6:** Envy can lead to highly productive labor, but is implicitly criticized by the two proverbs in vv. 5–6. On their own, the proverbs appear to contrast foolish laziness and frenetic toil with a state of lesser productivity that includes leisure. In this context, they teach that *envy* combines the worst of foolishness and mania: it leads those who are envious to turn against others and on themselves in self-consuming, cannibalistic violence. **4:** *Vanity*, 1.2n. *Chasing after wind*, 1.14n. **6:** Many Heb proverbs are "better . . . than" sayings (see v. 13; Prov 12.9; 15.16–17; 16.18; etc.). **7–12:** Joint commitments make possible a reward unavailable to isolated individuals. **8:** *Unhappy business*, see 1.13n. **13–16:** A somewhat obscure comparison that seems to say that even when advantages exist and surprising reversals occur, fleetingness and oblivion are unavoidable.

5.1–7: Words and deeds. The gap between what people say and what they do creates many problems, especially with religious practices (cf. Deut 23.21–22; Sir 18.2). Qohelet associates sacrifices, vows, and divinatory practices with fools. **1:** *House of God*, temple. *For they do not know* may mean that fools can be so foolish that they are unaware when their sacrifices produce harm. **3:** *Dreams* in the ancient Near East were understood to be a potential source of divine revelation that often had to be interpreted by a religious expert (cf. Gen 40:5–23). At times, dreams were also denigrated as a worthless and easily manipulated medium of divination (cf. Sir 34:1–3). Qohelet cautions the reader about the extreme difficulty of discerning the meanings of dreams. **4–5:** A religious *vow* promises some future deed with words, and thus exemplifies the distance between words and deeds. Qohelet advises against vowing, because humans usually fail to match deeds to words. **7:** *Fear* of *God* in the wisdom tradition refers to a reverent openness to divine instruction that is the first step to becoming a sage (cf. Prov 9.10). It can also describe awestruck terror in the face of God's overwhelming presence (cf. Job 9.35).

8 If you see in a province the oppression
of the poor and the violation of justice and
right, do not be amazed at the matter; for the
high official is watched by a higher, and there
are yet higher ones over them. 9 But all things
considered, this is an advantage for a land: a
king for a plowed field.[a]
10 The lover of money will not be satisfied
with money; nor the lover of wealth, with
gain. This also is vanity.
11 When goods increase, those who eat
them increase; and what gain has their owner
but to see them with his eyes?
12 Sweet is the sleep of laborers, whether
they eat little or much; but the surfeit of the
rich will not let them sleep.
13 There is a grievous ill that I have seen un-
der the sun: riches were kept by their owners to
their hurt, 14 and those riches were lost in a bad
venture; though they are parents of children,
they have nothing in their hands. 15 As they
came from their mother's womb, so they shall
go again, naked as they came; they shall take
nothing for their toil, which they may carry
away with their hands. 16 This also is a grievous
ill: just as they came, so shall they go; and what
gain do they have from toiling for the wind?
17 Besides, all their days they eat in darkness, in
much vexation and sickness and resentment.
18 This is what I have seen to be good: it is
fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in
all the toil with which one toils under the sun
the few days of the life God gives us; for this
is our lot. 19 Likewise all to whom God gives
wealth and possessions and whom he enables
to enjoy them, and to accept their lot and find
enjoyment in their toil—this is the gift of
God. 20 For they will scarcely brood over the
days of their lives, because God keeps them
occupied with the joy of their hearts.

6 There is an evil that I have seen under the
sun, and it lies heavy upon humankind:
2 those to whom God gives wealth, posses-
sions, and honor, so that they lack nothing of
all that they desire, yet God does not enable
them to enjoy these things, but a stranger
enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous ill.
3 A man may beget a hundred children, and
live many years; but however many are the
days of his years, if he does not enjoy life's
good things, or has no burial, I say that a still-
born child is better off than he. 4 For it comes
into vanity and goes into darkness, and in
darkness its name is covered; 5 moreover it
has not seen the sun or known anything; yet
it finds rest rather than he. 6 Even though he
should live a thousand years twice over, yet
enjoy no good—do not all go to one place?
7 All human toil is for the mouth, yet the
appetite is not satisfied. 8 For what advantage
have the wise over fools? And what do the
poor have who know how to conduct them-
selves before the living? 9 Better is the sight
of the eyes than the wandering of desire; this
also is vanity and a chasing after wind.[b]
10 Whatever has come to be has already
been named, and it is known what human

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *a feeding on wind*. See Hos 12.1

5.8–6.9: Disconnections between conditions of life and enjoyment. Objects of desire do not bring the satisfaction they promise (5.10; 6.2,7). Riches can cause restlessness (5.12) or even harm (5.13). Humans are capable of enjoyment, but it depends upon a divine agent (5.18–20). The pleasure human beings can experience never escapes "the wandering of desire" or the conditions of "vanity and a chasing after wind" (6.9). **5.8:** This saying may refer to a corrupt bureaucratic hierarchy or, more generally, to those who desire positions of status and power over others. **9:** An obscure verse that apparently praises agricultural production. See also 11.1–6n. **11–17:** Qohelet critiques the accumulation of wealth. See also 10.16–11.6n. **15:** *Naked*, see Job 1.21. **16:** See 1.3n. **18–19:** See 3.13n. **20:** The verb *brood* has to do with remembering. Those who enjoy will not remember much of their days, not because enjoyment enables escapism, but because the enjoyers are so occupied with finding joy in their toil (see v. 18) that they overlook much that would otherwise trouble them. **6.2:** At the beginning of his story, Job is an example of someone who lacks nothing yet cannot enjoy; see Job 1.1–5. **3:** *No burial*: to die unburied was considered an accursed condition (Deut 28.25–26; 1 Kings 14.10–11; Jer 16.4). *Stillborn*, see 4.3n. **6:** *One place*, see 3.20. **9:** *Sight of the eyes . . . wandering of desire,* the contrast appears to be between what is present and the insatiable appetite for what is not. Contrast 11.9, which commends following the "desire" of one's *eyes*. *Vanity*, 1.2n. *Chasing after wind*, 1.14n.

6.10–7.14: Life's missing ending makes the world inscrutable. Qohelet explains a paradox: in the story of a person's life, death is the end, but the dead no longer comprehend. Thus, humans are barred from fully under-

beings are, and that they are not able to
dispute with those who are stronger. [11] The
more words, the more vanity, so how is one
the better? [12] For who knows what is good for
mortals while they live the few days of their
vain life, which they pass like a shadow? For
who can tell them what will be after them
under the sun?

7 A good name is better than precious
ointment,
and the day of death, than the day of
birth.
[2] It is better to go to the house of mourning
than to go to the house of feasting;
for this is the end of everyone,
and the living will lay it to heart.
[3] Sorrow is better than laughter,
for by sadness of countenance the heart
is made glad.
[4] The heart of the wise is in the house of
mourning;
but the heart of fools is in the house of
mirth.
[5] It is better to hear the rebuke of
the wise
than to hear the song of fools.
[6] For like the crackling of thorns under a
pot,
so is the laughter of fools;
this also is vanity.
[7] Surely oppression makes the wise foolish,
and a bribe corrupts the heart.
[8] Better is the end of a thing than its
beginning;
the patient in spirit are better than the
proud in spirit.
[9] Do not be quick to anger,
for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.
[10] Do not say, "Why were the former days
better than these?"
For it is not from wisdom that you ask
this.
[11] Wisdom is as good as an inheritance,
an advantage to those who see the sun.
[12] For the protection of wisdom is like the
protection of money,

standing their lives (6.12). This section uses the word "good/better" (Heb "tob") nine times, but the repetition of "better than" sayings is ironic, since one does not know for certain what is better. By juxtaposing traditional wisdom literature forms and content (cf. 7.1a) with striking affirmations of death's superiority to life (cf. 7.1b), Qohelet reframes traditional wisdom and undermines notions of a benevolent cosmic order. **6.11–12:** The implied answers to these questions are negative. Because the human lifespan is limited, people cannot know the long-term effects of their actions and thus cannot determine what is better. Qohelet underscores the role of death in this impossibility of knowing (see also 3.21; 7.14). **7.1:** The first poetic line cleverly plays on the words *name* (Heb "shem") and *ointment* ("shemen"), so that the line sounds like it repeats or mirrors itself ("tob shem mishemen tob"). The high value of a good reputation is a traditional wisdom observation (cf. Prov 22.1). Contrary to Qohelet, traditional wisdom exalts life (*the day of birth*) over *death* (cf. Prov 8.35–36). But here Qohelet's critique of traditional wisdom is most radical: since one's reputation is only fully established after death, *the day of death* must be better. **2–4:** Qohelet draws further, shocking conclusions from the logical implications of the traditional wisdom teaching in v. 1. If a memorialized name is better than celebratory oil, then a funeral (*house of mourning*) is better than a wedding (*house of feasting*, v. 2), and likewise *sorrow* excels *laughter* (v. 3), as *mourning* surpasses joy (*mirth*, v. 4). **3:** *Heart is made glad*: since the Heb word "leb" literally means *heart*, but primarily indicates the capacity for thought, and the word translated *glad* is "tob" ("good," "better"), the words might be translated "makes the mind better." Meditation upon death, which is the common denominator of humanity (v. 2), sharpens mental acumen. **5–7:** These sayings focus on folly and seem to hew more closely to traditional wisdom. Yet the awkward insertion of *this also is vanity* (v. 6) is ambiguous, and disturbs the passage's clarity. This phrase could describe the *laughter of fools,* but it could introduce Qohelet's uncertainty about any distinction between the foolish and the wise (cf. 6.12). In v. 7 *oppression* turns the *wise* into the *foolish,* which underscores the instability of these categories. **8–9:** Qohelet returns to the claim that the *end* (i.e., death) is preferable to the *beginning*, and thus the *patient* who wait to render judgment excel those anxious to jump to conclusions, as in v. 9. *Proud in spirit,* better "anxious." **10:** This saying inverts the nostalgic preference for the *former days* found in traditional wisdom literature (e.g., Job 8.8–10; 15.7; Sir 39.1), and suggests that personified *Wisdom* herself does not encourage a quest to recover a pristine past (contrast Prov 8.22–31). Qohelet consistently reorients the wise toward endings rather than beginnings (cf. v. 8). **11–12:** These sayings reiterate traditional teachings about *Wisdom*, saying that she is as precious and even more life-giving than *money* (cf.

and the advantage of knowledge is that
wisdom gives life to the one who
possesses it.
13 Consider the work of God;
who can make straight what he has
made crooked?
14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in
the day of adversity consider; God has made
the one as well as the other, so that mortals
may not find out anything that will come
after them.
15 In my vain life I have seen everything;
there are righteous people who perish in
their righteousness, and there are wicked
people who prolong their life in their evil-
doing. 16 Do not be too righteous, and do
not act too wise; why should you destroy
yourself? 17 Do not be too wicked, and do
not be a fool; why should you die before
your time? 18 It is good that you should take
hold of the one, without letting go of the
other; for the one who fears God shall suc-
ceed with both.
19 Wisdom gives strength to the wise more
than ten rulers that are in a city.
20 Surely there is no one on earth so
righteous as to do good without ever sin-
ning.
21 Do not give heed to everything that peo-
ple say, or you may hear your servant cursing
you; 22 your heart knows that many times you
have yourself cursed others.
23 All this I have tested by wisdom; I said, "I
will be wise," but it was far from me. 24 That
which is, is far off, and deep, very deep; who
can find it out? 25 I turned my mind to know
and to search out and to seek wisdom and
the sum of things, and to know that wicked-
ness is folly and that foolishness is madness.
26 I found more bitter than death the woman
who is a trap, whose heart is snares and nets,
whose hands are fetters; one who pleases God
escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.
27 See, this is what I found, says the Teacher,[a]
adding one thing to another to find the sum,
28 which my mind has sought repeatedly, but I
have not found. One man among a thousand
I found, but a woman among all these I have

[a] *Qoheleth,* traditionally rendered *Preacher*

Prov 3.13–18; Job 28.15–19). Yet Qohelet's anxiety concerning *inheritance* (cf. 2.18–23) reappears: *Wisdom* is only an *advantage* for the living (those who *see the sun*; see 1.14n.). The limited worth of money implies that wisdom also has its limits. **13–14:** Ancient Israelite scribes associated "straightness" or "uprightness" with moral purity (Prov 11.5) and good teaching (Prov 8.8–9), and attributed the existence of "straight" teachings and actions to God's activity (Prov 3.6). Evil human actions, by contrast, are responsible for crookedness (Prov 11.20; 21.8). But here, God has *made* the world *crooked* (lit., "made unjust"; cf. 1.15), and humans cannot fix it.

7.15–22: Do not seek pure, ideal things. Traditional wisdom assures students that righteous lives result in wealth and longevity, while the foolish quickly perish (cf. Prov 16.22). Surprisingly, Qohelet advises against striving for personal perfection, since overly righteous people tend towards self-destruction. Some level of personal moral failure is required to function in human society. **16:** If you do not accept your own inevitable failures, you will *destroy yourself.* **17:** One must not be overly *wicked* either, as foolishness often leads to premature death. **18–20:** The *one who fears God* (see 5.7n.) will reject the search for pure righteousness, and accept both wisdom and folly as necessary parts of life. This will help one accept the failures of others as well, even a servant's offhanded criticism. **19:** Cf. Prov 21.22.

7.23–8.1:The frustrated search for cosmic meaning and order. This passage shares many themes and terms with the royal autobiography in 1.12–2.26. Qohelet embarks on a mental quest to comprehend the "sum" of the world, but finds instead that the world is fragmented, conflicted, with a dynamism that prevents it from being understood as a whole. **7.26:** Some read this verse as a misogynistic attack against women in general. More likely, Qohelet alludes to the specific misogynist metaphors commonly found in wisdom literature that personify folly and wisdom as female icons. Folly appears as a *bitter*, "strange woman" (cf. Prov 5.3–4). Wisdom is described as bonds and *fetters* that sages should willingly seek (cf. Sir 6.24–31). Qohelet rejects both ideals in 7.16–17, only to admit that he pursued both wisdom and folly (7.25), before disparaging such pursuit as a *trap*. **27–28:** Qohelet reiterates that to comprehend the world as a summative whole is impossible, not merely difficult. Like v. 26, some understand v. 28 as a general misogynistic statement about the rarity of wise men and the impossibility of a wise woman. In this passage, however, it may refer to the *woman* from v. 26. Thus, after initially assuming that he could not find Wisdom because she was "far off" (vv. 23–24), Qohelet concludes that

not found. [29] See, this alone I found, that God made human beings straightforward, but they have devised many schemes.

8 Who is like the wise man?
And who knows the interpretation of a thing?
Wisdom makes one's face shine,
and the hardness of one's countenance is changed.

[2] Keep[a] the king's command because of your sacred oath. [3] Do not be terrified; go from his presence, do not delay when the matter is unpleasant, for he does whatever he pleases. [4] For the word of the king is powerful, and who can say to him, "What are you doing?" [5] Whoever obeys a command will meet no harm, and the wise mind will know the time and way. [6] For every matter has its time and way, although the troubles of mortals lie heavy upon them. [7] Indeed, they do not know what is to be, for who can tell them how it will be? [8] No one has power over the wind[b] to restrain the wind,[b] or power over the day of death; there is no discharge from the battle, nor does wickedness deliver those who practice it. [9] All this I observed, applying my mind to all that is done under the sun, while one person exercises authority over another to the other's hurt.

[10] Then I saw the wicked buried; they used to go in and out of the holy place, and were praised in the city where they had done such things.[c] This also is vanity. [11] Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the human heart is fully set to do evil. [12] Though sinners do evil a hundred times and prolong their lives, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they stand in fear before him, [13] but it will not be well with the wicked, neither will they prolong their days like a shadow, because they do not stand in fear before God.

[14] There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. [15] So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will

[a] Heb *I keep*
[b] Or *breath*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

there is no such ideal Woman to be found (cf. Job 28 on the failed search for wisdom). **29:** The conclusion of Qohelet's quest: since God made the world crooked (cf. 1.15; 7.13), the *straightforward* human being's attempts to understand it are doomed to failure (reading "sum of things" with the LXX, as in v. 25, for *schemes*). **8.1:** Knowing that no one is certain how to interpret a *thing* (or "word," "matter") is itself *wisdom,* and enables one to enjoy life (*makes one's face shine*) and compels one to exchange arrogance (*hardness of one's countenance*) for humility.

8.2–9: The arbitrary powers and limitations of authority. Monarchs lack the humility taught in 8.1, so those working for royalty must obey without questioning. Yet no one, not even the king, knows what is to be or can forestall death or constrain conflict. Human *authority* pretends to ultimate power, which *hurts* people. **2:** *Sacred oath*, an oath sworn in the name of God (Ex 22.11; 2 Sam 21.7; 1 Kings 2.43). **5b–7:** *Time and way*, lit., "time and judgment" (cf. 3.1,16–17). There is a proper time and a proper judgment; unfortunately, no one knows when and how until after the fact. **8:** *Power over the wind to restrain it,* or, "power over the (life-)breath to hold back the (life-)breath." No one has the power to avert death. *No discharge from battle*, that is, from death. No one can send a substitute to take his or her place.

8.10–17: God's arbitrary powers and the limitations of wisdom. Like human rulers (vv. 2–9), God makes decisions that seem arbitrary and unquestionable. For example, wicked people are powerful, praised, and properly buried in the same places where they committed atrocities (v. 10). Qohelet briefly affirms divine justice (vv. 12–13) but then asserts that human experience finds no evidence of it (v. 14). Instead of endorsing hedonism (cf. 2.1–26), however, Qohelet commends enjoyment (see 9.1–12n.) which can accompany people even amidst their toil (v. 15). Since God's work makes it impossible even for the wise to understand the world (vv. 16–17), enjoyment becomes possible once one sees that the world cannot make sense. **10:** *Holy place*, a sanctuary, likely the Jerusalem Temple. Cf. Job 21.32–33. *Vanity*, 1.2n. **11:** Cf. Job 21.19–21. **13:** *Like a shadow*, a common image of transitoriness (6.12; Pss 102.11; 109.23; Job 8.9; 14.2; 17.7). **14:** *Vanity*, in the sense of an incomprehensible situation. **15:** *Enjoyment*, cf. 2.24; 3.13; 5.18; 9.7. The KJV famously translates "to eat, and to drink, and to be merry."

go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun.

16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how one's eyes see sleep neither day nor night, 17 then I saw all the work of God, that no one can find out what is happening under the sun. However much they may toil in seeking, they will not find it out; even though those who are wise claim to know, they cannot find it out.

9 All this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God; whether it is love or hate one does not know. Everything that confronts them 2 is vanity,[a] since the same fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil,[b] to the clean and the unclean, to those who sacrifice and those who do not sacrifice. As are the good, so are the sinners; those who swear are like those who shun an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that happens under the sun, that the same fate comes to everyone. Moreover, the hearts of all are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. 4 But whoever is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 5 The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no more reward, and even the memory of them is lost. 6 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished; never again will they have any share in all that happens under the sun.

7 Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has long ago approved what you do. 8 Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head. 9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

11 Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful; but time and chance happen to them all. 12 For no one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish taken in a cruel net, and like birds caught in a snare, so mortals are snared at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them.

13 I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. 14 There was a little city with few people in it. A great king came against it and besieged it,

[a] Syr Compare Gk: Heb *Everything that confronts them 2 is everything*
[b] Gk Syr Vg: Heb lacks *and the evil*

9.1–12: Accept that life is finite, and find joy in passionate engagement. All humans die, no matter their accomplishments (vv. 1–3,11–12), so everyone's life is equally "breath" (Heb "hebel"; cf. 1.2n.). Yet life is not worthless: life is preferable to death (vv. 4–6), even for those who suffer (a dog vs. a royal lion, v. 4). Since humans have limited life spans and no evident lasting rewards for good behavior, they need not measure themselves against universal standards of piety, wealth, or accomplishment. Instead, humans can immerse themselves in their intimate relationships, labor, leisure, and enjoyment of the material world (such as eating and drinking; vv. 7–9; cf. 2.24–26; 3.12–14,22; 8.15; 11.6–10; 12.1). This is no exhortation to hedonism or resignation: the limitations of human life demand constant, passionate engagement in the activities that one finds compelling (v. 10). **2:** *Vanity,* see 1.2n. The Heb (and LXX) reads "everything" instead of "vanity" (see textual note *a*), suggesting that what we can see, in all its incompleteness and continual change, is all there is: do not look to a transcendent plane to solve the universe's deep questions. *As are the good . . . sinners:* While evil and good are distinguishable in their effects, everyone dies. Ethical living does not earn lasting benefits. **4:** *Hope,* better, "assurance." **7–10:** A similar passage in the ancient Mesopotamian epic *Gilgamesh* suggests that the advice to enjoy life in the full knowledge of certain death was a piece of folk wisdom. Feasting rather than fasting, clean *garments*, anointing with *oil*, and sexual activity were associated with joy and the cessation of mourning (2 Sam 12.20,24). **9:** *Wife*, or "woman." *Vain life*, i.e., the ephemeral and uncontrollable nature of life. *Sheol*, the abode of the dead. **11:** Qohelet refutes the cause-and-effect or act-consequence relationship central to traditional wisdom literature.

9.13–10.15: Parable and proverbs on wisdom and folly. 9.13–16: *This example of wisdom* refers to no known historical event. The point is that the difference between wisdom and folly does not guarantee that anything in

building great siegeworks against it. 15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. 16 So I said, "Wisdom is better than might; yet the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded."

17 The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded
than the shouting of a ruler among fools.
18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war,
but one bungler destroys much good.

10 Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a foul odor;
so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.
2 The heart of the wise inclines to the right,
but the heart of a fool to the left.
3 Even when fools walk on the road, they lack sense,
and show to everyone that they are fools.
4 If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post,
for calmness will undo great offenses.
5 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as great an error as if it proceeded from the ruler: 6 folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. 7 I have seen slaves on horseback, and princes walking on foot like slaves.
8 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it;
and whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a snake.
9 Whoever quarries stones will be hurt by them;
and whoever splits logs will be endangered by them.
10 If the iron is blunt, and one does not whet the edge,
then more strength must be exerted;
but wisdom helps one to succeed.
11 If the snake bites before it is charmed,
there is no advantage in a charmer.

12 Words spoken by the wise bring them favor,
but the lips of fools consume them.
13 The words of their mouths begin in foolishness,
and their talk ends in wicked madness;
14 yet fools talk on and on.
No one knows what is to happen,
and who can tell anyone what the future holds?
15 The toil of fools wears them out,
for they do not even know the way to town.

16 Alas for you, O land, when your king is a servant,[a]
and your princes feast in the morning!
17 Happy are you, O land, when your king is a nobleman,
and your princes feast at the proper time—
for strength, and not for drunkenness!
18 Through sloth the roof sinks in,

[a] Or *a child*

life will turn out differently because of them. **15–16:** *Delivered* could be translated "might have delivered." The parable may be about how *a poor wise man*'s advice was ignored because of his low socioeconomic status. **9.17–18:** Two proverbs that comment directly on the parable. **10.1:** A more general saying about how easily something valuable can be destroyed by something less valuable. **2:** In many cultures the direction *right* is associated with positive things and *left* with negative ones (see Gen 48.13–18; but cf. Prov 3.16). **4:** *Leave . . . undo*, the same Heb verb. **5–7:** When so little can overtake so much, the world easily becomes topsy-turvy (see similar descriptions in Prov 30.21–23; Isa 3.4–5). The distress of wisdom writers that social orders should be overturned is also found in Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts. **8–11:** Maxims describing experiences where one's action unexpectedly proves harmful. The saying in 8a is similar to Prov 26.27a, where it suggests appropriate comeuppance to the schemer. In these maxims, however, the emphasis seems to be on the uncertain outcomes of actions, as v. 14 makes explicit (see 3.22; 6.12; 8.7).

10.16–11.6: Living with risks. The vulnerability of a land to political arrangements is first addressed (10.16–20), then economic uncertainties and how best to cope (11.1–6). **10.16.** *Your king is a servant*, or "your king is a boy." The point is that an incompetent person has gained power (cf. 9.17–18; 10.5–6). **18–19:** *The house leaks*, or "the house collapses": this may be subversive political commentary in the guise of an innocuous proverb, since

and through indolence the house leaks.
19 Feasts are made for laughter;
wine gladdens life,
and money meets every need.
20 Do not curse the king, even in your thoughts,
or curse the rich, even in your bedroom;
for a bird of the air may carry your voice,
or some winged creature tell the matter.

11 Send out your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will get it back.
2 Divide your means seven ways, or even eight,
for you do not know what disaster may happen on earth.
3 When clouds are full,
they empty rain on the earth;
whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,
in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.
4 Whoever observes the wind will not sow;
and whoever regards the clouds will not reap.
5 Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb,
so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything.
6 In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hands be idle; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.
7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.
8 Even those who live many years should rejoice in them all; yet let them remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.
9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.
10 Banish anxiety from your mind, and put away pain from your body; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.

12 Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will

"house" can refer to a dynasty as well as a structure. **20:** The Heb verb for *curse* simply means "to denigrate" or "to vilify." The author warns against the very kinds of subversive activity suggested by the "inside jokes" of vv. 18–19. **11.1–6:** A final exhortation to engage in productive labor amidst an uncertain world and the mysteries of life and prosperity. **1:** *Send out your bread upon the waters,* an Egyptian wisdom text suggests that this is an exhortation to give charitably, though it might also be construed as pragmatic and metaphorical advice about diversifying risk through trade, as v. 2 suggests. **2:** *Seven . . . eight*, the increasing numerical parallelism is a common poetic device. See Prov 6.16; 30.15–33; Am 1–2; Mic 5.5. **3–4:** *Clouds and wind* are mysterious things that mortals do not control. The farmer who attempts to discern the perfect weather conditions to *sow* or to *reap* will never do so. **5:** The images in this verse echo the surrounding verses. *Breath* is the same word as "wind" in v. 4. *Mother,* lit., "the full one," linking pregnancy with the description of clouds filled with rain in v. 3. The reference to procreation echoes reproductive references to sowing and seed in vv. 4,6. **6:** *Sow your seed* can also mean "to produce offspring"; after the mention of procreation in v. 5, this is an exhortation to productive and reproductive labor. Such activity in the full knowledge of uncertainty echoes the call to enjoyment in relationships and work advocated in 9.7–10.

11.7–8: In sum. The sensuous celebration of the pleasure of light is a variation on the repeated prescription to enjoy one's life in full knowledge of the coming *days of darkness*. As with other binary oppositions in the book, Qohelet teaches that the realities of light and darkness share one fundamental condition: *vanity* (see 1.2n.).

11.9–12.8: Qohelet's conclusion. **11.9–10**: One should find joy by immediately pursuing one's passions (*inclination of your heart*) before it is too late to enjoy them. *But,* the Heb conjunction ("waw") often means "and," which seems better here, unless this comment is a gloss by a disapproving editor. The context rather suggests that God will hold people to account if they do not follow their desire. Thus *anxiety* and negativity (*pain*) should be brushed aside. **10:** *Vanity,* here in the sense of ephemerality; cf. 1.2n. **12.1–8:** An evocative series of images typically read as metaphors for death and the aging human body, or as literal descriptions of a decrepit house, a passing funeral, or even the apocalyptic end of the cosmos. Qohelet describes worsening weather (v. 2), terrified people abandoning public spaces (vv. 3–5a), a disordered natural world (v. 5b), precious and useful objects

say, "I have no pleasure in them"; [2] before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return with[a] the rain; [3] in the day when the guards of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the women who grind cease working because they are few, and those who look through the windows see dimly; [4] when the doors on the street are shut, and the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low; [5] when one is afraid of heights, and terrors are in the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along[b] and desire fails; because all must go to their eternal home, and the mourners will go about the streets; [6] before the silver cord is snapped,[c] and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern, [7] and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath[d] returns to God who gave it. [8] Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher;[e] all is vanity.

[9] Besides being wise, the Teacher[e] also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs. [10] The Teacher[e] sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth plainly.

[11] The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings that are given by one shepherd.[f] [12] Of anything beyond these, my child, beware. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

[13] The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. [14] For God will bring every deed into judgment, including[g] every secret thing, whether good or evil.

[a] Or a*fter*; Heb *'ahar*
[b] Or *is a burden*
[c] Syr Vg Compare Gk: Heb *is removed*
[d] Or *the spirit*
[e] *Qoheleth,* traditionally rendered *Preacher*
[f] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[g] Or *into the judgment on*

breaking (v. 6), and the components of the human body returning to their elemental state after death (v. 7). Together, they present a sense of ultimate deterioration that links the inevitable disintegration of the cosmos to that of human society and individual human bodies. Ultimately, Qohelet teaches a fundamental truth of the cosmos: nothing is stable; everything is open to transformation (v. 8). **1:** The Heb for *your creator* ("bore'eka") sounds like the word "cistern ("bor") in v. 6, and so may link the giving and the cessation of life. **2:** The language of the darkening sky is reminiscent of prophetic eschatology (cf. Isa 5.30; 13.10; Ezek 32.7–8; Am 5.8; 8.9; Mic 3.6), but the following verses describe fatigue and cessation more than eschatological terror. **4:** The imagery is obscure. In Hebrew idiom "sons of" or "daughters of" is a way of identifying a type of thing, as "sons of cattle" are simply "cattle." So, "daughters of song" may refer to birds or to musical sounds. Perhaps v. 4 refers simply to the loss of hearing and the difficulty of distinguishing sounds. **5:** The Hebrew is extremely difficult and the translation is uncertain. **6–7:** Images of death. According to Gen 2.7, human beings are a conjunction of dirt and God's breath (here Heb "ruaḥ," though a different word is used in Gen 2.7; cf. Gen 6.17; 7.15,22). Here, God's animating power of breath returns to God when the human stops breathing (cf. Ps 104.29b). **8:** Qohelet quotes the opening motto of the book (see 1.2n.), thus performing the very circular repetition described by the introductory poem in 1.4–11.

12.9–14: Editorial conclusion. **9–12:** A later editor judges that Qohelet's teachings in 1.2–12.8 are plain and true, pleasing and provocative. **9:** The traditional work of a sage. **11:** Mixed metaphors that are difficult to interpret but suggest intentional effort designed to organize disparate things, as *goads* assist a *shepherd* in collecting the flock, and *nails* are used to hold boards together. **12:** A formulaic conclusion that appears to attempt to establish the authority of the text and warns against going beyond it to other texts. **13:** The editor's exhortation to *fear God, and keep his commandments* is inconsistent with Qohelet's teachings. **14:** The editor perhaps believes in an apocalyptic *judgment* (cf. Dan 12.1–4).

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

NAME OF BOOK AND LOCATION IN CANON

The Song of Solomon (its Hebrew title is "Song of Songs"), also known as Canticles, appears in the Megillot, or "five scrolls" (Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther), in the third part of the Jewish canon, the Writings. In the Christian canon it is among the Poetical and Wisdom books.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, LITERARY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Song of Solomon, the Bible's only love poem, offers no clues about when, where, or under what circumstances it was composed. Its author is unknown. The traditional attribution of the book to Solomon probably derives from references to Solomon in the poem (1.5; 3.7,9,11; 8.11,12) and his reputation as the composer of songs (1 Kings 4.32) and owner of a large harem (1 Kings 11.3).

Speculation about the date of composition ranges from the time of Solomon (tenth century BCE) to the Hellenistic period (fourth to second centuries BCE). Some scholars see the Song as a collection, in which case the various love poems would come from different authors and different times.

Similarities to Mesopotamian (3000–1000 BCE) and, in particular, Egyptian love poetry (thirteenth to eleventh centuries BCE) indicate that the poet drew upon a rich cultural tradition of love poetry. Shared features include wishing, desiring, praising the beloved, metaphoric descriptions of the body, double entendre, nature imagery, and the appeal to the senses. Sometimes a dialogue format is used; frequently the lovers address each other as "sister" and "brother." Many of the Mesopotamian love poems deal with the marriage of the goddess and her consort and were used in ritual contexts. In contrast, the Song, like the Egyptian love poems, is not about gods nor does it appear to have had anything to do with worship.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The Song is about how glorious it is to be in love. It looks at love from both a woman's and a man's point of view, and it consists entirely of dialogue, so that we learn about love through what lovers say about it. The dialogue format creates the impression that we are overhearing the lovers as they speak, and observing their love unfold. The poet seeks to immortalize a vision of love as "strong as death" (8.6) by portraying the lovers as forever seeking and finding gratification of their mutual desire. They delight in each other and in the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibility of the world around them, making the Song a feast for the senses.

A third speaking voice belongs to the women of Jerusalem, a kind of chorus functioning as an audience within the poem and whose presence, because the lovers are aware of and encourage it, facilitates the reader's entry into the lovers' seemingly private world of erotic intimacy.

The poem begins and ends with short speeches in which the speakers change frequently, and the voices of the woman, the man, and, occasionally, the women of Jerusalem intermingle (1.2–2.7; 8.1–14). In between—although the structure is not rigid—are two cycles of long speeches, in which the woman speaks, then the man, with the woman interrupting his speeches at the end (2.8–3.11 and 4.1–5.1; 5.2–6.3 and 6.4–7.13).

INTERPRETATION

Allegory was the dominant mode of interpretation from the early centuries of the Common Era until the rise of critical biblical scholarship in the nineteenth century. Jewish interpreters typically read the Song as an account of the relationship between God and Israel, while Christians saw it as about the love between Christ and the church, or Christ (or the divine logos) and the individual believer. Modern scholars recognize its subject as human love, though some have argued that it originated as a liturgical text whose speakers are a god and goddess. Whether the Song was included in the canon because it had been allegorized or was allegorized because it had been included in the canon has long been debated. Allegorization alone cannot have been the reason the Song was included, since the text must have already achieved a certain status—perhaps as part of the national religious literature—for anyone to have taken the trouble to develop an allegorical interpretation of it.

The Song is a lyric poem, not a record of events in the lives of two lovers. This means that unusual events or sudden transitions do not require explanation to make them seem more realistic or more intelligible. When we

read lyric poetry, which is essentially a discontinuous form, we should not expect to find the kind of linear unfolding of events that produces a plot. The Song meanders, repeating themes, images, phrases, and sometimes whole sections. As we read the poem, we may feel that we get to know the lovers, for they each have their own distinctive way of talking about their love and its effect on them. She is lovesick (2.5; 5.8), and she tells stories in which he comes to court her and she searches for him (2.8–17; 3.1–5; 5.2–8). He is overwhelmed by her (4.9; 6.5), and praises her charms in detail (4.1–15; 6.4–10; 7.1–9). Yet even as we build a picture of them, we need to recognize that the woman and the man are personae created by the poet to represent all lovers. They appear in various guises—shepherds, vineyard keepers, royal figures—as well as appearing as themselves. Because they are not real lovers, their movements are not restricted. They effortlessly traverse the poetic landscape—vineyards, gardens, palaces, houses, rocky cliffs, the wilderness, Lebanon—finding pleasure wherever their fancy takes them.

Readers are meant to revel in the poem's sonorousness, rich vocabulary, and exotic images. Its dense metaphoric language and extravagant images are not reducible to simple prose paraphrase, and typically the metaphors the lovers use to describe each other's bodies hide as much as they reveal.

This is no private poem, intended for a lover's ears only. It invites its readers to participate in the wonder of love, along with the women of Jerusalem, whose presence serves as a reminder that what seems to be a closed dialogue between lovers is indeed addressed to the reader.

J. Cheryl Exum

1 The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

[2] Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
For your love is better than wine,
[3] your anointing oils are fragrant,
your name is perfume poured out;
therefore the maidens love you.
[4] Draw me after you, let us make haste.
The king has brought me into his chambers.
We will exult and rejoice in you;
we will extol your love more than wine;
rightly do they love you.
[5] I am black and beautiful,
O daughters of Jerusalem,
like the tents of Kedar,
like the curtains of Solomon.
[6] Do not gaze at me because I am dark,
because the sun has gazed on me.
My mother's sons were angry with me;
they made me keeper of the vineyards,
but my own vineyard I have not kept!
[7] Tell me, you whom my soul loves,
where you pasture your flock,
where you make it lie down at noon;
for why should I be like one who is veiled
beside the flocks of your companions?

1.1: Title. *Song of Songs*, a superlative, "the best song," like "king of kings" (Ezek 26.7), the king above all kings; "holy of holies" (Ex 26.33), the most holy place; "vanity of vanities" (Eccl 1.2), the height of absurdity. Hebrew "shir" is a generic term for "song" or "poem." *Which is Solomon's* could indicate authorship, or that Solomon is the dedicatee, or that the Song is connected with him in some way (compare the use of "of David" as an editorial superscription to many psalms).

1.2–2.7: A montage of short speeches. 1.2: The poem begins with a romantic relationship already in progress. The woman speaks about her lover as "him," as though he were not there, then suddenly he materializes and she speaks to him of *your love*. *Love*, a plural form referring to physical lovemaking (4.10; 7.12; cf. Prov 7.18). Like *wine*, love is intoxicating (cf. Judg 9.13). **4:** *The king*, i.e., the lover in his royal or Solomonic guise. Here too she speaks of him in the third person, as the king, and then in the second person "you," as in v. 2. *We*, the lovers, or, more likely, the woman and the young women (NRSV, *maidens)* mentioned in v. 3, who are probably also the "they" at the end of v. 4. She is besotted with him and imagines that other women are similarly affected. **5–6:** *Black and beautiful*, her dark skin, she explains, is due to exposure to the sun while working in the vineyards. **5:** *Daughters of Jerusalem*, the female inhabitants of Jerusalem (cf. "sons of Israel" for Israelites). *Kedar*, a northern Arabian tribe whose name means "dark." **6:** No reason is given for the brothers' anger nor is any further reference made to it. *My own vineyard* refers to the woman herself, probably with a sexual meaning, as also in 8.12. **7–8:** The lovers appear in the guise of shepherds. **7:** *Pasture your flock*, there is no term for flock in the Hebrew,

[8] If you do not know,
O fairest among women,
follow the tracks of the flock,
and pasture your kids
beside the shepherds' tents.

[9] I compare you, my love,
to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.
[10] Your cheeks are comely with
ornaments,
your neck with strings of jewels.
[11] We will make you ornaments of gold,
studded with silver.

[12] While the king was on his couch,
my nard gave forth its fragrance.
[13] My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh
that lies between my breasts.
[14] My beloved is to me a cluster of henna
blossoms
in the vineyards of En-gedi.

[15] Ah, you are beautiful, my love;
ah, you are beautiful;
your eyes are doves.
[16] Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved,
truly lovely.
Our couch is green;
[17] the beams of our house are cedar,
our rafters[a] are pine.

2 I am a rose[b] of Sharon,
a lily of the valleys.

[2] As a lily among brambles,
so is my love among maidens.

[3] As an apple tree among the trees of the
wood,
so is my beloved among young men.
With great delight I sat in his shadow,
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.
[4] He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his intention toward me was love.
[5] Sustain me with raisins,
refresh me with apples;
for I am faint with love.
[6] O that his left hand were under my head,
and that his right hand embraced me!
[7] I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the wild does:
do not stir up or awaken love
until it is ready!

[8] The voice of my beloved!
Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *crocus*

which reads, "Where do you graze?" This is one of many instances of double entendre in the Song: the man grazes or feeds among the lilies and in the gardens, figures for the woman herself (2.1–2; 4.12–5.1; see also 2.16 and 6.2–3, where NRSV also inserts "flock"). *Veiled* could refer to a disguise, or, better, read "one who wanders," with some ancient versions. **8:** Spoken either by the man or by the women of Jerusalem, who elsewhere address the woman as "fairest among women" (5.9; 6.1). **9–11:** The man compares his beloved to a fine horse, a common form of praise in antiquity. **11:** He will have the work done, without specifying who will do it (though possibly "we" could be the lovers or the man and the women of Jerusalem). **12–14:** The woman speaks of her beloved as *the king*, as in 1.4. The fragrance of *nard* and *myrrh*, costly aromatics, blend with the natural scent of *henna blossoms*, which are strongly scented and grow in dense clusters. *En-gedi*, an oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea. **1.15–2.3:** Mutual adoration. The man (v. 15) and the woman (vv. 16–17) praise each other in similar terms. She compares herself to flowers we cannot identify with certainty (2.1). He turns her self-description into a compliment (v. 2), which she returns in a way that echoes his words (v. 3). *Sharon*, either the coastal plain between Jaffa and Mount Carmel or simply "the plain." **2.4:** *Banqueting house*, lit., "house of wine," where the lovers dwell in their mutual intoxication. **5–7:** The woman addresses the women of Jerusalem. *Faint with love*, lovesickness, for which the cause, love, is also the cure. **6:** Either a wish or a statement of fact; see 8.3. **7:** See 3.5; 8.4. This resembles a conventional way of swearing an oath but lacks the solemnity: the word for "gazelles" looks and sounds like the word for "hosts" in the name "Lord of Hosts," and Hebrew "ʾaylot hassadeh" ("wild does") recalls the divine name El Shaddai. *Love* is personified as something that has a will of its own.

2.8–3.11: The woman's first long speech. The woman's primary mode of speaking about love is to tell stories in which she and her lover are characters. As stories, these parts of the Song, unlike the poem as a whole, have plots. Here she tells three. **2.8–17:** The first describes the man's visit to her house and his invitation to her to

[9] My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.
Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.
[10] My beloved speaks and says to me:
"Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
[11] for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
[12] The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.
[13] The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.
[14] O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the covert of the cliff,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.
[15] Catch us the foxes,
the little foxes,
that ruin the vineyards—
for our vineyards are in
blossom."

[16] My beloved is mine and I am his;
he pastures his flock among the
lilies.
[17] Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle
or a young stag on the cleft
mountains.[a]

3 Upon my bed at night
I sought him whom my soul loves;
I sought him, but found him not;
I called him, but he gave no answer.[b]
[2] "I will rise now and go about the city,
in the streets and in the squares;
I will seek him whom my soul loves."
I sought him, but found him not.
[3] The sentinels found me,
as they went about in the city.
"Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"
[4] Scarcely had I passed them,
when I found him whom my soul loves.
I held him, and would not let him go
until I brought him into my mother's
house,
and into the chamber of her that
conceived me.
[5] I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the wild does:
do not stir up or awaken love
until it is ready!

[6] What is that coming up from the
wilderness,
like a column of smoke,
perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
with all the fragrant powders of the
merchant?

[a] Or *on the mountains of Bether*; meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk: Heb lacks this line

join him outdoors to enjoy the springtime. *The voice of my beloved*, better, "Listen! My lover!" "Listen" and *look* create the impression of immediacy. His movements are captured in process as he draws closer: *leaping* and *bounding*, then *standing* and *gazing*. **11:** *Winter*, the rainy season. **12:** *Time of singing* may also be read as "time of pruning." **14:** She seems inaccessible, perhaps also shy and hesitant. **15–17:** She answers his request to hear her voice. *Foxes* and *vineyards*, young men and young women. In v. 15 she speaks for women in general; in v. 16, about her relationship with her lover, which is exclusive and mutual. **17:** *Until the day breathes and the shadows flee* could refer to either evening or morning. Whereas she seems to be saying that the time has come for her lover to return, over the mountains, from which he came (v. 8), *cleft mountains* (or emend to "mountains of spices" as in 8.14) alludes to the woman herself and the various pleasures her body offers, perhaps her breasts (see 4.5–6). **3.1–5:** In her second story, she describes her nocturnal search for her beloved and its resolution when she finds him. **5:** See 2.7; 8.4. **3.6–11:** Her third story. A luxurious conveyance approaches, bearing her lover, whom she casts in the role of King Solomon on his wedding day. **6:** *Coming up*, the procession is in motion. First it looks *like a column of smoke*. Next comes an appeal to the sense of smell created by the fragrant aromas of *myrrh* and *frankincense*, suggesting that what is approaching from the distance might be a caravan

7 Look, it is the litter of Solomon!
Around it are sixty mighty men
of the mighty men of Israel,
8 all equipped with swords
and expert in war,
each with his sword at his thigh
because of alarms by night.
9 King Solomon made himself a
palanquin
from the wood of Lebanon.
10 He made its posts of silver,
its back of gold, its seat of purple;
its interior was inlaid with love.[a]
Daughters of Jerusalem,
11 come out.
Look, O daughters of Zion,
at King Solomon,
at the crown with which his mother
crowned him
on the day of his wedding,
on the day of the gladness of his heart.

4 How beautiful you are, my love,
how very beautiful!
Your eyes are doves
behind your veil.
Your hair is like a flock of goats,
moving down the slopes of Gilead.
2 Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes
that have come up from the washing,
all of which bear twins,
and not one among them is bereaved.
3 Your lips are like a crimson thread,
and your mouth is lovely.
Your cheeks are like halves of a
pomegranate
behind your veil.
4 Your neck is like the tower of David,
built in courses;
on it hang a thousand bucklers,
all of them shields of warriors.
5 Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle,
that feed among the lilies.
6 Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
I will hasten to the mountain of myrrh
and the hill of frankincense.
7 You are altogether beautiful, my love;
there is no flaw in you.
8 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride;
come with me from Lebanon.
Depart[b] from the peak of Amana,
from the peak of Senir and Hermon,
from the dens of lions,
from the mountains of leopards.

9 You have ravished my heart, my sister, my
bride,
you have ravished my heart with a
glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.
10 How sweet is your love, my sister, my
bride!
how much better is your love than wine,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *Look*

laden with *fragrant powders of the merchant*. **7–8:** *Look*, now the source of the smoke and the fragrance can be seen, a *litter* or *palanquin* (v. 9), an enclosed chair or couch carried by bearers, surrounded by an armed escort. **9–10:** The trappings of the magnificent *palanquin* progressively come into view. *Love* is not a material for decorating, like *wood*, *silver*, *gold*, and *purple*, and should be emended to "precious stones" or "ebony" or "leather."

4.1–5.1: The man's first long speech. The man's mode of speaking about love is to look at his lover, tell her what he sees and how it affects him. **4.1–5:** He describes parts of her body, using similes and metaphors. **1:** *Goats, moving down the slopes*, flowing tresses of wavy black hair (goats were commonly black or dark colored). *Gilead*, a hilly region in northern Jordan. **2:** *Teeth*, white and evenly paired, with none missing. **3:** *Cheeks*, *halves of a pomegranate*, perhaps rosy cheeks glimpsed through a white mesh *veil*. **4:** The image suggests a *neck* adorned with a necklace made up of several rows of beads. *Tower of David* evokes her regal quality; no such tower is known. **5:** Elsewhere the man is described as *feeding among the lilies*, an erotically suggestive image in which the lilies signify the woman (2.16; 6.2–3). **6:** He responds to her exhortation of 2.17. *Mountain of myrrh*, *hill of frankincense*, the woman's breasts, the woman herself, and the place where the lovers enjoy love's pleasures. **8:** *Bride*, here and v. 11, and "my sister, my bride" (4.9,10,12; 5.1) are terms of endearment. *Amana*, *Senir*, and *Hermon*, peaks in the Anti-Lebanon mountain range, north of Israel, where *lions* and *leopards* make their dens, create a contrast to the accessible mountains of v. 6 and symbolize the woman's inaccessibility and the awe she inspires in him. **9:** *Ravished*, either "stirred my heart" or "captured my heart." He speaks of love in terms of conquest,

and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!
11 Your lips distill nectar, my bride;
honey and milk are under your tongue;
the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon.
12 A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
a garden locked, a fountain sealed.
13 Your channel[a] is an orchard of pomegranates
with all choicest fruits,
henna with nard,
14 nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense,
myrrh and aloes,
with all chief spices—
15 a garden fountain, a well of living water,
and flowing streams from Lebanon.

16 Awake, O north wind,
and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden
that its fragrance may be wafted abroad.
Let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its choicest fruits.

5 I come to my garden, my sister, my bride;
I gather my myrrh with my spice,
I eat my honeycomb with my honey,
I drink my wine with my milk.

Eat, friends, drink,
and be drunk with love.

2 I slept, but my heart was awake.
Listen! my beloved is knocking.
"Open to me, my sister, my love,
my dove, my perfect one;
for my head is wet with dew,
my locks with the drops of the night."
3 I had put off my garment;
how could I put it on again?
I had bathed my feet;
how could I soil them?
4 My beloved thrust his hand into the opening,
and my inmost being yearned for him.
5 I arose to open to my beloved,
and my hands dripped with myrrh,
my fingers with liquid myrrh,
upon the handles of the bolt.
6 I opened to my beloved,
but my beloved had turned and was gone.
My soul failed me when he spoke.
I sought him, but did not find him;
I called him, but he gave no answer.
7 Making their rounds in the city
the sentinels found me;
they beat me, they wounded me,
they took away my mantle,
those sentinels of the walls.
8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
if you find my beloved,
tell him this:
I am faint with love.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

describing his feeling of being overwhelmed by her as something she has done to him. **11:** *The scent of Lebanon*, i.e., the fragrant cedars. **4.12–5.1:** A cluster of metaphors creates a picture of his lover as a fragrant garden, full of edible delights. **4.12:** *Garden locked*, his private garden for his exclusive pleasure. **13–15:** She is a paradisiacal garden, where exotic spice-bearing plants and trees from such faraway places as Arabia, Africa, and India grow side by side. **16:** The woman interrupts him, first inviting the winds into her garden to whet the man's appetite by stirring up its sweet smells, then inviting her lover to an erotic banquet. **5.1:** Eating and drinking are symbols of sexual intimacy. *Eat, friends*, the women of Jerusalem encourage the lovers in their mutual intoxication.

5.2–6.3: The woman's second long speech. Again the woman tells of a visit by the man followed by her search for him in the city streets at night. A dialogue with the women of Jerusalem enables her story to reach the desired outcome, union with her lover. **5.2–8:** See 3.1–5. Her story is replete with sexual allusions. **5.2:** *I slept, but my heart was awake*, a light sleep, in which the woman, desiring or anticipating her lover's visit, is half-listening for his voice. **3:** Either an explanation for her delay, addressed to the women of Jerusalem, or a playful reply to her lover ("I have put off my garment"). **5.** *Myrrh*, with which the woman had anointed herself, or perfumed her bed (Prov 7.17), or both. **6:** *My soul failed me* (lit., "went forth") may refer to swooning or fainting (cf. the similar expression used of dying, Gen 35.18; Ps 146.4). *When he spoke*, better translated, "because of him" or "when he left." **7:** A forceful reminder of the perils of love, or of the willingness of love to suffer. No justification is given for the woman's harsh treatment at the hands of the *sentinels*, and the verse is ambiguous regarding the

9 What is your beloved more than another
beloved,
O fairest among women?
What is your beloved more than another
beloved,
that you thus adjure us?

10 My beloved is all radiant and
ruddy,
distinguished among ten
thousand.
11 His head is the finest gold;
his locks are wavy,
black as a raven.
12 His eyes are like doves
beside springs of water,
bathed in milk,
fitly set.[a]
13 His cheeks are like beds of
spices,
yielding fragrance.
His lips are lilies,
distilling liquid myrrh.
14 His arms are rounded gold,
set with jewels.
His body is ivory work,[a]
encrusted with sapphires.[b]
15 His legs are alabaster columns,
set upon bases of gold.
His appearance is like Lebanon,
choice as the cedars.
16 His speech is most sweet,
and he is altogether desirable.
This is my beloved and this is my
friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

6 Where has your beloved gone,
O fairest among women?
Which way has your beloved turned,
that we may seek him with you?

2 My beloved has gone down to his
garden,
to the beds of spices,
to pasture his flock in the gardens,
and to gather lilies.
3 I am my beloved's and my beloved is
mine;
he pastures his flock among the lilies.

4 You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love,
comely as Jerusalem,
terrible as an army with banners.
5 Turn away your eyes from me,
for they overwhelm me!
Your hair is like a flock of goats,
moving down the slopes of Gilead.
6 Your teeth are like a flock of ewes,
that have come up from the washing;
all of them bear twins,
and not one among them is bereaved.
7 Your cheeks are like halves of a
pomegranate
behind your veil.
8 There are sixty queens and eighty
concubines,
and maidens without number.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *lapis lazuli*

severity of their attack. **5.9–6.3:** The women of Jerusalem's questions and the woman's answers reveal that they are not taking the search too seriously. **9:** They ask what is so special about him. **10–16:** She answers by praising him, thereby evoking his presence. The images are intimate and erotically suggestive. **10:** *Radiant and ruddy*, a sign of health, youthfulness, and beauty (Ps 104.15; 1 Sam 16.12; 17.42; Lam 4.7). **12:** *Doves* in pellucid pools, as though *bathed in milk*, evoke the pupil and iris surrounded by the wet milky whiteness of the eye. **14–16:** Her description of his statuesque body made of strong and precious materials expresses his value to her. **16:** *His speech* (lit., "his palate"), better, "his mouth," since she is describing his physical attributes. *My friend*, her only use of a term of endearment he uses frequently of her (1.9,15; 2.2,10,13; 4.1,7; 5.2; 6.4, where NRSV translates, "my love"). **6.1:** The playfulness of the dialogue is obvious, since, if she knows where he has gone, she needs no help to find him. **2–3:** She knows where he is. The *garden* represents both the woman and the setting for lovemaking. Grazing *in the gardens* and *among the lilies* are double entendres for erotic play (see 1.7n.).

6.4–7.9: The man's second long speech. Again the man describes the woman's charms in similes and metaphors. **6.4:** *Tirzah*, capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel ca. 920–880 BCE. *Terrible as an army with banners*, more likely the Hebrew means "as awesome in splendor as they," i.e., Jerusalem and Tirzah in this verse; the moon and the sun in v. 10. **5a:** *They overwhelm me*, he describes the way he feels as something she has done to

[9] My dove, my perfect one, is the only one,
the darling of her mother,
flawless to her that bore her.
The maidens saw her and called her happy;
the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.
[10] "Who is this that looks forth like the dawn,
fair as the moon, bright as the sun,
terrible as an army with banners?"

[11] I went down to the nut orchard,
to look at the blossoms of the valley,
to see whether the vines had budded,
whether the pomegranates were in bloom.
[12] Before I was aware, my fancy set me
in a chariot beside my prince.[a]

[13] [b]Return, return, O Shulammite!
Return, return, that we may look upon you.

Why should you look upon the Shulammite,
as upon a dance before two armies?[c]

7 How graceful are your feet in sandals,
O queenly maiden!
Your rounded thighs are like jewels,
the work of a master hand.
[2] Your navel is a rounded bowl
that never lacks mixed wine.
Your belly is a heap of wheat,
encircled with lilies.
[3] Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle.
[4] Your neck is like an ivory tower.
Your eyes are pools in Heshbon,
by the gate of Bath-rabbim.
Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon,
overlooking Damascus.
[5] Your head crowns you like Carmel,
and your flowing locks are like purple;
a king is held captive in the tresses.[d]

[6] How fair and pleasant you are,
O loved one, delectable maiden![e]
[7] You are stately[f] as a palm tree,
and your breasts are like its clusters.
[8] I say I will climb the palm tree
and lay hold of its branches.
O may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,
and the scent of your breath like apples,

[a] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Ch 7.1 in Heb
[c] Or *dance of Mahanaim*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Syr: Heb *in delights*
[f] Heb *This your stature is*

him (cf. 4.9). **5b–7:** See 4.1–3n. **9–10:** A royal fantasy (cf. 1.2–4,12; 3.6–11). **10:** The man's words or words he puts in the mouth of the queens and other royal wives (here translated "concubines"). **11–12:** *I went down to the nut orchard*, either the man's words or a short interruption of his speech by the woman, since in v. 13 she is asked to return. **12:** The verse is corrupt and untranslatable. **13:** *Shulammite*, not a proper name; possibly meaning "the perfect one," it evokes the name "Solomon" (Heb "Shelomoh"). *We*, the man and the women of Jerusalem. *A dance before two armies*, the meaning of the phrase is obscure. **7.1:** *Your rounded thighs are like jewels* probably refers to the curves of hips or thighs as resembling ornaments of some type. **2:** Parts of the body not normally exposed to view are described in metaphors that are not transparent. Perhaps *navel* is a euphemism for "vulva." *Heap of wheat* suggests the softness and gentle curve of the woman's stomach. **4:** The image evokes the gracefulness of a long neck. *Your eyes are pools*, the same Hebrew word, "'ayin," means both "eye" and "spring." *Heshbon*, east of Jerusalem in Transjordan, where excavations have revealed the remains of a large reservoir, dating from the ninth to eighth centuries BCE. The location of *Bath-rabbim*, meaning "daughter of many," is unknown. Perhaps the significance of *Lebanon* has to do with its scent; cf. 4.11n. **5:** The comparison to Mount Carmel, which overlooks the Mediterranean Sea at Haifa, suggests the stately way she holds her head. *Locks are like purple*, shiny black hair has a purple sheen. Purple, the color of royalty, evokes rich and luxurious hair, suitable for capturing a *king*. **7–9:** *I say I will climb*, i.e., "I intend to climb." The man puts himself in the picture (cf. 5.1), and, through a series of images, moves closer to the object of his desire. First he must climb the tall *palm tree* to reach *its clusters* that represent his lover's breasts (v. 7). Then, envisioned as grape clusters (v. 8), her breasts become more accessible.

9 and your kisses[a] like the best wine
that goes down[b] smoothly,
gliding over lips and teeth.[c]

10 I am my beloved's,
and his desire is for me.
11 Come, my beloved,
let us go forth into the fields,
and lodge in the villages;
12 let us go out early to the vineyards,
and see whether the vines have
budded,
whether the grape blossoms have opened
and the pomegranates are in bloom.
There I will give you my love.
13 The mandrakes give forth fragrance,
and over our doors are all choice fruits,
new as well as old,
which I have laid up for you, O my
beloved.

8 O that you were like a brother to me,
who nursed at my mother's breast!
If I met you outside, I would kiss you,
and no one would despise me.
2 I would lead you and bring you
into the house of my mother,
and into the chamber of the one who
bore me.[d]
I would give you spiced wine to drink,
the juice of my pomegranates.
3 O that his left hand were under my
head,
and that his right hand embraced me!
4 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
do not stir up or awaken love
until it is ready!

5 Who is that coming up from the
wilderness,
leaning upon her beloved?

Under the apple tree I awakened you.
There your mother was in labor with you;
there she who bore you was in labor.

6 Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a raging flame.
7 Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If one offered for love
all the wealth of one's house,
it would be utterly scorned.

8 We have a little sister,
and she has no breasts.
What shall we do for our sister,
on the day when she is spoken for?
9 If she is a wall,
we will build upon her a battlement of
silver;
but if she is a door,
we will enclose her with boards of
cedar.
10 I was a wall,

[a] Heb *palate*
[b] Heb *down for my lover*
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *lips of sleepers*
[d] Gk Syr: Heb *my mother; she (*or *you) will teach me*

7.10–13: The woman's reply. The man's second long speech, like his first, gives rise to the woman's invitation to love (cf. 4.16). **11:** *Villages*, the same Hebrew word also means "henna bushes," preferable here because of the outdoor setting. **13:** *Mandrakes* were thought by some to be an aphrodisiac.

8.1–14: A montage of short speeches. 1–4: The woman speaks of her desire. **3–4:** Cf. 2.6–7. **5a:** The women of Jerusalem speak about the lovers. **5b:** *In labor*, better, "conceived you." The woman aroused her lover in a setting where his mother also enjoyed sexual intimacy. **6–7:** The only statement in the Song about the nature of love in general. The poet places these words in the mouth of the woman, who speaks to the man not, as she has until now, about their love, but about love itself. **6:** She wants to be intimately and permanently close to him, like a *seal* he might wear. Seals made of precious or semiprecious metal or stone could be worn on a necklace or a bracelet for the wrist or upper arm, or a signet ring. *Love is strong as death*, not stronger. Their struggle to possess the same object (the loved one) is illustrated in the rivalry between their counterparts, *passion* (more precisely, "jealousy") and *the grave* (Heb "Sheol," the abode of the dead). **8–12:** The lovers speak in similitudes about themselves and their beloved. **8–10:** Unlike the girl in her example, for whom preparations will be made when she reaches marriageable age, the woman asserts that she needs no such arrangements, since she has already surrendered to her lover. **10:** In the context of a city under siege (v. 9), to *bring peace* signifies surrender,

and my breasts were like towers;
then I was in his eyes
as one who brings[a] peace.
[11] Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;
he entrusted the vineyard to keepers;
each one was to bring for its fruit a
thousand pieces of silver.
[12] My vineyard, my very own, is for myself;
you, O Solomon, may have the
thousand,
and the keepers of the fruit two
hundred!

[13] O you who dwell in the gardens,
my companions are listening for your
voice;
let me hear it.

[14] Make haste, my beloved,
and be like a gazelle
or a young stag
upon the mountains of spices!

[a] Or *finds*

and to find peace is to have the offer of surrender accepted (Deut 20.10–11; Josh 9.15; 11.19). **11–12:** The man compares his vineyard (the woman; see 1.6n.) to Solomon's: it is more valuable and he alone will tend it. *Baal-hamon*, no such place is known; meanings of the name, "owner of wealth" or "husband of a multitude," suggest that it was chosen to emphasize Solomon's privileged status. **13–14:** The poet does not bring the Song to a proper close, so that the love it celebrates can remain unending. **13:** *Let me hear it*, the man's words send us back to the beginning of the Song, where we hear the woman's voice, speaking of her desire. **14:** *Make haste*, the Hebrew word indicates movement away from the speaker. *Mountains of spices*, an erotic image for the woman herself; see 2.17; 4.6. As in 2.17, the woman appears to be sending her lover away and calling him to her at the same time. The effect is to leave love forever in progress, for only when the woman seems to send her lover away can the poem begin again with longing and the quest to gratify desire.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

PROPHETS IN THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN CANONS

Both Jewish and Christian Bibles contain a canonical section labeled Prophets and include much of the same material. The two Bibles, however, differ in key ways. In the Jewish Bible (Tanakh), the Prophets constitute the second of three canonical sections, following the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) and preceding the Writings (Psalms through Chronicles). The Jewish Bible further divides the Prophets into the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). Hosea through Malachi are considered a single book designated as the Book of the Twelve since, due to their small size, ancient scribes often copied them onto a single scroll. These twelve smaller books also are known as "minor [in the sense of short] prophets," as opposed to the larger books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, which are called the "major prophets."

In Christian Bibles, the books of Joshua through Kings likewise follow Deuteronomy but are categorized as Historical Books along with other narratives such as Ruth, which is inserted after Judges, and Chronicles. Prophets in the Christian canon include Isaiah through Malachi, as well as the books of Lamentations and Daniel, and appear as the final canonical section of the Old Testament. In Roman Catholic Bibles, an additional book, Baruch, follows Jeremiah. The Orthodox Christian Bible follows Jeremiah with not only Baruch and Lamentations but also the Letter of Jeremiah. The canonical order in Orthodox Bibles places the minor prophets prior to the major prophets.

These canonical placements reflect the different ways in which different confessional communities have understood the prophets. Jewish tradition interprets the Prophets as supporting the message of the Torah, a view that is underscored in Jewish liturgy by pairing a prophetic passage (*haftarah*) with the weekly sequential Torah reading. Christian tradition historically has interpreted the prophets as predicting or at least foreshadowing the coming of Jesus and thus has preferred the placement of the Prophets immediately prior to the Gospels. The inclusion of Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah, as well as the Orthodox ordering of Prophets, reflects codices of the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible used by early Christians.

PROPHECY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Throughout the ancient Near East, the gods were understood to communicate with humans through various means, some requiring the interpretation of trained specialists and some depending on those able to discern the divine message without formal training. Documents excavated from the Mesopotamian cities of Mari and Nineveh describe both diviners who found clues to divine activity in celestial movements, the flight patterns of birds (augury), and the entrails of sacrificed animals (extispicy), and also prophets who claimed direct communication with the gods, often though not always while in a state of ecstasy. Most of the oracles preserved at Nineveh were addressed to the kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, who ruled in the seventh century BCE, and some were gathered into collections, likely stored in the royal archives for ongoing consultation. The Mari letters, dating mostly from the first half of the eighteenth century BCE, report prophetic oracles to kings as well, many pronounced by female prophets.

In some ways, the Hebrew Bible characterizes Israelite prophets as similar to figures described in the records from Mari and Nineveh. In the Former Prophets, Jonathan's disobedience of his father's wartime restrictions is discerned by the casting of lots (Urim and Thummim, 1 Sam 14.41–42), and Saul is possessed by the spirit of God (1 Sam 10.10–13). Israelite prophets anoint kings (1 Sam 9.15–21; 16.1–13; 1 Kings 1.32–40), advise kings (2 Sam 7), and speak in the rhetorical style of "messenger speech" ("Thus says the LORD"). In the Latter Prophets, call narratives (see especially Isa 6; Jer 1; Ezek 1.1–3.11; see also Am 7.14–17) depict the prophets as compelled by the LORD to deliver a message, and their compliance is reported in the rhetorical style of messenger speech. The superscriptions to the Latter Prophets, the opening formulas that indicate their time and place, characterize each prophet as delivering God's message in a particular circumstance and label the speech to follow as that of

God: it is the "word" which came from the LORD (e.g., Jer 1.1; Ezek 1.2), an "oracle" (e.g., Nah 1.1; Hab 1.1), or a "vision" that a prophet "saw" (e.g., Isa 1.1; Ob 1). Some of the prophetic figures in these books announce a message to leaders of ancient Israel and Judah (e.g., Isa 7.1–17; Hag 2.20–23).

In other ways, the biblical portrait of prophets diverges from ancient Near Eastern models. The Latter Prophets are much less supportive of sitting kings than are the Nineveh and Mari oracles and predominantly address the nation as a whole. Oracles of judgment against other nations and their leadership dominate the Latter Prophets, with idealized future kings positively contrasted with the reality of current kings (Isa 11.1–9; Jer 33.14–22). In contrast to the ancient Near East, unsolicited communication with the divine is strongly preferred over divination. We find condemnation of "soothsayers" (Mic 5.12 [Heb 5.11]), necromancy (Isa 8.19), and liver omens (Ezek 21.21 [Heb 21.26]). Some passages equate various forms of divination, including Jer 29.8, in which both prophets and diviners receive dreams, and Joel 2.28 (Heb 3.1), in which "prophesy," "dream dreams," and "see visions" appear in parallel; yet true prophets are often characterized as reluctant messengers, as reflected in Jeremiah's complaint to the LORD that "you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed" (Jer 20:7).

The Hebrew term used for the prophets is *nabi'*, a noun likely derived from the verb "call." The female prophets Deborah, Huldah, and Noadiah (Judg 4.4; 2 Kings 22.14; Neh 6.14) are designated with the feminine form *nebi'ah*, as is the woman who bears a son in Isa 8.3. Other Hebrew terms employed for prophets are *ro'eh* ("seer") and *ḥozeh* ("visionary, seer"), which are sometimes explicitly equated with *nabi'* (1 Sam 9.9; 2 Sam 24.11; 2 Kings 17.13).

PROPHETIC BOOKS

The historical references within the Latter Prophets span three primary periods of Israelite and Judean history. Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, and Micah refer to persons and events in the eighth century BCE, when the Neo-Assyrian empire controlled the ancient Near East and dominated Israel and Judah. Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah reflect the period of transition between Assyrian and Babylonian hegemony in the late seventh century. Jeremiah and Obadiah speak of Babylonian control of Judah in the early sixth century, and Ezekiel and Daniel include references to the Babylonian exile. Haggai and Zechariah are explicitly dated to the Persian period, when some Judeans returned to former ancestral lands, and references within the book of Malachi point to the Persian period as well. In light of these historical references, some interpreters categorize prophetic figures by their era, referring to Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian period prophets or, alternately, preexilic, exilic, and postexilic prophets.

Historical references within the books, however, do not necessarily indicate the time of the book's composition. For example, Jonah refers to a king of Nineveh, which was destroyed in 612, but shows strong indications of a postexilic date, well after the fall of Nineveh. Despite its setting within the Babylonian exile, the book of Daniel reflects detailed knowledge of events during the Hellenistic period, including the events preceding the Maccabean revolt in 167–160 BCE. Within some individual books, vocabulary and style shift, and different geographical and chronological settings are presupposed. For example, in much of Isa 1–39, Isaiah of Jerusalem addresses the military and religious conflicts of eighth-century Judah, while Isa 40–55 optimistically proclaims the end of the Babylonian exile and speaks of Cyrus, the Persian king of the fifth century; yet differently, Isa 56–66 offers a pessimistic assessment of life upon the exiles' return to Jerusalem. Micah 1–3 grounds the prophet's message within the reigns of the eighth-century Judean kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, while Mic 4 presupposes a later time, referring to the Babylonian exile (4.10) and sharing with other Persian-period literature the hope for the restoration of the monarchy and Jerusalem's return to world prominence. Clearly, in their current form the prophetic books are not verbatim transcripts of ancient pronouncements but rather carefully crafted literary productions that frequently include material originating in different times.

Editorial activity also is evident between the books of the Latter Prophets. Some near-identical content appears in multiple books (Isa 2.2–4; Mic 4.1–5; Ob 1b–4; Jer 49.12–16), and oracles of salvation conclude most books, even those such as Amos which are otherwise devoted to judgment (Am 9.11–15).

Additional signs of editing appear in the superscriptions of the prophetic books, which follow closely the language and chronology of the Former Prophets, known by scholars as the Deuteronomistic History, given the collection's ideological slant toward the perspective of the book of Deuteronomy. These similarities suggest that a common scribal circle compiled both the Former and the Latter Prophets, perhaps intending them to be read in tandem. Together, the two collections portray a chain of prophets extending from Moses to Malachi and underscore the themes of the divine control of history paired with divine graciousness.

In the past few decades, many scholars have argued that the incorporation of Hosea through Malachi into the Book of the Twelve reflects not simply a scribal economy that was concerned to copy small books onto a single scroll but also an intentional effort to create a coherent collection. Arguments for coherence point to catchwords and quotations connecting the books, such as the citation of Amos in Joel (Joel 3.16; Am 1.2) and the commonalities in vocabulary and theme between Am 9 and words of the immediately following book in Ob 16–21. Other scholars have found arguments for an intentionally crafted Book of the Twelve unconvincing, suggesting that coherence is in the eye of the beholder.

Whatever the merits of the theories regarding the Twelve, the final form of all of the Latter Prophets appears to have been the work of postexilic editors. Earlier material has been shaped so that the books conform to the postexilic understanding of prophecy outlined in Zech 7.7–14 and 8.11–17: Jerusalem was destroyed for its sins, just as the prophets had warned, but now God intends salvation for Jerusalem. Other postexilic books reflect a similar understanding of prophecy (2 Chr 24.19; 36.15–16; Neh 9.30–31), suggesting that in the Persian period earlier prophecy was understood to explain the reason for the fall of Israel and Judah as well as for the fall of various nations, and to offer hope that Yahweh would defeat those who prevent the people from enjoying their land peacefully.

Some redaction critics, scholars who study the process by which biblical books were redacted or edited, believe that the application of particular critical tools can unravel the stitching by which the prophetic books were woven together, separating layers of later additions from the original words of the prophet. This approach was especially prominent through the mid-twentieth century. In the present, an increasing number of scholars focus attention instead on the Persian-period final form of the books. Readers will find different perspectives on this scholarly debate reflected in the introductions and annotations in this edition of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*.

INTERPRETING THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

Genres/forms

Prophetic literature draws from a consistent roster of genres, also known as "forms." Most common in the sayings attributed to preexilic prophets are "oracles of judgment." Announcing that Israel and/or Judah will be punished for their sins, oracles of judgment follow a consistent pattern, offering the reason for judgment and issuing a verdict of condemnation (e.g., Mic 3.9–12; Am 4.1–3); a variation of this genre is the "woe oracle" which laments the coming punishment (in the NRSV often translated as "ah" or "alas"; see, e.g., Am 5.18–20; 6.1–7). The genre known as the "oracle of salvation" appears occasionally in preexilic prophets but dominates collections associated with the exilic or postexilic periods. Isaiah 40–55, often designated Second Isaiah because it derives from a time later than the eighth-century prophet Isaiah, is replete with such promises (e.g., Isa 41; 43; 49), as is material considered to be postexilic in Micah (Mic 4–5).

Other prophetic genres include the "trial speech/covenant lawsuit," which uses legal language to depict the accused (Judah or Israel) on trial for crimes (e.g., Isa 1; Hos 4) and the "prophetic disputation," in which the prophet refutes the claims of others (e.g., Hag 1:2–11; Mal 1:1:2–2:9). "Symbolic action reports" at times accompany prophetic speech, as when Jeremiah buries a loin cloth (Jer 13.1–11) and Ezekiel lies before a model of Jerusalem under siege (Ezek 4). "Prophetic liturgies" mirror the vocabulary and style of Temple liturgies, such as the Song of Thanksgiving in Isa 12.1–6 (compare Ex 15 and Ps 105) and the prayer of Hab 3, punctuated with musical notations (compare Ps 7).

Many prophetic books contain "oracles against the nations," often extended sayings pronouncing God's judgment on nations other than Israel or Judah. Examples include Isa 13–23, Jer 46–51, Ezek 25–32, Nahum, and Obadiah. The ultimate crime of nations is their pride, failing to recognize the LORD's superiority over and ultimate control of their destinies, though the nations' crimes against Judah are also punished. In Amos, oracles against other nations (Am 1.3–2.3) foreshadow the condemnation of Judah and Israel (Am 2.4–16).

Prophetic books use these genres in different ways and for different purposes. Some prophets announce total destruction (e.g., Zeph 1), while others offer hope that a small remnant of the people might survive and rebuild after the inevitable disaster (e.g., Isa 11.11). Amos lambasts Israel's failure to care for the poor (Am 4.1–4), Micah condemns the rapacity of Judah's landowners (Mic 2.1–4), Hosea blames Israel for worshiping deities other than the LORD (Hos 1–3), and Ezekiel blames worship abominations for the departure of divine glory from the Temple (Ezek 8–9).

Style

Prophetic literature is primarily poetry, printed in the NRSV in verse. It utilizes a wide range of literary tropes, including metaphor, simile, alliteration, assonance, hyperbole, irony, repetition, parallelism, and wordplay. Symbolic names are given to children in Isa 7–8 (Shear-jashub, "a remnant shall return"; Maher-shallal-hash-baz, "the spoil speeds, the prey hastens"; Immanuel, "God with us") and in Hosea 1–2 (Jezreel, "God sows"; Lo-ruhamah, "not pitied"; Lo-ammi, "not my people"). In Micah and elsewhere the names of cities are linked with their fate: Beth-leaphrah ("house of dust") should roll itself in the dust (Heb *ʿaphar*, Mic 1.10) and Achzib is "deception" (Heb *ʾachzab*) (Mic 1.14). In Am 8.1–3, the prophet's vision of a piece of fruit (Heb *qayits*) is interpreted by the deity as a sign of Israel's end (Heb *qets*), and in Jer 1.11–12 an almond tree (Heb *shaqed*) confirms that the deity is watching (Heb *shoqed*).

One distinctive feature of prophetic style is comparison. Through episodic similes and extended metaphors, the prophets cast one thing as another. Yahweh is "a garland of glory, and a diadem of beauty" (Isa 28.5–6) and "will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily" (Hos 14.5); Zion is "like a shelter in a cucumber field" (Isa 1.8). Drawing heavily from the conceptual domain of human relationships, prophetic metaphor often reflects the patriarchal assumptions of ancient Israel. Yahweh's power is depicted through masculine images—warrior, father, husband, and king—while divine anguish is depicted as a woman's cry in childbirth or a mother's care for an infant. The dependency and infidelity of Israel (and other nations) are typified in feminine terms—daughter, wife, and whore—while chosenness is compared to the favor given a firstborn son. The characterization of Yahweh and Israel as husband and wife, often dubbed "the marriage metaphor," is explicitly outlined in Hos 1–2 and appears in most of the prophetic books (e.g., Isa 54.5; Jer 3.20; Ezek 16; 23).

The prophetic books often describe the day of coming punishment as "the day of the LORD," using powerful and violent imagery. Zephaniah describes the day of the LORD as a day of wrath, distress, anguish, ruin, devastation, darkness, and gloom (Zeph 1.15); not only humans but animals, birds, fish, and "everything" will be swept away from the face of the earth (Zeph 1.2–3). According to Isaiah, on the LORD's "day of vengeance" (Isa 34.8) the deity appears as a warrior who devastates Edom with the sword (34.5), accompanied by profuse amounts of blood (34.6), smoke (34.10), and other signs. Throughout the prophetic books, the reckoning of the day of the LORD can bring salvation to Israel and Judah by judging enemy nations (e.g., Isa 13, 34, 63; Jer 46; Zech 14.1–9) and/or it can bring devastation on Israel and/or Judah for their sins (e.g., Am 5.18–20; Ezek 7.1–20).

Theology/worldview

The prophetic literature assumes and perpetuates the view that God uses other nations both to punish and to save Israel and Judah. Assyria is the rod of God's anger (Isa 10.5) and Babylon is the war club in God's hands (Jer 51.20). In Second Isaiah, Cyrus, the Persian king who is envisioned as ending the exile, is called God's anointed (Isa 45.1)—Heb *mashiaḥ*, the basis for English "messiah."

The prophetic conviction that Israel's God directs geopolitics serves, theologically, to underscore God's sovereignty, even in the face of national defeat. It also invites engagement with postcolonial criticism. Understanding the imperial context under which prophetic literature was finalized suggests that the literature's refusal to acknowledge the ultimate power of foreign empires serves as a form of resistance. By focusing on the fate of nations and the restoration of Jerusalem's glory and honor, however, the prophetic literature devotes little attention to the fate of individuals and the human suffering endured during "punishment." For example, although the book of Amos champions the cause of the poor, it proclaims that all Israel will fall in war, and although Micah criticizes those who drive women and children from their homes (Mic 2.9), its vision of an idyllic future mentions only the peaceful land ownership of men (Mic 4.4; lit., "a man . . . under his own fig tree"). Some prophetic collections do suggest the differing fates of those within the community, such as Mal 3.13–18, which distinguishes between the wicked and the righteous, and Isa 57.18–21, which offers peace for the contrite but no peace for the wicked.

PROPHECY AND APOCALYPTIC

Some scholars discern within postexilic prophetic literature the seeds of apocalyptic thought. Apocalypses such as Revelation, 1 Enoch, and 3 Baruch are characterized by the periodization of history, accounts of otherworldly journeys, the belief that the future will be known only by the revelation of divine secrets by angels, and the conviction that God's future salvation will require a radical disjunction with the established course of human history. The visions of Second Zechariah (Zech 9–14) seem to move in this direction, calling for the end

of the created order and envisioning Yahweh straddling two parts of the Mount of Olives. Ezekiel 37–39 and Isa 24–27 are sometimes designated "protoapocalyptic" for their symbolism of evil powers and anticipation of cosmic collapse.

That early Christians linked prophecy with apocalyptic is evident in their inclusion of the book of Daniel within the Prophetic canon. Although the book does not open with a superscription, utilize standard prophetic forms, or call Daniel a "prophet," it portrays Daniel's ability to interpret dreams and signs. Daniel 7–12 records a series of visions, replete with complex symbolism, regarding the fates of nations and rulers. In apocalypses, prophets and visionaries no longer experience direct access of the divine but through an intermediary: While the visions of earlier prophets were interpreted by the prophet himself or by God (Jer 1; Am 7–8), in apocalyptic books such as Daniel a third (angelic) party interprets the vision. Daniel presents history as predetermined and not contingent on the actions of Israel and Judah, and earlier prophets such as Jeremiah are to be consulted rather than emulated (Dan 9.2)

Julia M. O'Brien

ISAIAH

NAME AND CANONICAL STATUS

The book of Isaiah (Heb *yesha'yah(u)*, "the LORD saves") is named for the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz who lived during the latter half of the eighth century BCE at the time of the Assyrian invasions of Israel and Judah. Isaiah is included among the Latter Prophets in the Tanakh and among the Prophets of the Old Testament in the Christian Bible. Jewish manuscripts and traditions frequently place Isaiah first because he lived before Jeremiah and Ezekiel, although the book sometimes appears after Jeremiah and Ezekiel because of its concern with comfort or restoration (*b. B. Bat.* 14b). In Christian Bibles, Isaiah is usually first among the Prophets because he lived before Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The Minor Prophets appear first in some manuscripts of the Greek Septuagint (LXX), however, probably because the prophet Hosea was thought to have lived before Isaiah.

AUTHORSHIP, COMPOSITION, AND LITERARY HISTORY

Traditional interpreters in both Judaism and Christianity attribute the book of Isaiah to the eighth-century BCE prophet Isaiah, but interpreters as early as the Middle Ages observed that the second portion of the book, beginning in ch 40, presupposes the rise of King Cyrus of Persia (ruled 559–530; see 44.28; 45.1) and the conclusion of the Babylonian exile in 538. Modern scholars generally identify three major stages of composition in the book: (1) the works of Isaiah ben Amoz, which appear in chs 1–39; (2) the work of an anonymous prophet known as Second Isaiah from the conclusion of the Babylonian exile in chs 40–55; and (3) the work of Third Isaiah, a collection of materials from several prophets who wrote during the early Persian-period restoration of Jerusalem (late sixth through fifth or early fourth centuries BCE) in chs 56–66. Some interpreters maintain that chs 56–66 should be included with Second Isaiah, and others maintain that chs 1–39 have been heavily edited in the seventh, sixth, and fifth centuries BCE. Altogether, the book appears to have gone through at least four stages of composition: first, during the lifetime of Isaiah ben Amoz, who witnessed the period of the Assyrian invasions of Israel and Judah in 742–701 BCE; second, during the late seventh-century BCE restoration of King Josiah of Judah (640–609 BCE), when Isaiah was edited to support the king's reforms; third, during the late sixth-century BCE collapse of Babylon and the rise of King Cyrus of Persia, who authorized the return of exiled Jews to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple; and fourth, during the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE when Nehemiah and Ezra attempted to consolidate the Jerusalem Temple's status as the holy center of Judaism in keeping with their understandings of the Torah and the Isaian tradition. The writers of each stage of Isaiah's composition edited and expanded the book in order to demonstrate that the prophet also addressed events of their own times. Whereas Isaiah ben Amoz spoke about divine judgment and restoration in his own day, each of the subsequent editions of the book presupposes that Isaiah's visions of restoration would be realized in their own time.

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Four pivotal moments in the history of the Israelite people form the background to the various parts of Isaiah.

1. *The Syro-Ephraimite War and its aftermath* (see 2 Kings 16). After a period of relative peace for Israel (the Northern Kingdom, often called "Ephraim" in Isaiah after its most important tribe) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom), international tensions rose when Tiglath-pileser III became king of the Assyrian Empire in 745 BCE. He began an effort to conquer the lands to the west of Assyria, including Syria, Israel, and Judah. Beginning in 735 BCE, Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria (Damascus or Aram), tried to enlist Ahaz, king of Judah, in an alliance against Assyria. When that effort failed, they attacked Judah to replace Ahaz with a king more amenable to their policies (ch 7). This conflict is known as the Syro-Ephraimite War, since it was a war of Syria and Ephraim against Judah. Ahaz turned to Assyria for help in fending off Israel and Syria. The price was steep: Judah paid a heavy tribute as a vassal of Assyria.

2. *The Assyrian invasion*. During the decades following the Syro-Ephraimite War, the Assyrians expanded their influence in the area, taking over Syria and then attacking the Northern Kingdom, which fell in 722 BCE. When the Assyrian ruler at the time, Sargon II, was killed in battle in 705, Hezekiah, the king of Judah and son of Ahaz, rebelled against Assyria. Hezekiah was trying to take advantage of the confusion at the change of rulers, and allied with Merodach-baladan, prince of Babylon, against Assyria

(ch 39). In addition, he sought support from Egypt that was not forthcoming (36.6). The new Assyrian king, Sennacherib, retaliated and conquered Judah in 701. Hezekiah was able to avert the conquest of Jerusalem itself only by paying tribute.

3. The conquest of Jerusalem and the exile. During the century following these events, the Assyrian Empire gradually weakened. In 612 BCE, the rising Babylonian Empire destroyed the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, and the international power struggle became one between Babylon and Egypt, with Judah caught between. In 605 the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, defeated the Egyptian pharaoh, Neco, at the battle of Carchemish, and Babylon became the leading empire of the day. Judah came under Babylon's control, and when the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, rebelled against Babylon, the result was an invasion by Nebuchadnezzar. In 586 Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple and exiled a good deal of the surviving population to Babylonia.

4. The return. During the sixth century BCE, the Babylonians were increasingly challenged by the rise of another great empire, the Persians. In 539 Cyrus, the Persian king, defeated the Babylonians at the battle of Opis. Cyrus was admitted to Babylon and declared king by the priests of the city. He subsequently allowed exiled peoples, including the Jews, to return to their homelands. Many exiled Jews (though not all) eventually did so, and rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple.

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

Although the book of Isaiah was composed in stages, the final form of Isaiah is designed to be read as a single work ascribed to the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz. Its different sections are unified partly by common themes, such as the Davidic/Zion tradition that presumes the ultimate rule over Jerusalem and the restored Israel by the house of David, under the sovereignty of the LORD. The various sections are also linked through common vocabulary, such as the divine title "the Holy One of Israel" (e.g., 1.4; 29.19; 40.25; 60.9). The literary structure of Isaiah consists of two major parts, both of which are concerned with reading Isaiah as a witness to Jerusalem as the seat of the LORD's sovereignty throughout all of creation. Chapters 1–33 address the period of punishment and anticipate the period of restoration through which the LORD's sovereignty will be recognized throughout the world, and chs 34–66 presuppose that the time of restoration and the recognition of the LORD's sovereignty are at hand. A more detailed outline of the formal literary structure of the book is as follows:

THE VISION OF ISAIAH BEN AMOZ:
PROPHETIC EXHORTATION TO JERUSALEM AND JUDAH TO ADHERE TO THE LORD

I. The LORD's plans to reveal worldwide sovereignty at Zion 1.1–33.24
  A. Prologue to the book: Introductory oracles concerning the LORD's plans to purify Jerusalem 1.1–31
  B. Prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's plans to reveal worldwide sovereignty at Zion: Announcement of the "day of the LORD" 2.1–33.24
    1. prophetic announcement concerning the purifying of Zion for its role as the center for the LORD's world rule 2.1–4.6
    2. prophetic instruction concerning Assyrian judgment against Israel and the restoration of the Davidic kingdom 5.1–12.6
    3. prophetic announcement concerning the preparation of the nations for the LORD's world rule 13.1–27.13
      a. announcements concerning the nations 13.1–23.18
      b. prophetic announcement of YHWH's new world order based in Zion 24.1–27.13
    4. prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's plans for the new king in Jerusalem 28.1–33.24
II. Concerning the realization of the LORD's plans for revealing worldwide sovereignty from Zion 34.1–66.24
  A. Prophetic instruction concerning the realization of the LORD's sovereignty at Zion 34.1–54.17
    1. prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's power to return the redeemed exiles to Zion 34.1–35.10

2. historical narratives concerning Hezekiah 36.1–39.8
3. prophetic instruction that the LORD reveals divine sovereignty at Zion 40.1–54.17
   a. renewed prophetic commission to announce the LORD's restoration of Zion 40.1–11
   b. contention: the LORD is master of creation 40.12–31
   c. contention: the LORD is master of human events 41.1–42.13
   d. contention: the LORD is redeemer of Israel 42.14–44.23
   e. contention: the LORD will use Cyrus for the restoration of Zion 44.24–48.22
   f. contention: the LORD is restoring Zion 49.1–54.17

B. Prophetic exhortation to adhere to the LORD's covenant 55.1–66.24
1. exhortation proper to adhere to the LORD 55.1–13
2. substantiation: prophetic instruction concerning the restored covenant community in Jerusalem 56.1–66.24
   a. prophetic instruction concerning proper observance of the covenant 56.1–59.21
   b. prophetic announcement of restoration for the nation 60.1–62.12
   c. prophetic instruction concerning the process of Zion's restoration 63.1–66.24

INTERPRETATION

The book of Isaiah serves as a theological reflection upon Jerusalem's experience of threat, exile, and restoration. It takes up fundamental questions of divine involvement in human history. To what extent is the LORD sovereign over Israel and Judah on the one hand, and the nations and all creation on the other? To what extent does the LORD bring both judgment and restoration to Jerusalem, Israel, and the world at large? To what extent is the LORD hidden in times of suffering and to what extent will the LORD deliberately bring suffering on one generation to achieve divine purpose in another? To what extent does the LORD's promise of security to Jerusalem/Zion and the royal house of David hold true? To what extent should human beings respond to the LORD's intervention in the human world with faithfulness? Such questions have occupied the readers of the book of Isaiah from ancient through modern times. Jewish interpreters have looked to Isaiah to understand the time when the LORD would restore Jerusalem, and Christian interpreters have looked to Isaiah to understand when the LORD would reveal the Messiah. Indeed, two major copies of the book of Isaiah and a number of shorter Isaian texts were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran. The command "in the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD" (40.3) apparently motivated the Qumran sect to locate a major settlement in the wilderness of the Dead Sea to await the time that God would destroy the Romans and all others considered evil in the world. Citations from Isaiah play a major role in presenting the life and significance of Jesus in the New Testament, and readings from Isaiah play an especially important role in Jewish liturgy where Isaian texts are frequently read to complete and interpret the reading of the Torah.

Marvin A. Sweeney

1 The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which
he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in
the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

[2] Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth;
for the LORD has spoken:
I reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.
[3] The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master's crib;
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.

[4] Ah, sinful nation,
people laden with iniquity,
offspring who do evil,
children who deal corruptly,
who have forsaken the LORD,
who have despised the Holy One of Israel,
who are utterly estranged!

[5] Why do you seek further beatings?
Why do you continue to rebel?
The whole head is sick,
and the whole heart faint.
[6] From the sole of the foot even to the head,
there is no soundness in it,
but bruises and sores
and bleeding wounds;
they have not been drained, or bound up,
or softened with oil.

[7] Your country lies desolate,
your cities are burned with fire;
in your very presence
aliens devour your land;
it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.
[8] And daughter Zion is left
like a booth in a vineyard,

1.1–33.24: The LORD's plans to reveal worldwide sovereignty at Zion. The first half of the book focuses especially on the punishment of Zion and anticipation of its future restoration in an effort to demonstrate the LORD's plans to reveal sovereignty over Israel, the nations, and creation at large. The second half of the book (chs 34–66) presupposes that the time of the restoration and the LORD's revelation are at hand.

1.1–31: Prologue to the book: Introductory oracles concerning the LORD's plans to purify Jerusalem. The prologue in ch 1 is an introduction both to the entire book of Isaiah and to the first portion of the book in chs 1–33. It is designed to convince its audience that Jerusalem's suffering during the late eighth century BCE and beyond was due to the LORD's plans to purify Jerusalem in preparation for its role as the seat of the LORD's rule over all of creation. In keeping with his understanding of the David/Zion tradition, Isaiah presumes the LORD's sovereignty, righteousness, and power to defend the royal house of David and the city of Jerusalem forever. The prophet therefore contends that Jerusalem's suffering is due to human wrongdoing and that the city must be purged to enable it to serve as the LORD's capital for all of creation. Such a position is theologically problematic, presuming the guilt of those who suffer.

1.1: Superscription. The prophetic books typically begin with a superscription that provides the reader with essential information concerning the prophet (cf. Jer 1.1–3; Ezek 1.1–3; Hos 1.1; Joel 1.1; Am 1.1; Ob 1; Mic 1.1; Nah 1.1; Hab 1.1; Zeph 1.1). This superscription introduces both the entire book and 1.2–31. Subsequent superscriptions in 2.1; 13.1; 14.28; 15.1; 17.1; 19.1; 21.1,11,13; 22.1; 23.1; and 30.6 introduce smaller subunits. Isaiah's *vision* (both visual and auditory communication from the LORD) reveals divine plans concerning Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of the Judean monarchs, *Uzziah* (783–742 BCE); *Jotham* (742–735 BCE); *Ahaz* (735–715 BCE); and *Hezekiah* (715–687 BCE). Although the superscription identifies the setting of the book as the eighth century BCE, the period of Assyrian invasions of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the book as a whole takes up Jerusalem's experiences through the time of the Babylonian exile and the early Persian period restoration in the sixth–fifth centuries BCE.

1.2–20: The speech of the accuser. The prophet employs the language of the courtroom. The LORD charges Israel with wrongdoing, to explain Jerusalem's suffering. **2–3:** Appeal to all creation, namely, heaven and earth, to witness the divine complaints against Israel (cf. Deut 32.1; Mic 6.1–8). The passage metaphorically portrays Israel as the LORD's rebellious children who do not even have the understanding of animals. **4–9:** Rhetorical questions motivate the listeners to return to God. The suffering of the people is presented as the result of their own wrongdoing rather than any lapse on the LORD's part. The imagery shifts from personal illness and injury to the suffering of the entire land during the Assyrian invasions, when Jerusalem was left standing alone surrounded by the forces of the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 701 BCE (2 Kings 18–20; Isa 36–39). **4:** *The Holy One of*

like a shelter in a cucumber field,
like a besieged city.
9 If the LORD of hosts
had not left us a few survivors,
we would have been like Sodom,
and become like Gomorrah.

10 Hear the word of the LORD,
you rulers of Sodom!
Listen to the teaching of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!
11 What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the LORD;
I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.

12 When you come to appear before me,[a]
who asked this from your hand?
Trample my courts no more;
13 bringing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—
I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.
14 Your new moons and your appointed festivals
my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.
15 When you stretch out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.
16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
17 learn to do good;
seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.

18 Come now, let us argue it out,
says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
19 If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
20 but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be devoured by the sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

21 How the faithful city
has become a whore!
She that was full of justice,
righteousness lodged in her—
but now murderers!

[a] Or *see my face*

Israel, a divine title that occurs throughout the book. **8:** Jerusalem is frequently personified as *daughter Zion* in Isaiah (10.32; 16.1; 37.22; 52.2; 62.11) and elsewhere (e.g., Zeph 3.14–20; Lam 1.6; 2; 4.22). **8:** *Booth, shelter*, flimsy temporary agricultural structures often built of leaves and branches (cf. Job 27.18). **9:** *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, the evil cities destroyed by the LORD (Gen 18–19). **10–17:** The prophet continues to characterize the people as Sodom and Gomorrah in an effort to accuse them of insincere worship. Although many interpreters maintain that Isaiah opposes ritual and sacrificial worship in principle, the LORD's instructions call for moral action to accompany Temple worship (see 1 Sam 15.22; Ps 50.7–15). The LORD threatens to ignore the people's prayers, a disturbing claim in the face of foreign invasion and a frequent concern of both Isaiah (e.g., 8.17; 54.8; 59.2; 64.6) and the Psalms (e.g., 10.11; 13.2; 22.25; 27.9; 51.11; 104.29). **13:** Sacrifices were offered at *new moon* (monthly) and *sabbath* (weekly) festivals (see Num 28.9–15). **17:** The *orphan* and the *widow* are often mentioned as the focus of special concern because of their social and economic vulnerability (Ex 22.21–23; Deut 10.18; Ps 68.5; Job 29.12–13; etc.).

1.21–31: The speech of the judge. The courtroom metaphor continues as the LORD now speaks as the judge who announces Zion's ultimate redemption and restoration. Jerusalem suffered greatly under the Assyrians and the Babylonians from the late eighth through the sixth centuries BCE, but the book of Isaiah understands these events in relation to Jerusalem's restoration in the early Persian period. **21–26:** The prophet's announcement of Jerusalem's rehabilitation combines metaphorical charges that the city is a *whore* and that it must be purified much as metal is refined by the removal of impurities known as *dross*. The principal accusation is the

22 Your silver has become dross,
your wine is mixed with water.
23 Your princes are rebels
and companions of thieves.
Everyone loves a bribe
and runs after gifts.
They do not defend the orphan,
and the widow's cause does not come
before them.

24 Therefore says the Sovereign, the LORD
of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel:
Ah, I will pour out my wrath on my enemies,
and avenge myself on my foes!
25 I will turn my hand against you;
I will smelt away your dross as with lye
and remove all your alloy.
26 And I will restore your judges as at the
first,
and your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you shall be called the city of
righteousness,
the faithful city.

27 Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent, by
righteousness.
28 But rebels and sinners shall be destroyed
together,
and those who forsake the LORD shall
be consumed.
29 For you shall be ashamed of the oaks
in which you delighted;
and you shall blush for the gardens
that you have chosen.
30 For you shall be like an oak
whose leaf withers,
and like a garden without water.
31 The strong shall become like tinder,
and their work[a] like a spark;
they and their work shall burn
together,
with no one to quench them.

2 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
3 Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the
LORD,

[a] Or *its makers*

breakdown of the judicial system (cf. 5.23; 33.15; Am 5.10,12; Mic 3.9,11). **27–28:** The prophet distinguishes the fate of the righteous from the wicked (see chs 65–66). **29–31:** The metaphor of the tree portrays the restoration of Zion. Trees and gardens were frequently associated with Canaanite fertility rites and goddesses. The prophet maintains that the dead branches must be trimmed and the tree burned. Later oracles will stress the new growth of the tree (6.12–13; 11.1–9).

2.1–4.6: Prophetic announcement concerning the purifying of Zion for its role as the center for the LORD's world rule. This unit begins with its own superscription (see 1.1n.). Ideal portrayals of Jerusalem as a center for the pilgrimage of the nations appear at the beginning (2.2–4) and as a holy center for the remnant of Israel at the end (4.2–6) of the unit. The material in 2.5–4.1 focuses in detail on the LORD's plans for purifying Zion in preparation for its divine role.

2.1: Superscription. A shorter version of the superscription in 1.1, specifying the concern with Judah and Jerusalem.

2.2–4: Announcement concerning the establishment of Zion as the center for the LORD's worldwide sovereignty. This oracle portrays a future time when the nations will make pilgrimage to Zion, the site of the Jerusalem Temple. The ideal of the nations at peace in Zion is a primary tenet of Davidic/Zion theology, which maintains that the LORD protects Zion as the seat of divine sovereignty in creation (Pss 2; 46; 48; cf. Ps 47). A parallel version of this passage appears in Mic 4.1–5, and it is also cited in Joel 3.10 and Zech 8.20–23. **2:** *In days to come,* past interpreters, including the Septuagint (LXX), have understood the Heb eschatologically as "in the latter days," but the Hebrew text simply means "in the future." *The mountain of the LORD's house,* throughout the ancient Near East, temples were described as the houses in which gods dwelt. In common with this ancient motif, Jerusalem is often represented as the cosmic mountain (10.12,32; 11.9; 16.1; 29.8; 30.29; 40.9; 57.13; 65.26; Ps 48.1–2; Ezek 20.40; 40.2). **3:** *Instruction*, Heb "torah"; frequently translated as "law," its primary meaning is "teaching, instruction."

to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
4 He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!
6 For you have forsaken the ways of [a] your people,
O house of Jacob.
Indeed they are full of diviners[b] from the east
and of soothsayers like the Philistines,
and they clasp hands with foreigners.
7 Their land is filled with silver and gold,
and there is no end to their treasures;
their land is filled with horses,
and there is no end to their chariots.
8 Their land is filled with idols;
they bow down to the work of their hands,
to what their own fingers have made.
9 And so people are humbled,
and everyone is brought low—
do not forgive them!
10 Enter into the rock,
and hide in the dust
from the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his majesty.
11 The haughty eyes of people shall be brought low,
and the pride of everyone shall be humbled;
and the LORD alone will be exalted on that day.
12 For the LORD of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up and high;[c]
13 against all the cedars of Lebanon,
lofty and lifted up;
and against all the oaks of Bashan;
14 against all the high mountains,
and against all the lofty hills;
15 against every high tower,
and against every fortified wall;
16 against all the ships of Tarshish,
and against all the beautiful craft.[d]
17 The haughtiness of people shall be humbled,
and the pride of everyone shall be brought low;
and the LORD alone will be exalted on that day.
18 The idols shall utterly pass away.

[a] Heb lacks *the ways of*
[b] Cn: Heb lacks *of diviners*
[c] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *low*
[d] Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

2.5–4.6: The prophet's address concerning the purifying of Zion. The prophet outlines in three addresses how the ideal of the nations' recognition of the LORD at Zion portrayed in 2.2–4 is to be achieved. **2.5–9:** The first oracular address begins with an invitation to the *house of Jacob*, a term frequently employed to characterize Israel (see Gen 32.28; Ex 19.3; Ps 114.1; Isa 46.3), to join the nations in their pilgrimage to Zion. The passage quickly turns to assertions that the LORD has forsaken the people because of their alleged wrongdoing in dealing with foreigners. The passage points to a source of tension: while it posits an ideal scenario of world peace and cooperation among the nations, it also points to the nations as a source of corruption and evil because of their associations with divinatory practices (cf. Deut 18.9–14); wealth in the form of *silver, gold, horses*, and *chariots* (cf. 1 Kings 10.26); and *idols* from the Arabian Desert and Babylonia to the east and Philistia to the west (cf. Isa 44.9–20). In the view of the prophet, such practices render the nations unholy and their association with Jacob renders Israel unholy as well. **10–21:** In the second oracular address, the prophet announces the future "day of the LORD" as a time when the LORD will appear to punish and bring down all who are arrogant, high, proud, and uplifted in the world so that the LORD alone will be recognized as the true sovereign. The "day of the LORD" is a frequent motif in the prophets (see Isa 13.6,9; Ezek 13.5; Joel 1.15; 2.11,31; 3.14; Am 5.18–20; Ob 15; Zeph 1.7,14; Mal 4.5). **13:** *Lebanon*, the mountainous area north of Israel famous for its cedars; *Bashan*, the high plateau in northern Transjordan known for its timber (Ezek 27.6). **16:** *Tarshish*, either in southern Turkey

19 Enter the caves of the rocks
and the holes of the ground,
from the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.
20 On that day people will throw away
to the moles and to the bats
their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
which they made for themselves to worship,
21 to enter the caverns of the rocks
and the clefts in the crags,
from the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.
22 Turn away from mortals,
who have only breath in their nostrils,
for of what account are they?

3 For now the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts,
is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah
support and staff—
all support of bread,
and all support of water—
2 warrior and soldier,
judge and prophet,
diviner and elder,
3 captain of fifty
and dignitary,
counselor and skillful magician
and expert enchanter.
4 And I will make boys their princes,
and babes shall rule over them.
5 The people will be oppressed,
everyone by another
and everyone by a neighbor;
the youth will be insolent to the elder,
and the base to the honorable.
6 Someone will even seize a relative,
a member of the clan, saying,
"You have a cloak;
you shall be our leader,
and this heap of ruins
shall be under your rule."
7 But the other will cry out on that day, saying,
"I will not be a healer;
in my house there is neither bread nor cloak;
you shall not make me
leader of the people."
8 For Jerusalem has stumbled
and Judah has fallen,
because their speech and their deeds are against the LORD,
defying his glorious presence.

9 The look on their faces bears witness against them;
they proclaim their sin like Sodom,
they do not hide it.
Woe to them!
For they have brought evil on themselves.
10 Tell the innocent how fortunate they are,
for they shall eat the fruit of their labors.
11 Woe to the guilty! How unfortunate they are,
for what their hands have done shall be done to them.
12 My people—children are their oppressors,
and women rule over them.
O my people, your leaders mislead you,
and confuse the course of your paths.

13 The LORD rises to argue his case;
he stands to judge the peoples.

(later Tarsus) or in southern Spain. **2.22–4.6:** The third oracular address focuses specifically on the purging of Jerusalem and Judah. **2.22:** The introductory wisdom saying pleads with the audience to desist from human self-reliance. **3.1–12:** The prophet elaborates the purging of Jerusalem and Judah by focusing on the punishment of the male leaders of the city and the nation. The Assyrians were well known for deporting the leading figures and skilled craftspeople of a conquered society in order to exploit their talents elsewhere in the empire and to destabilize the conquered society to prevent further revolt. The prophet again characterizes the people as Sodom (see 1.9–10n.) in order to press home his point that the suffering of the people must be the result of their own wrongdoing. **3.1:** *LORD of Hosts*, i.e., God of the heavenly armies (cf. Josh 5.13–15; Judg 5.20). **3.13–4.1:** The prophet portrays a courtroom scene in which the LORD charges the leaders of the nation with exploitation of the poor (by enclosure and confiscation of lands, indentured service, etc.), a frequent topic of eighth-century BCE prophetic polemic (Am 2.6–8; 3.9–11; 6.4–7; 8.4–6; Mic 2.1–3; 3.1–4,9–12). He accuses the women of Jeru-

14 The LORD enters into judgment
with the elders and princes of his people:
It is you who have devoured the vineyard;
the spoil of the poor is in your houses.
15 What do you mean by crushing my people,
by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord GOD of hosts.

16 The LORD said:
Because the daughters of Zion are haughty
and walk with outstretched necks,
glancing wantonly with their eyes,
mincing along as they go,
tinkling with their feet;
17 the Lord will afflict with scabs
the heads of the daughters of Zion,
and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts.

18 In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; 19 the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; 20 the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; 21 the signet rings and nose rings; 22 the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; 23 the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils.
24 Instead of perfume there will be a stench;
and instead of a sash, a rope;
and instead of well-set hair, baldness;
and instead of a rich robe, a binding of sackcloth;
instead of beauty, shame.[a]
25 Your men shall fall by the sword
and your warriors in battle.
26 And her gates shall lament and mourn;
ravaged, she shall sit upon the ground.

4 Seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying,
"We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes;
just let us be called by your name;
take away our disgrace."

2 On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel. 3 Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, 4 once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. 5 Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its places of assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. Indeed over all the glory there will be a canopy. 6 It will serve as a pavilion, a shade by day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

5 Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

[a] Q Ms: MT lacks *shame*

salem of arrogance and being more concerned with fashion than with the fate of their city and nation. When Jerusalem is conquered, the women will be stripped, humiliated, and desperate to find a husband in the devastation, even willing to forego the financial support mandated by law (Ex 21.10). **3.14:** *Vineyard,* see 5.1–7n. **24:** *Sackcloth,* clothing of rough fabric worn in times of mourning. **4.2–6:** An idyllic portrayal of the restored Jerusalem following its period of purging begins with the formula, *on that day*. The passage combines the metaphor of the *branch* that will grow again after it is cut (cf. 6.12–13; 11.1–9) with the imagery of the daughters of Zion, washing and purifying themselves after their menstrual periods (see Lev 15.19–24). *Cloud by day* and *flaming fire by night* over the sacred site of Mount Zion recalls the LORD leading Israel at the time of the Exodus and Wilderness wandering (e.g., Ex 13.21–22; 14.19–20; 24.15–18; 40.34–38; Num 10.11–36; cf. 1 Kings 8.10–12). Such imagery also refers to the column of smoke and fire that rises from the Temple altar during sacrifice to signify the LORD's presence. Here the smoke and fire forms a protective canopy for the restored city. The canopy is sometimes understood metaphorically as a wedding canopy to symbolize the restored marriage between the LORD and Daughter Zion (Jerusalem; cf. ch 54).

5.1–12.6: Prophetic instruction concerning Assyrian judgment against Israel and the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. Although chs 5–12 lack a superscription, the interest in both Israel and Judah is clear throughout

[2] He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the
midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

[3] And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.
[4] What more was there to do for my
vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

[5] And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
[6] I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briers
and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

[7] For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!
[8] Ah, you who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is room for no one but you,
and you are left to live alone
in the midst of the land!
[9] The LORD of hosts has sworn in my
hearing:
Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without
inhabitant.
[10] For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but
one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield a mere
ephah.[a]

[11] Ah, you who rise early in the morning
in pursuit of strong drink,
who linger in the evening
to be inflamed by wine,
[12] whose feasts consist of lyre and harp,
tambourine and flute and wine,
but who do not regard the deeds of the
LORD,
or see the work of his hands!

[a] The Heb *bath, homer,* and *ephah* are measures of quantity

the unit. The passage begins with an announcement of divine judgment against Israel and Judah in 5.1–30, and a lengthy elaboration concerning the significance of that judgment and the restoration to follow in 6.1–12.6.

5.1–30: Announcement of judgment against Israel and Judah. This block of oracles combines the prophet's accusations of social wrongdoing in Israel with a vivid portrayal of the approach of the Assyrian army to argue that the LORD has brought the Assyrians to punish Israel. **1–7:** Isaiah's song of the vineyard (see also 27.2–6) allegorically portrays the LORD as Isaiah's friend (*beloved* does not adequately convey the Hebrew here) who worked so hard to ensure a productive vineyard only to be disappointed when it yielded sour grapes. The allegory, which is explained only at the end, draws in the audience, as many in ancient Judah would have had extensive experience in vineyards. Its conclusion uses puns to make its point, viz., the LORD expects *justice* (Heb "mishpat"), but sees only *bloodshed* (Heb "mispaḥ"), and hopes for *righteousness* (Heb "tsedaqah") only to hear a *cry* (Heb "tseʿaqah"). **8–24:** A series of "woe" (NRSV "*Ah*") oracles (see also 28.1; 29.1,15; 30.1; 31.1; 33.1; Hab 2.6–19), each introduced by the Heb exclamation "hoy" ("woe!") warns the people of coming punishment due to the failure of the leadership of Israel to ensure justice as called for in Israel's law codes, particularly Ex 20–23. **8–10:** The first oracle criticizes seizure of property, a frequent concern of eighth-century BCE prophets (see 3.12–4.1n.). A *bath* is a liquid measure of ca. 6 gal (23 L), a poor yield for ten acres. A *homer* is ca. 6.5 bu (230 L), and an *ephah* is only one-tenth of a *homer*. **11–17:** The prophet charges Israel's leadership with drunken incompetence. **11:** Drunkenness is frequently mentioned together with charges of incompetence and wrongdoing (Isa 28.7–8; Hos 4.11; 7.5; Am 4.1; Mic 2.11). **12:** The *deeds* and *work*, or plan and agenda, of God, a central motif

13 Therefore my people go into exile
without knowledge;
their nobles are dying of hunger,
and their multitude is parched with
thirst.

14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
and opened its mouth beyond measure;
the nobility of Jerusalem[a] and her
multitude go down,
her throng and all who exult in her.
15 People are bowed down, everyone is
brought low,
and the eyes of the haughty are humbled.
16 But the LORD of hosts is exalted by
justice,
and the Holy God shows himself holy
by righteousness.
17 Then the lambs shall graze as in their
pasture,
fatlings and kids[b] shall feed among the
ruins.

18 Ah, you who drag iniquity along with
cords of falsehood,
who drag sin along as with cart ropes,
19 who say, "Let him make haste,
let him speed his work
that we may see it;
let the plan of the Holy One of Israel
hasten to fulfillment,
that we may know it!"
20 Ah, you who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter!
21 Ah, you who are wise in your own eyes,
and shrewd in your own sight!
22 Ah, you who are heroes in drinking wine
and valiant at mixing drink,
23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and deprive the innocent of their rights!
24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours
the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will become rotten,
and their blossom go up like dust;
for they have rejected the instruction of
the LORD of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy
One of Israel.

25 Therefore the anger of the LORD was
kindled against his people,
and he stretched out his hand against
them and struck them;
the mountains quaked,
and their corpses were like refuse
in the streets.
For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.

26 He will raise a signal for a nation far
away,
and whistle for a people at the ends of
the earth;
Here they come, swiftly, speedily!

[a] Heb *her nobility*
[b] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *aliens*

in Isaiah (5.19; 10.12; 14.24–27; 19.12,17; 23.9; 28.21; 30.1). **14:** The threat of exile and death is personified as *Sheol*, the underworld abode of the dead, which opens its mouth to swallow up the leadership of the people, much as they swallowed wine and food at their feasts. **20–24:** The prophet charges that the people can no longer distinguish between right and wrong, perverting the judicial system (1.23; Mic 3.11; cf. Ex 23.8; Deut 16.19) in their own narcissism and drunkenness. Returning to the vineyard allegory of vv.1–7, the prophet charges that the people will be utterly consumed by *fire* for neglecting divine instruction (Heb "torah"). **25–30:** The final subunit shifts from the metaphor of a burning vineyard to a chilling portrayal of the approaching Assyrian army summoned by the LORD. The outstretched hand of the LORD also appears throughout 9.7–10.5, and builds upon the imagery of Moses's outstretched hand throughout the plagues of the Exodus narratives (see Ex 7–10), the crossing of the sea (Ex 14.26–29), the provision of water from the rock (Ex 17.1–7), and the defeat of Amalek in the wilderness (Ex 17.8–16). **26:** The *signal* (Heb "nes") raised to summon the nations likewise recalls the LORD's "banner" ("nes") in Ex 17.15–16. The *roaring* of the Assyrian army like *lions* recalls the lion as the symbol of the tribe of Judah and the house of David (Gen 49.9), now turned against the people. The darkening *clouds* over the land recall the pillar of cloud and smoke, identified with the LORD's presence during the Exodus and in the Holy of Holies in the Temple (see 4.2–6n.), but which is now absent.

27 None of them is weary, none stumbles,
none slumbers or sleeps,
not a loincloth is loose,
not a sandal-thong broken;
28 their arrows are sharp,
all their bows bent,
their horses' hoofs seem like flint,
and their wheels like the whirlwind.
29 Their roaring is like a lion,
like young lions they roar;
they growl and seize their prey,
they carry it off, and no one can rescue.
30 They will roar over it on that day,
like the roaring of the sea.
And if one look to the land—
only darkness and distress;
and the light grows dark with clouds.

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. 2 Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory."

4 The pivots[a] on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. 5 And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 The seraph[b] touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *He*

6.1–13: Isaiah's commission. Isaiah's lengthy explanation of divine judgment and restoration in 6.1–12.6 begins with a first-person visionary account of his commission as a prophet. Prophetic visions are common in the Bible (Ex 33; 1 Sam 3; 1 Kings 19; Jer 1.11–19; 24; Ezek 1–3; 8–11; 40–48; Am 7–9; Hab 2.2; Zech 1.7–6.15) and in the larger ancient Near Eastern world (cf. Balaam's visions in Num 22–24; a vision of Balaam was found inscribed on the collapsed wall of a ninth–eighth century building at Deir Alla, east of the Jordan River). Although visions are commonly associated with temples, priests (e.g., Moses; Samuel; Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Zechariah) and nonpriests (Elijah; Amos; Habakkuk) alike may experience visions. Isaiah is not a priest, but his vision portrays the LORD enthroned in the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple. As a royal adviser, Isaiah would stand with the king by the column at the entrance of the Temple where he could see the interior of the Temple (2 Kings 11.14; 23.3). Such a vision of the LORD's royal court corresponds to the visions of Micaiah (1 Kings 22.19–23) and Ezekiel (Ezek 1). Given the emphasis on purifying the people from sin, it is possible that the vision takes place on the Day of Atonement, when the priest enters the Holy of Holies to atone on behalf of the people (Lev 16; 23.26–32). **1–2:** *King Uzziah* of Judah, also known as Azariah, died in 742 or 733 BCE (2 Kings 15.1–7,32); the chronology is uncertain. The reigns of his son, Jotham, and grandson, Ahaz, saw the first attempts by the Syro-Ephraimite alliance, i.e., Aram and the Northern Kingdom of Israel, to invade Judah, motivating Assyria to take control of the region (2 Kings 15.32–16.20; Isa 7.1–9.6). Because Isaiah is heavily influenced by the royal Davidic/Zion theology, he sees the LORD enthroned as a king in the Holy of Holies of the Temple. The ark of the covenant, which was housed in the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 8.6–9), was believed to serve as the footstool for the LORD's throne (see 1 Sam 4.4; 6.2; Isa 37.16; 66.1; Pss 80.2; 99.1). The *seraphs* are heavenly beings who serve as attendants to the divine king. The Hebrew word "seraph" (lit., "fiery one") also refers to fiery snakes in the wilderness (Num 21.6–9; Deut 8.15; cf. Isa 14.29; 30.6). Here, they are comparable to the cherubim, winged creatures of composite animal and human form, which are guardians of the ark (Ex 25.10–22). Isaiah's vision of the seraphs is apparently influenced by the imagery of the flickering lights of the lamp stands in the thick incense smoke that fills the Temple during worship. *Feet,* a euphemism for genitals. **3–4:** The hymn of the seraphs, well known in both Jewish and Christian worship, recounts the LORD's holiness as sovereign of all creation, and points to the liturgical setting of Isaiah's vision. The shaking of the thresholds likely represents the movement of the Temple doors as they are opened. *Smoke* accompanies the divine presence (4.5; 30.27; Ex 19.18; Ps 18.8), in this case also from the fire on the altar (v. 6). **5:** Isaiah recognizes that he is not sufficiently pure to stand before the LORD in the Temple (cf. Ex 33.18–20). **6–7:** The cleansing of Isaiah's mouth with a hot coal from the altar is similar to the mouth purifica-

departed and your sin is blotted out." [8] Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" [9] And he said, "Go and say to this people:

'Keep listening, but do not comprehend;
keep looking, but do not understand.'
[10] Make the mind of this people dull,
and stop their ears,
and shut their eyes,
so that they may not look with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and comprehend with their minds,
and turn and be healed."
[11] Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said:
"Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is utterly desolate;
[12] until the Lord sends everyone far away,
and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.
[13] Even if a tenth part remain in it,
it will be burned again,
like a terebinth or an oak
whose stump remains standing
when it is felled."[a]
The holy seed is its stump.

7 In the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel went up to attack Jerusalem, but could not mount an attack against it. [2] When the house of David heard that Aram had allied itself with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz[b] and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *his heart*

tion rituals of oracular priests in ancient Mesopotamia so that they could speak on behalf of their gods. **8:** The Lord's question and Isaiah's response recalls the experience of Micaiah (1 Kings 22.20–21). *Us*, the plural refers to the entire divine assembly. **9–10:** The Lord's commission to Isaiah is one of the most disturbing elements of the book, insofar as Isaiah's task is to ensure that the people will not see, hear, or understand, so that they cannot repent and thereby avoid the punishment of the Lord (cf. the Lord's hardening the heart of Pharaoh; Ex 7.3–5; 10.1). **11–13:** Isaiah's response *How long?* is often understood to be a sign of his resignation to the divine will and his empathy for his people, although other figures, such as Abraham (Gen 18), Moses (Ex 33; Num 14), Amos (Am 7.1–6), and Job did not hesitate to challenge the Lord when they thought a divine act was questionable. The concluding images of judgment against the land culminate in a portrayal of a tree *stump* that must be burned after the tree is cut down. Despite the horrific imagery of a mere ten-percent survival rate (*tenth part*), the account concludes with a hopeful image of new growth from the ravaged stump that will constitute the *holy seed* of restoration (see Ezra 9.2).

7.1–8.15: Narrative concerning the Lord's judgment against Judah. The explanation of divine judgment shifts to a third-person narrative concerning Isaiah's confrontation with King Ahaz of Judah (743/735–727/715 BCE) at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite invasion of Judah (see 1 Kings 16) in 7.1–25, followed by a return to Isaiah's first-person narrative in 8.1–15 concerning the significance of the Maher-shalal-hash-baz sign (see textual note *a* on 8.1). The passage has a complex history of revision in response to changing circumstances.

7.1–25: Dialogue between King Ahaz and Isaiah. The narrative begins with reference to the Syro-Ephraimite War of 735–732 BCE. In an attempt to oppose advances into western Asia by the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III (745–727), King Rezin of Damascus (Aram; ca. 750–732) and King Pekah of Israel (735–732) formed the Syro-Ephraimite alliance. Pekah came to the throne of Israel in a coup engineered by Aram that saw the assassination of his predecessor, Pekahiah (737–735), the son of the pro-Assyrian Menahem (747–737; 2 Kings 15.17–26). Rezin and Pekah attempted to assemble all of the smaller states in the region into a united force that would face the Assyrians. King Jotham of Judah (759–743/735), who likely knew all too well the animosity between Israel and Aram over the past century (King Ahab of Israel was killed at Ramoth-gilead while fighting the Arameans; see 1 Kings 22), refused to join such an unstable alliance. Jotham died of unknown causes before the combined forces of the northern kingdom of Israel and Aram arrived at Jerusalem, leaving his twenty-year-old son Ahaz to face the threat (1 Kings 16). The goal of the assault was to force Judah into the Syro-Ephraimite alliance by removing the Davidic king and replacing him with a presumably more pliable figure named "son of Tabeel" (v. 6). **2:** *The house of David*, the southern kingdom of Judah; *Ephraim,* the northern kingdom of Israel.

3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, Go out to
meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub,[a]
at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on
the highway to the Fuller's Field, 4 and say to
him, Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do
not let your heart be faint because of these two
smoldering stumps of firebrands, because of
the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son
of Remaliah. 5 Because Aram—with Ephraim
and the son of Remaliah—has plotted evil
against you, saying, 6 Let us go up against
Judah and cut off Jerusalem[b] and conquer it for
ourselves and make the son of Tabeel king in
it; 7 therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

It shall not stand,
and it shall not come to pass.
8 For the head of Aram is Damascus,
and the head of Damascus is Rezin.
(Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be
shattered, no longer a people.)
9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria,
and the head of Samaria is the son of
Remaliah.
If you do not stand firm in faith,
you shall not stand at all.

10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying,
11 Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be
deep as Sheol or high as heaven. 12 But Ahaz
said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD
to the test. 13 Then Isaiah[c] said: "Hear then,
O house of David! Is it too little for you to
weary mortals, that you weary my God also?
14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a
sign. Look, the young woman[d] is with child
and shall bear a son, and shall name him
Immanuel.[e] 15 He shall eat curds and honey
by the time he knows how to refuse the evil
and choose the good. 16 For before the child
knows how to refuse the evil and choose the
good, the land before whose two kings you
are in dread will be deserted. 17 The LORD will
bring on you and on your people and on your
ancestral house such days as have not come
since the day that Ephraim departed from
Judah—the king of Assyria."

18 On that day the LORD will whistle for
the fly that is at the sources of the streams of
Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of
Assyria. 19 And they will all come and settle
in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the
rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all
the pastures.

[a] That is *A remnant shall return*
[b] Heb *cut it off*
[c] Heb *he*
[d] Gk *the virgin*
[e] That is *God is with us*

3–9: *The end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field.* A *fuller* prepared cloth by treading on it when it was wet. The location refers to the Gihon spring, Jerusalem's water source, which was located beyond the fortified wall of the city in the Kidron Valley immediately east of the city of David. All ancient cities faced the problem of access to water in times of siege. Like several ancient Israelite cities, Jerusalem had a tunnel that would allow protected access to the Gihon from inside the walls of the city. Ahaz was inspecting Jerusalem's defenses when Isaiah arrived with his son, symbolically named *Shear-jashub* ("a remnant will return"). The symbolic name is both a reassurance that the LORD would defend Jerusalem in keeping with the Davidic/Zion tradition, and also an acknowledgment of Judah's heavy losses. **4:** Isaiah's advice to trust in the LORD makes some practical military sense, since the Israelite and Aramean armies would hardly have time to lay a protracted siege of Jerusalem, leaving their own borders open to Assyrian attack. **6:** *Son of Tabeel,* see 7:1–25n. **9:** *If you do not stand firm in faith* (Heb "'im lo' ta'aminu," lit., "if you are not faithful"), *you shall not stand at all* ("lo' te'amenu," lit., "you will not be secure"), a wordplay between two forms of the Heb verb, "'amen," "to stand firm." **10–25:** The narrative suggests that Ahaz is skeptical, prompting the prophet to demand that the king ask a "sign" of the LORD. **11:** *Sheol*, the underworld. Although Ahaz rejects Isaiah's advice, his response to the prophet is a model of piety insofar as he will not put the LORD to the test. **14:** Isaiah's reply emphasizes the LORD's own *sign*, i.e., the birth of the child *Immanuel* ("God is with us") to express the LORD's commitment to defend Jerusalem. The *young woman* is not identified; she may be either the wife of Isaiah (cf. 8.3) or of King Ahaz. Although 7.14 is cited in Mt 1.23 as a proof text for the virgin birth of Jesus, based on the Greek LXX translation "parthenos" (virgin), the Heb word "'almah" simply means *young woman*, not virgin. **15–17:** *Curds and honey,* choice fare, difficult to obtain during a siege; by the time the child is weaned (two to three years) the northern allies will have been totally defeated and the land (of milk and honey) will return to the prosperity it enjoyed under David and Solomon. **18–19:** A negative oracle describing the dire consequences, particularly the subjuga-

20 On that day the Lord will shave with
a razor hired beyond the River—with the
king of Assyria—the head and the hair of
the feet, and it will take off the beard as
well.
21 On that day one will keep alive a young
cow and two sheep, 22 and will eat curds
because of the abundance of milk that they
give; for everyone that is left in the land shall
eat curds and honey.
23 On that day every place where there
used to be a thousand vines, worth a thou-
sand shekels of silver, will become briers
and thorns. 24 With bow and arrows one will
go there, for all the land will be briers and
thorns; 25 and as for all the hills that used
to be hoed with a hoe, you will not go there
for fear of briers and thorns; but they will
become a place where cattle are let loose and
where sheep tread.

8 Then the Lord said to me, Take a
large tablet and write on it in common
characters, "Belonging to Maher-shalal-
hash-baz,"[a] 2 and have it attested[b] for me
by reliable witnesses, the priest Uriah and
Zechariah son of Jeberechiah. 3 And I went
to the prophetess, and she conceived and
bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, Name
him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; 4 for before the
child knows how to call "My father" or "My
mother," the wealth of Damascus and the
spoil of Samaria will be carried away by the
king of Assyria.
5 The Lord spoke to me again: 6 Because
this people has refused the waters of Shiloah
that flow gently, and melt in fear before[c]
Rezin and the son of Remaliah; 7 therefore,
the Lord is bringing up against it the mighty
flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria
and all his glory; it will rise above all its chan-
nels and overflow all its banks; 8 it will sweep
on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over, it
will reach up to the neck; and its outspread
wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Im-
manuel.

9 Band together, you peoples, and be
dismayed;
listen, all you far countries;
gird yourselves and be dismayed;
gird yourselves and be dismayed!
10 Take counsel together, but it shall be
brought to naught;

[a] That is *The spoil speeds, the prey hastens*
[b] Q Ms Gk Syr: MT *and I caused to be attested*
[c] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

tion of Judah by the Assyrian Empire, that will befall Jerusalem and Judah as a result of Ahaz's refusal to accept Isaiah's promises. The Isaiah narrative presumes Ahaz's decision to send for help to the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III (2 Kings 16.7–18). Ahaz's appeal to Assyria put him and his nation in debt to the Assyrians. Had he followed Isaiah's advice to wait out the siege, Tiglath-pileser, needing no invitation to invade Aram and Israel, would have come anyway, and Ahaz would not have been so indebted. **20:** For the shaming of prisoners by the removal of facial and body hair, see 2 Sam 10.1–5. *Feet*, genitals. **21–22:** A reuse of the curds-and-honey motif signifying that the land will go back to pasture as a result of invasion. **23–25:** Reuse of the motif of the reversion of the vineyards to briers and thorns, as in 5.6. **23:** *A thousand shekels,* ca. 25 lb (11 kg).

8.1–15: Autobiographical account concerning the Maher-shalal-hash-baz sign. The narrative abruptly shifts to Isaiah's first-person account concerning the birth of his son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, who serves as a sign concerning the impending judgment to be suffered by Judah when the Assyrian king takes control of Judah. **1–4:** The prophet recounts how he secured witnesses concerning the future birth of his son, *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, whose name means "the spoil speeds, the prey hastens," symbolically conveying the speed with which the Assyrians will act against the Syro-Ephraimite coalition and establish their authority over Judah. **2:** *Uriah and Zechariah*, the former may be the chief priest of the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kings 16.10–16) and the latter the father-in-law of Ahaz (2 Kings 18.2). **3:** *The prophetess*, Isaiah's wife, perhaps in the service of the Temple or court. **5–8:** The prophet makes clear the Lord's dissatisfaction with Ahaz's refusal to accept the divine offer of protection. *The waters of Shiloah,* the stream fed by the Gihon spring that symbolizes the Lord's sustenance of Jerusalem and the house of David (Neh 2.14; 3.15). The oracle plays on the imagery of the protective stream that now becomes a threatening force as it overflows its banks to flood the land. **7:** *The River*, the Euphrates, in western Assyria. **8:** Whereas *Immanuel*, "God is with us," earlier signified God's protection of Judah, the name now symbolizes the Lord's punishment of the land. **9–10:** A brief hymn expands on the Immanuel theme with

speak a word, but it will not stand,
for God is with us.[a]

11 For the LORD spoke thus to me while his hand was strong upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: 12 Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread. 13 But the LORD of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against; for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over—a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.

16 Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. 17 I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. 18 See, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. 19 Now if people say to you, "Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living, 20 for teaching and for instruction?" surely, those who speak like this will have no dawn! 21 They will pass through the land,[b] greatly distressed and hungry; when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse[c] their king and their gods. They will turn their faces upward, 22 or they will look to the earth, but will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness.[d]

9[e] But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

2[f] The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;

[a] Heb *immanu el*
[b] Heb *it*
[c] Or *curse by*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Ch 8.23 in Heb
[f] Ch 9.1 in Heb

reference to the victorious Jerusalem of the future (anticipating 8.16–12.6). **11–15:** The *hand* of the LORD signifies possession by the spirit of God, resulting in transformed prophetic consciousness (e.g., 1 Kings 18.46; 2 Kings 3.15; Ezek 1.3; 3.22; 8.1; 33.22). Isaiah's opposition to Ahaz and his circle has apparently led to accusations of conspiracy directed against him and his followers.

8.16–12.6: Announcement concerning the fall of Assyria and the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. Having laid out the scenario for Jerusalem's and Judah's judgment at the hands of Assyria in 7.1–8.15, the prophet's oracles then turn to a scenario of divine judgment against Assyria for its own arrogance (cf. 2.10–21) and the restoration of righteous Davidic rule over a reunited Israel and Judah.

8.16–9.7: Prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's signs to Israel and the house of David. Isaiah now expresses frustration as he decides to wait for the LORD to act. Isaiah maintains that the LORD is hiding from the nation, a disturbing proposition that is meant to overcome suggestions of divine impotence or maliciousness in the face of crisis, but nevertheless points to the LORD as an important cause of Judah's suffering. **8.16:** The commands to *bind up the testimony* and *seal the teaching* (Heb "torah") among *my disciples* is an ambiguous statement. Heb "limmuday," translated here as "my disciples," may also refer to "my teachings," since "limmud" means "taught," whether the content is the teaching or the person taught. The phrase may have played a role in motivating the expansion of the book of Isaiah in the exilic and postexilic periods as later interpreters reflected upon the meaning of the prophet's oracles in relation to their own times. **8.18–9.7:** The prophet anticipates a period of gloom and darkness until a new Davidic monarch arises to replace Ahaz. **18:** *I and the children,* Shear-jashub (7.3), Maher-shalal-hash-baz (v.1) and possibly Immanuel (see 7.14n.), are portents for the future; the name Isaiah ("The LORD saves") connotes the hope of salvation. **19:** Recourse to *ghosts and the familiar spirits* (i.e., necromancy) was a practice in ancient Israel and Judah, though often condemned (19.3; Lev 19.31; Deut 18.10–11). Here Isaiah threatens that it can lead only to greater distress and darkness. **9.1:** *Zebulun* and *Naphtali* refer to the Assyrian annexation of Israelite tribal territories in the Galilee following Tiglath-pileser's defeat of northern Israel in 732 BCE. The Assyrian provinces of Dur (Dor, *the way of the sea*), Gal'azu (Gilead, *the land beyond the Jordan*), and Magidu (Megiddo, *Galilee of the nations*), areas just south and west of Zebulun and Naphtali, were also carved out of Israel at this time. **2–7:** The royal song of thanks-

those who lived in a land of deep
darkness—
on them light has shined.
3 You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing
plunder.
4 For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of
Midian.
5 For all the boots of the tramping
warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
6 For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.
8 The LORD sent a word against Jacob,
and it fell on Israel;
9 and all the people knew it—
Ephraim and the inhabitants of
Samaria—
but in pride and arrogance of heart they
said:
10 "The bricks have fallen,
but we will build with dressed stones;
the sycamores have been cut down,
but we will put cedars in their place."
11 So the LORD raised adversaries[a] against
them,
and stirred up their enemies,
12 the Arameans on the east and the
Philistines on the west,
and they devoured Israel with open
mouth.
For all this his anger has not turned away;
his hand is stretched out still.

13 The people did not turn to him who
struck them,
or seek the LORD of hosts.
14 So the LORD cut off from Israel head and
tail,
palm branch and reed in one day—
15 elders and dignitaries are the head,
and prophets who teach lies are the tail;

[a] Cn: Heb *the adversaries of Rezin*

giving answers the hopes of those who wait for the LORD to act to restore righteous Davidic rule in Israel. **4–5:** Military oppression is symbolized by the *yoke* (10.27; 14.25), the *bar* (10.24), the *rod* (10.24; 14.5; Gen 49.10), and the trampling *boots*. **4:** *The day of Midian* refers to Gideon's defeat of Midian and deliverance of Israel in Judg 7.15–25. **6–7:** *For us,* see 6.8n. The birth or coronation of a new king, perhaps Hezekiah, the son and successor of Ahaz, signals a new period of *peace, justice*, and *righteousness* in which Davidic rule will be reestablished in Israel. See also Ps 2.7.

9.8–10.4: Prophetic warning of judgment to Israel's leaders. The prophet returns to a focus on northern Israel. The oracles in this passage all conclude with the formulaic statement, "for all this, his (the LORD's) anger has not turned away; his hand is stretched out still" (9.12b, 17b, 21b; 10.4b). The occurrence of this formula in 5.25 indicates that 5.1–30 and 9.8–10.4 form a literary envelope around 6.1–9.7. The oracles presuppose Israel's experience in the Syro-Ephraimite alliance, and point to Israel's leadership as the cause of its problems. **9.8–12:** This oracle recalls Aram's (and Philistia's) aggression against Israel in the ninth century BCE when King Ahab was killed in battle (1 Kings 22). Later Israelite kings and their Judean vassals were contained by the Aramean push into Philistia (2 Kings 10.32; 12.17–18; 13.7). **8:** *Jacob* is the eponymous ancestor of Israel (Gen 32.22–32; 35.9–15) and is especially associated with northern Israelite locations. **9:** *Ephraim* is the dominant tribe of northern Israel, and *Samaria* is the capital of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 16.24). **13–17:** Isaiah decries Israel's failure to recognize that the LORD was the party responsible for striking against Israel's leaders. Although the Jehu dynasty eventually achieved security for Israel during the reigns of Jehoash (800–784 BCE) and Jeroboam II (788–747; 2 Kings 13.24–25; 14.23–29), ancient Near Eastern sources indicate that Jehu (842–814) and Jehoash did so by forming an alliance with Assyria to contain Aram. King Zechariah (747), the last king of the house of Jehu, was

16 for those who led this people led them
astray,
and those who were led by them were
left in confusion.
17 That is why the LORD did not have pity
on[a] their young people,
or compassion on their orphans and
widows;
for everyone was godless and an evildoer,
and every mouth spoke folly.
For all this his anger has not turned away;
his hand is stretched out still.

18 For wickedness burned like a fire,
consuming briers and thorns;
it kindled the thickets of the forest,
and they swirled upward in a column of
smoke.
19 Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts
the land was burned,
and the people became like fuel for the fire;
no one spared another.
20 They gorged on the right, but still were
hungry,
and they devoured on the left, but were
not satisfied;
they devoured the flesh of their own
kindred;[b]
21 Manasseh devoured Ephraim, and
Ephraim Manasseh,
and together they were against Judah.
For all this his anger has not turned away;
his hand is stretched out still.

10 Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees,
who write oppressive statutes,
2 to turn aside the needy from justice
and to rob the poor of my people of
their right,
that widows may be your spoil,
and that you may make the orphans
your prey!
3 What will you do on the day of
punishment,
in the calamity that will come from far
away?
To whom will you flee for help,
and where will you leave your
wealth,
4 so as not to crouch among the
prisoners
or fall among the slain?
For all this his anger has not turned away;
his hand is stretched out still.

5 Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger—
the club in their hands is my fury!
6 Against a godless nation I send him,
and against the people of my wrath I
command him,
to take spoil and seize plunder,
and to tread them down like the mire of
the streets.
7 But this is not what he intends,
nor does he have this in mind;
but it is in his heart to destroy,
and to cut off nations not a few.
8 For he says:
"Are not my commanders all kings?

[a] Q Ms: MT *rejoice over*
[b] Or *arm*

ultimately assassinated by pro-Aramean elements in Israel (2 Kings 8–12). **18–21:** The last years of the kingdom of Israel were marked by a series of royal assassinations as pro-Assyrian and pro-Aramean elements struggled for control of the nation. King Pekah (see 7.1–25n.), who joined Israel with Aram to form the Syro-Ephraimite alliance, gained his throne by assassinating Pekahiah, the son of the pro-Assyrian King Menahem (2 Kings 15.17–26; cf. 2 Kings 15.25). **21:** *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* were the two largest tribes in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

10.1–4: The last oracle of the sequence begins with "woe" (*Ah*) to signal the prophet's judgment against Israel's leadership for its oppression of the poor and manipulation of the judicial system (see 5.20–24n.). Ultimately the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BCE) stripped away much of Israel's outlying territory, which prompted Hoshea (732–722) to assassinate Pekah and submit to Assyria (2 Kings 15.29–30).

10.5–12.6: Prophetic announcement of Assyrian downfall and Davidic restoration. The final oracular sequence in chs 5–12 takes up divine judgment against the Assyrian monarch for his arrogance and the coming restoration of righteous Davidic rule over a reunified Israel and Judah. **10.5–11:** The sequence begins with a "woe" (*Ah*) oracle directed against the Assyrian king. Although the LORD sent the Assyrians to punish Israel, the Assyrian king arrogantly sees himself and not the LORD as the true power in the world. The Assyrian monarch

9 Is not Calno like Carchemish?
Is not Hamath like Arpad?
Is not Samaria like Damascus?
10 As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols
whose images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,
11 shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols
what I have done to Samaria and her images?"

12 When the LORD has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he[a] will punish the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride. 13 For he says:
"By the strength of my hand I have done it,
and by my wisdom, for I have understanding;
I have removed the boundaries of peoples,
and have plundered their treasures;
like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones.
14 My hand has found, like a nest,
the wealth of the peoples;
and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken,
so I have gathered all the earth;
and there was none that moved a wing,
or opened its mouth, or chirped."

15 Shall the ax vaunt itself over the one who wields it,
or the saw magnify itself against the one who handles it?
As if a rod should raise the one who lifts it up,
or as if a staff should lift the one who is not wood!

16 Therefore the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts,
will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors,
and under his glory a burning will be kindled,
like the burning of fire.
17 The light of Israel will become a fire,
and his Holy One a flame;
and it will burn and devour
his thorns and briers in one day.
18 The glory of his forest and his fruitful land
the LORD will destroy, both soul and body,
and it will be as when an invalid wastes away.
19 The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few
that a child can write them down.

20 On that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on the one who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21 A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. 22 For though your people Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. 23 For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in all the earth.[b]

24 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: O my people, who live in Zion, do not

[a] Heb *I*
[b] Or *land*

portrayed here is Sargon II (721–705 BCE). **9:** The cities named are all Aramean cities conquered by Tiglath-pileser III (745–727) or Sargon II. *Calno* (Calneh) in 740 and 738; *Carchemish* in 717; *Hamath* in 738 and again in 720; *Arpad* in 740; and *Damascus* in 732. **10–11:** To the Assyrian king, *Samaria* and *Jerusalem* are ruled by idols and will fall to him just like the others. **12–19:** Once the LORD completes the punishment of Jerusalem, divine attention will turn to the punishment of the Assyrian king for his arrogant and self-aggrandizing boasting. **15:** The imagery of *ax* and *saw* presupposes the Assyrian practice of cutting down trees in the land of their enemies to provide wood for siege engines and to destroy the agricultural base of the economy (cf. Deut 20.19–20). The LORD will become a raging fire that will burn Assyria, symbolically portrayed as felled trees. **20–27a:** The prophet returns to the theme of the remnant that will survive the Syro-Aramean and Assyrian onslaughts (cf. 1.9; 4.2–6; 6.12–13; 7.1–15) to see the final overthrow of the Assyrians. **22:** *Sand,* cf. 48.19; Gen 22.17; 1 Kings 4.20. **24:** Assyria has become an oppressor of Israel much like the pharaoh of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. The oracle plays on the image of Assyria's *rod* (cf. 10.5), first to be used to punish Israel, then as an instrument of oppression, and finally used against Assyria, much as the rods of Moses and Aaron were used against Egypt during the plagues

be afraid of the Assyrians when they beat you
with a rod and lift up their staff against you as
the Egyptians did. 25 For in a very little while
my indignation will come to an end, and my
anger will be directed to their destruction.
26 The LORD of hosts will wield a whip against
them, as when he struck Midian at the rock
of Oreb; his staff will be over the sea, and he
will lift it as he did in Egypt. 27 On that day his
burden will be removed from your shoulder,
and his yoke will be destroyed from your
neck.

He has gone up from Rimmon,[a]
28 he has come to Aiath;
he has passed through Migron,
at Michmash he stores his baggage;
29 they have crossed over the pass,
at Geba they lodge for the night;
Ramah trembles,
Gibeah of Saul has fled.
30 Cry aloud, O daughter Gallim!
Listen, O Laishah!
Answer her, O Anathoth!
31 Madmenah is in flight,
the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety.
32 This very day he will halt at Nob,
he will shake his fist
at the mount of daughter Zion,
the hill of Jerusalem.

33 Look, the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts,
will lop the boughs with terrifying
power;
the tallest trees will be cut down,
and the lofty will be brought low.
34 He will hack down the thickets of the
forest with an ax,
and Lebanon with its majestic trees[b]
will fall.

11 A shoot shall come out from the stump
of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and
understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of
the LORD.
3 His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
4 but with righteousness he shall judge the
poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of
the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his
mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall
kill the wicked.
5 Righteousness shall be the belt around
his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his
loins.

6 The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling
together,
and a little child shall lead them.
7 The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8 The nursing child shall play over the hole
of the asp,

[a] Cn: Heb *and his yoke from your neck, and a yoke will be destroyed because of fatness*
[b] Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb *with a majestic one*

and at the parting of the sea (Ex 6–11; 13–15). **26:** *Midian . . . Oreb,* see Judg 7.25. **10.27b–11.9:** The advance of the Assyrian king against Jerusalem generally follows the route from northern Israel through Benjamin south into Jerusalem. The Assyrian king who threatens Jerusalem is likely Sargon II, who passed through Jerusalem in 720 BCE and put on a show of force to intimidate the city on his way to confront the Egyptians and Philistines at Raphia. **10.27b–32:** Some of the cities named cannot be identified with certainty, but all are presumably not far north of Jerusalem. **33:** Isaiah's use of tree imagery recurs (see 10.15–19). **34:** *Lebanon,* see 2.13n. **11.1–9:** In place of the felled Assyrian tree, the stump will produce a new branch that will grow into the new and righteous Davidic monarch who will preside over Jerusalem in peace (cf. 6.12–13; 9.1–7). **1:** *Jesse*, the father of David (1 Sam 16.1–20). **2:** *The spirit of the LORD*, the charismatic endowment of the future ruler is expressed in three pairs of attributes; LXX adds "the spirit of piety," providing the basis for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology. **6–8:** The idyllic scenario in which the animals live in peace and even a baby is safe recalls the garden

and the weaned child shall put its hand
on the adder's den.
9 They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge
of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.
11 On that day the LORD will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia,[a] from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.
12 He will raise a signal for the nations,
and will assemble the outcasts of Israel,
and gather the dispersed of Judah
from the four corners of the earth.
13 The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart,
the hostility of Judah shall be cut off;
Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah,
and Judah shall not be hostile towards
Ephraim.
14 But they shall swoop down on the backs
of the Philistines in the west,
together they shall plunder the people
of the east.
They shall put forth their hand against
Edom and Moab,
and the Ammonites shall obey them.
15 And the LORD will utterly destroy
the tongue of the sea of Egypt;
and will wave his hand over the River
with his scorching wind;
and will split it into seven channels,
and make a way to cross on foot;
16 so there shall be a highway from Assyria
for the remnant that is left of his
people,
as there was for Israel
when they came up from the land of
Egypt.

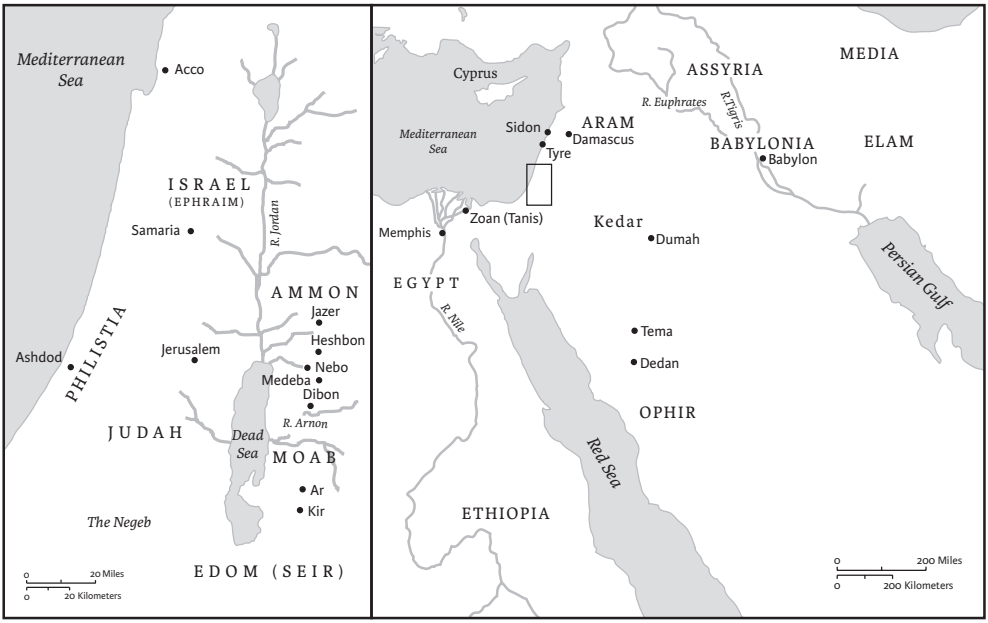
12 You will say in that day:
I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
and you comforted me.

2 Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the LORD GOD[b] is my strength and my
might;
he has become my salvation.

3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 And you will say in that day:
Give thanks to the LORD,
call on his name;

a Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
b Heb *for Yah, the LORD*

of Eden (Gen 2). **9:** *My holy mountain*, see 2.2n. **10:** *Signal,* see 5.26n. **11–16:** The restoration of righteous Davidic rule in Jerusalem prompts the return of Israel's exiles and the restoration of the united Davidic empire. Israelites were exiled to Assyria and others had fled to Egypt during the course of the Assyrian invasions in the late eighth century. **11:** *Pathros*, in southern Egypt; *Ethiopia* (Heb "Cush"), south of Egypt; *Elam,* in southern Iran, east of Babylonia; *Shinar,* the plain of Babylon; *Hamath,* in north central Aram (Syria); *the coastlands of the sea,* the Phoenician littoral on the eastern Mediterranean coast, or the islands of the eastern Aegean. **12–14:** With the exiles recovered, Israel and Judah will reunite under the rule of the Davidic king as in the days of David and Solomon, to conquer Philistia and Transjordan (*Edom, Moab,* and *the Ammonites*), regions that had once been part of the kingdom of David and Solomon (2 Sam 8). **15:** The LORD's defeat of the sea of Egypt recalls the parting of the sea at the time of the Exodus (Ex 14–15). The *scorching wind* is a dry sirocco or east wind that plays a role in the parting of the sea and other acts of the LORD (Ex 10.13; 14.21). *The River,* the Euphrates. *Seven channels* evokes mythological traditions about the dragon Leviathan (cf. 27.1), who has seven heads in Canaanite mythology. **16:** The *highway from Assyria* is compared to the King's Highway, a trade route through Transjordan, that Israel followed on its way through Moab to the promised land (Num 20.17; 21.22; Deut 2.17). **12.1–6:** The concluding song of thanksgiving quotes from the Song of the Sea in Ex 15 (see esp. Ex 15.1–3) and various Psalms (e.g., 105.1; 118.14,21). The drawing of water suggests a setting in the celebration of Sukkot (Tabernacles; Lev 23.33–44), when water libations were poured at the Temple to celebrate the end of the fruit harvest and the onset of the rainy season as well as Israel's journey through the wilderness.



Places mentioned in the oracles against foreign nations (Isa 13–23)

make known his deeds among the nations;
proclaim that his name is exalted.

5 Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known[a] in all the earth.
6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal[b] Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

13 The oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw.

2 On a bare hill raise a signal,
cry aloud to them;
wave the hand for them to enter the gates of the nobles.

[a] Or *this is made known*
[b] Or *O inhabitant of*

13.1–27.13: Prophetic announcement concerning the preparation of the nations for the LORD's world rule. The oracles concerning the nations in chs 13–23 together with prophecies of restoration for Zion and Israel in chs 24–27 constitute a major unit that anticipates the LORD's actions and sovereignty from throughout the entire world. The superscription in 13.1 that introduces this section is styled much like that in 2.1. Major blocks of oracles concerning the nations are a common feature of prophetic books (see Jer 46–51; Ezek 25–32; Am 1–2; Ob; Nah; Zeph 2.4–15). Isaiah's oracles are each marked with a superscription that identifies it as an oracle or pronouncement (Heb "massa'") concerning the nation in question. The prophet's pronouncements include nations that were ultimately conquered by the Persian Empire, beginning with the Persian King Cyrus's conquest of Babylon in 539 BCE, which prompted his decree to end the Babylonian exile and allow Jews to return to their own land (2 Chr 36.22–23; Ezra 1.1–4). Insofar as the latter portions of Isaiah designate Cyrus as the LORD's "messiah" and "temple builder" (44.28; 45.1), the final form of the book of Isaiah views Cyrus and the Persian Empire as the means by which the LORD exercises worldwide sovereignty.

13.1–14.32: Isaiah's pronouncement concerning Babylon. The prophet's oracle concerning Babylon includes a summation in 14.24–27 that applies the oracles concerning Assyria to Babylon, and an appendix in 14.28–32 that takes up Philistia. **13.1:** The superscription both introduces the oracle concerning Babylon and the oracles concerning the nations throughout Isaiah 13–23. **13.2–14.27:** The lengthy oracle concerning

[3] I myself have commanded my
consecrated ones,
have summoned my warriors, my
proudly exulting ones,
to execute my anger.

[4] Listen, a tumult on the mountains
as of a great multitude!
Listen, an uproar of kingdoms,
of nations gathering together!
The LORD of hosts is mustering
an army for battle.
[5] They come from a distant land,
from the end of the heavens,
the LORD and the weapons of his
indignation,
to destroy the whole earth.

[6] Wail, for the day of the LORD is near;
it will come like destruction from the
Almighty![a]
[7] Therefore all hands will be feeble,
and every human heart will melt,
[8] and they will be dismayed.
Pangs and agony will seize them;
they will be in anguish like a woman in
labor.
They will look aghast at one another;
their faces will be aflame.
[9] See, the day of the LORD comes,
cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,
to make the earth a desolation,
and to destroy its sinners from it.
[10] For the stars of the heavens and their
constellations
will not give their light;
the sun will be dark at its rising,
and the moon will not shed its light.

[11] I will punish the world for its evil,
and the wicked for their iniquity;
I will put an end to the pride of the
arrogant,
and lay low the insolence of tyrants.
[12] I will make mortals more rare than fine
gold,
and humans than the gold of Ophir.
[13] Therefore I will make the heavens
tremble,
and the earth will be shaken out of its
place,
at the wrath of the LORD of hosts
in the day of his fierce anger.
[14] Like a hunted gazelle,
or like sheep with no one to gather
them,
all will turn to their own people,
and all will flee to their own lands.
[15] Whoever is found will be thrust
through,
and whoever is caught will fall by the
sword.
[16] Their infants will be dashed to pieces
before their eyes;
their houses will be plundered,
and their wives ravished.
[17] See, I am stirring up the Medes against
them,
who have no regard for silver
and do not delight in gold.
[18] Their bows will slaughter the young
men;
they will have no mercy on the fruit of
the womb;
their eyes will not pity children.

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

Babylon is unexpected immediately following the earlier concerns with Assyria and its threat to Israel and Judah in the eighth century. Nevertheless, the book as a whole also addresses the Babylonian exile and the Persian-period restoration in the sixth century BCE. It therefore portrays Babylon as the natural successor to Assyria as the LORD's agent of punishment who must in turn be brought down to realize Jerusalem's restoration. **13.2–5:** The summons to war presupposes Israel's holy war traditions (cf. Deut 20; Josh 1–11) in which the LORD fights on behalf of Israel with his *consecrated ones*, his heavenly army (see Ex 23.20–33; Josh 5.13–15; 2 Kings 6.15–19; 7.3–8). **6–8:** *The day of the LORD*, see 2.10–21n. The imagery of wailing together with *pangs* and *agony* evokes the imagery of childbirth. Such imagery builds on the role that the birth of Isaiah's own symbolically named sons play in communicating his oracles (7.1–9; 8.1–15,18). **9–16:** Because the LORD is the sovereign of all creation, elements of creation such as the stars, moon, and sun, all play roles in the assault against the arrogant and evil on the "day of the LORD." **12:** *Ophir*, in Arabia, was known for its gold (1 Kings 9.26–28). **17–22:** The *Medes* are a nation northwest of Persia, which allied with the Babylonians in 627–609 BCE to bring down the Assyrian Empire. Later, under the rule of Cyrus, they united with Persia to form the Persian Empire,

19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,
the splendor and pride of the Chaldeans,
will be like Sodom and Gomorrah
when God overthrew them.
20 It will never be inhabited
or lived in for all generations;
Arabs will not pitch their tents there,
shepherds will not make their flocks lie down there.
21 But wild animals will lie down there,
and its houses will be full of howling creatures;
there ostriches will live,
and there goat-demons will dance.
22 Hyenas will cry in its towers,
and jackals in the pleasant palaces;
its time is close at hand,
and its days will not be prolonged.

14 But the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land; and aliens will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. 2 And the nations will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess the nations[a] as male and female slaves in the LORD's land; they will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them.

3 When the LORD has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, 4 you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon:

How the oppressor has ceased!
How his insolence[b] has ceased!
5 The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,
the scepter of rulers,
6 that struck down the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows,
that ruled the nations in anger
with unrelenting persecution.
7 The whole earth is at rest and quiet;
they break forth into singing.
8 The cypresses exult over you,
the cedars of Lebanon, saying,
"Since you were laid low,
no one comes to cut us down."
9 Sheol beneath is stirred up
to meet you when you come;
it rouses the shades to greet you,
all who were leaders of the earth;
it raises from their thrones
all who were kings of the nations.
10 All of them will speak
and say to you:
"You too have become as weak as we!
You have become like us!"
11 Your pomp is brought down to Sheol,
and the sound of your harps;
maggots are the bed beneath you,
and worms are your covering.

12 How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground,
you who laid the nations low!
13 You said in your heart,
"I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
on the heights of Zaphon;[c]
14 I will ascend to the tops of the clouds,
I will make myself like the Most High."

[a] Heb *them*
[b] Q Ms Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of MT uncertain
[c] Or *assembly in the far north*

which in turn conquered Babylonia in 539 BCE. **19:** *Chaldeans,* the Babylonians. *Sodom and Gomorrah,* see 1.9n. **20–22:** The reversion of cities to a primitive condition is a common theme in Isaiah; see 14.22; 17.23; 18.6; 25.2; 27.10–11; 32.13–14; 34.8–15. Although Cyrus defeated the Babylonian army in the field, Babylon surrendered to him peacefully and was not destroyed. **21:** *Goat-demons*, satyrs and demons, including Lilith (34.14), are at home in the wilderness. **14.1–2:** With the defeat and destruction of Babylon, the LORD turns to the restoration of Israel to its own land. **3–23:** The LORD instructs Isaiah to sing a taunt song at the downfall of the king of Babylon. **7–8:** Both Assyrian and Babylonian kings were known for cutting down the *cypresses* and *cedars of Lebanon* (2.13n), as the wood was prized for building luxurious palaces (see 37.24). The trees therefore rejoice at the king's death. **9–11:** *Sheol*, the underworld, prepares to welcome the dead king. Despite his arrogance (cf. 10.5–32), the king must recognize that no one, not even kings, escapes death and its consequences. **12–14:** The names *Day Star* and *son of Dawn* draw on divine names known from Canaanite mythology. "Day Star" was

15 But you are brought down to Sheol,
to the depths of the Pit.
16 Those who see you will stare at you,
and ponder over you:
"Is this the man who made the earth
tremble,
who shook kingdoms,
17 who made the world like a desert
and overthrew its cities,
who would not let his prisoners go
home?"
18 All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
each in his own tomb;
19 but you are cast out, away from your
grave,
like loathsome carrion,[a]
clothed with the dead, those pierced by
the sword,
who go down to the stones of the Pit,
like a corpse trampled underfoot.
20 You will not be joined with them in burial,
because you have destroyed your land,
you have killed your people.

May the descendants of evildoers
nevermore be named!
21 Prepare slaughter for his sons
because of the guilt of their father.[b]
Let them never rise to possess the earth
or cover the face of the world with cities.

22 I will rise up against them, says the LORD of hosts, and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, offspring and posterity, says the LORD. 23 And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, says the LORD of hosts.

24 The LORD of hosts has sworn:
As I have designed,
so shall it be;
and as I have planned,
so shall it come to pass:
25 I will break the Assyrian in my land,
and on my mountains trample him
under foot;
his yoke shall be removed from them,
and his burden from their shoulders.
26 This is the plan that is planned
concerning the whole earth;
and this is the hand that is stretched out
over all the nations.
27 For the LORD of hosts has planned,
and who will annul it?
His hand is stretched out,
and who will turn it back?

28 In the year that King Ahaz died this
oracle came:

29 Do not rejoice, all you Philistines,
that the rod that struck you is broken,

[a] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *like a loathed branch*
[b] Syr Compare Gk: Heb *fathers*

translated as "Lucifer" in Latin, and the passage was later understood to refer to Satan's fall from heaven. The taunt song apparently reflects mythological references to failed attempts by gods to challenge the rule of the chief god (see also Ezek 28; Ps 82). *Zaphon* is the mythological northern mountain of Baal in Canaanite mythology; it is identified with Mount Zion in Ps 48.2. **15:** The king's descent to *Sheol* (also called *the Pit*) draws on mythic patterns such as the Mesopotamian "Descent of Ishtar/Inanna to the Underworld," in which a goddess descends to the netherworld in an attempt to recover her dead consort. **18–21:** Allusions to the body of the king lying unburied in vv. 19–20 indicate that the passage originally presupposed the Assyrian King Sargon II, whose body was reportedly left on the battlefield in 705 BCE. **22–23:** A prose conclusion repeating the motif of reversion to primitive conditions (see 13.20–22n.). **24–27:** The reference to the LORD's plan to defeat Assyria in the land of Israel draws an analogy between Assyria and Babylon as nations that must be punished for their arrogance following their roles as agents for divine punishment of Israel. The similarities with 10.5–34 suggest that the two passages may have formed a unit in an earlier edition of Isaiah's oracles. Babylon succeeds Assyria as the major enemy in chs 40–55. The reference to the LORD's plan also anticipates statements concerning the LORD's word in 40.8 and the realization of divine plans in 55.11.

14.28–32: Appendix concerning Isaiah's pronouncement against Philistia. Following the death of King Ahaz (715 BCE), Philistia attempted to revolt against Assyria, and likely approached Ahaz's son, King Hezekiah, for support. Isaiah was opposed to military alliances against Assyria due to his belief in the Davidic/Zion theology that posited the LORD's protection of Jerusalem (cf. 7.1–25). Sargon put down the Philistine revolt in 713 BCE.

for from the root of the snake will come
forth an adder,
and its fruit will be a flying fiery
serpent.
30 The firstborn of the poor will graze,
and the needy lie down in safety;
but I will make your root die of famine,
and your remnant I[a] will kill.
31 Wail, O gate; cry, O city;
melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you!
For smoke comes out of the north,
and there is no straggler in its ranks.

32 What will one answer the messengers of
the nation?
"The LORD has founded Zion,
and the needy among his people
will find refuge in her."

15 An oracle concerning Moab.

Because Ar is laid waste in a night,
Moab is undone;
because Kir is laid waste in a night,
Moab is undone.
2 Dibon[b] has gone up to the temple,
to the high places to weep;
over Nebo and over Medeba
Moab wails.
On every head is baldness,
every beard is shorn;
3 in the streets they bind on sackcloth;
on the housetops and in the squares
everyone wails and melts in tears.
4 Heshbon and Elealeh cry out,
their voices are heard as far as Jahaz;
therefore the loins of Moab quiver;[c]
his soul trembles.
5 My heart cries out for Moab;
his fugitives flee to Zoar,
to Eglath-shelishiyah.
For at the ascent of Luhith
they go up weeping;
on the road to Horonaim
they raise a cry of destruction;
6 the waters of Nimrim
are a desolation;
the grass is withered, the new growth fails,
the verdure is no more.
7 Therefore the abundance they have
gained
and what they have laid up
they carry away
over the Wadi of the Willows.
8 For a cry has gone
around the land of Moab;
the wailing reaches to Eglaim,
the wailing reaches to Beer-elim.
9 For the waters of Dibon[d] are full of blood;
yet I will bring upon Dibon[d] even
more—
a lion for those of Moab who escape,
for the remnant of the land.

[a] Q Ms Vg: MT *he*
[b] Cn: Heb *the house and Dibon*
[c] Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *the armed men of Moab cry aloud*
[d] Q Ms Vg Compare Syr: MT *Dimon*

15.1–16.14: Isaiah's pronouncement concerning Moab. The superscription introduces a lamentation concerning the downfall of Moab, a nation east of the Dead Sea that was often in conflict with Israel and Judah (cf. Gen 19.30–37). The poem employs the poetic meter typical of dirges in ancient Hebrew poetry (cf. Lam 1–2). Elements of the oracle also appear in Jer 48.29–38, which employs the Isaian oracle to comment on Moab's fate at the hands of Babylon in Jeremiah's time. A likely setting for this oracle is Tiglath-pileser's invasion of Israel during the Syro-Ephraimite War of 735–732 BCE. Moabite territory north of the Arnon had once been the tribal territory of Reuben and perhaps Gad (see Num 32). In the Moabite Stone (Mesha Stela, ninth century BCE), the Moabite King Mesha boasts of having defeated Israel—and the men of Gad in particular—and taking their land. The Assyrians would have considered this territory to be Israelite and therefore fair game for their own plans for taking control of the region. Moab's appeal for assistance to Jerusalem (16.1–4) makes sense in the Syro-Ephraimite War, because Ahaz summons the Assyrians for assistance and maintains his loyalty as an Assyrian vassal (see 7.1–25) **15.1–9:** The Moabite towns mentioned in the oracle indicate an invasion that targeted Moabite territory north of the Wadi Arnon, the Wadi el-Mujib that flows into the Dead Sea. **1–4:** The cities of *Ar*, *Kir*(-hareseth), *Nebo, Medeba, Heshbon*, and *Elealeh*, are all located in the north and subject to attack. *Dibon* and *Jahaz,* on the old border of Moab just north of the Arnon, serve only as witnesses. *Baldness . . . sackcloth,* signs of mourning. **5–8:** The southern cities and locations, none of which can be conclusively identified, are places

16 Send lambs
to the ruler of the land,
from Sela, by way of the desert,
to the mount of daughter Zion.
2 Like fluttering birds,
like scattered nestlings,
so are the daughters of Moab
at the fords of the Arnon.
3 "Give counsel,
grant justice;
make your shade like night
at the height of noon;
hide the outcasts,
do not betray the fugitive;
4 let the outcasts of Moab
settle among you;
be a refuge to them
from the destroyer."

When the oppressor is no more,
and destruction has ceased,
and marauders have vanished from the land,
5 then a throne shall be established in steadfast love
in the tent of David,
and on it shall sit in faithfulness
a ruler who seeks justice
and is swift to do what is right.

6 We have heard of the pride of Moab
—how proud he is!—
of his arrogance, his pride, and his insolence;
his boasts are false.
7 Therefore let Moab wail,
let everyone wail for Moab.
Mourn, utterly stricken,
for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth.

8 For the fields of Heshbon languish,
and the vines of Sibmah,
whose clusters once made drunk
the lords of the nations,
reached to Jazer
and strayed to the desert;
their shoots once spread abroad
and crossed over the sea.
9 Therefore I weep with the weeping of Jazer
for the vines of Sibmah;
I drench you with my tears,
O Heshbon and Elealeh;
for the shout over your fruit harvest
and your grain harvest has ceased.
10 Joy and gladness are taken away
from the fruitful field;
and in the vineyards no songs are sung,
no shouts are raised;
no treader treads out wine in the presses;
the vintage-shout is hushed.[a]
11 Therefore my heart throbs like a harp for Moab,
and my very soul for Kir-heres.
12 When Moab presents himself, when he wearies himself upon the high place, when he comes to his sanctuary to pray, he will not prevail.

13 This was the word that the LORD spoke concerning Moab in the past. 14 But now the LORD says, In three years, like the years of a hired worker, the glory of Moab will be brought into contempt, in spite of all its great multitude; and those who survive will be very few and feeble.

17 An oracle concerning Damascus.
See, Damascus will cease to be a city,
and will become a heap of ruins.

[a] Gk: Heb *I have hushed*

to which refugees flee from the assault in the north. **16.1:** *Sela*, unidentified, perhaps modern Petra, in Edom. **7:** *Raisin cakes,* clumps of dried grapes. **8–11:** Lament for the destruction of the vineyards of *Sibmah*, apparently the wine-producing region of Moab. **13–14:** A summary identifies the preceding as an earlier word of the LORD that will come to pass in three years.

17.1–18.7: Isaiah's pronouncements concerning Damascus and Cush. The superscription identifies this unit as the prophet's pronouncement concerning Damascus, but the contents of the oracle include material concerning Israel and the LORD's recognition by Cush (i.e., Ethiopia). This suggests that the oracle is concerned with the Syro-Ephraimite coalition of Aram-Damascus and Israel, and Israel's efforts to convince Cush to join in opposition to Assyria. **17.1b–6:** The initial segment of the oracle targets both *Damascus*, the capital of Aram,

2 Her towns will be deserted forever;[a]
they will be places for flocks,
which will lie down, and no one will
make them afraid.
3 The fortress will disappear from Ephraim,
and the kingdom from Damascus;
and the remnant of Aram will be
like the glory of the children of Israel,
says the LORD of hosts.

4 On that day
the glory of Jacob will be brought low,
and the fat of his flesh will grow lean.
5 And it shall be as when reapers gather
standing grain
and their arms harvest the ears,
and as when one gleans the ears of grain
in the Valley of Rephaim.
6 Gleanings will be left in it,
as when an olive tree is beaten—
two or three berries
in the top of the highest bough,
four or five
on the branches of a fruit tree,
says the LORD God of Israel.

7 On that day people will regard their Maker, and their eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel; 8 they will not have regard for the altars, the work of their hands, and they will not look to what their own fingers have made, either the sacred poles[b] or the altars of incense.

9 On that day their strong cities will be like the deserted places of the Hivites and the Amorites,[c] which they deserted because of the children of Israel, and there will be desolation.

10 For you have forgotten the God of your
salvation,
and have not remembered the Rock of
your refuge;
therefore, though you plant pleasant
plants
and set out slips of an alien god,
11 though you make them grow on the day
that you plant them,
and make them blossom in the morning
that you sow;
yet the harvest will flee away
in a day of grief and incurable pain.

12 Ah, the thunder of many peoples,
they thunder like the thundering of the
sea!
Ah, the roar of nations,
they roar like the roaring of mighty
waters!
13 The nations roar like the roaring of many
waters,
but he will rebuke them, and they will
flee far away,
chased like chaff on the mountains before
the wind
and whirling dust before the storm.
14 At evening time, lo, terror!
Before morning, they are no more.
This is the fate of those who despoil us,
and the lot of those who plunder us.

18 Ah, land of whirring wings
beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,[d]
2 sending ambassadors by the Nile
in vessels of papyrus on the waters!
Go, you swift messengers,

[a] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *the cities of Aroer are deserted*
[b] Heb *Asherim*
[c] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *places of the wood and the highest bough*
[d] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

and *Ephraim*, the tribal name identified with the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Isaiah's favored images of harvest and gleaning then portray the decimation of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians. The *Valley of Rephaim,* i.e., the Valley of the Shades (those dwelling in the underworld), is located south of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5.18). The beating of *olive trees* appears also in 10.5–33. **7–8:** The LORD's actions against Israel will prompt the people to reconsider their adherence to other gods. *Sacred poles* were tree trunks or monoliths dedicated to the goddess Asherah (2 Kings 17.7–18; 10.16). **9–11:** *Hivites* and *Amorites,* pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land destroyed because of their idolatry and evil practices (Deut 7.1–6). *Slips of an alien god*, i.e., veneration of a vegetation deity, perhaps the Mesopotamian Tammuz (see Ezek 8.14–18), later known as Adonis. **12–14:** The prophet employs the mythological motif of the combat with the sea to portray the LORD's defeat of the nations (Pss 46; 74; 93; Ex 15). In Isaiah's understanding of the Davidic/Zion tradition, the LORD alone defends Jerusalem (cf. Ps 2). **18.1–7:** The

to a nation tall and smooth,
to a people feared near and far,
a nation mighty and conquering,
whose land the rivers divide.

3 All you inhabitants of the world,
you who live on the earth,
when a signal is raised on the mountains,
look!
When a trumpet is blown, listen!
4 For thus the LORD said to me:
I will quietly look from my dwelling
like clear heat in sunshine,
like a cloud of dew in the heat of
harvest.
5 For before the harvest, when the blossom
is over
and the flower becomes a ripening grape,
he will cut off the shoots with pruning
hooks,
and the spreading branches he will hew
away.
6 They shall all be left
to the birds of prey of the mountains
and to the animals of the earth.
And the birds of prey will summer on
them,
and all the animals of the earth will
winter on them.

7 At that time gifts will be brought to the LORD of hosts from[a] a people tall and smooth, from a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide, to Mount Zion, the place of the name of the LORD of hosts.

19 An oracle concerning Egypt.

See, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud
and comes to Egypt;
the idols of Egypt will tremble at his
presence,
and the heart of the Egyptians will melt
within them.
2 I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians,
and they will fight, one against the
other,
neighbor against neighbor,
city against city, kingdom against
kingdom;
3 the spirit of the Egyptians within them
will be emptied out,
and I will confound their plans;
they will consult the idols and the spirits
of the dead
and the ghosts and the familiar spirits;
4 I will deliver the Egyptians
into the hand of a hard master;
a fierce king will rule over them,
says the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts.

5 The waters of the Nile will be dried up,
and the river will be parched and dry;
6 its canals will become foul,
and the branches of Egypt's Nile will
diminish and dry up,
reeds and rushes will rot away.
7 There will be bare places by the Nile,
on the brink of the Nile;
and all that is sown by the Nile will dry up,

[a] Q Ms Gk Vg: MT *of*

appended "woe" (*Ah*) oracle focuses on Cush (*Ethiopia*) to whom Israel sent messengers in 724 BCE during the reign of King Hoshea in an effort to gain support for its revolt against Assyria (2 Kings 17.4). Isaiah is consistently opposed to such alliances, and looks to the natural world to illustrate his view. When grapes are cut and harvested, the vines are left to the mercy of birds and animals. When nations see how the LORD trims these shoots and leaves the remnant to be picked over, they will bring offerings to Zion to recognize the LORD's sovereignty.

19.1–20.6: Isaiah's pronouncement concerning Egypt. Isaiah's pronouncement concerning Egypt includes both the oracle against Egypt in 19.1b–25 and a narrative concerning Isaiah's symbolic actions at the time of the fall of Ashdod that legitimizes the oracle concerning Egypt. **19.1–25:** Egypt played an important role in attempting to foment revolt against the Assyrians by Israel, Judah, and the other small states in the Syro-Israelite region. Such moves would help to defend them from Assyrian invasion through the Sinai and enable them to extend their own influence into western Asia. **1a:** The superscription follows the standard form for Isaiah's pronouncements (13.1a; 15.1a; 17.1a; 23.1a). **1b:** The LORD is portrayed as riding on a cloud (cf. Pss 18.10; 68.33), which is also how the Canaanite god Baal and the Assyrian god Assur were sometimes portrayed. **2:** The conflict among the Egyptians presupposes the internal struggle that took place in Egypt during the late eighth century, resulting finally in the emergence of the Twenty-fifth Ethiopian Dynasty, ca. 715 BCE. **5–10:** The Nile

be driven away, and be no more.
8 Those who fish will mourn;
all who cast hooks in the Nile will lament,
and those who spread nets on the water will languish.
9 The workers in flax will be in despair,
and the carders and those at the loom will grow pale.
10 Its weavers will be dismayed,
and all who work for wages will be grieved.

11 The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish;
the wise counselors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel.
How can you say to Pharaoh,
"I am one of the sages,
a descendant of ancient kings"?
12 Where now are your sages?
Let them tell you and make known
what the LORD of hosts has planned against Egypt.
13 The princes of Zoan have become fools,
and the princes of Memphis are deluded;
those who are the cornerstones of its tribes
have led Egypt astray.
14 The LORD has poured into them[a]
a spirit of confusion;
and they have made Egypt stagger in all its doings
as a drunkard staggers around in vomit.
15 Neither head nor tail, palm branch or reed,
will be able to do anything for Egypt.

16 On that day the Egyptians will be like women, and tremble with fear before the hand that the LORD of hosts raises against them. 17 And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom it is mentioned will fear because of the plan that the LORD of hosts is planning against them.

18 On that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD of hosts. One of these will be called the City of the Sun.

19 On that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the center of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. 20 It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; when they cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior, and will defend and deliver them. 21 The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the LORD on that day, and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them. 22 The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them.

23 On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

24 On that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, 25 whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage."

[a] Gk Compare Tg: Heb *it*

River provides the agricultural foundations for Egypt; the loss of its waters would devastate Egypt. **11–15:** Isaiah returns to his critique of Jerusalem's efforts to establish an alliance with Egypt against Assyria. *Zoan* is another name for the Egyptian city of Rameses or Tanis in the Delta region. The site is associated with the Exodus tradition (Ps 78.12,43; cf. Ex 1.11). *Memphis* is the capital of Lower (Northern) Egypt. *Head*, *tail*, *palm branch*, and *reed* refer to the leadership and people of Israel (see 9.14–15). **16–25:** The oracle concerning the course of future punishment and restoration for Egypt may include some later expansions of the text that presuppose Assyria's conquest of Egypt in 671 BCE and the rise of the Twenty-sixth Saite Egyptian Dynasty that began as an Assyrian vassal but ultimately served as an autonomous Assyrian ally as Assyrian power declined. The five "on that day" statements posit that Egypt will ultimately recognize the LORD together with Israel and the Assyrians. Such a sentiment correlates with images of the nations' recognition of the LORD in 2.2–4; 60.10–12; 61.5–10; 66.18–24. **18:** *Five cities* in which Judeans were settled are mentioned in Jer 2.16; 43.7; 44.1. *The language of Canaan*, Hebrew.

20 In the year that the commander-in-chief, who was sent by King Sargon of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and took it— [2] at that time the LORD had spoken to Isaiah son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and loose the sackcloth from your loins and take your sandals off your feet," and he had done so, walking naked and barefoot. [3] Then the LORD said, "Just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Ethiopia,[a] [4] so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as captives and the Ethiopians[b] as exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. [5] And they shall be dismayed and confounded because of Ethiopia[a] their hope and of Egypt their boast. [6] In that day the inhabitants of this coastland will say, 'See, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?' "

21 The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea.

As whirlwinds in the Negeb sweep on,
    it comes from the desert,
    from a terrible land.
[2] A stern vision is told to me;
    the betrayer betrays,
    and the destroyer destroys.
Go up, O Elam,
    lay siege, O Media;
all the sighing she has caused
    I bring to an end.
[3] Therefore my loins are filled with
        anguish;
    pangs have seized me,
    like the pangs of a woman in labor;
I am bowed down so that I cannot hear,
    I am dismayed so that I cannot see.
[4] My mind reels, horror has appalled me;
    the twilight I longed for
    has been turned for me into trembling.
[5] They prepare the table,
    they spread the rugs,
    they eat, they drink.
Rise up, commanders,
    oil the shield!
[6] For thus the Lord said to me:
"Go, post a lookout,
    let him announce what he sees.
[7] When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs,
    riders on donkeys, riders on camels,
let him listen diligently,
    very diligently."
[8] Then the watcher[c] called out:
"Upon a watchtower I stand, O Lord,

[a] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
[b] Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*
[c] Q Ms: MT *a lion*

The passage may refer to the Judean diaspora in Egypt. *The City of the Sun,* the Egyptian city Heliopolis (Jer 43.13). **20.1–6:** King Sargon II of Assyria (722–705) put down a revolt by the coastal Philistine city of Ashdod in 711 BCE. The revolt was instigated by Egypt. In order to illustrate his view that alliance with the Egyptians and Ethiopians is useless, Isaiah walks about Jerusalem naked for three years to symbolize the fate of the Egyptians and Ethiopians taken prisoner by the Assyrians. Prophets frequently engaged in symbolic actions that were meant to symbolize and realize their prophetic messages (see Jer 27–28; Ezek 5; Hos 1–3).

21.1–10: Isaiah's pronouncement concerning the wilderness of the sea. The oracle expresses Isaiah's view that Babylon would be defeated by Assyria. **1:** The reference to Babylon's fall in v. 9 indicates that *the wilderness of the sea* refers to Babylon. The term likely refers to the marshlands of southern Babylonia where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers join and flow into the Persian Gulf. The Babylonian prince Merodach-baladan, who allied with Hezekiah to revolt against Assyria in 705–701 BCE (cf. ch 39), hid from Sennacherib in this region through 689 BCE. *Negeb*, the desert region south of Judah. **2:** The references to *Elam* and *Media* suggest the possibility of a later setting. Media, northeast of Babylon, allied with it to defeat Assyria in 627–609 BCE. Elam, directly east of Babylon, had been conquered by the Assyrians in the mid-seventh century, but was allied with Merodach-baladan in the late eighth century. Perhaps they later joined with Media against Assyria. Elam and Media formed part of the Persian Empire that defeated Babylon in 539 BCE. Isaiah's original oracle was either updated or later read to account for that event. **5:** *Oil the shield,* shields were made of leather and had to be oiled regularly to prevent them from drying out and cracking; see 2 Sam 1.21. **6–10:** The watchman waits for word concerning Babylon only to learn of its defeat.

continually by day,
and at my post I am stationed
throughout the night.
9 Look, there they come, riders,
horsemen in pairs!"
Then he responded,
"Fallen, fallen is Babylon;
and all the images of her gods
lie shattered on the ground."
10 O my threshed and winnowed one,
what I have heard from the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel, I announce to you.

11 The oracle concerning Dumah.

One is calling to me from Seir,
"Sentinel, what of the night?
Sentinel, what of the night?"
12 The sentinel says:
"Morning comes, and also the night.
If you will inquire, inquire;
come back again."

13 The oracle concerning the desert plain.

In the scrub of the desert plain you will lodge,
O caravans of Dedanites.
14 Bring water to the thirsty,
meet the fugitive with bread,
O inhabitants of the land of Tema.
15 For they have fled from the swords,
from the drawn sword,
from the bent bow,
and from the stress of battle.
16 For thus the Lord said to me: Within a year, according to the years of a hired worker, all the glory of Kedar will come to an end;
17 and the remaining bows of Kedar's warriors will be few; for the LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken.

22 The oracle concerning the valley of vision.

What do you mean that you have gone up,
all of you, to the housetops,
2 you that are full of shoutings,
tumultuous city, exultant town?
Your slain are not slain by the sword,
nor are they dead in battle.
3 Your rulers have all fled together;
they were captured without the use of a bow.[a]
All of you who were found were captured,
though they had fled far away.[b]
4 Therefore I said:
Look away from me,
let me weep bitter tears;
do not try to comfort me
for the destruction of my beloved people.

[a] Or *without their bows*
[b] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *fled from far away*

21.11–12: Isaiah's pronouncement concerning Dumah. *Dumah,* a major oasis in the Arabian Desert conquered by the Assyrian King Sennacherib in 689 BCE. *Seir* is a name for Edom, located southeast of the Dead Sea.

21.13–17: Isaiah's pronouncement concerning Arabia. Although the NRSV refers to the *desert plain*, the Hebrew text refers to Arabia, including the Arabian Desert situated to the east of Transjordan, to the west of Babylon, and south into the Arabian peninsula. The cities of *Dedan* and *Tema* were located in the northwestern Arabian peninsula south of Edom or Seir. The Assyrians conducted a number of campaigns in this region from the late eighth through the seventh centuries BCE. The most likely scenario is Sennacherib's defeat of *Kedar* in the northern Arabian desert in 689 BCE.

22.1–22: Isaiah's pronouncement concerning the valley of vision. The contents of this oracle indicate that *the valley of vision* refers to Jerusalem. No such name is otherwise known. The term is meant as a pun on the name of the Kidron Valley that defines the eastern boundary of biblical Jerusalem. Kidron means "darkness" or "gloom," and Isaiah's use of the term *valley of vision* to refer to the site is a play that reverses the meaning of the valley's name to designate it as a site of vision or revelation concerning the LORD's intentions for the city of Jerusalem. **1b–14:** The oracle begins with Isaiah's observations concerning the city's rejoicing at the deliverance of Jerusalem from an enemy, most likely the lifting of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE. Although Isaiah 37.36–37 indicates that Sennacherib withdrew following the LORD's defeat of his army, Assyrian records indicate that no such defeat took place and that Sennacherib withdrew after accepting Hezekiah's surrender. Isaiah points out the cost of the siege: although Jerusalem was spared, the Assyrians devastated the land of Ju-

5 For the Lord God of hosts has a day
of tumult and trampling and confusion
in the valley of vision,
a battering down of walls
and a cry for help to the mountains.
6 Elam bore the quiver
with chariots and cavalry,[a]
and Kir uncovered the shield.
7 Your choicest valleys were full of
chariots,
and the cavalry took their stand at the
gates.
8 He has taken away the covering of Judah.

On that day you looked to the weapons
of the House of the Forest, 9 and you saw
that there were many breaches in the city
of David, and you collected the waters of
the lower pool. 10 You counted the houses of
Jerusalem, and you broke down the houses
to fortify the wall. 11 You made a reservoir
between the two walls for the water of the
old pool. But you did not look to him who
did it, or have regard for him who planned it
long ago.

12 In that day the Lord God of hosts
called to weeping and mourning,
to baldness and putting on sackcloth;
13 but instead there was joy and festivity,
killing oxen and slaughtering sheep,
eating meat and drinking wine.
"Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die."
14 The Lord of hosts has revealed himself
in my ears:
Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven
you until you die,
says the Lord God of hosts.
15 Thus says the Lord God of hosts: Come,
go to this steward, to Shebna, who is master
of the household, and say to him: 16 What
right do you have here? Who are your rela-
tives here, that you have cut out a tomb here
for yourself, cutting a tomb on the height,
and carving a habitation for yourself in the
rock? 17 The Lord is about to hurl you away
violently, my fellow. He will seize firm hold
on you, 18 whirl you round and round, and
throw you like a ball into a wide land; there
you shall die, and there your splendid chari-
ots shall lie, O you disgrace to your master's
house! 19 I will thrust you from your office,
and you will be pulled down from your post.
20 On that day I will call my servant Eli-
akim son of Hilkiah, 21 and will clothe him
with your robe and bind your sash on him.
I will commit your authority to his hand,
and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of
Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. 22 I will
place on his shoulder the key of the house
of David; he shall open, and no one shall
shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open. 23 I
will fasten him like a peg in a secure place,
and he will become a throne of honor to his
ancestral house. 24 And they will hang on him

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

dah; see also 36.1; Mic 1–2). **6:** *Elam* and *Kir* refer to elements of the Assyrian army. Elam was located in southern Iran and allied with Merodach-baladan against Assyria, although Assyria was known for incorporating military units of its vassals into its own army. Kir was an Aramean city subjugated by Assyria. **8b–11:** Prose expansion describing preparations for the siege. *House of the Forest*, a structure built by Solomon (1 Kings 7.2; 10.17), perhaps an armory. Its cedar pillars may have suggested a forest. **9:** *The waters of the lower pool*, the prophet refers to King Hezekiah's attempts to fortify the city, including his digging of the Siloam Tunnel under *the city of David* to channel the waters of the Gihon Spring into Jerusalem where they would form the Siloam pool protected by Jerusalem's walls at the southern tip of the city. Such a move eliminated the problem that Ahaz faced: protecting the water source (7.1–9). The famed Siloam Inscription commemorates the digging of the tunnel. **12–14:** Bitter, fatalistic rejoicing in a time of disaster. When a siege occurred, it was necessary to slaughter animals, since they could not be pastured outside the city, thus creating a time of feasting, even when danger threatened. **15–25:** Isaiah condemns the *steward Shebna,* a major administrative official in charge of the royal palace (*household*); his tomb has been found in the Kidron Valley east of Jerusalem. The prophet condemns Shebna for building his tomb when the Lord plans to remove him from office and replace him with *Eliakim son of Hilkiah*. In 36.2 Eliakim ben Hilkiah is called the officer "in charge of the palace" and Shebna the "secretary" or "recorder." The secretary may have worked under the supervision of the officer "over the house." In Isaiah's view, Eliakim will ultimately lose his job as well.

the whole weight of his ancestral house, the offspring and issue, every small vessel, from the cups to all the flagons. 25 On that day, says the LORD of hosts, the peg that was fastened in a secure place will give way; it will be cut down and fall, and the load that was on it will perish, for the LORD has spoken.

23 The oracle concerning Tyre.

Wail, O ships of Tarshish,
for your fortress is destroyed.[a]
When they came in from Cyprus
they learned of it.
2 Be still, O inhabitants of the coast,
O merchants of Sidon,
your messengers crossed over the sea[b]
3 and were on the mighty waters;
your revenue was the grain of Shihor,
the harvest of the Nile;
you were the merchant of the nations.
4 Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken,
the fortress of the sea, saying:
"I have neither labored nor given birth,
I have neither reared young men
nor brought up young women."
5 When the report comes to Egypt,
they will be in anguish over the report about Tyre.
6 Cross over to Tarshish—
wail, O inhabitants of the coast!
7 Is this your exultant city
whose origin is from days of old,
whose feet carried her
to settle far away?
8 Who has planned this
against Tyre, the bestower of crowns,
whose merchants were princes,
whose traders were the honored of the earth?
9 The LORD of hosts has planned it—
to defile the pride of all glory,
to shame all the honored of the earth.
10 Cross over to your own land,
O ships of[c] Tarshish;
this is a harbor[d] no more.
11 He has stretched out his hand over the sea,
he has shaken the kingdoms;
the LORD has given command concerning Canaan
to destroy its fortresses.
12 He said:
You will exult no longer,
O oppressed virgin daughter Sidon;
rise, cross over to Cyprus—
even there you will have no rest.

13 Look at the land of the Chaldeans!
This is the people; it was not Assyria. They destined Tyre for wild animals. They erected their siege towers, they tore down her palaces, they made her a ruin.[e]
14 Wail, O ships of Tarshish,
for your fortress is destroyed.
15 From that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the lifetime of one king. At the

[a] Cn Compare verse 14: Heb *for it is destroyed, without houses*
[b] Q Ms: MT *crossing over the sea, they replenished you*
[c] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *like the Nile, daughter*
[d] Cn: Heb *restraint*
[e] Meaning of Heb uncertain

23.1–18: Isaiah's pronouncement concerning Tyre. *Tyre* was the dominant Phoenician city located along the sea coast north of Akko and south of *Sidon*. It was the major sea power of the day with a large navy that defended the island city from attack and engaged in trade throughout the Mediterranean (see Ezek 27). Tyre was allied with Hezekiah in the revolt against Assyria in 705–701 BCE, but Sennacherib's assault against Phoenicia in 701 quickly forced Tyre and its Phoenician dependents to submit. With Tyre out of the picture, Hezekiah's allies in western Asia quickly capitulated, leaving him to face Assyria alone. **1:** *Tarshish,* see 2.16n. **3:** *Shihor*, probably one or more channels of the Nile in the eastern Delta. **11:** *Canaan,* here meaning specifically Phoenicia (Lebanon) and its trading colonies. **13–18:** The oracle has been updated by a reference to the *Chaldeans*, the Neo-Babylonian Empire founded by Nabo-polassar in 625 BCE. His son Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 BCE) conquered Tyre—but did not destroy it—following a thirteen-year siege that ended in 572 BCE (cf. Ezek 26–28). **15:** The *seventy-year* period of Tyre's decline corresponds to Jeremiah's claims of a seventy-year period for Jerusalem's exile (Jer 25.11–12; 29.10). Because Tyre trades with many nations, she is disparaged as a *prostitute*, but ultimately her merchandise will be dedicated to the LORD (cf. 19.16–25).

end of seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song about the prostitute:

16 Take a harp,
go about the city,
you forgotten prostitute!
Make sweet melody,
sing many songs,
that you may be remembered.
17 At the end of seventy years, the LORD will visit Tyre, and she will return to her trade, and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth.
18 Her merchandise and her wages will be dedicated to the LORD; her profits[a] will not be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who live in the presence of the LORD.

24 Now the LORD is about to lay waste
the earth and make it desolate,
and he will twist its surface and scatter
its inhabitants.
2 And it shall be, as with the people, so
with the priest;
as with the slave, so with his master;
as with the maid, so with her mistress;
as with the buyer, so with the seller;
as with the lender, so with the
borrower;
as with the creditor, so with the debtor.
3 The earth shall be utterly laid waste and
utterly despoiled;
for the LORD has spoken this word.

4 The earth dries up and withers,
the world languishes and withers;
the heavens languish together with the
earth.
5 The earth lies polluted
under its inhabitants;
for they have transgressed laws,
violated the statutes,
broken the everlasting covenant.
6 Therefore a curse devours the earth,
and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt;
therefore the inhabitants of the earth
dwindled,
and few people are left.
7 The wine dries up,
the vine languishes,
all the merry-hearted sigh.
8 The mirth of the timbrels is stilled,
the noise of the jubilant has ceased,
the mirth of the lyre is stilled.
9 No longer do they drink wine with singing;
strong drink is bitter to those who
drink it.
10 The city of chaos is broken down,

[a] Heb *it*

24.1–27.13: Prophetic announcement of the LORD's new world order based in Zion. Chapters 24–27 form a distinct block of material at the conclusion of Isaiah's oracles concerning the nations. This material posits the future withering of creation (24.1–13), the downfall of an unnamed exalted city (24.10,12; 25.2,3; 26.5), the recognition of the LORD by the nations at Zion (25.6–8), and the ultimate restoration of Zion itself as the seat of the LORD's sovereignty over both creation and the nations. Although these chapters are sometimes called "the Isaiah apocalypse," the themes of cosmic chaos and restoration, the resurrection of the dead (26.14,19), and the view that the future constitutes the end of time need not indicate that these chapters are an apocalyptic work; the formula "in that day" may serve as a simple reference to the future. Similarly, mythological perspectives can be used to identify divine action in the world. Rather than pointing to the end of time, chs 25–27 point to the restoration of Jerusalem following its period of punishment portrayed in ch 24. The frequent citation of earlier prophetic literature indicates that this material was composed at a later time, probably in the sixth century BCE when the Babylonian exile was coming to an end and Jerusalem's restoration was at hand.

24.1–23: Prophetic announcement of the LORD's punishment of the earth. The depiction of a devastated land appears frequently in ancient Near Eastern treaty curses, the covenant curses of the biblical law collections (e.g., Lev 26; Deut 28–29), and the judgment scenarios of the prophets (e.g., Isa 34.11–17; Jer 5.6; 19.7–9; Hos 4; 13.7–8; Zeph 2.9). The background of such scenarios is the withdrawal or death of fertility gods such as the Canaanite Baal or the Mesopotamian Tammuz. Likewise, biblical literature, particularly Deuteronomy and many of the prophets, maintains that the LORD also ensures the fertility of the land in conjunction with human behavior. **2:** The naming of paired opposites, such as *people . . . priest, slave . . . master,* is a common poetic device called merismus, which indicates totality. **5:** *The everlasting covenant* is the foundation for all creation, including Israel (Gen 9.16; 17.7; Ex 31.16; Lev 24.8; Isa 55.3; 61.8; Jer 32.40; Ezek 37.26). **10:** *The city of chaos* is not named,

every house is shut up so that no one
can enter.
11 There is an outcry in the streets for lack
of wine;
all joy has reached its eventide;
the gladness of the earth is banished.
12 Desolation is left in the city,
the gates are battered into ruins.
13 For thus it shall be on the earth
and among the nations,
as when an olive tree is beaten,
as at the gleaning when the grape
harvest is ended.

14 They lift up their voices, they sing for joy;
they shout from the west over the
majesty of the LORD.
15 Therefore in the east give glory to the
LORD;
in the coastlands of the sea glorify the
name of the LORD, the God of
Israel.
16 From the ends of the earth we hear songs
of praise,
of glory to the Righteous One.
But I say, I pine away,
I pine away. Woe is me!
For the treacherous deal treacherously,
the treacherous deal very treacherously.

17 Terror, and the pit, and the snare
are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth!
18 Whoever flees at the sound of the terror
shall fall into the pit;
and whoever climbs out of the pit
shall be caught in the snare.
For the windows of heaven are opened,
and the foundations of the earth
tremble.
19 The earth is utterly broken,
the earth is torn asunder,
the earth is violently shaken.
20 The earth staggers like a drunkard,
it sways like a hut;
its transgression lies heavy upon it,
and it falls, and will not rise again.

21 On that day the LORD will punish
the host of heaven in heaven,
and on earth the kings of the earth.
22 They will be gathered together
like prisoners in a pit;
they will be shut up in a prison,
and after many days they will be
punished.
23 Then the moon will be abashed,
and the sun ashamed;
for the LORD of hosts will reign
on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,
and before his elders he will manifest his
glory.

25 O LORD, you are my God;
I will exalt you, I will praise your
name;
for you have done wonderful things,
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.
2 For you have made the city a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;
the palace of aliens is a city no more,
it will never be rebuilt.
3 Therefore strong peoples will glorify
you;
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.
4 For you have been a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the rainstorm and a
shade from the heat.

although the context suggests that it represents the enemy of the LORD, such as the Assyrian capital Nineveh, Babylon, or the capital of any empire that might threaten Israel or the LORD. Chaos (Heb "tohu") describes the state of the earth before creation commenced (Gen 1.2). The defeat of human enemies is frequently portrayed in cosmic terms (e.g., Ex 15). **13:** The beating of the *olive tree* alludes to 17.6 (cf. 10.33–34). **14–16:** The downfall of the city of chaos prompts the recognition of the LORD from throughout the world. *The coastlands of the sea,* the Aegean islands, i.e., the far west. **16:** The treachery of *the treacherous* is a citation of 21.2 (cf. 33.1). Although the Hebrew is difficult, it appears to portray the downfall of Babylon. **17–20:** There was no escape when *the windows of heaven* opened at the time of the flood (Gen 7.11), and there is no escape from the LORD's judgment now. **21–23:** *The host of heaven . . . kings of the earth*, the gods and rulers of the nations.

25.1–12: The LORD's blessing of the earth at Zion. With the downfall of the enemy city, the time of restoration may begin. **1–5:** A communal psalm of thanksgiving greets the LORD following the downfall of the oppressive city, much like the hymn of praise sung by Moses, Miriam, and the people at the Sea in Ex 15. **4–5:** Echoing

When the blast of the ruthless was like a
winter rainstorm,
5 the noise of aliens like heat in a dry
place,
you subdued the heat with the shade of
clouds;
the song of the ruthless was stilled.

6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will
make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged
wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-
aged wines strained clear.
7 And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all
nations;
8 he will swallow up death forever.
Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the
tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will
take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.
9 It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for
him, so that he might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we have
waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his
salvation.
10 For the hand of the LORD will rest on this
mountain.

The Moabites shall be trodden down in
their place
as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit.
11 Though they spread out their hands in
the midst of it,
as swimmers spread out their hands to
swim,
their pride will be laid low despite the
struggle[a] of their hands.
12 The high fortifications of his walls will
be brought down,
laid low, cast to the ground, even to the
dust.

26 On that day this song will be sung in
the land of Judah:
We have a strong city;
he sets up victory
like walls and bulwarks.
2 Open the gates,
so that the righteous nation that keeps
faith
may enter in.
3 Those of steadfast mind you keep in
peace—
in peace because they trust in you.
4 Trust in the LORD forever,
for in the LORD GOD[b]
you have an everlasting rock.
5 For he has brought low
the inhabitants of the height;
the lofty city he lays low.
He lays it low to the ground,
casts it to the dust.
6 The foot tramples it,
the feet of the poor,
the steps of the needy.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *in Yah, the* LORD

4.5b–6 and 32.1–2. **6–12:** A banquet for all the nations is held on Mount Zion in the aftermath of the LORD's victory over the city of chaos. Such a banquet symbolizes worship at the Jerusalem Temple, particularly since offering at the Temple altar was conceived as a meal or banquet shared by the people with their God. **7:** *Shroud, sheet*, garments worn in time of mourning or the cloths in which a corpse is wrapped. **8:** *Swallow up death,* in ancient Near Eastern mythological traditions the fertility god, e.g., the Canaanite Baal or the Mesopotamian Tammuz, is rescued from the underworld to bring fertility and life back to the world of creation. As sovereign of creation, the LORD now brings life to creation. *Wipe away the tears*, cf. Rev 7.1; 21.4. **10b–12:** The demise of the *Moabites* refers to the defeat of Moab by Babylon in the sixth century BCE, and echoes 2.9–17 to portray the downfall of the arrogant.

26.1–21: Judah's petition to the LORD for deliverance. The liturgical setting of the thanksgiving hymn and the banquet in ch 25 prompts the liturgical hymns in ch 26 that praise the LORD and call for deliverance from the wicked. **1b–6:** The initial song of praise celebrates the victory of the LORD over the oppressive city of chaos mentioned in 24.10. **4:** *Trust in the LORD*, a common feature of complaint psalms that petition the LORD for deliverance in a time of threat or need (e.g., Pss 6; 7). **5a:** *The inhabitants of the height,* cf. 2.6–21 concerning the

7 The way of the righteous is level;
O Just One, you make smooth the path
of the righteous.
8 In the path of your judgments,
O LORD, we wait for you;
your name and your renown
are the soul's desire.
9 My soul yearns for you in the night,
my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.
For when your judgments are in the earth,
the inhabitants of the world learn
righteousness.
10 If favor is shown to the wicked,
they do not learn righteousness;
in the land of uprightness they deal
perversely
and do not see the majesty of the LORD.
11 O LORD, your hand is lifted up,
but they do not see it.
Let them see your zeal for your people,
and be ashamed.
Let the fire for your adversaries
consume them.
12 O LORD, you will ordain peace for us,
for indeed, all that we have done, you
have done for us.
13 O LORD our God,
other lords besides you have ruled
over us,
but we acknowledge your name alone.
14 The dead do not live;
shades do not rise—
because you have punished and destroyed
them,
and wiped out all memory of them.
15 But you have increased the nation,
O LORD,
you have increased the nation; you are
glorified;
you have enlarged all the borders of the
land.
16 O LORD, in distress they sought you,
they poured out a prayer[a]
when your chastening was on them.
17 Like a woman with child,
who writhes and cries out in her
pangs
when she is near her time,
so were we because of you, O LORD;
18 we were with child, we writhed,
but we gave birth only to wind.
We have won no victories on earth,
and no one is born to inhabit the
world.
19 Your dead shall live, their corpses[b] shall
rise.
O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing
for joy!
For your dew is a radiant dew,
and the earth will give birth to those
long dead.[c]

20 Come, my people, enter your chambers,
and shut your doors behind you;
hide yourselves for a little while
until the wrath is past.
21 For the LORD comes out from his place
to punish the inhabitants of the earth
for their iniquity;
the earth will disclose the blood shed on it,
and will no longer cover its slain.

27 On that day the LORD with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn Compare Syr Tg: Heb *my corpse*
[c] Heb *to the shades*

LORD's capacity to bring down the arrogant. **7–10:** Statement of confidence in the LORD. The LORD's righteousness becomes a factor in teaching righteousness to the wicked of the world. **11–19:** Petitions for action on the part of the LORD. **13:** *Other lords,* perhaps an allusion to the oppressor city of chaos (24.10), whose downfall will come in response to the people's petition. **14:** *The dead do not live,* a common theme in the psalms; only the living can praise God (Pss 6.5; 30.9; 49.10–20); see 39.18–19. **17–18:** Childbirth is a common image for an immanent event (see 13.8; 66.7–9). **19:** *Your dead shall live*, the response to v. 14, expressing an intuition of a meaningful survival of death; cf. Ezek 37.1–14; Dan 12.2. **20–21:** Exhortation to wait for the LORD (cf. 2.10,19,21).

27.1: The LORD's defeat of Leviathan. *Leviathan,* the seven-headed serpent known from Ugaritic and biblical tradition as a chaos monster whose defeat by the LORD aids in bringing about order in creation (see 11.15n.; Ps 74.13–14).

2 On that day:
A pleasant vineyard, sing about it!
3 I, the LORD, am its keeper;
every moment I water it.
I guard it night and day
so that no one can harm it;
4 I have no wrath.
If it gives me thorns and briers,
I will march to battle against it.
I will burn it up.
5 Or else let it cling to me for protection,
let it make peace with me,
let it make peace with me.

6 In days to come[a] Jacob shall take root,
Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots,
and fill the whole world with fruit.

7 Has he struck them down as he struck
down those who struck them?
Or have they been killed as their killers
were killed?
8 By expulsion,[b] by exile you struggled
against them;
with his fierce blast he removed them in
the day of the east wind.
9 Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be
expiated,
and this will be the full fruit of the
removal of his sin:
when he makes all the stones of the altars
like chalkstones crushed to pieces,
no sacred poles[c] or incense altars will
remain standing.
10 For the fortified city is solitary,
a habitation deserted and forsaken, like
the wilderness;
the calves graze there,
there they lie down, and strip its
branches.
11 When its boughs are dry, they are
broken;
women come and make a fire of them.
For this is a people without understanding;
therefore he that made them will not
have compassion on them,
he that formed them will show them no
favor.

12 On that day the LORD will thresh from the channel of the Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel. 13 And on that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

28 Ah, the proud garland of the
drunkards of Ephraim,
and the fading flower of its glorious
beauty,
which is on the head of those bloated
with rich food, of those overcome
with wine!
2 See, the Lord has one who is mighty and
strong;
like a storm of hail, a destroying
tempest,

[a] Heb *Those to come*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Heb *Asherim*

27.2–13: The new vineyard allegory plays upon the earlier allegory in 5.1–7 that accused the people of Israel and Judah of wrongdoing before the LORD. Now the LORD stands ready to resume care for the vineyard. **6:** *Jacob shall take root,* cf. 11.1–9. **7–13:** A justification of the LORD. The suffering of the people constitutes the LORD's efforts to purge the nation of sins and idolatry. **10:** *The fortified city,* referring to the unnamed city of 24.10; 25.2; 26.5. **11:** *Without understanding*, cf. 1.2–3. **12–13:** With the downfall of the oppressor, the time to gather the exiles from Assyria (the river *Euphrates*) and Egypt has arrived (cf. 11.15–16). *The Wadi of Egypt* is not the Nile but either the Wadi el-Arish or the Wadi Besor, both south of Gaza.

28.1–33.24: Prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's plans for the new king in Jerusalem. This block of material is defined by its introductory "Woe" (Heb "hoy"; NRSV "Ah," "Ha," "Oh," "Alas") oracle forms (28.1; 29.1,15; 30.1; 31.1; 33.1); its overall concern for the deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyria; and its culminating concern for the establishment of a righteous king in Jerusalem.

28.1–29: Prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's purpose in bringing Assyrian rule. This oracle condemns both Israelite and Judean leadership as an explanation for Assyrian rule of Israel and Judah. **1–4:** The introductory "woe" (NRSV *Ah*) oracle condemns the leadership of northern Israel (*Ephraim* was the dominant

like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters;
with his hand he will hurl them down
to the earth.
3 Trampled under foot will be
the proud garland of the drunkards of
Ephraim.
4 And the fading flower of its glorious beauty,
which is on the head of those bloated
with rich food,
will be like a first-ripe fig before the
summer;
whoever sees it, eats it up
as soon as it comes to hand.

5 In that day the LORD of hosts will be a
garland of glory,
and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant
of his people;
6 and a spirit of justice to the one who sits
in judgment,
and strength to those who turn back
the battle at the gate.

7 These also reel with wine
and stagger with strong drink;
the priest and the prophet reel with strong
drink,
they are confused with wine,
they stagger with strong drink;
they err in vision,
they stumble in giving judgment.
8 All tables are covered with filthy vomit;
no place is clean.

9 "Whom will he teach knowledge,
and to whom will he explain the
message?
Those who are weaned from milk,
those taken from the breast?
10 For it is precept upon precept, precept
upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line,
here a little, there a little."[a]
11 Truly, with stammering lip
and with alien tongue
he will speak to this people,
12 to whom he has said,
"This is rest;
give rest to the weary;
and this is repose";
yet they would not hear.
13 Therefore the word of the LORD will be
to them,
"Precept upon precept, precept upon
precept,
line upon line, line upon line,
here a little, there a little;"[a]
in order that they may go, and fall
backward,
and be broken, and snared, and taken.

14 Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you
scoffers
who rule this people in Jerusalem.
15 Because you have said, "We have made a
covenant with death,
and with Sheol we have an agreement;
when the overwhelming scourge passes
through
it will not come to us;
for we have made lies our refuge,
and in falsehood we have taken
shelter";
16 therefore thus says the Lord GOD,
See, I am laying in Zion a foundation
stone,
a tested stone,
a precious cornerstone, a sure
foundation:
"One who trusts will not panic."
17 And I will make justice the line,
and righteousness the plummet;
hail will sweep away the refuge of lies,
and waters will overwhelm the shelter.

[a] Meaning of Heb of this verse uncertain

tribe of northern Israel) for self-indulgence in food and wine (cf. 5.8–24). *Proud garland* and *glorious beauty* designate the royal crown. **5–6:** The LORD's promise to support a future monarch who rules in justice and defends the nation (cf. 9.1–7; 11.1–9). **7–13:** The oracle presupposes the Canaanite "marzeaḥ" ritual, associated with funerary rites that called for all-night drinking and feasting. This ritual has also been associated with the conclusion of treaties. **14–22:** An indictment of Jerusalem's leadership. The covenant with Sheol, the abode of the dead, plays upon the previously noted "marzeaḥ" ritual. It may also refer to an alliance with Egypt. **16:** The *foundation stone* in Jerusalem symbolizes both the foundation for a major building, such as the Jerusalem Temple, and the Davidic/Zion tradition of the LORD's promise of security for Jerusalem and the house of David.

18 Then your covenant with death will be
annulled,
and your agreement with Sheol will not
stand;
when the overwhelming scourge passes
through
you will be beaten down by it.
19 As often as it passes through, it will take
you;
for morning by morning it will pass
through,
by day and by night;
and it will be sheer terror to understand
the message.
20 For the bed is too short to stretch
oneself on it,
and the covering too narrow to wrap
oneself in it.
21 For the LORD will rise up as on Mount
Perazim,
he will rage as in the valley of Gibeon
to do his deed—strange is his deed!—
and to work his work—alien is his work!
22 Now therefore do not scoff,
or your bonds will be made stronger;
for I have heard a decree of destruction
from the Lord GOD of hosts upon the
whole land.

23 Listen, and hear my voice;
Pay attention, and hear my speech.
24 Do those who plow for sowing plow
continually?
Do they continually open and harrow
their ground?
25 When they have leveled its surface,
do they not scatter dill, sow cummin,
and plant wheat in rows
and barley in its proper place,
and spelt as the border?
26 For they are well instructed;
their God teaches them.
27 Dill is not threshed with a threshing
sledge,
nor is a cart wheel rolled over cummin;
but dill is beaten out with a stick,
and cummin with a rod.
28 Grain is crushed for bread,
but one does not thresh it forever;
one drives the cart wheel and horses over it,
but does not pulverize it.
29 This also comes from the LORD of hosts;
he is wonderful in counsel,
and excellent in wisdom.

29 Ah, Ariel, Ariel,
the city where David encamped!
Add year to year;
let the festivals run their round.
2 Yet I will distress Ariel,
and there shall be moaning and
lamentation,
and Jerusalem[a] shall be to me like an
Ariel.[b]
3 And like David[c] I will encamp against you;
I will besiege you with towers
and raise siegeworks against you.
4 Then deep from the earth you shall
speak,
from low in the dust your words shall
come;
your voice shall come from the ground like
the voice of a ghost,
and your speech shall whisper out of
the dust.

5 But the multitude of your foes[d] shall be
like small dust,

[a] Heb *she*
[b] Probable meaning, *altar hearth*; compare Ezek 43.15
[c] Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Cn: Heb *strangers*

21: *Perazim* refers to the LORD's victory over the Philistines at Baal-perazim (2 Sam 5.17–21) and *Gibeon* to the victory over the Canaanites (Josh 10.10). But now, the LORD will punish Jerusalem's leaders. **23–29:** The concluding allegory illustrates the both the duration and the appropriateness of the punishment. Just as a farmer must plow the ground and then thresh, beat, and crush the crops to prepare them for human use, so the LORD will plow and thresh the people in preparation for their restoration.

29.1–24: Prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's purpose in assaulting Ariel/Zion. 1–4: The first portion of this "woe" (*Ah*) oracle begins with a portrayal of an assault against the city of Jerusalem, apparently presupposing or anticipating an Assyrian attack. Just as *David* once conquered Jerusalem (2 Sam 5.6–9), the LORD will do the same with a foreign army. **1:** The Heb term *Ariel* means "lion of God," recalling the lion as the symbol

and the multitude of tyrants like flying
chaff.
And in an instant, suddenly,
6 you will be visited by the LORD of hosts
with thunder and earthquake and great
noise,
with whirlwind and tempest, and the
flame of a devouring fire.
7 And the multitude of all the nations that
fight against Ariel,
all that fight against her and her
stronghold, and who distress her,
shall be like a dream, a vision of the night.
8 Just as when a hungry person dreams of
eating
and wakes up still hungry,
or a thirsty person dreams of drinking
and wakes up faint, still thirsty,
so shall the multitude of all the nations be
that fight against Mount Zion.

9 Stupefy yourselves and be in a stupor,
blind yourselves and be blind!
Be drunk, but not from wine;
stagger, but not from strong drink!
10 For the LORD has poured out upon you
a spirit of deep sleep;
he has closed your eyes, you prophets,
and covered your heads, you seers.
11 The vision of all this has become for you
like the words of a sealed document. If it is
given to those who can read, with the com-
mand, "Read this," they say, "We cannot, for
it is sealed." 12 And if it is given to those who
cannot read, saying, "Read this," they say,
"We cannot read."

13 The Lord said:
Because these people draw near with their
mouths
and honor me with their lips,
while their hearts are far from me,
and their worship of me is a human
commandment learned by rote;
14 so I will again do
amazing things with this people,
shocking and amazing.
The wisdom of their wise shall perish,
and the discernment of the discerning
shall be hidden.

15 Ha! You who hide a plan too deep for the
LORD,
whose deeds are in the dark,
and who say, "Who sees us? Who
knows us?"
16 You turn things upside down!
Shall the potter be regarded as the clay?
Shall the thing made say of its maker,
"He did not make me";
or the thing formed say of the one who
formed it,
"He has no understanding"?

17 Shall not Lebanon in a very little while
become a fruitful field,
and the fruitful field be regarded as a
forest?
18 On that day the deaf shall hear
the words of a scroll,
and out of their gloom and darkness
the eyes of the blind shall see.
19 The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the
LORD,
and the neediest people shall exult in
the Holy One of Israel.
20 For the tyrant shall be no more,
and the scoffer shall cease to be;
all those alert to do evil shall be cut
off—

for Judah (Gen 49.8–11). It is related to a Heb word that designates the hearth of the altar (Ezek 43.15–16). **6–7:** God will appear with all the elements of a theophany as a divine warrior to fight against those attacking Jerusalem. **9–10:** *Stupefy . . . blind yourselves* recalls the prophet's commission in 6.9–10 to render the people blind, deaf, and ignorant so that they will not repent and be saved. The *deep sleep* poured on the people is like that of the first human when the woman was created (Gen 2.21) and of Abraham when he had a revelation of Israel's deliverance from Egypt at the Exodus (Gen 15.12–16). **11–12:** The *sealed document,* cf. 8.16–17. Ultimately, the significance of Isaiah's prophecies will be understood only when later generations read them, perhaps in the time of the Babylonian exile (chs 40–55) or the Persian-period restoration (chs 56–66). **13–14:** Cf. 1.10–17. **15–24:** The second portion of this "woe" (*Ha!*) oracle focuses on the future realization of the LORD's purposes for Zion. The LORD is the *potter* and not the *clay*; cf. 45.9; Jer 18.1–6. **17:** *Lebanon*, 2.13n; see also 10.34. The image is of a radical transformation. **18:** The *deaf* and the *blind* (cf. 6.9–10) will understand when they hear and read the scroll

21 those who cause a person to lose a lawsuit,
who set a trap for the arbiter in the gate,
and without grounds deny justice to the one in the right.

22 Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob:
No longer shall Jacob be ashamed,
no longer shall his face grow pale.
23 For when he sees his children,
the work of my hands, in his midst,
they will sanctify my name;
they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob,
and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.
24 And those who err in spirit will come to understanding,
and those who grumble will accept instruction.

30 Oh, rebellious children, says the LORD,
who carry out a plan, but not mine;
who make an alliance, but against my will,
adding sin to sin;
2 who set out to go down to Egypt
without asking for my counsel,
to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh,
and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt;
3 Therefore the protection of Pharaoh shall become your shame,
and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt your humiliation.
4 For though his officials are at Zoan
and his envoys reach Hanes,
5 everyone comes to shame
through a people that cannot profit them,
that brings neither help nor profit,
but shame and disgrace.

6 An oracle concerning the animals of the Negeb.
Through a land of trouble and distress,
of lioness and roaring[a] lion,
of viper and flying serpent,
they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys,
and their treasures on the humps of camels,
to a people that cannot profit them.
7 For Egypt's help is worthless and empty,
therefore I have called her,
"Rahab who sits still."[b]

8 Go now, write it before them on a tablet,
and inscribe it in a book,
so that it may be for the time to come
as a witness forever.
9 For they are a rebellious people,
faithless children,
children who will not hear
the instruction of the LORD;
10 who say to the seers, "Do not see";
and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right;
speak to us smooth things,
prophesy illusions,
11 leave the way, turn aside from the path,
let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."
12 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel:

[a] Cn: Heb *from them*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

of Isaiah's prophecies (cf. 8.16–23). **22:** *Abraham*, cf. 41.8; 51.2. Abraham, redeemed by God's call to journey into the promised land (Gen 12.1–3), becomes the model for those who returned to Judah in the post-disaster period.

30.1–33: Prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's delay in delivering the people from Assyria. This lengthy "woe" oracle-complex expresses Isaiah's dissatisfaction with Hezekiah's embassies to Egypt in order to enlist support for his revolt against Assyria in 701 BCE. **1–11:** Isaiah opposes attempts to ally with other nations for Jerusalem's protection because his understanding of Davidic/Zion theology holds that the LORD alone will protect Jerusalem and the house of David. **4:** *Zoan,* see 19.11–15n. *Hanes* is south of Memphis. **6–7:** The *oracle* condemns Judah for sending a caravan of goods to Egypt to enlist Egyptian aid. *Negeb*, see 20.1n. *Rahab* is a mythological sea dragon that sometimes symbolizes Egypt (51.9–11; Ps 89.9; Job 9.13). **8–11:** The prophet records his oracle because the people are not ready to hear him but want to hear only *smooth* or comforting things. The significance of the LORD's actions will be understood only at a later time (cf. 8.16–23; 29.11–12). **12–17:** The prophet

Because you reject this word,
and put your trust in oppression and deceit,
and rely on them;
13 therefore this iniquity shall become for you
like a break in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse,
whose crash comes suddenly, in an instant;
14 its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel
that is smashed so ruthlessly
that among its fragments not a sherd is found
for taking fire from the hearth,
or dipping water out of the cistern.

15 For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:
In returning and rest you shall be saved;
in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.
But you refused 16 and said,
"No! We will flee upon horses"—
therefore you shall flee!
and, "We will ride upon swift steeds"—
therefore your pursuers shall be swift!
17 A thousand shall flee at the threat of one,
at the threat of five you shall flee,
until you are left
like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain,
like a signal on a hill.

18 Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you.
For the Lord is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for him.
19 Truly, O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you.
20 Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. 21 And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." 22 Then you will defile your silver-covered idols and your gold-plated images. You will scatter them like filthy rags; you will say to them, "Away with you!"

23 He will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and grain, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous. On that day your cattle will graze in broad pastures; 24 and the oxen and donkeys that till the ground will eat silage, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. 25 On every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water—on a day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. 26 Moreover the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of seven days, on the day when the Lord binds up the injuries of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

27 See, the name of the Lord comes from far away,
burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke;[a]
his lips are full of indignation,
and his tongue is like a devouring fire;
28 his breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck—
to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction,
and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads them astray.

29 You shall have a song as in the night when a holy festival is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

argues that the Lord will delay deliverance from Assyria because the people do not trust the prophet's message. **17:** *A thousand shall flee*, see Lev 26.36–37; Deut 32.30. **18–26:** The Lord will ultimately show mercy to Jerusalem. A *Teacher*, perhaps someone who would interpret the prophecies that were bound up. Such a statement might motivate the writings of later prophets in chs 40–66. **27–33:** Ultimately, the Lord will strike down the Assyrian oppressor (cf. 10.5–33; 14.24–27). The oracle invokes the imagery of a Temple festival when the Lord is revealed in the smoke and flame of the incense burners and lamp stands of the Jerusalem Temple.

the flute to go to the mountain of the LORD,
to the Rock of Israel. 30 And the LORD will
cause his majestic voice to be heard and the
descending blow of his arm to be seen, in
furious anger and a flame of devouring fire,
with a cloudburst and tempest and hail-
stones. 31 The Assyrian will be terror-stricken
at the voice of the LORD, when he strikes with
his rod. 32 And every stroke of the staff of
punishment that the LORD lays upon him will
be to the sound of timbrels and lyres; battling
with brandished arm he will fight with him.
33 For his burning place[a] has long been pre-
pared; truly it is made ready for the king,[b] its
pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood
in abundance; the breath of the LORD, like a
stream of sulfur, kindles it.

31 Alas for those who go down to Egypt
for help
and who rely on horses,
who trust in chariots because they are
many
and in horsemen because they are very
strong,
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel
or consult the LORD!
2 Yet he too is wise and brings disaster;
he does not call back his words,
but will rise against the house of the
evildoers,
and against the helpers of those who
work iniquity.
3 The Egyptians are human, and not God;
their horses are flesh, and not spirit.
When the LORD stretches out his hand,
the helper will stumble, and the one
helped will fall,
and they will all perish together.

4 For thus the LORD said to me,
As a lion or a young lion growls over its
prey,
and—when a band of shepherds is
called out against it—
is not terrified by their shouting
or daunted at their noise,
so the LORD of hosts will come down
to fight upon Mount Zion and upon its
hill.
5 Like birds hovering overhead, so the
LORD of hosts
will protect Jerusalem;
he will protect and deliver it,
he will spare and rescue it.

6 Turn back to him whom you[c] have deeply
betrayed, O people of Israel. 7 For on that day
all of you shall throw away your idols of silver
and idols of gold, which your hands have sin-
fully made for you.
8 "Then the Assyrian shall fall by a sword,
not of mortals;
and a sword, not of humans, shall
devour him;
he shall flee from the sword,
and his young men shall be put to
forced labor.
9 His rock shall pass away in terror,
and his officers desert the standard in
panic,"
says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion,
and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

32 See, a king will reign in righteousness,
and princes will rule with justice.
2 Each will be like a hiding place from the
wind,
a covert from the tempest,
like streams of water in a dry place,
like the shade of a great rock in a weary
land.
3 Then the eyes of those who have sight
will not be closed,
and the ears of those who have hearing
will listen.

[a] Or *Topheth*
[b] Or *Molech*
[c] Heb *they*

31.1–9: The prophet's warning concerning reliance on Egyptian aid against Assyria. Isaiah again condemns attempts to ally with Egypt in preparation for Hezekiah's revolt against Assyria in 701 BCE. The prophet employs the allegories of a lion over its prey and a bird protecting its young to illustrate his point. **1:** Cf. Ps 20.7. **8–9:** The final defeat of Assyria (14.24–27). *Fire, furnace,* a reference to the Temple altar.

32.1–33.24: Prophetic instruction concerning the righteous king. 32.1–8: When the *king* rules over Jerusalem in *righteousness* (cf. 9.1–7; 11.1–16), the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the people will understand (reversing

4 The minds of the rash will have good
judgment,
and the tongues of stammerers will
speak readily and distinctly.
5 A fool will no longer be called noble,
nor a villain said to be honorable.
6 For fools speak folly,
and their minds plot iniquity:
to practice ungodliness,
to utter error concerning the LORD,
to leave the craving of the hungry
unsatisfied,
and to deprive the thirsty of drink.
7 The villainies of villains are evil;
they devise wicked devices
to ruin the poor with lying words,
even when the plea of the needy is
right.
8 But those who are noble plan noble
things,
and by noble things they stand.

9 Rise up, you women who are at ease, hear
my voice;
you complacent daughters, listen to my
speech.
10 In little more than a year
you will shudder, you complacent ones;
for the vintage will fail,
the fruit harvest will not come.
11 Tremble, you women who are at ease,
shudder, you complacent ones;
strip, and make yourselves bare,
and put sackcloth on your loins.
12 Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields,
for the fruitful vine,
13 for the soil of my people
growing up in thorns and briers;
yes, for all the joyous houses
in the jubilant city.
14 For the palace will be forsaken,
the populous city deserted;
the hill and the watchtower
will become dens forever,
the joy of wild asses,
a pasture for flocks;
15 until a spirit from on high is poured out
on us,
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful
field,
and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.
16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,
and righteousness abide in the fruitful
field.
17 The effect of righteousness will be peace,
and the result of righteousness,
quietness and trust forever.
18 My people will abide in a peaceful
habitation,
in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting
places.
19 The forest will disappear completely,[a]
and the city will be utterly laid low.
20 Happy will you be who sow beside every
stream,
who let the ox and the donkey range
freely.

33 Ah, you destroyer,
who yourself have not been
destroyed;
you treacherous one,
with whom no one has dealt
treacherously!
When you have ceased to destroy,
you will be destroyed;
and when you have stopped dealing
treacherously,
you will be dealt with treacherously.

2 O LORD, be gracious to us; we wait for
you.
Be our arm every morning,
our salvation in the time of trouble.
3 At the sound of tumult, peoples fled;
before your majesty, nations scattered.
4 Spoil was gathered as the caterpillar
gathers;
as locusts leap, they leaped[b] upon it.

[a] Cn: Heb *And it will hail when the forest comes down*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

6.9–10). **9–20:** The prophet summarizes the themes of his prophecies by describing the reversal from crop failure to a transformation of the natural and moral environment through a *spirit from on high* (cf. 5.6; 11.1–9). **33.1–24:** The prophet's announcement of the righteous king is formulated as a liturgical cycle that combines elements of the complaint songs with the announcement of the king. **1:** The liturgy begins with a "woe" (*Ah*) oracle that proclaims the downfall of the oppressor. **2–4:** An address to the LORD petitions for relief from the

5 The LORD is exalted, he dwells on high;
he filled Zion with justice and
righteousness;
6 he will be the stability of your times,
abundance of salvation, wisdom, and
knowledge;
the fear of the LORD is Zion's treasure.[a]

7 Listen! the valiant[b] cry in the streets;
the envoys of peace weep bitterly.
8 The highways are deserted,
travelers have quit the road.
The treaty is broken,
its oaths[c] are despised,
its obligation[d] is disregarded.
9 The land mourns and languishes;
Lebanon is confounded and withers
away;
Sharon is like a desert;
and Bashan and Carmel shake off their
leaves.

10 "Now I will arise," says the LORD,
"now I will lift myself up;
now I will be exalted.
11 You conceive chaff, you bring forth
stubble;
your breath is a fire that will consume
you.
12 And the peoples will be as if burned to
lime,
like thorns cut down, that are burned in
the fire."

13 Hear, you who are far away, what I have
done;
and you who are near, acknowledge my
might.
14 The sinners in Zion are afraid;
trembling has seized the godless:
"Who among us can live with the
devouring fire?
Who among us can live with everlasting
flames?"
15 Those who walk righteously and speak
uprightly,
who despise the gain of oppression,
who wave away a bribe instead of
accepting it,
who stop their ears from hearing of
bloodshed
and shut their eyes from looking on
evil,
16 they will live on the heights;
their refuge will be the fortresses of
rocks;
their food will be supplied, their water
assured.

17 Your eyes will see the king in his beauty;
they will behold a land that stretches
far away.
18 Your mind will muse on the terror:
"Where is the one who counted?
Where is the one who weighed the
tribute?
Where is the one who counted the
towers?"
19 No longer will you see the insolent
people,
the people of an obscure speech that
you cannot comprehend,
stammering in a language that you
cannot understand.
20 Look on Zion, the city of our appointed
festivals!
Your eyes will see Jerusalem,
a quiet habitation, an immovable tent,
whose stakes will never be pulled up,

[a] Heb *his treasure*; meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Q Ms: MT *cities*
[d] Or *everyone*

oppressor. **5–6:** An address to the audience reiterates Isaiah's view that the LORD is exalted (cf. 2.9–21). **7–9:** The prophet summarizes the suffering and withering of the land that precede the rise of the righteous king. *Lebanon*, 2.13n. *Sharon*, the fertile coastal plain extending south from Acco/Acre and Dor nearly to Joppa/Jaffa. *Bashan*, the fertile plain south of Aram (Syria) and east of the Sea of Galilee. *Carmel,* the fertile mountain range that extends from Acco/Acre south along the eastern edge of the Sharon plain. **10–12:** A response in which the God of Israel threatens to arise and burn the enemy like thorns; cf. 10.16–17; 30.27–33. **13–16:** Those in Zion who do not trust in the LORD will also suffer. **17–24:** Those who had been blind, deaf, and ignorant (32.1–3; cf. 6.9–10) will finally see the righteous king in Jerusalem. **19:** *Obscure speech,* the Assyrian oppressors, who speak a foreign language, will be gone, and Zion will again see its Temple festivals.

and none of whose ropes will be
broken.
21 But there the LORD in majesty will be
for us
a place of broad rivers and streams,
where no galley with oars can go,
nor stately ship can pass.
22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our
ruler,
the LORD is our king; he will save us.

23 Your rigging hangs loose;
it cannot hold the mast firm in its place,
or keep the sail spread out.

Then prey and spoil in abundance will be
divided;
even the lame will fall to plundering.
24 And no inhabitant will say, "I am sick";
the people who live there will be
forgiven their iniquity.

34 Draw near, O nations, to hear;
O peoples, give heed!
Let the earth hear, and all that fills it;
the world, and all that comes from it.
2 For the LORD is enraged against all the
nations,
and furious against all their hordes;
he has doomed them, has given them
over for slaughter.
3 Their slain shall be cast out,
and the stench of their corpses shall
rise;
the mountains shall flow with their
blood.
4 All the host of heaven shall rot away,
and the skies roll up like a scroll.
All their host shall wither
like a leaf withering on a vine,
or fruit withering on a fig tree.

5 When my sword has drunk its fill in the
heavens,
lo, it will descend upon Edom,
upon the people I have doomed to
judgment.
6 The LORD has a sword; it is sated with
blood,
it is gorged with fat,
with the blood of lambs and goats,
with the fat of the kidneys of rams.
For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah,
a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
7 Wild oxen shall fall with them,
and young steers with the mighty bulls.
Their land shall be soaked with blood,
and their soil made rich with fat.

8 For the LORD has a day of vengeance,
a year of vindication by Zion's cause.[a]
9 And the streams of Edom[b] shall be turned
into pitch,
and her soil into sulfur;

[a] Or *of recompense by Zion's defender*
[b] Heb *her streams*

34.1–66.24: Concerning the realization of the LORD's plans for revealing worldwide sovereignty from Zion. Whereas chs 1–33 anticipate the revelation of the LORD's worldwide sovereignty at Zion, the second half of the book in chs 34–66 presupposes that the time is at hand.

34.1–35.10: Prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's power to return the redeemed exiles to Zion. Chs 34–35 introduce the second half of the book of Zion with an emphasis on the judgment of the nations, represented by Edom, and the return of the exiles to Zion.

34.1–17: Prophetic instruction concerning the LORD's power over the nations. Chapter 34 emphasizes the LORD's power over the nations by focusing especially on the fate of Edom, Israel's neighbor to the southeast (cf. 63.1–6). Edom, which is condemned in biblical literature for its role in the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 49.7–22; Ezek 25.12–17; Ob; Ps 137.7; Lam 4.21–22), began to decline in the sixth century BCE as Arab tribes began to encroach upon Edomite territory. This decline provides a counterpart for the judgment leveled against Israel and Jerusalem in ch 1. Links between chs 34 and 1 include parallel calls to attention (34.1; 1.2); the LORD's vengeance (34.8; 1.24); unquenchable burning (34.10; 1.24); the mouth of the LORD that has spoken (34.16; 1.20); the sword of punishment (34.5,6; 1.20); the sacrificial blood and fat of cattle (34.6–7; 1.11–15); Sodom and Gomorrah (34.9–10; 1.7–9,10); and wilting leaves (34.4; 1.30). **1–15:** The address to the nations calls their attention to Edom's punishment. The portrayal of destruction employs the images of sacrifice. **6:** *Bozrah*: a major city in Edom. **8:** The passage takes up the "day of the LORD" theme (cf. 2.10–21; 13.6–16). **9–10:** The fate of Edom will resemble that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19.24–28), located at the southern end of the Dead Sea by Edom.

her land shall become burning pitch.
10 Night and day it shall not be quenched;
its smoke shall go up forever.
From generation to generation it shall lie waste;
no one shall pass through it forever and ever.
11 But the hawk[a] and the hedgehog[a] shall possess it;
the owl[a] and the raven shall live in it.
He shall stretch the line of confusion over it,
and the plummet of chaos over[b] its nobles.
12 They shall name it No Kingdom There,
and all its princes shall be nothing.
13 Thorns shall grow over its strongholds,
nettles and thistles in its fortresses.
It shall be the haunt of jackals,
an abode for ostriches.
14 Wildcats shall meet with hyenas,
goat-demons shall call to each other;
there too Lilith shall repose,
and find a place to rest.
15 There shall the owl nest
and lay and hatch and brood in its shadow;
there too the buzzards shall gather,
each one with its mate.
16 Seek and read from the book of the LORD:
Not one of these shall be missing;
none shall be without its mate.
For the mouth of the LORD has commanded,
and his spirit has gathered them.
17 He has cast the lot for them,
his hand has portioned it out to them with the line;
they shall possess it forever,
from generation to generation they shall live in it.

35 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus 2 it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you."

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
6 then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
7 the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,[c]

[a] Identification uncertain
[b] Heb lacks *over*
[c] Cn: Heb *in the haunt of jackals is her resting place*

11: Confusion (Heb "tohu") and chaos (Heb "bohu") are terms employed to describe primeval chaos prior to creation (Gen 1.2). **14:** *Lilith* is a hostile goddess associated with the night in Sumerian mythology. In later Jewish folklore, she is known as Adam's first wife who gives birth to demons. **16–17:** *Book of the LORD,* perhaps the book of Isaiah as it then existed. The second address asks the reader to search the book for confirmation of the LORD's purpose concerning the nations.

35.1–10: Prophetic oracle of salvation concerning the return of the redeemed to Zion. The return of the exiles to Zion is portrayed as a second Exodus in which the people return to Zion through the wilderness. **1–2:** The announcement of the return emphasizes the rejoicing and blooming of the wilderness as the LORD is sovereign of all creation. *Lebanon* is the mountain range north of Israel, *Carmel, Sharon,* see 33.9–10n. **4:** *Do not fear,* the reassurance formula addressed by the prophet to King Ahaz in 7.4 and to Hezekiah in 37.6. **5–6:** A reversal of 6.9–10. The open eyes of the blind and the unstopped ears of the deaf indicate that the LORD's commands that

the grass shall become reeds and
rushes.

8 A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,[a]
but it shall be for God's people;[b]
no traveler, not even fools, shall go
astray.
9 No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up
on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall
return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

36 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. 2 The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. He stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field. 3 And there came out to him Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace,

[a] Or *pass it by*
[b] Cn: Heb *for them*

Isaiah render the people blind and deaf so that they cannot repent and be saved are now at an end (cf. 29.18; 32.3; 42.16,18–19; 43.8; 44.18). **8–10:** The *highway* through the wilderness is a motif of both the Exodus/Wilderness tradition (Num 20.17; 21.22; Deut 2.8) and the second exodus of the book of Isaiah (40.3; 42.16; 43.19). The return of exiles from Egypt and Assyria appears in 11.16; 27.12–13.

36.1–39.8: Historical narratives concerning Hezekiah. These narratives also appear in a slightly different form in 2 Kings 18–20. Because the prophet Isaiah makes his last appearance here in the book of Isaiah, many interpreters consider chs 36–39 to be drawn from 2 Kings 18–20 in order to form a historical appendix to First Isaiah (chs 1–39). Although chs 36–39 may originally have been intended as an appendix to an early edition of the book, the reference to the exile of Hezekiah's sons to Babylon in 39.7–8 indicates that they now are transitional chapters that prepare the reader for the downfall of Babylon and the return of the exiles to Zion beginning in ch 40. The figure of Hezekiah is contrasted with that of Ahaz in 7.1–9.6 to demonstrate that Hezekiah's return to the LORD results in the deliverance of his people whereas Ahaz's refusal to turn to the LORD resulted in the subjugation of his people to Assyria. Such a portrayal also facilitates Second Isaiah's call to turn to the LORD in chs 40–55 at the time of the restoration. Subtle differences from 2 Kings 18–20 indicate an effort to whitewash Hezekiah's character in Isa 36–39 in order to present him as a pure figure who places his trust entirely in the LORD.

36.1–37.38: Confrontation story concerning the LORD's defeat of Sennacherib at Jerusalem. This narrative presents an account of the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian King Sennacherib in 701 BCE. King Hezekiah allied with Babylon and assembled a coalition to revolt against Assyria following the death of Sargon II in 705 BCE. Sargon's successor, Sennacherib, attacked western Asia including Judah. As Hezekiah's allies quickly submitted to Assyria, Hezekiah found himself alone against the Assyrians. Sennacherib's records indicate that he concentrated his attack in southwestern Judah along the border with Philistia, devastated the land of Judah, besieged Jerusalem, and ultimately forced Hezekiah to submit, taking away captives, a great deal of plunder, and even Hezekiah's own daughters. Hezekiah nevertheless retained his throne. Sennacherib was assassinated by his own sons in 681 BCE. Most interpreters maintain that chs 36–37 are an idealized account of the siege designed to celebrate the LORD's victory over Sennacherib as the Assyrian Empire began to decline in the seventh century BCE. **36.1:** *The fourteenth year,* 701 BCE. The narrative of Hezekiah's initial capitulation to Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18.14–16 does not appear here. **2–22:** The Assyrian Rabshakeh, "Cup-bearer" or "Chief Steward" of the Assyrian king, presents the terms of surrender to Hezekiah and the besieged defenders of Jerusalem. **2:** *Lachish*, the major royal city in southwestern Judah. Excavations indicate that it was conquered by the Assyrians, who forced Jewish prisoners of war to build a ramp up the side of the city's fortifications. A pit with 1,500 human skeletons on the site indicates the extent of the Judean casualties. Wall reliefs at Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh portray the defeat of Lachish in order to impress and intimidate visitors with his power. *Conduit of the upper pool,* the same location where Isaiah confronted Ahaz (see 7.3–9n.). **3:** The Judean officers negotiate with the Rabshakeh

and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder.

4 The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? 5 Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me? 6 See, you are relying on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. 7 But if you say to me, 'We rely on the LORD our God,' is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'? 8 Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. 9 How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10 Moreover, is it without the LORD that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it."

11 Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." 12 But the Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?"

13 Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! 14 Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. 15 Do not let Hezekiah make you rely on the LORD by saying, The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' 16 Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree and drink water from your own cistern, 17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18 Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, The LORD will save us. Has any of the gods of the nations saved their land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20 Who among all the gods of these countries have saved their countries out of my hand, that the LORD should save Jerusalem out of my hand?' "

21 But they were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him." 22 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

37 When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of

on behalf of Hezekiah. *Eliakim, Shebna,* see 22.15–25n. **4–10:** The Rabshakeh's speech is meant to intimidate the Judean defenders and weaken their morale. At this point, the Egyptians, with whom Hezekiah had allied, had already been turned back by the Assyrians. The Rabshakeh's boastful speech may have represented Assyrian views but has drawn on 10.8–11,13–14. **6:** Cf. the sayings on the Egyptian alliance (18.1–19.15; 30.1–7; 31.1–3). **7:** On Hezekiah's removal of the *high places*, see 2 Kings 18.3–6. **10:** Appeal to the anger of the national deity reflects Isaiah's sayings about Assyria as the LORD's agent for the punishment of Israel. **11:** *Aramaic* was the language of diplomacy beginning in the late Neo-Assyrian period. *The language of Judah* is Hebrew. **12–20:** The Rabshakeh speaks in Hebrew in order to address the Judean troops directly and appeal for their surrender. His description of their circumstances reveals the desperate conditions in a besieged city (cf. 2 Kings 6.24–32). Deportation of soldiers and skilled persons from subjugated lands was a standard Assyrian practice. **19:** *Hamath* and *Arpad* were cities conquered by the Assyrians (see 10.9n.). *Samaria*, the capital of northern Israel, was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BCE (2 Kings 17). *Sepharvaim*, located in Aram between Hamath and Damascus, was a city under Assyrian control to which northern Israelites were deported (2 Kings 17.24,31). **37.1–7:** The delegation to

the LORD. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. 3 They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. 4 It may be that the LORD your God heard the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left."

5 When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. 7 I myself will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.' "

8 The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. 9 Now the king[a] heard concerning King Tirhakah of Ethiopia,[b] "He has set out to fight against you." When he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10 "Thus shall you speak to King Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered? 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?"

14 Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; then Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. 15 And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying: 16 "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. 17 Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. 18 Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, 19 and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods, but the work of human hands—wood and stone—and so they were destroyed. 20 So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD."

21 Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria, 22 this is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him:

She despises you, she scorns you—
  virgin daughter Zion;
she tosses her head—behind your back,
  daughter Jerusalem.

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

Isaiah recalls the consultation of prophets by earlier and later kings (1 Kings 22.5–28; 2 Kings 1.9–17; 3.11–17; 22.11–14; Jer 21.1–4). **1:** *Tore his clothes . . . sackcloth,* signs of mourning. **6:** The prophet's immediate response reassures Hezekiah with the classic formula "*do not be afraid*" (cf. 7.4). **8–13:** The Rabshakeh delivers a second message to Hezekiah from Sennacherib. Having taken Lachish, Sennacherib is besieging *Libnah*, located near Lachish although the precise site is disputed. **9:** *King Tirhakah of Ethiopia* may have been a general in the army since he came to the throne of Egypt only in 690 BCE. **12:** Northern Mesopotamian sites taken by the Assyrians: *Gozan*, on the Habur River in Mesopotamia (2 Kings 17.6); *Haran*, on the Balikh River (Gen 11.27–32); *Rezeph*, near the west end of the Jebel Singar; *Eden*, between the Euphrates and the Balikh Rivers (Am 1.5; Ezek 27.23); and *Telassar*, located near Eden in Aram. **13:** See 36.19n. *Hena* and *Ivvah* are unknown. **14–20:** Unlike Ahaz in 7.1–25, Hezekiah turns to the LORD in this time of distress. **16:** *Enthroned above the cherubim*, the ark of the covenant and its cherubim (66.1; 1 Sam 4.4; 2 Sam 6.2), which served as the LORD's throne in the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 8.6–7). **21–35:** Isaiah conveys the LORD's oracle of reassurance to Hezekiah. The LORD repeats claims of greatness made by Sennacherib to illustrate his arrogance (cf. 2.10–21). **22:** *Virgin daughter*

23 "Whom have you mocked and
reviled?
Against whom have you raised your
voice
and haughtily lifted your eyes?
Against the Holy One of Israel!
24 By your servants you have mocked the
Lord,
and you have said, 'With my many
chariots
I have gone up the heights of the
mountains,
to the far recesses of Lebanon;
I felled its tallest cedars,
its choicest cypresses;
I came to its remotest height,
its densest forest.
25 I dug wells
and drank waters,
I dried up with the sole of my foot
all the streams of Egypt.'

26 "Have you not heard
that I determined it long ago?
I planned from days of old
what now I bring to pass,
that you should make fortified cities
crash into heaps of ruins,
27 while their inhabitants, shorn of
strength,
are dismayed and confounded;
they have become like plants of the
field
and like tender grass,
like grass on the housetops,
blighted[a] before it is grown.

28 "I know your rising up[b] and your sitting
down,
your going out and coming in,
and your raging against me.
29 Because you have raged against me
and your arrogance has come to my
ears,
I will put my hook in your nose
and my bit in your mouth;
I will turn you back on the way
by which you came.

30 "And this shall be the sign for you: This year eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that; then in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 31 The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; 32 for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

33 "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the LORD. 35 For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David."

36 Then the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. 37 Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. 38 As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.

[a] With 2 Kings 19.26: Heb *field*
[b] Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *your rising up*

Zion, see 1.8n. **24:** Mesopotamian kings frequently felled trees in *Lebanon* (see 2.13n). **26:** Whereas the Assyrian king claims great accomplishments, the LORD had planned long ago to bring the Assyrians as a tool of punishment (cf. 5.8–30; 10.5–34). **29:** *Hook . . . bit*, equipment used to control animals, also used to humiliate prisoners of war. **30–35:** The surviving remnant of Judah, like the ruined Judean wheat crop, will continue to grow each season in the aftermath of the Assyrian invasion, i.e., the LORD will defend Jerusalem in keeping with the Davidic/Zion tradition. **36–38:** The angel of death that killed the Assyrian troops recalls the tenth plague of the Exodus that saw the deaths of the firstborn of Egypt (Ex 11; 12.29–32). Sennacherib was assassinated by his own sons in 681 BCE as part of a coup. The coup was put down, and another son, Esar-haddon, succeeded his father. **38:** The name *Nisroch* is elsewhere unattested. *Ararat* is Armenia.

38 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover." 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the LORD: 3 "Remember now, O LORD, I implore you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4 Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: 5 "Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life. 6 I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and defend this city.

7 "This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he has promised: 8 See, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps." So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined.[a]

9 A writing of King Hezekiah of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness:

10 I said: In the noontide of my days
I must depart;
I am consigned to the gates of Sheol
for the rest of my years.
11 I said, I shall not see the LORD
in the land of the living;
I shall look upon mortals no more
among the inhabitants of the world.
12 My dwelling is plucked up and removed
from me
like a shepherd's tent;
like a weaver I have rolled up my life;
he cuts me off from the loom;
from day to night you bring me to an end;[a]
13 I cry for help[b] until morning;
like a lion he breaks all my bones;
from day to night you bring me to an
end.[a]

14 Like a swallow or a crane[a] I clamor,
I moan like a dove.
My eyes are weary with looking upward.
O Lord, I am oppressed; be my security!
15 But what can I say? For he has spoken
to me,
and he himself has done it.
All my sleep has fled[c]
because of the bitterness of my soul.

16 O Lord, by these things people live,
and in all these is the life of my spirit.[a]
Oh, restore me to health and make me
live!
17 Surely it was for my welfare
that I had great bitterness;
but you have held back[d] my life
from the pit of destruction,
for you have cast all my sins
behind your back.
18 For Sheol cannot thank you,
death cannot praise you;
those who go down to the Pit cannot hope
for your faithfulness.
19 The living, the living, they thank you,
as I do this day;
fathers make known to children
your faithfulness.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Cn Compare Syr: Heb *I will walk slowly all my years*
[d] Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb *loved*

38.1–22: Hezekiah's recovery from illness. This narrative complements the earlier narrative in chs 36–37 concerning the deliverance of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kings 20.1–11). **1–8:** *In those days* coordinates this account with chs 36–37, although the contents of the narrative indicate an event before the siege of Jerusalem (see v. 3). **3:** Hezekiah's petition to the LORD resembles Ps 26. **4–8:** The miraculous reversal of *ten steps* on the sundial of Ahaz both confirms the LORD's oracle and reminds the reader of Hezekiah's contrasting portrayal with that of Ahaz in 7.1–9.6. **5:** *Fifteen years*, calculated on the basis of 2 Kings 18.2,13. **9–22:** A hymn of thanksgiving attributed to Hezekiah (cf. Pss 30; 32; 92; Jon 2). It does not appear in 2 Kings 20.1–11, and functions here to highlight Hezekiah's piety. **10–13:** Introductory elements of complaint, conveying Hezekiah's distress. **10:** *Sheol*, the underworld. **14–16:** Petition for security and health. **17–20:** Thanksgiving for restoration to health.

20 The LORD will save me,
and we will sing to stringed
instruments[a]
all the days of our lives,
at the house of the LORD.

21 Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a lump of figs, and apply it to the boil, so that he may recover." 22 Hezekiah also had said, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?"

39 At that time King Merodach-baladan son of Baladan of Babylon sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. 2 Hezekiah welcomed them; he showed them his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his whole armory, all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them. 3 Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say? From where did they come to you?" Hezekiah answered, "They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon." 4 He said, "What have they seen in your house?" Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them."

5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: 6 Days are coming when all that is in your house, and that which your ancestors have stored up until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the LORD. 7 Some of your own sons who are born to you shall be taken away; they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." 8 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my days."

40 Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,

[a] Heb *my stringed instruments*

The Pit, a poetic synonym for *Sheol*. **21–22:** Isaiah acts as a healer in prescribing a compress for Hezekiah's boil; cf. 2 Kings 20.8.

39.1–8: Narrative concerning Isaiah's condemnation of Hezekiah for allying with Merodach-baladan of Babylon (cf. 2 Kings 20.12–19). Hezekiah entered into an alliance with Prince *Merodach-baladan* (Marduk-apaliddina) of Babylon to mount a revolt against Assyria in 705–701 BCE. Babylon was also an Assyrian vassal at this time. The strategy was to hit Assyria simultaneously from both east and west, and thereby force Sennacherib to divide his forces, but it failed when Hezekiah was forced to capitulate in 701 BCE. Merodach-baladan was never caught, although Sennacherib was still hunting him as late as 689 BCE. **1–2:** The phrase *at that time* coordinates the narrative with both chs 36–37 and 38. The display of wealth and provisions demonstrates to Merodach-baladan's envoys that Hezekiah is prepared for revolt. **3–8:** Isaiah, based on his adherence to Davidic/Zion theology, objects to the alliance on the grounds that the LORD will protect Jerusalem and the king. Isaiah's statements that Hezekiah's wealth and sons will be carried off to Babylon corresponds to Sennacherib's own account of the siege. In the context of the book of Isaiah, it foreshadows the Babylonian exile presupposed from ch 40 on. Hezekiah's concluding statement reemphasizes his piety; in 2 Kings 20.19 it is a question that highlights his self-interest.

40.1–54.17: Prophetic instruction that the LORD reveals divine sovereignty at Zion. Chapter 40 begins the portion of the book (chs 40–55) attributed to an anonymous prophet of the latter years of the Babylonian exile when King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylonia and decreed that Jews could return to their homeland (ca. 545–538 BCE). Although these chapters are clearly written long after the time of the eighth-century prophet Isaiah, they nevertheless share his basic theological perspective rooted in the Zion/Davidic tradition, i.e., that the LORD protects Zion, although the Davidic covenant is now applied to the people rather than to the Davidic king (55.3). These chapters therefore function within the book to describe the realization of the LORD's plans to restore Zion as articulated throughout chs 1–33.

40.1–11: Renewed prophetic commission to announce the LORD's restoration of Zion. This segment renews the prophet's commission to speak (cf. ch 6) and announces that the time of the restoration is at hand. **1–2:** The attendants in the heavenly court of the LORD (cf. ch 6; 1 Kings 22.19–23; Ps 82) are instructed to comfort

that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

3 A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
4 Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.
5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

6 A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.
7 The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
8 The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.
9 Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;[a]
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,[b]
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"
10 See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure,
and weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance?
13 Who has directed the spirit of the LORD,
or as his counselor has instructed him?
14 Whom did he consult for his enlightenment,
and who taught him the path of justice?
Who taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of understanding?
15 Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
and are accounted as dust on the scales;
see, he takes up the isles like fine dust.
16 Lebanon would not provide fuel enough,
nor are its animals enough for a burnt offering.

[a] Or *O herald of good tidings to Zion*
[b] Or *O herald of good tidings to Jerusalem*

Jerusalem. *Double* restitution of stolen property is the penalty in the case of theft (Ex 22.7). **3–5:** The voices are those of the attendants in the heavenly court. The passage evokes the tradition of the journey through the wilderness in which the people traveled along the King's Highway in Transjordan on their way to the land of Israel (Num 20.17; 21.22; Deut 2.8). *The glory of the LORD* refers to the divine presence, often symbolized by a cloud of smoke and flickering flame, such as was seen at Sinai, upon the wilderness Tabernacle, and before the Holy of Holies of the Temple (see Ex 19.16; 40.34–38; 1 Kings 8.10–13). **6–8:** The prophet's commission to proclaim restoration appears in v. 6. The message emphasizes the permanence of God's word. Just as Isaiah said that the LORD would restore Jerusalem (e.g., 2.1–4; 31.4–5; 33.20), now it comes to pass (cf. 55.10–11). **9–11:** *Zion* or *Jerusalem* functions as the *herald* of the LORD to announce the news of God's return and Zion's restoration. Using the typical image of Mesopotamian and Judean kings, the LORD appears as a *shepherd* who cares for the *flock* (cf. 1 Sam 16.11,19; 17.1,20,34–37).

40.12–31: The LORD is the master of creation. This is the first of a series of sections (40.12–31; 41.1–42.13; 42.14–44.23) that are designed to demonstrate that the LORD is indeed acting to restore Zion. The first focuses on the LORD's role as the creator. **12–14:** The argumentative style of the passage employs rhetorical questions to make its basic points. **15–17:** *Lebanon*'s fuel (see 2.13n) refers to its tall trees that, like the animals of its forests,

17 All the nations are as nothing before him;
they are accounted by him as less than
nothing and emptiness.

18 To whom then will you liken God,
or what likeness compare with him?
19 An idol? —A workman casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold,
and casts for it silver chains.
20 As a gift one chooses mulberry wood[a]
—wood that will not rot—
then seeks out a skilled artisan
to set up an image that will not topple.

21 Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the
beginning?
Have you not understood from the
foundations of the earth?
22 It is he who sits above the circle of the
earth,
and its inhabitants are like
grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a
curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
23 who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as
nothing.

24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the
earth,
when he blows upon them, and they
wither,
and the tempest carries them off like
stubble.

25 To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
26 Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers
them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.

27 Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
"My way is hidden from the Lord,
and my right is disregarded by my
God"?
28 Have you not known? Have you not
heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
29 He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
30 Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
31 but those who wait for the Lord shall
renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like
eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

41 Listen to me in silence,
O coastlands;
let the peoples renew their strength;
let them approach, then let them
speak;
let us together draw near for
judgment.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

are insufficient to provide a suitable sacrifice before the Lord. **18–20:** The beginning of this prophet's polemic against idolatry, which also targets aspects of the religious and intellectual tradition of the Babylonians (also 41.6–7,29; 42.17; 43.10; 44.9–20; 45.16,20; 46.1–7; Jer 10.1–10). **21–24:** A rhetorical recapitulation of vv. 12–20. The language in which the cosmos is described should be compared with Gen 1.1–31. **25–26:** The passage returns to the key question of v. 18. The Heb verb "bara'" ("create") is for the most part restricted to Gen 1 and these chapters (40.28; 41.26; 42.5; 43.1,7,15; 45.7,8,12,18; 48.7; 54.16). **27–31:** An attempt to answer the crisis of faith that political disaster provoked by presenting the Lord as a cosmic rather than a purely national deity. Waiting for God, implying trust, is frequently advocated in the book (8.17; 30.18; 49.23; 64.4).

41.1–42.13: The Lord is the master of human events. The second contention in the series is the power of the Lord to play a decisive role in human events. **41.1–4:** The passage is formulated as a courtroom scene in which the Lord cross-examines witnesses. The Lord demands the attention of the *coastlands* (the islands of the

[2] Who has roused a victor from the east,
summoned him to his service?
He delivers up nations to him,
and tramples kings under foot;
he makes them like dust with his sword,
like driven stubble with his bow.
[3] He pursues them and passes on safely,
scarcely touching the path with his feet.
[4] Who has performed and done this,
calling the generations from the beginning?
I, the LORD, am first,
and will be with the last.
[5] The coastlands have seen and are afraid,
the ends of the earth tremble;
they have drawn near and come.
[6] Each one helps the other,
saying to one another, "Take courage!"
[7] The artisan encourages the goldsmith,
and the one who smooths with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the anvil,
saying of the soldering, "It is good";
and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved.
[8] But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
[9] you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, "You are my servant,
I have chosen you and not cast you off";
[10] do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

[11] Yes, all who are incensed against you
shall be ashamed and disgraced;
those who strive against you
shall be as nothing and shall perish.
[12] You shall seek those who contend with you,
but you shall not find them;
those who war against you
shall be as nothing at all.
[13] For I, the LORD your God,
hold your right hand;
it is I who say to you, "Do not fear,
I will help you."

[14] Do not fear, you worm Jacob,
you insect[a] Israel!
I will help you, says the LORD;
your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.
[15] Now, I will make of you a threshing sledge,
sharp, new, and having teeth;
you shall thresh the mountains and crush them,
and you shall make the hills like chaff.
[16] You shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them away,
and the tempest shall scatter them.
Then you shall rejoice in the LORD;
in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.

[a] Syr: Heb *men of*

Aegean) and the nations. **2:** The first point is that the LORD has summoned *a victor from the east,* King Cyrus II of Persia (559–530 BCE), who would conquer the Babylonian Empire in 539 BCE. He is called to emerge as the LORD's anointed king and Temple builder in 44.28; 45.1. **4:** By claiming to be *first* and *last* (see 44.6; 48.12), the LORD asserts control over all events in history from the beginning of creation to its end. **5–20:** The LORD maintains that just as the coastlands (see 24.13n.) and nations have granted recognition, Jacob/Israel must do likewise. **5–7:** The nations fear the approach of the LORD, and build idols in a futile attempt to protect themselves (cf. 44.9–20). **8–20:** Israel must recognize the LORD's power to act in the human world just as the nations have done. **8:** *Israel* is the LORD's servant much like Moses (Ex 14.31) and David (2 Sam 7.5). The mention of *Abraham* recalls the origins of Israel's covenant with the LORD (Gen 15). In exilic texts the people of Israel are often referred to as *Jacob*, whose story of exile and return (Gen 28–35) is similar to that of the exiles in Babylon. Based on the perspective of the Zion/Davidic covenant tradition, the LORD has chosen Israel and will uphold the covenant to protect the nation. **10:** The reassurance formula *do not fear* supports the assertions of the LORD. **11–16:** The LORD reiterates the reassurance theme in an effort to convince the audience of the LORD's absolute fidelity to the divine promise. **14:** The LORD as *Redeemer* (43.14; 44.6; 47.4; see Ex 6.6; 15.13) is the first of many echoes of the Exodus tradition in these chapters. **15–16:** A *threshing sledge* was employed to crush grain stalks so that the chaff could be removed from

17 When the poor and needy seek water,
and there is none,
and their tongue is parched with thirst,
I the LORD will answer them,
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
18 I will open rivers on the bare heights,[a]
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
and the dry land springs of water.
19 I will put in the wilderness the cedar,
the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;
I will set in the desert the cypress,
the plane and the pine together,
20 so that all may see and know,
all may consider and understand,
that the hand of the LORD has done this,
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

21 Set forth your case, says the LORD;
bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob.
22 Let them bring them, and tell us
what is to happen.
Tell us the former things, what they are,
so that we may consider them,
and that we may know their outcome;
or declare to us the things to come.
23 Tell us what is to come hereafter,
that we may know that you are gods;
do good, or do harm,
that we may be afraid and terrified.
24 You, indeed, are nothing
and your work is nothing at all;
whoever chooses you is an abomination.

25 I stirred up one from the north, and he has come,
from the rising of the sun he was summoned by name.[b]
He shall trample[c] on rulers as on mortar,
as the potter treads clay.
26 Who declared it from the beginning, so that we might know,
and beforehand, so that we might say, "He is right"?
There was no one who declared it, none who proclaimed,
none who heard your words.
27 I first have declared it to Zion,[d]
and I give to Jerusalem a herald of good tidings.
28 But when I look there is no one;
among these there is no counselor
who, when I ask, gives an answer.
29 No, they are all a delusion;
their works are nothing;
their images are empty wind.

42 Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
2 He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
3 a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
4 He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

5 Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,

[a] Or *trails*
[b] Cn Compare Q Ms Gk: MT *and he shall call on my name*
[c] Cn: Heb *come*
[d] Cn: Heb *First to Zion—Behold, behold them*

the grain. **17–20:** As creator, the LORD is able to provide for the needs of the poor as in the time of the wilderness wandering (Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13; Pss 78.15–16; 105.41). **21–29:** The passage returns to the courtroom imagery (cf. vv. 1–5) in which the LORD demands counterarguments from the gods of the nations. The LORD presumes that they cannot explain the past or the future and therefore do not have the capacity to act like the LORD, much less to challenge the LORD's power to act in the human world. **25:** *One from the north* and from the east, the LORD again claims to have brought a deliverer, i.e., Cyrus (41.2; 44.28; 45.1), which demonstrates again the LORD's capacity to act in human affairs. Having claimed to have announced these events long ago, the LORD observes that there is no one to answer. **42.1–4:** The first of the four so-called "servant songs" of Isaiah (see 49.1–6; 50.4–11; 52.13–53.12). The servant represents Israel. **5–9:** As a covenant to the peoples and a light to the nations, Israel's

who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:
6 I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,[a]
a light to the nations,
7 to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
8 I am the LORD, that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.
9 See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

10 Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise from the end of the earth!
Let the sea roar[b] and all that fills it,
the coastlands and their inhabitants.
11 Let the desert and its towns lift up their voice,
the villages that Kedar inhabits;
let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy,
let them shout from the tops of the mountains.
12 Let them give glory to the LORD,
and declare his praise in the coastlands.

13 The LORD goes forth like a soldier,
like a warrior he stirs up his fury;
he cries out, he shouts aloud,
he shows himself mighty against his foes.

14 For a long time I have held my peace,
I have kept still and restrained myself;
now I will cry out like a woman in labor,
I will gasp and pant.
15 I will lay waste mountains and hills,
and dry up all their herbage;
I will turn the rivers into islands,
and dry up the pools.
16 I will lead the blind
by a road they do not know,
by paths they have not known
I will guide them.
I will turn the darkness before them into light,
the rough places into level ground.
These are the things I will do,
and I will not forsake them.
17 They shall be turned back and utterly put to shame—
those who trust in carved images,
who say to cast images,
"You are our gods."

18 Listen, you that are deaf;
and you that are blind, look up and see!
19 Who is blind but my servant,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn Compare Ps 96.11; 98.7: Heb *Those who go down to the sea*

experience of punishment and restoration becomes the means by which all the nations will recognize the LORD's sovereignty in the world. By opening the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, the servant brings to an end the period of blindness and deafness called for in Isaiah's commission (6.9–10). That the former things have come to pass, i.e., those things foretold earlier in the book of Isaiah, serves as an argument that the things now declared will also happen. **10–13:** A hymn of praise for the LORD closes the section devoted to demonstrating the LORD's mastery of human events. Now creation itself rejoices like worshipers in the Temple (cf. Pss 96; 98). *Kedar* is located in the Arabian desert (see 21.16), and *Sela* is in Edom.

42.14–44.23: The LORD is the redeemer of Israel. The third contention in the series is that the LORD redeems Israel. Insofar as Israel had suffered punishment and exile at the hands of the Assyrians and the Babylonians, acting as agents of the LORD, such a contention is designed to answer claims that the LORD is an enemy to Israel or that the LORD is powerless to redeem Israel. **42.14–17:** The LORD's silence and inaction during the period of Israel's punishment has come to an end. The image of a woman in childbirth (cf. 13.8; 26.1–18) indicates that the time for action has come. The passage evokes the wilderness tradition (see 40.3–5n.) to portray the LORD's guidance of Israel. The *blind* are now given light (cf. 6.9–10; 8.23). **18–25:** The passage addresses Israel as the *blind* and the *deaf*, a recurrent image (6.9–10; 29.9,18; 32.3; 35.5; 42.16; 43.8) denoting spiritual imperception and

or deaf like my messenger whom I
send?
Who is blind like my dedicated one,
or blind like the servant of the LORD?
20 He sees many things, but does[a] not
observe them;
his ears are open, but he does not hear.
21 The LORD was pleased, for the sake of his
righteousness,
to magnify his teaching and make it
glorious.
22 But this is a people robbed and
plundered,
all of them are trapped in holes
and hidden in prisons;
they have become a prey with no one to
rescue,
a spoil with no one to say, "Restore!"
23 Who among you will give heed to this,
who will attend and listen for the time
to come?
24 Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler,
and Israel to the robbers?
Was it not the LORD, against whom we
have sinned,
in whose ways they would not walk,
and whose law they would not obey?
25 So he poured upon him the heat of his
anger
and the fury of war;
it set him on fire all around, but he did not
understand;
it burned him, but he did not take it to
heart.

43 But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are
mine.
2 When you pass through the waters, I will
be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not
overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not
be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
3 For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia[b] and Seba in exchange for you.
4 Because you are precious in my sight,
and honored, and I love you,
I give people in return for you,
nations in exchange for your life.
5 Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;
6 I will say to the north, "Give them up,"
and to the south, "Do not withhold;
bring my sons from far away
and my daughters from the end of the
earth—
7 everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."

8 Bring forth the people who are blind, yet
have eyes,
who are deaf, yet have ears!
9 Let all the nations gather together,
and let the peoples assemble.
Who among them declared this,
and foretold to us the former things?

[a] Heb *You see many things but do*
[b] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

obtuseness. In fact, however, the LORD has controlled the fate of the nation all along. Now the time has come for Israel to recognize the LORD as their redeemer. Although the LORD had revealed divine "torah" ("teaching," v. 21) to the people, they were punished for having failed to observe the LORD's instruction, improperly translated in v. 24 as "law" (cf. 2.2–4; 5.24). **43.1–7:** The reassurance formula *do not fear* (cf. 7.4; 37.6; 41.10,14) emphasizes that Israel's punishment is now over and redemption is at hand. **2:** The passage evokes the Exodus and wilderness tradition as Israel passes through waters (see, e.g., Ex 14–15) as it returns from exile to its homeland. *Through fire*, cf. Ps 66.12. **3:** *Egypt, Ethiopia*, and *Seba* (or Sheba, a kingdom in southwestern Arabia), all of which Cyrus was expected to conquer, serve as a ransom for the redemption of Israel from its exile. The return of the exiles from throughout the world is a frequent theme in Isaiah (11.15–16; 27.12–13; 35.1–10; 49.22; 60.9).

43.8–44.23: The setting returns to the courtroom as the LORD substantiates the claims to redeem Israel (see 41.1–5,21–29). **43.8–13:** The LORD calls both blind and deaf Israel (6.9–10; 42.19–20; cf. 42.7) and the nations to witness to the LORD's claims. **9:** *The former things*, the statements of the LORD's plans found in the Isaian

Let them bring their witnesses to justify
them,
and let them hear and say, "It is true."
10 You are my witnesses, says the LORD,
and my servant whom I have chosen,
so that you may know and believe me
and understand that I am he.
Before me no god was formed,
nor shall there be any after me.
11 I, I am the LORD,
and besides me there is no savior.
12 I declared and saved and proclaimed,
when there was no strange god among
you;
and you are my witnesses, says the
LORD.
13 I am God, and also henceforth I am He;
there is no one who can deliver from
my hand;
I work and who can hinder it?

14 Thus says the LORD,
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
For your sake I will send to Babylon
and break down all the bars,
and the shouting of the Chaldeans will
be turned to lamentation.[a]
15 I am the LORD, your Holy One,
the Creator of Israel, your King.
16 Thus says the LORD,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
17 who brings out chariot and horse,
army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a
wick:
18 Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
19 I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not
perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
20 The wild animals will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
21 the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

22 Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob;
but you have been weary of me,
O Israel!
23 You have not brought me your sheep for
burnt offerings,
or honored me with your sacrifices.
I have not burdened you with offerings,
or wearied you with frankincense.
24 You have not bought me sweet cane with
money,
or satisfied me with the fat of your
sacrifices.
But you have burdened me with your sins;
you have wearied me with your
iniquities.

25 I, I am He
who blots out your transgressions for
my own sake,
and I will not remember your sins.
26 Accuse me, let us go to trial;
set forth your case, so that you may be
proved right.
27 Your first ancestor sinned,
and your interpreters transgressed
against me.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

tradition. Only the LORD can carry out Israel's redemption; no idols can possibly manifest such planning and power. **14–15:** *Redeemer* and *Holy One* are frequent designations for the LORD in this section of Isaiah (41.14; 47.4; 48.17;49.7; 54.5). *Chaldea,* a term for the Neo-Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar. **16–21:** The LORD is identified as the one who led Israel through the sea at the time of the Exodus (Ex 14–15); the *former things* of v. 18 provide the foundation for understanding the *new thing,* i.e., the exodus from Babylon. Once again, the LORD provides a highway in the wilderness for the people to return home (11.15–16; 27.12–13; 35.1–10; 40.3–5). *Water in the wilderness* recalls the wilderness tradition (Ex 15.22–27; 17.17; Num 20.2–13). **22–28:** The LORD justifies past punishment of Israel, charging that the people did not honor the LORD appropriately with sacrifices, but sinned instead. Nevertheless, the LORD will not remember those sins now that the punishment is over. **27:** *First ancestor*, Jacob (cf. Hos 12.2–4). *Interpreters transgressed*, translation and meaning are uncertain; perhaps it is a denunciation of optimistic prophets during the time of the monarchy who led the people astray.

28 Therefore I profaned the princes of the sanctuary,
I delivered Jacob to utter destruction,
and Israel to reviling.

44 But now hear, O Jacob my servant,
Israel whom I have chosen!
2 Thus says the LORD who made you,
who formed you in the womb and will help you:
Do not fear, O Jacob my servant,
Jeshurun whom I have chosen.
3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my spirit upon your descendants,
and my blessing on your offspring.
4 They shall spring up like a green tamarisk,
like willows by flowing streams.
5 This one will say, "I am the LORD's,"
another will be called by the name of Jacob,
yet another will write on the hand, "The LORD's,"
and adopt the name of Israel.

6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.
7 Who is like me? Let them proclaim it,
let them declare and set it forth before me.
Who has announced from of old the things to come?[a]
Let them tell us[b] what is yet to be.
8 Do not fear, or be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
You are my witnesses!
Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know not one.

9 All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know. And so they will be put to shame. 10 Who would fashion a god or cast an image that can do no good? 11 Look, all its devotees shall be put to shame; the artisans too are merely human. Let them all assemble, let them stand up; they shall be terrified, they shall all be put to shame.

12 The ironsmith fashions it[c] and works it over the coals, shaping it with hammers, and forging it with his strong arm; he becomes hungry and his strength fails, he drinks no water and is faint. 13 The carpenter stretches a line, marks it out with a stylus, fashions it with planes, and marks it with a compass; he makes it in human form, with human beauty, to be set up in a shrine. 14 He cuts down cedars or chooses a holm tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. 15 Then it can be used as fuel. Part of it he takes and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Then he makes a god and worships it, makes it a carved image and bows down before it. 16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he roasts meat, eats it and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Ah, I am warm, I can feel the fire!" 17 The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows down to it and worships it; he prays to it and says, "Save me, for you are my god!"

18 They do not know, nor do they comprehend; for their eyes are shut, so that they cannot see, and their minds as well, so that they cannot understand. 19 No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted meat and

[a] Cn: Heb *from my placing an eternal people and things to come*
[b] Tg: Heb *them*
[c] Cn: Heb *an ax*

44.1–5: An oracle of salvation for Israel. **2:** *Jeshurun,* "one who is upright," is a poetic name for Israel (Deut 32.15; 33.5,26). **3:** The passage employs the imagery of libation offerings poured out at the Temple at the festival of Sukkot, "Tabernacles," to celebrate the onset of the rainy season and fertility in the land. **6–8:** A recapitulation of earlier arguments for the incomparability of the LORD who has declared the divine plans for Israel from the beginning (see 41.21–29; 43.10–13). **9–20:** A lengthy and satirical prose polemic against idolatry, describing how artisans meticulously fashion idols out of metal and wood and then declare the idol to be a god (cf. Wis 13–15; Let Jer). The blindness and deafness motif is here applied to the idols who can neither see nor hear (cf. 6.9–10;

have eaten. Now shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" 20 He feeds on ashes; a deluded mind has led him astray, and he cannot save himself or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a fraud?"

21 Remember these things, O Jacob,
and Israel, for you are my servant;
I formed you, you are my servant;
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.
22 I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud,
and your sins like mist;
return to me, for I have redeemed you.

23 Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it;
shout, O depths of the earth;
break forth into singing, O mountains,
O forest, and every tree in it!
For the LORD has redeemed Jacob,
and will be glorified in Israel.

24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,
who formed you in the womb:
I am the LORD, who made all things,
who alone stretched out the heavens,
who by myself spread out the earth;
25 who frustrates the omens of liars,
and makes fools of diviners;
who turns back the wise,
and makes their knowledge foolish;
26 who confirms the word of his servant,
and fulfills the prediction of his messengers;
who says of Jerusalem, "It shall be inhabited,"
and of the cities of Judah, "They shall be rebuilt,
and I will raise up their ruins";
27 who says to the deep, "Be dry—
I will dry up your rivers";
28 who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd,
and he shall carry out all my purpose";
and who says of Jerusalem, "It shall be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."

45 Thus says the LORD to his anointed,
to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped
to subdue nations before him
and strip kings of their robes,
to open doors before him—
and the gates shall not be closed:
2 I will go before you
and level the mountains,[a]
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron,

[a] Q Ms Gk: MT *the swellings*

42.18–20). **21–22:** Conclusion of the oracle in vv. 6–8. **23:** Hymnic conclusion in which all creation celebrates the redemption of Israel.

44.24–48.22: The LORD will use Cyrus for the restoration of Zion. This lengthy unit constitutes the fourth contention in the series. The claim that the LORD uses Cyrus to restore Zion is particularly controversial because the Persian king is a foreign monarch who displaces the role traditionally assigned to the Davidic king as anointed one and Temple builder. Nevertheless, Cyrus's conquest of Babylon in 539 BCE opened the way for his declaration that exiled Jews could return to their homeland to rebuild the Temple (2 Chr 36.22–23; Ezra 1.1–4). Since Cyrus does not restore Davidic kingship, the prophet determines that the LORD has declared Cyrus to be the righteous king of Isaian tradition (9.1–7; 11.1–16; 32.1–8).

44.24–45.8: The LORD's announcement concerning Cyrus. The LORD announces the plan to use Cyrus as the redeemer of Zion. **44.24–28:** Reiterations of the divine qualities and roles previously articulated. **25:** *Omens . . . diviners*, Babylonian religion was renowned for its use of techniques for determining the future. **28:** *Shepherd*, a common metaphor for ruler (56.11; Jer 23.4). Cyrus II (558–530 BCE), founder of the Persian Empire, is identified with the LORD's long established plans, including the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, a role formerly accomplished by David and Solomon. **45.1–7:** Cyrus is commissioned to act as the LORD's agent for restoration, and is identified as the LORD's messiah or *anointed* one to signify that the Persian king now occupies the role once held by the Davidic kings. The imagery presupposes elements of the Babylonian Akitu or New Year Festival in which the Babylonian king's right to rule was renewed for the coming year. The king grasped the hand of Marduk, the god of Babylon, and was granted the tablets of destiny as part of his authorization to rule. Cyrus

3 I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the LORD,
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
4 For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I surname you, though you do not know me.
5 I am the LORD, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god.
I arm you, though you do not know me,
6 so that they may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is no one besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
7 I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe;
I the LORD do all these things.

8 Shower, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness;
let the earth open, that salvation may spring up,[a]
and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also;
I the LORD have created it.

9 Woe to you who strive with your Maker,
earthen vessels with the potter![b]
Does the clay say to the one who fashions it, "What are you making"?
or "Your work has no handles"?
10 Woe to anyone who says to a father,
"What are you begetting?"
or to a woman, "With what are you in labor?"
11 Thus says the LORD,
the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:
Will you question me[c] about my children,
or command me concerning the work of my hands?
12 I made the earth,
and created humankind upon it;
it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,
and I commanded all their host.
13 I have aroused Cyrus[d] in righteousness,
and I will make all his paths straight;
he shall build my city
and set my exiles free,
not for price or reward,
says the LORD of hosts.
14 Thus says the LORD:
The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Ethiopia,[e]
and the Sabeans, tall of stature,
shall come over to you and be yours,
they shall follow you;
they shall come over in chains and bow down to you.
They will make supplication to you, saying,
"God is with you alone, and there is no other;
there is no god besides him."
15 Truly, you are a God who hides himself,
O God of Israel, the Savior.
16 All of them are put to shame and confounded,
the makers of idols go in confusion together.
17 But Israel is saved by the LORD
with everlasting salvation;
you shall not be put to shame or confounded
to all eternity.

18 For thus says the LORD,
who created the heavens
(he is God!),

a Q Ms: MT *that they may bring forth salvation*
b Cn: Heb *with the potsherds*, or *with the potters*
c Cn: Heb *Ask me of things to come*
d Heb *him*
e Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

was authorized to serve as king of Babylon when he participated in the Akitu festival in 539 BCE. The LORD here takes on the role of Marduk, is declared to be the only God, and authorizes Cyrus to rule. **8:** The heavens celebrate Cyrus's role with showers and a hymn of praise.

45.9–48.19: Trial scene concerning the LORD's use of Cyrus as redeemer. The contention that the LORD had chosen Cyrus as king was no doubt controversial. Once again, the LORD appears in court to support such claims. **45.9–19:** An introductory court speech disputes any challenge to the LORD's decision. For the metaphor of the potter and the clay see 29.16; Jer 18.1–6. **14:** *Egypt, Ethiopia*, and *Seba*. In contrast to 43.3 where these nations

who formed the earth and made it
(he established it;
he did not create it a chaos,
he formed it to be inhabited!):
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
19 I did not speak in secret,
in a land of darkness;
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,
"Seek me in chaos."
I the LORD speak the truth,
I declare what is right.

20 Assemble yourselves and come
together,
draw near, you survivors of the nations!
They have no knowledge—
those who carry about their wooden
idols,
and keep on praying to a god
that cannot save.
21 Declare and present your case;
let them take counsel together!
Who told this long ago?
Who declared it of old?
Was it not I, the LORD?
There is no other god besides me,
a righteous God and a Savior;
there is no one besides me.

22 Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.
23 By myself I have sworn,
from my mouth has gone forth in
righteousness
a word that shall not return:
"To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear."

24 Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me,
are righteousness and strength;
all who were incensed against him
shall come to him and be ashamed.
25 In the LORD all the offspring of Israel
shall triumph and glory.

46 Bel bows down, Nebo stoops,
their idols are on beasts and cattle;
these things you carry are loaded
as burdens on weary animals.
2 They stoop, they bow down together;
they cannot save the burden,
but themselves go into captivity.

3 Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of
Israel,
who have been borne by me from your
birth,
carried from the womb;
4 even to your old age I am he,
even when you turn gray I will carry
you.
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save.

5 To whom will you liken me and make me
equal,
and compare me, as though we were
alike?
6 Those who lavish gold from the purse,
and weigh out silver in the scales—
they hire a goldsmith, who makes it into
a god;
then they fall down and worship!
7 They lift it to their shoulders, they
carry it,
they set it in its place, and it stands
there;
it cannot move from its place.
If one cries out to it, it does not answer
or save anyone from trouble.

are given to Cyrus as a ransom, here their wealth will come to Israel when they are conquered by Cyrus. **20–25:** An offer of salvation and a demand for the LORD to be recognized as sovereign of all creation by the nations and by Israel.

46.1–47.15: Presentation of evidence concerning the LORD's power. Two major sections (46.1–13 and 47.1–15) demonstrate the powerlessness of Babylon's gods before the LORD. **46.1–4:** This section draws on the imagery of the Babylonian Akitu or New Year festival, when the gods were paraded through the streets of Babylon in procession to the temple of Marduk, city god of Babylon, at the center of the city. *Bel* and *Nebo* appear as burdens to those who carry them through the streets rather than as powerful gods who can act on behalf of their people. *Bel,* meaning "lord," is a title of Marduk, and *Nebo* (Akkadian Nabu) was the city god of Borsippa and son of Marduk. In contrast to their weakness, the LORD asserts the capacity to carry Israel as well as to redeem. **5–7:** A satirical

[8] Remember this and consider,[a]
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
[9] remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like me,
[10] declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, "My purpose shall stand,
and I will fulfill my intention,"
[11] calling a bird of prey from the east,
the man for my purpose from a far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
I have planned, and I will do it.

[12] Listen to me, you stubborn of heart,
you who are far from deliverance:
[13] I bring near my deliverance, it is not far off,
and my salvation will not tarry;
I will put salvation in Zion,
for Israel my glory.

47 Come down and sit in the dust,
virgin daughter Babylon!
Sit on the ground without a throne,
daughter Chaldea!
For you shall no more be called
tender and delicate.
[2] Take the millstones and grind meal,
remove your veil,
strip off your robe, uncover your legs,
pass through the rivers.
[3] Your nakedness shall be uncovered,
and your shame shall be seen.
I will take vengeance,
and I will spare no one.
[4] Our Redeemer—the LORD of hosts is his name—
is the Holy One of Israel.

[5] Sit in silence, and go into darkness,
daughter Chaldea!
For you shall no more be called
the mistress of kingdoms.
[6] I was angry with my people,
I profaned my heritage;
I gave them into your hand,
you showed them no mercy;
on the aged you made your yoke
exceedingly heavy.
[7] You said, "I shall be mistress forever,"
so that you did not lay these things to heart
or remember their end.

[8] Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures,
who sit securely,
who say in your heart,
"I am, and there is no one besides me;
I shall not sit as a widow
or know the loss of children"—
[9] both these things shall come upon you
in a moment, in one day:
the loss of children and widowhood
shall come upon you in full measure,
in spite of your many sorceries
and the great power of your enchantments.

[10] You felt secure in your wickedness;
you said, "No one sees me."
Your wisdom and your knowledge
led you astray,
and you said in your heart,
"I am, and there is no one besides me."
[11] But evil shall come upon you,
which you cannot charm away;
disaster shall fall upon you,
which you will not be able to ward off;
and ruin shall come on you suddenly,
of which you know nothing.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

polemic against idols; see 40.18–20; 44.9–20. **8–11:** A reiteration of the incomparability of the LORD who predicts events and brings them to pass; see 40.2–5; 41.25–29; 43.10–13; 44.6–8. **11:** The *bird of prey* from the east is Cyrus. **47.1–15:** Babylon (also called "Chaldea") is portrayed as a once magnificent princess who has been thrown to the dirt and humiliated before her conquerors. It was common for cities in the ancient Near Eastern world to be portrayed as women or goddesses; cf. Jerusalem's designation as "daughter Zion" (see 1.8n.; 37.22; 52.2). **5–7:** Babylon, much like the Assyrian king earlier (see 10.5–34; 14.24–27), overstepped its bounds in oppressing Israel and failing to recognize that it acted as the LORD's agent. **8–11:** Babylon's boast of uniqueness is countered by the claim of the God of Israel's incomparability. **9:** On the death of Babylonian children, cf. Ps 137.9.

12 Stand fast in your enchantments
and your many sorceries,
with which you have labored from your youth;
perhaps you may be able to succeed,
perhaps you may inspire terror.
13 You are wearied with your many consultations;
let those who study[a] the heavens
stand up and save you,
those who gaze at the stars,
and at each new moon predict
what[b] shall befall you.

14 See, they are like stubble,
the fire consumes them;
they cannot deliver themselves
from the power of the flame.
No coal for warming oneself is this,
no fire to sit before!
15 Such to you are those with whom you have labored,
who have trafficked with you from your youth;
they all wander about in their own paths;
there is no one to save you.

48 Hear this, O house of Jacob,
who are called by the name of Israel,
and who came forth from the loins[c] of Judah;
who swear by the name of the LORD,
and invoke the God of Israel,
but not in truth or right.
2 For they call themselves after the holy city,
and lean on the God of Israel;
the LORD of hosts is his name.

3 The former things I declared long ago,
they went out from my mouth and I made them known;
then suddenly I did them and they came to pass.
4 Because I know that you are obstinate,
and your neck is an iron sinew
and your forehead brass,
5 I declared them to you from long ago,
before they came to pass I announced them to you,
so that you would not say, "My idol did them,
my carved image and my cast image commanded them."

6 You have heard; now see all this;
and will you not declare it?
From this time forward I make you hear new things,
hidden things that you have not known.
7 They are created now, not long ago;
before today you have never heard of them,
so that you could not say, "I already knew them."
8 You have never heard, you have never known,
from of old your ear has not been opened.
For I knew that you would deal very treacherously,
and that from birth you were called a rebel.

9 For my name's sake I defer my anger,
for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you,
so that I may not cut you off.
10 See, I have refined you, but not like[d] silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of adversity.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Syr Compare Vg: Heb *from what*
[c] Cn: Heb *waters*
[d] Cn: Heb *with*

12–15: Babylonian diviners and astrologers developed mathematics and other sciences in their attempts to track the movements of the planets and the stars to determine the will of the gods. Despite such expertise, Babylon's efforts are useless before the LORD.

48.1–22: A series of courtroom summary speeches and concluding hymn reiterates the LORD's right to use Cyrus as the redeemer of Israel. **1–5:** The fulfillment of prophecies should persuade the people to recognize the truth of the LORD's claims. **6–8:** The *new things* are the conquests of Cyrus, which are destined to lead to a change of fortune for Judah; cf. 43.18–19. Proof is necessary because of Israel's history of alleged religious infidelity. **9–11:** The concern for the divine name or reputation and divine sanctity is also a prominent theme in

[11] For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it,
for why should my name[a] be profaned?
My glory I will not give to another.

[12] Listen to me, O Jacob,
and Israel, whom I called:
I am He; I am the first,
and I am the last.
[13] My hand laid the foundation of the earth,
and my right hand spread out the heavens;
when I summon them,
they stand at attention.

[14] Assemble, all of you, and hear!
Who among them has declared these things?
The LORD loves him;
he shall perform his purpose on Babylon,
and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans.
[15] I, even I, have spoken and called him,
I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way.
[16] Draw near to me, hear this!
From the beginning I have not spoken in secret,
from the time it came to be I have been there.
And now the Lord GOD has sent me and his spirit.

[17] Thus says the LORD,
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
I am the LORD your God,
who teaches you for your own good,
who leads you in the way you should go.
[18] O that you had paid attention to my commandments!
Then your prosperity would have been like a river,
and your success like the waves of the sea;
[19] your offspring would have been like the sand,
and your descendants like its grains;
their name would never be cut off
or destroyed from before me.

[20] Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea,
declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it,
send it forth to the end of the earth;
say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!"
[21] They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts;
he made water flow for them from the rock;
he split open the rock and the water gushed out.

[22] "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."

49 Listen to me, O coastlands,
pay attention, you peoples from far away!
The LORD called me before I was born,
while I was in my mother's womb he named me.
[2] He made my mouth like a sharp sword,
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;

[a] Gk Old Latin: Heb *for why should it*

Ezekiel (e.g., 36.11,21–23). The imagery of refined silver is drawn from 1.24–25. **12–16:** *First* and *last*; see also 41.4; 43.10; 44.6. **14:** *Chaldeans*, the Neo-Babylonian kingdom. **17–19:** The LORD reiterates the terms of the ancestral covenant with Abraham (Gen 15.5; 17.1–8; 22.16–18) and with Jacob (Gen 28.13–14; 35.9–15) to emphasize the cost to Israel of its failure to observe the LORD's commandments. **20–22:** The concluding hymn calls upon the exiles to flee from Babylon and Chaldea and to journey through the wilderness as they make their way home. The theme of water in the wilderness (Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13) demonstrates the LORD's sustenance on this new exodus from Babylon. **22:** See also 57.21.

49.1–54.17: The LORD is restoring Zion. The fifth and concluding contention in the series. This lengthy unit focuses especially on the role of the servant figure, earlier identified as Israel, in the divine plan.

49.1–13: Announcement concerning the role of the servant. The servant is defined both in relation to the restoration of Israel and as a light to the nations. **1–6:** The second of the "servant songs" (see 42.1n.) presents the servant as an individual figure who is also identified as Israel. He is called from the womb much like Jeremiah

he made me a polished arrow,
in his quiver he hid me away.
3 And he said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified."
4 But I said, "I have labored in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing
and vanity;
yet surely my cause is with the LORD,
and my reward with my God."

5 And now the LORD says,
who formed me in the womb to be his
servant,
to bring Jacob back to him,
and that Israel might be gathered to
him,
for I am honored in the sight of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—
6 he says,
"It is too light a thing that you should be
my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the survivors of Israel;
I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end
of the earth."

7 Thus says the LORD,
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy
One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the
nations,
the slave of rulers,
"Kings shall see and stand up,
princes, and they shall prostrate
themselves,
because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen
you."

8 Thus says the LORD:
In a time of favor I have answered you,
on a day of salvation I have helped you;
I have kept you and given you
as a covenant to the people,[a]
to establish the land,
to apportion the desolate heritages;
9 saying to the prisoners, "Come out,"
to those who are in darkness, "Show
yourselves."
They shall feed along the ways,
on all the bare heights[b] shall be their
pasture;
10 they shall not hunger or thirst,
neither scorching wind nor sun shall
strike them down,
for he who has pity on them will lead
them,
and by springs of water will guide them.
11 And I will turn all my mountains into a
road,
and my highways shall be raised up.
12 Lo, these shall come from far away,
and lo, these from the north and from
the west,
and these from the land of Syene.[c]

13 Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult,
O earth;
break forth, O mountains, into singing!
For the LORD has comforted his people,
and will have compassion on his
suffering ones.

14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken
me,
my Lord has forgotten me."
15 Can a woman forget her nursing child,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *the trails*
[c] Q Mss: MT *Sinim*

(Jer 1.5; cf. Ps 139.13). **3:** The servant is here specifically identified as Israel, although his task in v. 5 is to bring Israel/Jacob to the LORD. **6:** *A light to the nations,* see 42.5–9n. **7–12:** An oracle of restoration. **7:** The servant's restoration demonstrates the sovereignty of the LORD in the world; cf. 52.13–15. **8–12:** *Covenant to the people,* here the role of the servant is described in relation to the people Israel who will be released from prison to return through the wilderness to their homeland in a second exodus (see also 40.3–5; 41.17–20; 43.19; 48.20–22). **12:** *Syene,* Aswan in Upper (southern) Egypt at the first cataract of the Nile, where a Jewish settlement existed prior to the Persian conquest of Egypt in 525 BCE. **13:** The concluding hymn portrays the celebration of all creation at the restoration of Israel (cf. 44.23; 45.8).

49.14–52.12: The LORD's announcement of the restoration of Zion. The LORD attempts to convince Israel that despite her experience of exile the LORD will now return the nation to Zion. **49.14–18:** Many Jews in Bab-

or show no compassion for the child of
her womb?
Even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you.
16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of
my hands;
your walls are continually before me.
17 Your builders outdo your destroyers,[a]
and those who laid you waste go away
from you.
18 Lift up your eyes all around and see;
they all gather, they come to you.
As I live, says the LORD,
you shall put all of them on like an
ornament,
and like a bride you shall bind
them on.

19 Surely your waste and your desolate
places
and your devastated land—
surely now you will be too crowded for
your inhabitants,
and those who swallowed you up will
be far away.
20 The children born in the time of your
bereavement
will yet say in your hearing:
"The place is too crowded for me;
make room for me to settle."
21 Then you will say in your heart,
"Who has borne me these?
I was bereaved and barren,
exiled and put away—
so who has reared these?
I was left all alone—
where then have these come from?"

22 Thus says the Lord GOD:
I will soon lift up my hand to the nations,
and raise my signal to the peoples;
and they shall bring your sons in their
bosom,
and your daughters shall be carried on
their shoulders.
23 Kings shall be your foster fathers,
and their queens your nursing mothers.
With their faces to the ground they shall
bow down to you,
and lick the dust of your feet.
Then you will know that I am the LORD;
those who wait for me shall not be put
to shame.

24 Can the prey be taken from the mighty,
or the captives of a tyrant[b] be rescued?
25 But thus says the LORD:
Even the captives of the mighty shall be
taken,
and the prey of the tyrant be rescued;
for I will contend with those who contend
with you,
and I will save your children.
26 I will make your oppressors eat their
own flesh,
and they shall be drunk with their own
blood as with wine.
Then all flesh shall know
that I am the LORD your Savior,
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of
Jacob.

50 Thus says the LORD:
Where is your mother's bill of
divorce
with which I put her away?
Or which of my creditors is it
to whom I have sold you?
No, because of your sins you were sold,

[a] Or *Your children come swiftly; your destroyers*
[b] Q Ms Syr Vg: MT *of a righteous person*

ylonian exile would have questioned the power of the LORD to protect the nation. In this section Zion is personified as a woman (49.14; 50.1; 51.17–52.2; 54.1–14; see 1.8n.). The LORD similarly is compared to a mother with her child and claims not to have forgotten or abandoned the people (cf. 66.13). **18:** This verse is echoed and developed in Bar 5.5–9. **20:** *Children born in the time of your bereavement*, those born in exile who are returning. **22:** The raised hand of the LORD reverses the hand of judgment extended against Israel (9.7–10.4) and recalls the banner that signals restoration (11.1–16). **24–26:** The rhetorical questions function here as assertions of divine power insofar as the LORD can make these things happen. **50.1–11:** The language of the courtroom appears again as the LORD explains the divine role in Israel's experience. **1–3:** Rhetorical questions are used to make the LORD's case. Zion is portrayed as a mother, who was neither divorced (see Deut 24.1–4) nor sold to creditors to pay the LORD's bill (see Ex 21.7–1; Deut 15.12–18). Instead, the LORD contends that she was sold for the sins of the

and for your transgressions your
mother was put away.
2 Why was no one there when I came?
Why did no one answer when I called?
Is my hand shortened, that it cannot
redeem?
Or have I no power to deliver?
By my rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers a desert;
their fish stink for lack of water,
and die of thirst.[a]
3 I clothe the heavens with blackness,
and make sackcloth their covering.

4 The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,[b]
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
5 The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.
6 I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out
the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

7 The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to
shame;
8 he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
9 It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
All of them will wear out like a garment;
the moth will eat them up.

10 Who among you fears the Lord
and obeys the voice of his servant,
who walks in darkness
and has no light,
yet trusts in the name of the Lord
and relies upon his God?
11 But all of you are kindlers of fire,
lighters of firebrands.[c]
Walk in the flame of your fire,
and among the brands that you have
kindled!
This is what you shall have from my
hand:
you shall lie down in torment.

51 Listen to me, you that pursue
righteousness,
you that seek the Lord.
Look to the rock from which you were
hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were
dug.
2 Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
but I blessed him and made him many.
3 For the Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste places,
and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the
Lord;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.

[a] Or *die on the thirsty ground*
[b] Cn: Heb *of those who are taught*
[c] Syr: Heb *you gird yourselves with firebrands*

nation. Nevertheless, the Lord asserts divine power as creator of the universe to redeem. *Sackcloth,* see 3.24n. **4–9:** The third servant song (see 42.1n.) appears in vv. 4–11, although vv. 10–11 presuppose a different speaker. **4:** The servant links himself with Isaiah's disciples (see 8.16n.). **6:** Obedience to God entailed suffering (cf. 6.9–10, which calls for the suffering of the people as part of the divine plan). The persecution of the servant recalls that of Jeremiah (Jer 11.9; 20.1–2; 26.7–24). **10–11:** The Lord maintains that those who refuse to fear the Lord and honor the servant kindle the fire of their own suffering (cf. 1.29–31). **51.1–52.12:** Proof for the restoration for Zion. **51.1–8:** The Lord addresses the righteous who seek the Lord. The argument proceeds from the basis of the Lord's promises to make Abraham and Sarah into a great nation by which all nations will be blessed (Gen 12.2–3; cf. Gen 15.1–6,17–21; 17.15–22; 22.15–18). **3:** To fulfill the ancestral promise, the Lord will comfort and

4 Listen to me, my people,
and give heed to me, my nation;
for a teaching will go out from me,
and my justice for a light to the peoples.
5 I will bring near my deliverance swiftly,
my salvation has gone out
and my arms will rule the peoples;
the coastlands wait for me,
and for my arm they hope.
6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and those who live on it will die like
gnats;[a]
but my salvation will be forever,
and my deliverance will never be ended.

7 Listen to me, you who know
righteousness,
you people who have my teaching in
your hearts;
do not fear the reproach of others,
and do not be dismayed when they
revile you.
8 For the moth will eat them up like a
garment,
and the worm will eat them like wool;
but my deliverance will be forever,
and my salvation to all generations.

9 Awake, awake, put on strength,
O arm of the LORD!
Awake, as in days of old,
the generations of long ago!
Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces,
who pierced the dragon?
10 Was it not you who dried up the sea,
the waters of the great deep;
who made the depths of the sea a way
for the redeemed to cross over?
11 So the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

12 I, I am he who comforts you;
why then are you afraid of a mere
mortal who must die,
a human being who fades like grass?
13 You have forgotten the LORD, your Maker,
who stretched out the heavens
and laid the foundations of the earth.
You fear continually all day long
because of the fury of the oppressor,
who is bent on destruction.
But where is the fury of the oppressor?
14 The oppressed shall speedily be released;
they shall not die and go down to the
Pit,
nor shall they lack bread.
15 For I am the LORD your God,
who stirs up the sea so that its waves
roar—
the LORD of hosts is his name.
16 I have put my words in your mouth,
and hidden you in the shadow of my
hand,
stretching out[b] the heavens
and laying the foundations of the earth,
and saying to Zion, "You are my
people."

17 Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!
Stand up, O Jerusalem,
you who have drunk at the hand of the
LORD
the cup of his wrath,
who have drunk to the dregs
the bowl of staggering.

[a] Or *in like manner*
[b] Syr: Heb *planting*

restore Zion. *Eden,* see Gen 2.8–9. **4–5:** Israel will then emerge as a basis for sending the LORD's *teaching* (Heb "torah") and *justice* to the entire world (cf. 2.2–4). *Coastlands,* see 24.13n. **9–11:** The prophet calls upon the arm of the LORD to act (cf. Ps 44.23) and recounts past actions. *Rahab* is a mythological sea monster who is defeated by God before creation (Ps 89.10; Job 26.12; cf. Ps 74.12–17; Isa 27.1). Again, the Exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the sea illustrate the power of the LORD to redeem Israel (Ex 14–15; cf. Isa 11.15–16; 27.12–13). **12–16:** Israel should not fear human opponents when the LORD, creator of heaven and earth, acts on their behalf. **14:** *The Pit,* Sheol, the underworld (cf. 14.9–11). **17–23:** The prophet addresses Jerusalem, here portrayed as a woman who has suffered at the hands of the LORD. The metaphorical cup of divine wrath appears elsewhere (e.g., Jer 25.15–29; Hab 2.15–16). As a result of the devastation, Jerusalem's children lie dead leaving no one to help her.

18 There is no one to guide her
among all the children she has borne;
there is no one to take her by the hand
among all the children she has brought up.
19 These two things have befallen you
—who will grieve with you?—
devastation and destruction, famine and sword—
who will comfort you?[a]
20 Your children have fainted,
they lie at the head of every street
like an antelope in a net;
they are full of the wrath of the LORD,
the rebuke of your God.

21 Therefore hear this, you who are wounded,[b]
who are drunk, but not with wine:
22 Thus says your Sovereign, the LORD,
your God who pleads the cause of his people:
See, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering;
you shall drink no more
from the bowl of my wrath.
23 And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors,
who have said to you,
"Bow down, that we may walk on you";
and you have made your back like the ground
and like the street for them to walk on.

52 Awake, awake,
put on your strength, O Zion!
Put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city;
for the uncircumcised and the unclean
shall enter you no more.
2 Shake yourself from the dust, rise up,
O captive[c] Jerusalem;
loose the bonds from your neck,
O captive daughter Zion!

3 For thus says the LORD: You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money. 4 For thus says the Lord GOD: Long ago, my people went down into Egypt to reside there as aliens; the Assyrian, too, has oppressed them without cause. 5 Now therefore what am I doing here, says the LORD, seeing that my people are taken away without cause? Their rulers howl, says the LORD, and continually, all day long, my name is despised. 6 Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
8 Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.
9 Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the LORD has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
10 The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

11 Depart, depart, go out from there!
Touch no unclean thing;

[a] Q Ms Gk Syr Vg: MT *how may I comfort you?*
[b] Or *humbled*
[c] Cn: Heb *rise up, sit*

The LORD announces the end of Jerusalem's suffering and declares that the cup of divine wrath will now be drunk by her oppressors. **52.1–6:** The imagery of restoration reverses many of the miseries described in Lamentations (cf. Lam 1.9–10,14,17; 2.10). The prophet addresses Jerusalem as a woman again (see 1.8n.; 37.22), and calls upon her to awake and to put on her beautiful clothing because her suffering is over. Foreign enemies will no longer enter or rape her and subject her to captivity. **3–6:** The LORD explains how Israel was oppressed both by Egypt (Ex 1–15) during the Exodus and Assyria in more recent times. The LORD will therefore act to redeem the people and to put an end to the derision of the divine name among Israel's oppressors. When the LORD acts, the people will know their God. **5:** *Coastlands,* see 24.13n. **7–10:** As in 40.9, the prophet describes the messenger who brings good news that the LORD is returning to Zion (cf. Isa 40.9; Nah 1.15 [Heb 2.1]). **11–12:** In response to

go out from the midst of it, purify
yourselves,
you who carry the vessels of the
LORD.
12 For you shall not go out in haste,
and you shall not go in flight;
for the LORD will go before you,
and the God of Israel will be your rear
guard.

13 See, my servant shall prosper;
he shall be exalted and lifted up,
and shall be very high.
14 Just as there were many who were
astonished at him[a]
—so marred was his appearance,
beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of mortals—
15 so he shall startle[b] many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because
of him;
for that which had not been told them
they shall see,
and that which they had not heard they
shall contemplate.

53 Who has believed what we have
heard?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD
been revealed?
2 For he grew up before him like a young
plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should
look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we
should desire him.
3 He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering[c] and acquainted with
infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their
faces[d]
he was despised, and we held him of no
account.

4 Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
5 But he was wounded for our
transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made
us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.
6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers
is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
8 By a perversion of justice he was taken
away.
Who could have imagined his future?

[a] Syr Tg: Heb *you*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Or *a man of sorrows*
[d] Or *as one who hides his face from us*

the LORD's return to Zion, the exiles are called upon to leave Babylon and to form a holy procession bearing the Temple vessels (see Ezra 1.7–11) as they return to their homeland. *Not . . . in haste*, the exodus from Babylon will be different from the first Exodus; cf. Ex 12.11; 13.21–22.

52.13–53.12: Announcement of the exaltation of the servant of the LORD. The fourth and final servant song (see 42.1n.) portrays the suffering of the servant and his ultimate exaltation. Talmudic tradition identifies the servant with Moses, who suffered throughout the wilderness journey (*b. Sotah* 14a), and early Christian tradition identifies the servant with Jesus (Acts 8.32–35). Second Isaiah identifies the servant with Israel (49.3), although the servant's mission is to restore Israel and Jacob to the LORD (49.5). Other figures identified with the servant include the prophet Jeremiah, who was persecuted throughout his life; King Josiah, who was killed by Pharaoh Neco at Megiddo (2 Kings 23.29–30); and King Jehoiachin, who was exiled to Babylon (2 Kings 24.10–16). **52.13–15:** The disfigurement and suffering of the servant, but also his exaltation elicit astonishment from foreign nations and rulers (cf. 49.7). **53.1–12:** The intense suffering of the servant is defined vicariously; just as the LORD calls for Israel to be blind and deaf so that they will suffer punishment (6.9–10), so the servant now exemplifies that role. His suffering serves as a means to atone for the sins of the nation, much like a lamb

For he was cut off from the land of the
living,
stricken for the transgression of my
people.
9 They made his grave with the wicked
and his tomb[a] with the rich,[b]
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush
him with pain.[c]
When you make his life an offering for
sin,[d]
he shall see his offspring, and shall
prolong his days;
through him the will of the LORD shall
prosper.
11 Out of his anguish he shall see light;[e]
he shall find satisfaction through his
knowledge.
The righteous one,[f] my servant, shall
make many righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.
12 Therefore I will allot him a portion with
the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the
strong;
because he poured out himself to death,
and was numbered with the
transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the
transgressors.

54 Sing, O barren one who did not bear;
burst into song and shout,
you who have not been in labor!
For the children of the desolate woman
will be more
than the children of her that is married,
says the LORD.

2 Enlarge the site of your tent,
and let the curtains of your habitations
be stretched out;
do not hold back; lengthen your cords
and strengthen your stakes.
3 For you will spread out to the right and to
the left,
and your descendants will possess the
nations
and will settle the desolate towns.

4 Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed;
do not be discouraged, for you will not
suffer disgrace;
for you will forget the shame of your
youth,
and the disgrace of your widowhood
you will remember no more.
5 For your Maker is your husband,
the LORD of hosts is his name;
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
the God of the whole earth he is called.
6 For the LORD has called you
like a wife forsaken and grieved in
spirit,
like the wife of a man's youth when she is
cast off,
says your God.
7 For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great compassion I will gather
you.

[a] Q Ms: MT *and in his death*
[b] Cn: Heb *with a rich person*
[c] Or *by disease*; meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Q Mss: MT lacks *light*
[f] Or *and he shall find satisfaction. Through his knowledge, the righteous one*

sacrificed at the Temple altar. **10:** The servant's *offspring* refer to those who follow his example and teaching after his death rather than indicating that he survived and was rehabilitated.

54.1–17: Restoration of the covenant between the LORD and Zion. Like other major sections of Second Isaiah, 49.1–54.17 closes with a hymn (cf. 42.13; 44.23; 48.20–22). **1–3:** Zion is again addressed as a woman (cf. 49.14; 50.1; 51.17–52.2). Much like Sarah (Gen 16.1), she is described as a barren woman. In keeping with the promises to Abraham and Sarah, Zion will soon have so many children that her home will not be able to contain them (Gen 12.2–3; cf. Gen 15.1–6,17–21; 17.15–22; 22.15–18). **4–10:** The reassurance formula (cf. 7.4; 37.6) informs Zion that her time as an abandoned woman is at an end. The passage metaphorically identifies the LORD as Zion's husband in keeping with Israelite tradition that posited a marriage relationship between the LORD and Israel (cf. Jer 2; Ezek 16; Hos 1–3; Zeph 3.14–20). **6:** *Wife . . . cast off,* see 50.1–3n.

8 In overflowing wrath for a moment
I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love I will have
compassion on you,
says the LORD, your Redeemer.

9 This is like the days of Noah to me:
Just as I swore that the waters of Noah
would never again go over the earth,
so I have sworn that I will not be angry
with you
and will not rebuke you.
10 For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from
you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be
removed,
says the LORD, who has compassion on
you.

11 O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not
comforted,
I am about to set your stones in
antimony,
and lay your foundations with
sapphires.[a]
12 I will make your pinnacles of rubies,
your gates of jewels,
and all your wall of precious stones.
13 All your children shall be taught by the
LORD,
and great shall be the prosperity of your
children.
14 In righteousness you shall be
established;
you shall be far from oppression, for
you shall not fear;
and from terror, for it shall not come
near you.
15 If anyone stirs up strife,
it is not from me;
whoever stirs up strife with you
shall fall because of you.
16 See it is I who have created the smith
who blows the fire of coals,
and produces a weapon fit for its
purpose;
I have also created the ravager to destroy.
17 No weapon that is fashioned against
you shall prosper,
and you shall confute every tongue that
rises against you in judgment.
This is the heritage of the servants of the
LORD
and their vindication from me, says the
LORD.

55 Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
2 Why do you spend your money for that
which is not bread,

[a] Or *lapis lazuli*

8: *Hid my face*, cf. 8.16–17. **9:** *Days of Noah,* an allusion to the eternal covenant made with Noah never again to destroy the earth by flood (Gen 9.8–17), invoked to illustrate the permanence and validity of this new divine promise. **10:** The *covenant of peace* signifies God's lasting commitment to be present with *steadfast love* (Heb "ḥesed"); cf. 55.3; Num 25.10–13; Ezek 34.25. **11–17:** The LORD addresses Jerusalem as a bride about to be decked out in jewels before her wedding. **11–13a:** The new Jerusalem is adorned with precious stones and gems by builders supernaturally instructed; cf. Ezek 28.13–19. Christian apocalyptic literature draws on this imagery to describe the new Jerusalem (Rev 21.18–21). **17b:** The future Jerusalem will be given to the servants of the LORD. The mention of this faithful segment of the people serves as a point of transition to the last section of the book (cf. 56.6; 63.17; 65.8–9,13–16; 66.14). Although Second Isaiah ended with ch 55, this last chapter functions as an introduction to chs 56–66.

55.1–66.24: Prophetic exhortation to adhere to the LORD's covenant. The final block of the book of Isaiah calls upon the audience of the book to adhere to the LORD as the period of restoration is at hand. Chapter 55 was originally composed as the conclusion to the work of Second Isaiah in Isa 40–54, but it now functions as the introduction to chs 56–66, to the work of Third Isaiah, which is a collective designation for anonymous prophets of the early Persian period.

55.1–13: Exhortation proper to adhere to the LORD. 1–5: The prophet employs the metaphors of thirst and hunger to invite the audience of the book to partake of what the LORD has to offer. The invitation is formulated

and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
3 Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
4 See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.
5 See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

6 Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
7 let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

12 For you shall go out in joy,
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

56 Thus says the LORD:
Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.

in the language of wisdom literature, which often employs the metaphor of food to portray the pursuit of wisdom (cf. Prov 9.1–6). **3–5:** The prophet reiterates the Davidic covenant tradition with its promise of eternal kingship for the house of David (2 Sam 7). Because no Davidic king would ascend the throne under Persian rule, however, the prophet applies the Davidic covenant to the people of Israel at large. Just as David established an empire over surrounding nations (2 Sam 8), Israel will now serve as a means to call nations to recognize the LORD (cf. 2.2–4). **6–13:** The exhortation to follow the LORD addresses the audience directly (cf. 1.17; Am 5.6,14). The distinction between the righteous and the wicked in this passage is a rhetorical device to persuade the audience to choose to be included among the righteous rather than to suffer punishment with the wicked. **8–9:** The distinction between the ways and thoughts of the LORD and those of the audience builds the case that the LORD planned for punishment to culminate in restoration. **10–11:** The passage reiterates the permanence of the LORD's word (cf. 40.8), and that it will accomplish the divine purpose (cf. 14.27). **12–13:** In contrast to the thorns and thistles produced by Israel in the vineyard song (5.1–7), Israel will grow into *cypress* and *myrtle* as an everlasting sign of its relationship with the LORD (cf. 11.1–16). The imagery also recapitulates the theme of glorious return in 40.3–5 and 48.20–22, the beginning and end of chs 40–48. It therefore indicates a point of closure at a stage in the formation of the book. **13:** *Memorial,* lit., "name."

56.1–66.24: Substantiation: Prophetic instruction concerning the restored covenant community in Jerusalem. The collection of writings in chs 56–66 is generally ascribed to Third Isaiah, a name for various anonymous

2 Happy is the mortal who does this,
the one who holds it fast,
who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it,
and refrains from doing any evil.

3 Do not let the foreigner joined to the
LORD say,
"The LORD will surely separate me from
his people";
and do not let the eunuch say,
"I am just a dry tree."
4 For thus says the LORD:
To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,
5 I will give, in my house and within my walls,
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.

6 And the foreigners who join themselves
to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of
the LORD,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not
profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—
7 these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of
prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of
prayer
for all peoples.
8 Thus says the Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them
besides those already gathered.[a]

9 All you wild animals,
all you wild animals in the forest, come
to devour!
10 Israel's[b] sentinels are blind,
they are all without knowledge;
they are all silent dogs
that cannot bark;
dreaming, lying down,
loving to slumber.
11 The dogs have a mighty appetite;
they never have enough.

[a] Heb *besides his gathered ones*
[b] Heb *His*

prophets from the time of the restoration in the late sixth through the fifth centuries BCE. This material substantiates the exhortation to adhere to the covenant announced in Isa 55.

56.1–59.21: Prophetic instruction concerning proper observance of the covenant. The various subunits of this section of Isaiah offer instruction concerning the observance of the covenant with the LORD as the restoration comes to fruition. **56.1–8:** The passage begins with a general statement of principles concerning the LORD's expectations. Justice and righteousness are the basis of biblical law and subsequent Jewish tradition. **2:** *The sabbath* is the fundamental observance of Jewish tradition, having been founded as the LORD's day of rest from the time of creation (Gen 2.1–3; cf. Ex 20.8–11; 31.12–17; 20.8–11; Lev 19.30; 23.3; Deut 5.12–15). **3–8:** *Foreigners joined to the LORD* refers to those who have converted to Judaism, much as Jethro (Ex 18) and Ruth (Ruth 1) were viewed. Although Ezra and Nehemiah expelled foreign women from Jerusalem, those expelled had maintained their native languages and religious traditions without having converted (Neh 13.23–30; Ezra 9–10; cf. Deut 7.1–6). Deut 21.10–14 defines the procedure for marriage to a foreign woman captured in war, and biblical laws constantly stress that foreigners may join Israel if they observe the LORD's instructions (cf. Ex 12.48–49; Lev 24.22; Num 9.14; 15.27–31). *Eunuch,* castrated male, e.g., for service in a foreign court or harem. Deut 23.1–8 bans eunuchs, Ammonites and Moabites, and those born of an illicit marriage from membership in the community, but the present passage makes provision for eunuchs and foreigners if they observe the sabbath as the foundation of the eternal covenant with the LORD. A *monument and a name* (Heb. *yad veshem*) is given to eunuchs who cannot have children but observe the sabbath. The Hebrew phrase was used to name the Israel Holocaust Museum to honor those who were murdered in the Shoah (the Holocaust).

56.9–57.21: The LORD's willingness to forgive those who repent and return to the LORD. 56.9–12: The prophet metaphorically compares Israel's sentinels or leaders to silent dogs, who lack understanding and serve only their own immediate interests (cf. 1.2–3; cf. Jer 12.8–9; Ezek 39.17), thus leaving the people prey to *wild animals*. Alternatively, they are drunks (see 5.11–12; 28.1,7–13). Such characterization is designed to motivate

The shepherds also have no
understanding;
they have all turned to their own way,
to their own gain, one and all.
12 "Come," they say, "let us[a] get wine;
let us fill ourselves with strong drink.
And tomorrow will be like today,
great beyond measure."

57 The righteous perish,
and no one takes it to heart;
the devout are taken away,
while no one understands.
For the righteous are taken away from
calamity,
2 and they enter into peace;
those who walk uprightly
will rest on their couches.
3 But as for you, come here,
you children of a sorceress,
you offspring of an adulterer and a
whore.[b]
4 Whom are you mocking?
Against whom do you open your mouth
wide
and stick out your tongue?
Are you not children of transgression,
the offspring of deceit—
5 you that burn with lust among the oaks,
under every green tree;
you that slaughter your children in the
valleys,
under the clefts of the rocks?
6 Among the smooth stones of the valley is
your portion;
they, they, are your lot;
to them you have poured out a drink
offering,
you have brought a grain offering.
Shall I be appeased for these things?
7 Upon a high and lofty mountain
you have set your bed,
and there you went up to offer sacrifice.
8 Behind the door and the doorpost
you have set up your symbol;
for, in deserting me,[c] you have uncovered
your bed,
you have gone up to it,
you have made it wide;
and you have made a bargain for yourself
with them,
you have loved their bed,
you have gazed on their nakedness.[d]
9 You journeyed to Molech[e] with oil,
and multiplied your perfumes;
you sent your envoys far away,
and sent down even to Sheol.
10 You grew weary from your many
wanderings,
but you did not say, "It is useless."
You found your desire rekindled,
and so you did not weaken.

11 Whom did you dread and fear
so that you lied,
and did not remember me
or give me a thought?
Have I not kept silent and closed my eyes,[f]
and so you do not fear me?
12 I will concede your righteousness and
your works,

a Q Ms Syr Vg Tg: MT *me*
b Heb *an adulterer and she plays the whore*
c Meaning of Heb uncertain
d Or *their phallus*; Heb *the hand*
e Or *the king*
f Gk Vg: Heb *silent even for a long time*

the audience to accept the prophet's teachings concerning observance of the LORD's covenant. **57.1–13:** The prophet chastises Israel for idolatrous and immoral behavior. **1–2:** A complaint that the probably violent death of the righteous goes unnoticed and unlamented; cf. Ps 12.1; Mic 7.2. Placed here, it contrasts with the polemic that follows. The righteous die in peace, but their fate is ignored. **3–10:** The prophet portrays non-Israelite fertility worship, often associated with sexual rites in the Bible (e.g., Num 25; Lev 18.24–39). The language in these verses has much sexual innuendo. **3–5:** Cf. Hos 2.1–5; Jer 2.20–25. **6:** *The valley,* a stream bed, which would be an appropriate place to pour out libations to the gods. **7:** High mountains or hills are often sanctuary sites because they symbolize the majesty of the gods and, more practically, because grain is more readily threshed in the winds that blow across hilltops. **9:** *Molech* is a Canaanite god to whom children were apparently sacrificed (Lev 18.21; 20.2–5; 2 Kings 3.27; 23.10; Jer 7.31; 32.35); the spelling of his name is uncertain because the vowels employed in it are taken from Heb "boshet" ("shame"). *Sheol* is the underworld. **11–12:** The LORD's rhetorical questions assert that the people feared their idols. The LORD claims to have remained silent through the period

but they will not help you.
13 When you cry out, let your collection of
idols deliver you!
The wind will carry them off,
a breath will take them away.
But whoever takes refuge in me shall
possess the land
and inherit my holy mountain.

14 It shall be said,
"Build up, build up, prepare the way,
remove every obstruction from my
people's way."
15 For thus says the high and lofty one
who inhabits eternity, whose name is
Holy:
I dwell in the high and holy place,
and also with those who are contrite
and humble in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the humble,
and to revive the heart of the contrite.
16 For I will not continually accuse,
nor will I always be angry;
for then the spirits would grow faint
before me,
even the souls that I have made.
17 Because of their wicked covetousness I
was angry;
I struck them, I hid and was angry;
but they kept turning back to their own
ways.
18 I have seen their ways, but I will heal
them;
I will lead them and repay them with
comfort,
creating for their mourners the fruit of
the lips.[a]
19 Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says
the LORD;
and I will heal them.
20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea
that cannot keep still;
its waters toss up mire and mud.
21 There is no peace, says my God, for the
wicked.

58 Shout out, do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
2 Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced
righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of
their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.
3 "Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not
notice?"
Look, you serve your own interest on your
fast day,
and oppress all your workers.
4 Look, you fast only to quarrel and to
fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.
5 Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

of Israel's oppression and exile, but now the LORD has returned. **14–21:** The prophet now turns to themes of restoration and a concluding diatribe. **14–15:** The motif of the highway that leads the exiles home, as in the Exodus tradition (cf. 11.15–16; 27.12–13; 35.1–10; 40.3–5) is now applied metaphorically. The LORD emphasizes that the time of judgment is now past and that the time of healing and peace has begun. **18:** *The fruit of the lips,* praise and joyful prayer in the place of mourning, as an accompaniment or substitute for sacrifice (cf. Hos 14.2). **21:** A concluding diatribe condemns the *wicked* who will have no *peace* (cf. 48.22).

58.1–14: A call to repentance and promise of restoration. The LORD calls upon the people to repent and defines the criteria by which they may observe the covenant. **1–2:** The celebratory tone evokes festival observance in the Temple, but the LORD's first demand is for righteous moral action to accompany holy ritual action. **3–5:** The questions of the people presuppose a time of distress that would have continued throughout the Babylonian exile as the people waited for a divine response that was long in coming. Fasting was a means to humble oneself before the LORD in such a time of distress (cf. Zech 7.1–14; 8.18–19; Joel 1.14; 2.15). *Sackcloth,* see

6 Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator[a] shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say,
Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
10 if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
11 The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.
12 Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.
13 If you refrain from trampling the sabbath,
from pursuing your own interests on my holy day;
if you call the sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs;[b]
14 then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

59 See, the LORD's hand is not too short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear.
2 Rather, your iniquities have been barriers
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.
3 For your hands are defiled with blood,
and your fingers with iniquity;
your lips have spoken lies,
your tongue mutters wickedness.
4 No one brings suit justly,
no one goes to law honestly;
they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies,
conceiving mischief and begetting iniquity.
5 They hatch adders' eggs,
and weave the spider's web;
whoever eats their eggs dies,
and the crushed egg hatches out a viper.

[a] Or *vindication*
[b] Heb *or speaking words*

3.24n. **6–14:** A definition of genuine fasting. The LORD then spells out the means by which one should practice righteousness before the LORD. Concern for the poor is a hallmark of biblical tradition, including both biblical law and the prophets (Ex 22.21–27; 23.10–11; Lev 19.9–10; Deut 14.28–29; Isa 1.10–17; Am 2.6–8). **9:** When the people are righteous, the LORD answers the prayers of the nation (cf. 1.10–17, esp. v. 15) and rebuilds its ruins. **12:** *Ruins . . . foundations,* a reinterpretation of earlier promises of restoration (44.26–28). **13:** The LORD's instruction culminates in observance of the *sabbath* (cf. 56.1–8); cf. Am 8.5. **14:** For the final formula see 40.5.

59.1–21: The lament of the nation will be answered when the LORD comes to restore those who repent. **1–8:** The prophet argues that the LORD has the power and the will to restore the nation, but the people have not yet begun to practice righteousness. **2:** *Hidden his face,* cf. 8.16–17. **3:** *Hands . . . defiled with blood,* cf. 1.18–20. **5:** *Adders*

6 Their webs cannot serve as clothing;
they cannot cover themselves with what they make.
Their works are works of iniquity,
and deeds of violence are in their hands.
7 Their feet run to evil,
and they rush to shed innocent blood;
their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity,
desolation and destruction are in their highways.
8 The way of peace they do not know,
and there is no justice in their paths.
Their roads they have made crooked;
no one who walks in them knows peace.

9 Therefore justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not reach us;
we wait for light, and lo! there is darkness;
and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.
10 We grope like the blind along a wall,
groping like those who have no eyes;
we stumble at noon as in the twilight,
among the vigorous[a] as though we were dead.
11 We all growl like bears;
like doves we moan mournfully.
We wait for justice, but there is none;
for salvation, but it is far from us.
12 For our transgressions before you are many,
and our sins testify against us.
Our transgressions indeed are with us,
and we know our iniquities:
13 transgressing, and denying the Lord,
and turning away from following our God,
talking oppression and revolt,
conceiving lying words and uttering them from the heart.
14 Justice is turned back,
and righteousness stands at a distance;
for truth stumbles in the public square,
and uprightness cannot enter.
15 Truth is lacking,
and whoever turns from evil is despoiled.

The Lord saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no justice.
16 He saw that there was no one,
and was appalled that there was no one to intervene;
so his own arm brought him victory,
and his righteousness upheld him.
17 He put on righteousness like a breastplate,
and a helmet of salvation on his head;
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle.
18 According to their deeds, so will he repay;
wrath to his adversaries, requital to his enemies;
to the coastlands he will render requital.
19 So those in the west shall fear the name of the Lord,
and those in the east, his glory;
for he will come like a pent-up stream
that the wind of the Lord drives on.

20 And he will come to Zion as Redeemer,
to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord.
21 And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouths of your children, or out of the mouths of your children's children, says the Lord, from now on and forever.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

and *spiders* are poisonous and represent sins that destroy the wicked (cf. Pss 58.3–4; 140.1–3). **9–15a:** A communal confession of sin, though only v. 12 is addressed to God (cf. Pss 51.5; 90.8). The passage appears to be a meditation on 8.16–23, which portrays divine absence and the people groping in darkness. **15b–21:** The Lord prepares to come in judgment on seeing that there is no justice. **17:** The Lord's justice is described metaphorically as armor that a warrior puts on for battle. **18–20:** When the wicked are punished, Zion will be redeemed (cf. 1.27–28). **18:** *Coastlands,* see 24.13n. **21:** A promise of prophetic guidance (cf. 53.10; 61.1–4).

60 Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen
upon you.
2 For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
3 Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your
dawn.

4 Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to
you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on
their nurses' arms.
5 Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,[a]
because the abundance of the sea shall be
brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to
you.
6 A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the
LORD.
7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered
to you,
the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to
you;
they shall be acceptable on my altar,
and I will glorify my glorious house.

8 Who are these that fly like a cloud,
and like doves to their windows?
9 For the coastlands shall wait for me,
the ships of Tarshish first,
to bring your children from far away,
their silver and gold with them,
for the name of the LORD your God,
and for the Holy One of Israel,
because he has glorified you.
10 Foreigners shall build up your walls,
and their kings shall minister to you;
for in my wrath I struck you down,
but in my favor I have had mercy on
you.
11 Your gates shall always be open;
day and night they shall not be shut,
so that nations shall bring you their
wealth,
with their kings led in procession.
12 For the nation and kingdom
that will not serve you shall perish;
those nations shall be utterly laid waste.
13 The glory of Lebanon shall come to you,
the cypress, the plane, and the pine,
to beautify the place of my sanctuary;
and I will glorify where my feet rest.
14 The descendants of those who oppressed
you
shall come bending low to you,
and all who despised you
shall bow down at your feet;
they shall call you the City of the LORD,
the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
15 Whereas you have been forsaken and
hated,
with no one passing through,
I will make you majestic forever,
a joy from age to age.

[a] Heb *be enlarged*

60.1–62.12: Prophetic announcement of restoration for the nation. These chapters have strong similarities of content and style with chs 40–55. **60.1–9:** Zion's restoration, the return of the glory of the LORD, and the approach of the nations bearing gifts. As before, Zion is imaged as a woman (cf. 49.4; 52.1–2,7–12; 54.1–17). **1:** *Arise, shine,* see 51.17; 52.1–2; and cf. 2.2–4; 8.23. **1b–2:** *The glory of the LORD* is described as it was in the wilderness tabernacle (Ex 40.34–38), the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 8.1–13), and the restored Zion (4.2–5). **3:** The approach of the nations echoes the procession to Zion in 2.2–4. **4:** Dispersed Judeans will return, assisted by Gentiles (also 49.12; 51.9–11; 60.8–9; 66.20). **5–9:** Foreigners will bring gifts to honor the LORD (cf. 45.14,22–23; 60.11,16; Zeph 3.9–10; Hag 2.1–9). **6–7:** The Arabian kingdoms *Midian* (Ex 2.15), *Ephah* (Gen 25.4), *Sheba* (Gen 10.17; 1 Kings 10.1–13), *Kedar* (Isa 21.13–17; Jer 49.28–29), and *Nebaioth* (Gen 25.13). **9:** *Coastlands,* see 24.13n. *Tarshish*, see 2.16n. **10–22:** Whereas the nations in the past were brought by the LORD for Zion's punishment, now they will come to submit to her and to sustain her. **13:** *Lebanon* was known for its tall trees that were prized throughout the ancient Near East for splendid building projects, including the Jerusalem Temple (2.13; 1 Kings 5.8–10). The place where the LORD's *feet rest* is the Holy of Holies of the Temple where the ark of the covenant served as the

16 You shall suck the milk of nations,
you shall suck the breasts of kings;
and you shall know that I, the LORD, am
your Savior
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of
Jacob.

17 Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
instead of iron I will bring silver;
instead of wood, bronze,
instead of stones, iron.
I will appoint Peace as your overseer
and Righteousness as your taskmaster.
18 Violence shall no more be heard in your
land,
devastation or destruction within your
borders;
you shall call your walls Salvation,
and your gates Praise.
19 The sun shall no longer be
your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon
give light to you by night;[a]
but the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.
20 Your sun shall no more go down,
or your moon withdraw itself;
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall be
ended.
21 Your people shall all be righteous;
they shall possess the land forever.
They are the shoot that I planted, the work
of my hands,
so that I might be glorified.
22 The least of them shall become a clan,
and the smallest one a mighty nation;
I am the LORD;
in its time I will accomplish it quickly.

61 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the
oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint
spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his
glory.
4 They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former
devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

5 Strangers shall stand and feed your
flocks,

[a] Q Ms Gk Old Latin Tg: MT lacks *by night*

footstool for the LORD's throne (cf. 66.1). **16:** *The breasts of kings,* a metaphor for the nations' sustenance of Zion. **21:** *The shoot that I planted,* cf. 6.12–13; 11.1–16. **22:** The concluding statements recall the promise of both land and a numerous posterity to the ancestors (Gen 12.1–3; 15.5–6,17–21; 17.1–8; 28.10–15; 35.9–15). **61.1–7:** This passage presupposes the persona of the servant from Second Isaiah (cf. 42.1–4; 49.1–6; 50.4–11; 52.13–53.12). **1–2:** The imagery evokes the priestly proclamation of a year of jubilee or release from debt (Lev 25.8–17). The year of jubilee was to be observed every fiftieth year as a means to forgive debt and to return land and property to its ancestral owners. It is applied here to the return of Zion to its exiled people. **3b:** *Oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD*, see 6.12–13; 11.1–9; cf. 5.1–7; 27.2–6. **6:** The people of Israel will serve as priests to the nations (cf. Ex 19.6). **7:** Their double portion recalls Zion's double punishment (40.2). **8–9:** An everlasting covenant with the restored people of Zion (cf. 54.9–10).

61.10–62.12: Joy at the LORD's restoration of Zion (61.10–11). Just as Zion is dressed as a bride (52.12; 54.11–14) and the LORD is dressed in the armor of righteousness to redeem Zion (59.16–21), so the prophet now dresses for the wedding that will celebrate the reunion of the LORD and Zion. The imagery of growing shoots symbolizes the restoration (cf. 6.12–13; 11.1–9). **62.1–12:** The bridal imagery confirms Zion's restored status. Whereas the nations were appalled at the sight of the servant (52.13–53.12), now they will witness the emergence of a beautiful Zion. **3:** The *crown of beauty* also symbolizes the restored walls of the city (4.2; 28.5–6). **4:** *No more be termed Forsaken . . . Desolate*, cf. 54.1,6. **5:** The builder is now the LORD in contrast to 44.28 where it was Cyrus acting on

foreigners shall till your land and dress
your vines;
6 but you shall be called priests of the
LORD,
you shall be named ministers of our
God;
you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations,
and in their riches you shall glory.
7 Because their[a] shame was double,
and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot,
therefore they shall possess a double
portion;
everlasting joy shall be theirs.

8 For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;[b]
I will faithfully give them their
recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant
with them.
9 Their descendants shall be known among
the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD
has blessed.
10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of
salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of
righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a
garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her
jewels.
11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in
it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness
and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the
dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.
2 The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the
hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your
God.
4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken,[c]
and your land shall no more be termed
Desolate;[d]
but you shall be called My Delight Is in
Her,[e]
and your land Married;[f]
for the LORD delights in you,
and your land shall be married.
5 For as a young man marries a young
woman,
so shall your builder[g] marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the
bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.
6 Upon your walls, O Jerusalem,
I have posted sentinels;
all day and all night
they shall never be silent.
You who remind the LORD,
take no rest,
7 and give him no rest
until he establishes Jerusalem
and makes it renowned throughout the
earth.
8 The LORD has sworn by his right hand
and by his mighty arm:
I will not again give your grain
to be food for your enemies,
and foreigners shall not drink the wine
for which you have labored;
9 but those who garner it shall eat it
and praise the LORD,

[a] Heb *your*
[b] Or *robbery with a burnt offering*
[c] Heb *Azubah*
[d] Heb *Shemamah*
[e] Heb *Hephzibah*
[f] Heb *Beulah*
[g] Cn: Heb *your sons*

behalf of the LORD. **6–9:** The task of the sentinels or watchers is to ensure that the LORD keeps the divine promise to restore Zion. The image is based in part on the armed guards of a city, but it also presupposes the role of the priestly gatekeepers who ensured the sanctity of the Temple and its holy courts (1 Chr 9.17–27; 26.1–19;

and those who gather it shall drink it
in my holy courts.

10 Go through, go through the gates,
prepare the way for the people;
build up, build up the highway,
clear it of stones,
lift up an ensign over the peoples.
11 The LORD has proclaimed
to the end of the earth:
Say to daughter Zion,
"See, your salvation comes;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him."
12 They shall be called, "The Holy People,
The Redeemed of the LORD";
and you shall be called, "Sought Out,
A City Not Forsaken."

63 "Who is this that comes from Edom,
from Bozrah in garments stained
crimson?
Who is this so splendidly robed,
marching in his great might?"

"It is I, announcing vindication,
mighty to save."

2 "Why are your robes red,
and your garments like theirs who tread
the wine press?"

3 "I have trodden the wine press alone,
and from the peoples no one was
with me;
I trod them in my anger
and trampled them in my wrath;
their juice spattered on my garments,
and stained all my robes.
4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart,
and the year for my redeeming work
had come.
5 I looked, but there was no helper;
I stared, but there was no one to sustain
me;
so my own arm brought me victory,
and my wrath sustained me.
6 I trampled down peoples in my anger,
I crushed them in my wrath,
and I poured out their lifeblood on the
earth."

7 I will recount the gracious deeds of the
LORD,
the praiseworthy acts of the LORD,
because of all that the LORD has done
for us,
and the great favor to the house of
Israel
that he has shown them according to his
mercy,
according to the abundance of his
steadfast love.
8 For he said, "Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely";
and he became their savior
9 in all their distress.
It was no messenger[a] or angel

[a] Gk: Heb *anguish*

cf. 2 Kings 11.4–8). **10–12:** The prophet again calls for the people to go out (48.20–22), to prepare the *highway* (11.15; 27.12–13; 35.1–10; 40.3–5), and to raise the *ensign* (Heb "nes"; cf. 11.10; 49.22) to proclaim Zion's restoration.

63.1–66.24: Prophetic instruction concerning the process of Zion's restoration. The final unit of Third Isaiah and the book as a whole focuses on the means by which the LORD will judge the wicked before the ideal restoration can be achieved. Such a view attempts to explain why the ideals of the book have not yet been achieved (e.g., 2.2–4; 9.1–7; 11.1–16) by charging that some among the people are wicked rather than by raising questions about the LORD's ability to bring about the restoration.

63.1–6: Vengeance on Edom. During the sixth through the fourth centuries BCE, Edom disintegrated as it was displaced by Arabian tribal groups that formed the Nabatean kingdom. The Isaian oracle explains the Edomite decline as a deliberate act of the LORD (cf. ch 34). **1:** *Edom,* located southeast of the Dead Sea and the Negeb regions of Judah. *Bozrah,* a key city in Edom. **2–3:** The prophet employs the imagery of treading grapes to depict the LORD's blood-splattered clothing. Now that the vineyard has been restored (27.2–6), the harvest metaphorically begins. **4–6:** The LORD's *day of vengeance* builds upon the "day of the LORD" tradition in Isaiah when evil is defeated (2.10–21; 13.6–22; 34.8–17; 61.2).

63.7–64.12: A psalm of communal lamentation. 7–9: Recollection of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. See Ex 23.20, which asserts that an angel would lead Israel through the wilderness. In Ex 13.17–21, however, the LORD,

but his presence that saved them;[a]
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

10 But they rebelled
and grieved his holy spirit;
therefore he became their enemy;
he himself fought against them.
11 Then they[b] remembered the days of old,
of Moses his servant.[c]
Where is the one who brought them up out of the sea
with the shepherds of his flock?
Where is the one who put within them his holy spirit,
12 who caused his glorious arm
to march at the right hand of Moses,
who divided the waters before them
to make for himself an everlasting name,
13 who led them through the depths?
Like a horse in the desert,
they did not stumble.
14 Like cattle that go down into the valley,
the spirit of the LORD gave them rest.
Thus you led your people,
to make for yourself a glorious name.
15 Look down from heaven and see,
from your holy and glorious habitation.
Where are your zeal and your might?
The yearning of your heart and your compassion?
They are withheld from me.
16 For you are our father,
though Abraham does not know us
and Israel does not acknowledge us;
you, O LORD, are our father;
our Redeemer from of old is your name.
17 Why, O LORD, do you make us stray from your ways
and harden our heart, so that we do not fear you?
Turn back for the sake of your servants,
for the sake of the tribes that are your heritage.
18 Your holy people took possession for a little while;
but now our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary.
19 We have long been like those whom you do not rule,
like those not called by your name.

64 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
2[d] as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
4 From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
5 You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.[e]
6 We have all become like one who is unclean,

[a] Or *savior.* [9]*In all their distress he was distressed; the angel of his presence saved them;*
[b] Heb *he*
[c] Cn: Heb *his people*
[d] Ch 64.1 in Heb
[e] Meaning of Heb uncertain

symbolized as the pillar of smoke and fire, leads the nation. **10:** *But they rebelled*, i.e., in the wilderness; see Ex 32–34; Num 11–25. **15–19:** Direct appeal for the LORD to *look down* and *see.* **17:** The prophet takes up the motif of the hardened heart, applied to Pharaoh in the Exodus tradition (Ex 7.3–5; cf. Isa 6.9–10) to demand that the LORD cease afflicting Israel. **18:** The trampling of the sanctuary would refer to the Babylonian destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. **64.1–3:** A direct appeal to God, characteristic of the lament psalms, to intervene, to appear in power as in the days of old (cf. Ex 19.16–18; Judg 5.4–5; Ps 68.7–8; Hab 3.3–15). **5b–7:** The prophet reiterates the LORD's anger and hidden face from the people (cf. 8.16–17). Having been ravaged, the nation has now become

and all our righteous deeds are like a
filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take
us away.
7 There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered[a] us into the hand of
our iniquity.
8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.
10 Your holy cities have become a
wilderness,
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.
11 Our holy and beautiful house,
where our ancestors praised you,
has been burned by fire,
and all our pleasant places have become
ruins.
12 After all this, will you restrain yourself,
O LORD?
Will you keep silent, and punish us so
severely?

65 I was ready to be sought out by those
who did not ask,
to be found by those who did not
seek me.
I said, "Here I am, here I am,"
to a nation that did not call on my
name.
2 I held out my hands all day long
to a rebellious people,
who walk in a way that is not good,
following their own devices;
3 a people who provoke me
to my face continually,
sacrificing in gardens
and offering incense on bricks;
4 who sit inside tombs,
and spend the night in secret places;
who eat swine's flesh,
with broth of abominable things in
their vessels;
5 who say, "Keep to yourself,
do not come near me, for I am too holy
for you."
These are a smoke in my nostrils,
a fire that burns all day long.
6 See, it is written before me:
I will not keep silent, but I will repay;
I will indeed repay into their laps
7 their[b] iniquities and their[b] ancestors'
iniquities together,
says the LORD;
because they offered incense on the
mountains
and reviled me on the hills,
I will measure into their laps
full payment for their actions.
8 Thus says the LORD:
As the wine is found in the cluster,
and they say, "Do not destroy it,
for there is a blessing in it,"
so I will do for my servants' sake,
and not destroy them all.
9 I will bring forth descendants[c] from
Jacob,
and from Judah inheritors[d] of my
mountains;
my chosen shall inherit it,
and my servants shall settle there.

[a] Gk Syr Old Latin Tg: Heb *melted*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *your*
[c] Or *a descendant*
[d] Or *an inheritor*

impure. No one calls upon the LORD because the LORD is the source of Israel's punishment. **8–12:** A final appeal for the LORD to cease the divine silence and the punishment of the nation. Now that the Temple is destroyed, the LORD's relationship with the nation is in jeopardy. **8:** *Clay . . . potter,* cf. 29.16; 45.9.

65.1–66.24: The LORD's answer. The passage attempts to explain the failure of the nation to attain the ideals stated in the book by charging that evil still exists among the people. **1–7:** The people rejected the LORD despite the LORD's readiness to be sought. **3–4:** *Sacrificing in gardens,* non-Israelite fertility rituals practiced in gardens (cf. 1.28–31; 66.17). A list of abominations follows, such as tomb rituals to worship or consult the dead (Deut 18.11–12) and the eating of swine's flesh (66.17; Deut 14.8). **8–25:** The seed of Jacob will be restored in the new creation on Zion, but the wicked will be destroyed. **9:** The descendants of both *Jacob* (northern Israel) and *Judah*

10 Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks,
and the Valley of Achor a place for
herds to lie down,
for my people who have sought me.
11 But you who forsake the LORD,
who forget my holy mountain,
who set a table for Fortune
and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny;
12 I will destine you to the sword,
and all of you shall bow down to the
slaughter;
because, when I called, you did not
answer,
when I spoke, you did not listen,
but you did what was evil in my sight,
and chose what I did not delight in.
13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
My servants shall eat,
but you shall be hungry;
my servants shall drink,
but you shall be thirsty;
my servants shall rejoice,
but you shall be put to shame;
14 my servants shall sing for gladness of
heart,
but you shall cry out for pain of heart,
and shall wail for anguish of spirit.
15 You shall leave your name to my chosen
to use as a curse,
and the Lord GOD will put you to death;
but to his servants he will give a
different name.
16 Then whoever invokes a blessing in the
land
shall bless by the God of faithfulness,
and whoever takes an oath in the land
shall swear by the God of faithfulness;
because the former troubles are forgotten
and are hidden from my sight.

17 For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
18 But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.
19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be
heard in it,
or the cry of distress.
20 No more shall there be in it
an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old person who does not live out
a lifetime;
for one who dies at a hundred years will be
considered a youth,
and one who falls short of a hundred
will be considered accursed.
21 They shall build houses and inhabit
them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their
fruit.
22 They shall not build and another
inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of
my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the
work of their hands.
23 They shall not labor in vain,
or bear children for calamity;[a]
for they shall be offspring blessed by the
LORD—
and their descendants as well.

[a] Or *sudden terror*

will be restored in keeping with the LORD's covenant. **10:** *Sharon*, the coastal plain south of Akko and the Carmel, formerly desolate (33.9), and *Achor*, the barren valley south of Jericho and west of the Dead Sea (Josh 7.24; Hos 2.15), will both become fertile pastureland. The border regions of Israel will be secure. **11–12:** *Fortune* and *Destiny*, Heb "Gad" and "Meni," deities of fate and good luck venerated among Syrians, Arabs, and Nabateans. **12:** *When I called . . .*, see Jer 7.12–13. **13–16:** The contrasting fates of the wicked and the LORD's *servants*, i.e., those who are righteous. **15–16:** The names of the reprobate will serve as a curse, like the names of the prophets Ahab and Zedekiah executed by the Babylonians (Jer 29.22). The giving of a new name signifies a new status (43.1,7; 44.1–5; 62.2). **17–25:** The new heavens and earth essentially constitutes a new creation. Insofar as the Temple was the holy center of creation, its destruction and rebuilding entailed a new creation. Life in the restored land will be idyllic. **17b:** *Former things*, 43.18. **20:** The prediction of vastly increased life expectancy connotes a return to the original creation (cf. Gen 5). **21–23:** The future Israel will witness the reversal of familiar curses attached to treaties and covenants; see 62.8–9; Deut 28.30. **22:** *Days of a tree*, cf. 6.12–13; Job 14.7–9. **23:** The imagery of

24 Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed
together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the LORD.

66 Thus says the LORD:
Heaven is my throne
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build
for me,
and what is my resting place?
2 All these things my hand has made,
and so all these things are mine,[a]
says the LORD.
But this is the one to whom I will look,
to the humble and contrite in spirit,
who trembles at my word.

3 Whoever slaughters an ox is like one who
kills a human being;
whoever sacrifices a lamb, like one who
breaks a dog's neck;
whoever presents a grain offering, like one
who offers swine's blood;[b]
whoever makes a memorial offering
of frankincense, like one who
blesses an idol.
These have chosen their own ways,
and in their abominations they take
delight;
4 I also will choose to mock[c] them,
and bring upon them what they fear;
because, when I called, no one answered,
when I spoke, they did not listen;
but they did what was evil in my sight,
and chose what did not please me.

5 Hear the word of the LORD,
you who tremble at his word:
Your own people who hate you
and reject you for my name's sake
have said, "Let the LORD be glorified,
so that we may see your joy";
but it is they who shall be put to shame.

6 Listen, an uproar from the city!
A voice from the temple!
The voice of the LORD,
dealing retribution to his enemies!

7 Before she was in labor
she gave birth;
before her pain came upon her
she delivered a son.
8 Who has heard of such a thing?
Who has seen such things?
Shall a land be born in one day?
Shall a nation be delivered in one
moment?
Yet as soon as Zion was in labor
she delivered her children.
9 Shall I open the womb and not deliver?
says the LORD;
shall I, the one who delivers, shut the
womb?
says your God.

10 Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for
her,
all you who love her;
rejoice with her in joy,
all you who mourn over her—
11 that you may nurse and be satisfied
from her consoling breast;

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *these things came to be*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Or *to punish*

successful childbirth reverses that employed to describe the "day of the LORD" (13.8; cf. 26.17–18). **24–25:** The idyllic portrayal of predators at peace with prey is drawn from 11.6–9.

66.1–24: Restoration for the righteous. **1–4:** The Temple (*house*) only symbolizes the divine reality of the LORD's sovereignty (see 1 Kings 8.27). A saying directed against false understandings and expectations associated with the Jerusalem Temple and its sacrificial worship, rather than against the Temple as such or the project of rebuilding. Without an attitude of humility, sacrifice and offerings are of no use (cf. 1.10–17). **6:** The judgment to come has its source in the Temple; cf. Joel 3.16; Am 1.2. **7–9:** Here miraculously easy childbirth symbolizes the downfall of the old world and the rise of the new (contrast 13.8; 26.17–18; 37.3). **10–14:** The imagery of the rejoicing Jerusalem extends the metaphor of childbirth to the portrayal of a nursing mother (cf. 54.1–17). *River . . . overflowing stream*, now an image of prosperity; contrast 8.6–8, which portrays the Assyrian onslaught as

that you may drink deeply with delight
from her glorious bosom.

12 For thus says the LORD:
I will extend prosperity to her like a river,
and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream;
and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm,
and dandled on her knees.
13 As a mother comforts her child,
so I will comfort you;
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
14 You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice;
your bodies[a] shall flourish like the grass;
and it shall be known that the hand of the LORD is with his servants,
and his indignation is against his enemies.
15 For the LORD will come in fire,
and his chariots like the whirlwind,
to pay back his anger in fury,
and his rebuke in flames of fire.
16 For by fire will the LORD execute judgment,
and by his sword, on all flesh;
and those slain by the LORD shall be many.

17 Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following the one in the center, eating the flesh of pigs, vermin, and rodents, shall come to an end together, says the LORD.

18 For I know[b] their works and their thoughts, and I am[c] coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, 19 and I will set a sign among them. From them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put,[d] and Lud—which draw the bow—to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. 20 They shall bring all your kindred from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring a grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. 21 And I will also take some of them as priests and as Levites, says the LORD.

22 For as the new heavens and the new earth,
which I will make,
shall remain before me, says the LORD;
so shall your descendants and your name remain.
23 From new moon to new moon,
and from sabbath to sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship before me,
says the LORD.

24 And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

[a] Heb *bones*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb lacks *know*
[c] Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *it is*
[d] Gk: Heb *Pul*

a flood that will inundate the land. **15–24:** Judgment and new creation at Zion. **15–16:** Theophanies and scenarios of judgment often feature fire (26.11; 29.5–6; 30.27,33; 31.9; 33.12,14; 34.10) and the LORD's sword (27.1; 31.8; 34.5–7). **17:** See 65.3–4n. **18–21:** The gathering of the nations at Zion recalls 2.2–4. *Tarshish*, see 2.16n.; *Put*, in Libya; *Lud*, Lydia in Asia Minor; *Tubal*, also in Asia Minor; *Javan*, Greece or Ionia. Those taken to be *priests* and *Levites* are drawn from the returned exiles, not from the nations. **22–23:** The new creation (cf. 65.15–16) is declared permanent, like the old creation (Gen 9.8–17). **24:** The book closes with a portrayal of the fate of the wicked, designed to motivate the audience to identify with the righteous.

JEREMIAH

NAME, CANONICAL LOCATION, AND CONTENTS

The book of Jeremiah, the second of the major prophets, is in chronological order between Isaiah and Ezekiel. Named for the prophet Jeremiah and written for the survivors of three Babylonian incursions against Judah (598, 587, and 582 BCE), the book portrays a world of trauma. The book reenacts the disastrous events of Judah's final decades as a national and religious community: the destruction of Jerusalem and its sanctuary, the end of political independence, the forfeiture of land, and the death and deportation of thousands. While the details of these losses are debated, Jeremiah interprets them as meaning-making events that signal the end of the nation's social and symbolic worlds, even the collapse of the order of creation (4.23–26). The losses frame and define the text. They engulf the text in suffering, and they form a tapestry of grief that envelops Jeremiah and Judah, as well as the cosmos and its creator.

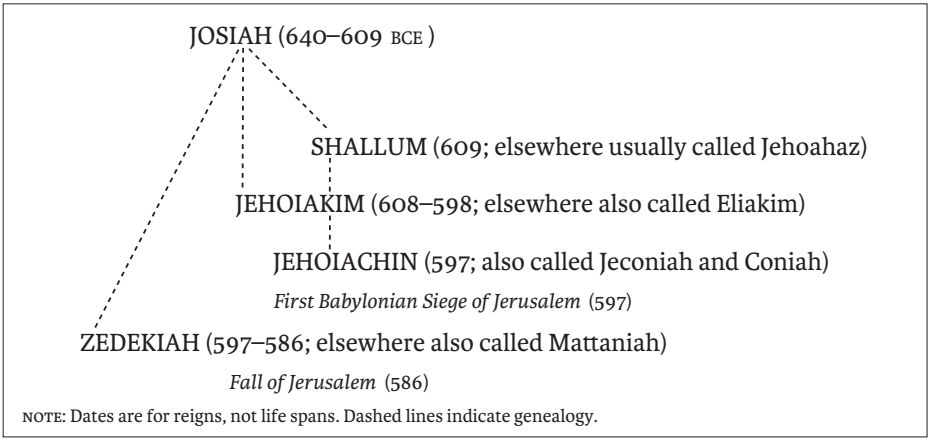
The book of Jeremiah contains both poetry and artistic prose. Poetry, especially the genre of lament or the dirge, dominates the first half of the book (chs 1–25). Even Jeremiah's oracles of judgment are often in the cadence of lamentations, as are the prophet's prayers, his so-called "confessions." Prose narratives predominate in the second half of the book (chs 26–52). The "Baruch narrative," the longest prose narrative in Jeremiah (chs 36–45), for example, has been described as a story of Jeremiah's suffering. Altogether the first half of Jeremiah predicts the traumatic end of the nation, whereas the second half depicts it, which some construed as the annulment of hope.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The prophet Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest from Anathoth (1.1). The family may have been descended from the priest Abiathar, who was banished by Solomon to Anathoth (1 Kings 2.26,27). Jeremiah lived during the critical years spanning the reign of the King Josiah (640–609 BCE) and the subsequent fall and destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of part of the Judean population into captivity (597–586 BCE), all at the hand of Nebuchadrezzar II of Babylon. Although some scholars interpret chs 2–6 and perhaps portions of chs 30–31 as the prophet's early preaching during Josiah's reign, no material in the book can be assigned to that time with certainty. Moreover, even though the prose sermons and the biographical narratives in the book bear strong linguistic resemblance to Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua–2 Kings), Jeremiah does not specifically mention Josiah's religious reform inspired by the discovery in the Temple of the "book of the law" in 622 BCE (2 Kings 22–23). These difficulties lead some scholars to regard 627 as the date of Jeremiah's birth (1.5) rather than as the beginning of his public career. After the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, Jeremiah and his secretary Baruch chose to remain in Judah with Gedaliah, who had been appointed governor by the Babylonians. After Gedaliah's murder, the Judeans who had been with Gedaliah fled to Egypt, forcibly taking Jeremiah and Baruch with them. Jeremiah is last heard speaking judgment oracles against this community in Egypt in the years following 586 BCE (chs 40–45).

STRUCTURE, COMPOSITION, AND LITERARY HISTORY

Although the book of Jeremiah has its origins in the poetic prophetic oracles uttered by Jeremiah, these have been arranged in groupings that are not simply chronological. Moreover, alongside the prophetic oracles, the book also contains a good deal of prose—often written in the third person, influenced by the language and theology of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings), and including the historical appendix (ch 52) borrowed and expanded from 2 Kings 24.28–25.30. There are also many doublets (7.1–15 || 26.4–6; 7.32 || 19.6; 16.14–15 || 23.7–8). A system of superscriptions and chronological notes may have been inserted to make the book conform to the Deuteronomistic History. The relationship between the Hebrew Masoretic text (MT) and the Greek Septuagint (LXX) is also complicated; the text of the LXX is about one-eighth shorter than the MT, and has a different location for the oracles against the foreign nations (MT 25.15–38; chs. 46–51). One Hebrew manuscript from Qumran (4Q71) is close to the LXX. All of these features suggest that the book of Jeremiah was produced through a long process of editorial activity.


JOSIAH (640–609 BCE)
SHALLUM (609; elsewhere usually called Jehoahaz)
JEHOIAKIM (608–598; elsewhere also called Eliakim)
JEHOIACHIN (597; also called Jeconiah and Coniah)
First Babylonian Siege of Jerusalem (597)
ZEDEKIAH (597–586; elsewhere also called Mattaniah)
Fall of Jerusalem (586)
NOTE: Dates are for reigns, not life spans. Dashed lines indicate genealogy.

The last kings of Judah in the book of Jeremiah.

The book of Jeremiah is not entirely chaotic, but is made up of composite collections that are meaningfully arranged. The first half of the book, chs 1–25, includes accusations and indictments against Judah and Jerusalem, which anticipate the nation's dismantling and death. This collection may have its origin in the scrolls of judgment oracles that Jeremiah is said to have dictated to Baruch (ch 36). The second half, chs 26–52, gives more attention to survival and hope. Chapters 27–29 are comprised of narratives about prophets with conflicting interpretations of Judah's future. At the center is the "Book of Consolation," an anthology of oracles and narratives of restoration (chs 30–33). Chapters 36–45, the so-called Baruch narrative, is a story of Jeremiah's suffering and survival during Judah's most vexing days. Chapters 46–51, oracles against the nations, close the Hebrew text of Jeremiah (MT) with a triumphant note of God's victory over archenemy Babylon. Thus, as a whole, the book testifies to the divine work of both "plucking up and pulling down" and of "building and planting" (1.10).

In addition, the prose sermons in Jeremiah create a degree of order. They provide commentary and create a sense of narrative progression in the poetic contexts of chs 1–25. For example, the prose sermons frustrate Judah's belief that God is unconditionally tied to its preexilic arrangements, as Jeremiah proclaims that Judah's cherished beliefs and institutions—the Temple, covenant, election, land claims, and dynasty—will not protect the nation from looming disaster. Accordingly, the prophet assaults Judah's worship at the Jerusalem Temple (ch 7), declares that the ancient covenant curses rather than blesses (ch 11), scrutinizes Israel's election tradition (ch 18), subverts dynastic rights (ch 21), and sabotages ancient land claims (ch 25). Though such attacks were likely unwelcome, they aimed to help a displaced Judean community in Babylon relinquish its former world for a new social setting.

Finally, the persona of Jeremiah provides some order. Unlike other biblical prophets whose oracles eclipse their characters, stories about Jeremiah, his experiences, and his prayers are as important as his oracles. This archetypal figure not only speaks for God but engages God's purposes and pathos in his own life. In this capacity, Jeremiah himself becomes God's prophetic message. His devotion to God and suffering service, his life of supplication and protest, all take on paradigmatic force. In the end, Jeremiah emerges as God's suffering servant, not unlike Second Isaiah's "servant of the LORD." Jeremiah endures enormous hardship at the hands of his enemies. He faces scorn and humiliation, suffers unjustly and in solidarity with the poor, and does not cower though his life is endangered. As a representative of war-torn people, Jeremiah testifies that suffering is neither shameful nor a sign of divine displeasure but rather an indication of one's devotion to God. This unifying portrayal of Jeremiah organizes the text's seemingly dissonant world.

Louis Stulman

1 The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 2 to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3 It came also in the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

4 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."
6 Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." 7 But the LORD said to me,

"Do not say, 'I am only a boy';
for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.
8 Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
says the LORD."
9 Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me,

"Now I have put my words in your mouth.
10 See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant."

11 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And I said, "I see a branch of an almond tree."[a] 12 Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching[b] over my word to perform it." 13 The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, tilted away from the north."

14 Then the LORD said to me: Out of the north disaster shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land. 15 For now I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come and all of them shall set their thrones at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its surrounding walls and against all the cities of Judah. 16 And I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness

[a] Heb *shaqed*
[b] Heb *shoqed*

1.1–3: Superscription. The superscription resembles Hos 1.1; Am 1.1; Mic 1.1; Zeph 1.1 and represents a stage in the editing of the prophetic corpus. **1:** The phrase *the words of Jeremiah* functions as bookends (1.1; 51.64; cf. 2 Chr 36.22–23). *Anathoth*, a small village about 3 mi (5 km) northeast of Jerusalem (modern Ras el-Kharrubeh), associated with the outlier priest Abiathar (cf. 1 Kings 2.26–27). **2–3:** *In the days of King Josiah . . . in the thirteenth year of his reign* (627 BCE); *until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah* (587 BCE), a forty-year prophetic ministry. *In the fifth month* recalls the burning of the Temple and the razing of Jerusalem by the invading Babylonians (52.12; 2 Kings 25.8–12; Zech 7.3–5).

1.4–10: Jeremiah's call follows a typical pattern (see Ex 3–6; Judg 6.11–18; Isa 6) involving God's identification of a task and commission of the one called, the excuses of the one commissioned, God's promise to be with the one commissioned, and God's giving a sign. The call report authorizes Jeremiah's words and mission, drawing upon the figures of Moses, Solomon, and Isaiah's "servant of the LORD." **4:** *Word of the LORD,* the prophets' primary area of responsibility, often gained by visionary experience (see vv. 11,13; 18.18; Ezek 7.26). **5:** Like the servant of the LORD in Isaiah, Jeremiah is chosen and *formed . . . in the womb* by God (Isa 44.1–2; 49.1,5) to be *a prophet to the nations* (Isa 42.1; 49.6). **6–8:** *I am only a boy*, indicating apprentice or assistant status (cf. 1 Kings 3.7). *I do not know how to speak*, like Moses (Ex 3.1–6; 4.10–17) and Gideon (Judg 6.15), Jeremiah expresses a sense of inadequacy. **9:** God addresses Jeremiah's reservations by putting words into his mouth (15.16; Ex 4.12; Deut 18.18; cf. Isa 6.7). **10:** *To pluck up and pull down . . . to build and plant*, Jeremiah's twofold task of judgment and restoration (see, e.g., 12.14–17; 18.7–10; 24.6; 31.28,40; 42.10; 45.4; cf. 18.14).

1.11–19: Vision reports and their explanations. 11–12: Jeremiah sees *an almond tree* (Heb "shaqed") and is assured that God is *watching over* (Heb "shoqed") the prophetic word to fulfill it. For similar vision/puns see Am 7.7–9; 8.1–3. **13–14:** The *boiling pot, tilted away from the north* foreshadows a military assault from the north against Judah and Jerusalem. The pot was *boiling* over as first Assyria and then Babylon exercised expansionist imperial policies against Judah and its neighbors (cf. 4.6; 6.1,22; 10.22). **15–16:** *Set their thrones at the entrance of*

in forsaking me; they have made offerings
to other gods, and worshiped the works of
their own hands. [17] But you, gird up your
loins; stand up and tell them everything that
I command you. Do not break down before
them, or I will break you before them. [18] And
I for my part have made you today a fortified
city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against
the whole land—against the kings of Judah,
its princes, its priests, and the people of the
land. [19] They will fight against you; but they
shall not prevail against you, for I am with
you, says the LORD, to deliver you.

2 The word of the LORD came to me, saying:
[2] Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jeru-
salem, Thus says the LORD:

I remember the devotion of your youth,
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown.
[3] Israel was holy to the LORD,
the first fruits of his harvest.
All who ate of it were held guilty;
disaster came upon them,
says the LORD.

[4] Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Ja-
cob, and all the families of the house of Israel.
[5] Thus says the LORD:

What wrong did your ancestors find in
me
that they went far from me,
and went after worthless things, and
became worthless themselves?
[6] They did not say, "Where is the LORD
who brought us up from the land of
Egypt,
who led us in the wilderness,
in a land of deserts and pits,
in a land of drought and deep darkness,
in a land that no one passes through,
where no one lives?"
[7] I brought you into a plentiful land
to eat its fruits and its good things.
But when you entered you defiled my
land,
and made my heritage an
abomination.
[8] The priests did not say, "Where is the
LORD?"
Those who handle the law did not know
me;
the rulers[a] transgressed against me;
the prophets prophesied by Baal,
and went after things that do not profit.

[a] Heb *shepherds*

the gates, at the place of judgment and justice; a sign of military conquest (39.3; 43.10). *For all their wickedness,* the invasion is divine punishment for Judah's infidelity. *The works of their own hands,* images and idols of other gods fashioned by artisans (10.9). **17:** *Gird up your loins*, as if binding up a garment for hard travel (2 Kings 4.29; 9.1) or for battle (Job 38.3; Nah 2.1). **18:** *A fortified city . . .* see also 6.27 textual note *a*; cf. 34.7. *The whole land*, if the target is Judah. But Heb "'erets" also means "earth," and expresses the universal commission of Jeremiah against nations and kingdoms. **19:** *I am with you*, see also 1.8; 15.20; 30.11.

2.1–4.4: Divine grief over Israel's infidelity. This unit uses intertextual links, shifts in (Israel's) gender identity, dissonant voices, and contrasting emotions, as well as dialogue, satire, exhortation, and legal precedent to imagine God as a spurned lover longing for reunion with God's loved one. The metaphor of rejected lover unifies the larger context (see also Hos 1–3; Isa 1.21; Ezek 16; 23).

2.1–37: Accusations of betrayal. 1–13: The unit opens with memories of Israel's devotion to God in the wilderness, which functions as a literary foil and the basis for a lawsuit against Israel (vv. 4–13; cf. Hos 4.1–4; Mic 6.1–5; and, by contrast, Jer 12.1–4). **1:** The wilderness period immediately after the Exodus is recalled in idealized terms as a period of fidelity to God (cf. Hos 2.14–15). **2:** *Devotion . . . love*, loyalty and commitment. *In a land not sown* there was no temptation to worship the fertility gods of Canaan. **3:** *Israel was holy to the LORD*, like sacrifices that were "most holy" and therefore reserved strictly for priestly consumption (Lev 5.15–16; 6.25–29); the nations who have devoured Israel, God's own holy portion, are *guilty*. *First fruits*, see Lev 23.9–14.

2.4–8: Israel defiles the land. 5: *Worthless things*, or "vaporous puffs of wind" (Heb "hevel"); cf. Eccl 1.2. **6–7:** Inability to engage in lament indicates a loss of relationship. **8:** *The priests* failed to lead the community in such complaint as was their responsibility. *Those who handle the law,* the priests who were to instruct the community in *law* (Heb "torah"). *Prophesied by Baal*, the Canaanite god; cf. Hos 2.8–17. *Things that do not profit* (Heb "ya'al"), a play on the name Baal ("ba'al").

9 Therefore once more I accuse you,
says the LORD,
and I accuse your children's children.
10 Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
send to Kedar and examine with care;
see if there has ever been such a thing.
11 Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?
But my people have changed their glory
for something that does not profit.
12 Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
says the LORD,
13 for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for themselves,
cracked cisterns
that can hold no water.

14 Is Israel a slave? Is he a homeborn
servant?
Why then has he become plunder?
15 The lions have roared against him,
they have roared loudly.
They have made his land a waste;
his cities are in ruins, without
inhabitant.
16 Moreover, the people of Memphis and
Tahpanhes
have broken the crown of your head.
17 Have you not brought this upon yourself
by forsaking the LORD your God,
while he led you in the way?
18 What then do you gain by going to
Egypt,
to drink the waters of the Nile?
Or what do you gain by going to Assyria,
to drink the waters of the Euphrates?
19 Your wickedness will punish you,
and your apostasies will convict you.
Know and see that it is evil and bitter
for you to forsake the LORD your God;
the fear of me is not in you,
says the Lord GOD of hosts.

20 For long ago you broke your yoke
and burst your bonds,
and you said, "I will not serve!"
On every high hill
and under every green tree
you sprawled and played the whore.
21 Yet I planted you as a choice vine,
from the purest stock.
How then did you turn degenerate
and become a wild vine?
22 Though you wash yourself with lye
and use much soap,
the stain of your guilt is still before me,
says the Lord GOD.
23 How can you say, "I am not defiled,
I have not gone after the Baals"?
Look at your way in the valley;
know what you have done—

2.9–13: God's resulting legal accusation. Interrogation and accusation support evidence against Israel, including the claim that Israel has been unfaithful (v. 13). **9:** *I accuse you*, language typical of the lawsuit oracle. **10:** From *the coasts of Cyprus to Kedar*, that is from west to east. "Cyprus" or "Kittim" (Heb "kittiyyim"; see Gen 10.4; Isa 23.1), the distant western lands in the Mediterranean (later Greece, 1 Macc 1.1, and Rome, Dan 11.30). *Kedar*, a collective term for nomadic tribes in northern Arabia (49.28–33; Gen 25.13; Ps 120.5; Song 1.5; Isa 60.7; Ezek 27.21). **11:** *Does not profit,* see v. 8n. **12:** In the lawsuit oracle the *heavens* are witness to Israel's guilt (cf. Mic 6.1–2).

2.14–19: Israel's apostasy is enacted in illicit alliances with Egypt and Assyria, thereby sacrificing its freedom. **14:** The rhetorical questions beg a negative response, but the present reality of subjugation suggests something fundamentally wrong. **15:** *The lions*, Israel's enemies; here, Assyria. **16:** *Memphis,* a city in northern Egypt on the west bank of the Nile; *Tahpanhes,* an Egyptian border city also known as Baal-zaphon, where some Judeans flee after the death of Gedaliah (43.7–9; 44.1; 46.14). **18:** *Egypt . . . Assyria*, the temptation was to make alliances with a stronger neighbor, to protect against other enemies (2 Kings 16.7; Isa 31.1). Such alliances showed a lack of faith in the LORD, and could involve worshiping the gods of the major treaty power, resulting in religious apostasy. *Waters of the Nile . . . the Euphrates*, contrast *the fountain of living waters* in v. 13.

2.20–28: Israel's wild promiscuity. 21: God's *choice vine* from *purest stock* turned into something wild, lit., "foreign"; see Isa 5.2; cf. Hos 10.1. **23:** *Baals*, local manifestations of the chief Canaanite god of fertility. Heb "ba'al" means "master, husband, owner," and Israel's God might also be thought of as Israel's husband or "ba'al" (3.14; 31.31; Hos 2.16), thereby creating religious confusion. The Baal worship elaborates the metaphor of Israel as a promiscuous spouse (cf. Hos 1–3). **23b–24:** The image of animals *in heat* suggests the uncontrollable nature

a restive young camel interlacing her
tracks,
24 a wild ass at home in the
wilderness,
in her heat sniffing the wind!
Who can restrain her lust?
None who seek her need weary
themselves;
in her month they will find her.
25 Keep your feet from going unshod
and your throat from thirst.
But you said, "It is hopeless,
for I have loved strangers,
and after them I will go."

26 As a thief is shamed when caught,
so the house of Israel shall be
shamed—
they, their kings, their officials,
their priests, and their prophets,
27 who say to a tree, "You are my father,"
and to a stone, "You gave me birth."
For they have turned their backs to me,
and not their faces.
But in the time of their trouble they say,
"Come and save us!"
28 But where are your gods
that you made for yourself?
Let them come, if they can save you,
in your time of trouble;
for you have as many gods
as you have towns, O Judah.

29 Why do you complain against me?
You have all rebelled against me,
says the LORD.
30 In vain I have struck down your
children;
they accepted no correction.
Your own sword devoured your prophets
like a ravening lion.
31 And you, O generation, behold the word
of the LORD![a]
Have I been a wilderness to Israel,
or a land of thick darkness?
Why then do my people say, "We are free,
we will come to you no more"?
32 Can a girl forget her ornaments,
or a bride her attire?
Yet my people have forgotten me,
days without number.

33 How well you direct your course
to seek lovers!
So that even to wicked women
you have taught your ways.
34 Also on your skirts is found
the lifeblood of the innocent poor,
though you did not catch them breaking
in.
Yet in spite of all these things[a]
35 you say, "I am innocent;
surely his anger has turned
from me."
Now I am bringing you to judgment
for saying, "I have not sinned."
36 How lightly you gad about,
changing your ways!
You shall be put to shame by Egypt
as you were put to shame by
Assyria.
37 From there also you will come away
with your hands on your head;
for the LORD has rejected those in whom
you trust,
and you will not prosper through
them.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

of Israel's apostasy. **26:** *A thief is ashamed*, the word "shame" was often used in place of the name Baal (see 2 Sam 3.8, textual note *c*). *Kings . . . officials . . . priests . . . prophets . . .*, Judah's national leadership. **27:** The *tree* or wood pole (Heb "'asherah") symbolized the goddess Asherah, and the standing *stone* symbolized the god Baal and they were associated with Canaanite practices (see Ex 23.24; Deut 12.3; 1 Kings 16.33).

2.29–37: God's legal suit against Israel. 29: *Complain against*, formal lawsuit language. Israel's countercomplaint is without basis. **30:** *Devoured your prophets*, that Israel neglected the prophets is a refrain of the Deuteronomistic editor of Jeremiah (7.25; 25.4; 25.15; 26.5; 29.19; 44.4); cf. 1 Kings 19.10; 2 Kings 21.16. **32:** Cf. vv. 10–11. *Days without number*, contrasts Israel's early devotion (vv. 2–3). **34–35:** If a thief was caught in the act, violence against the thief might be excusable (Ex 22.2–3). **36:** Recalls the invasion of Judah and siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians in 701 BCE (2 Kings 18.13–19.28). **37:** *Your hands on your head*, a sign of deep mourning (2 Sam 13.19).

3 If[a] a man divorces his wife
and she goes from him
and becomes another man's wife,
will he return to her?
Would not such a land be greatly polluted?
You have played the whore with many
lovers;
and would you return to me?
says the LORD.
2 Look up to the bare heights,[b] and see!
Where have you not been lain with?
By the waysides you have sat waiting for
lovers,
like a nomad in the wilderness.
You have polluted the land
with your whoring and wickedness.
3 Therefore the showers have been
withheld,
and the spring rain has not come;
yet you have the forehead of a whore,
you refuse to be ashamed.
4 Have you not just now called to me,
"My Father, you are the friend of my
youth—
5 will he be angry forever,
will he be indignant to the end?"
This is how you have spoken,
but you have done all the evil that you
could.

6 The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and played the whore there? 7 And I thought, "After she has done all this she will return to me"; but she did not return, and her false sister Judah saw it. 8 She[c] saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce; yet her false sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. 9 Because she took her whoredom so lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. 10 Yet for all this her false sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but only in pretense, says the LORD.

11 Then the LORD said to me: Faithless Israel has shown herself less guilty than false Judah. 12 Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say:

Return, faithless Israel,
says the LORD.
I will not look on you in anger,
for I am merciful,
says the LORD;
I will not be angry forever.
13 Only acknowledge your guilt,
that you have rebelled against the LORD
your God,
and scattered your favors among strangers
under every green tree,
and have not obeyed my voice,
says the LORD.

[a] Q Ms Gk Syr: MT *Saying, If*
[b] Or *the trails*
[c] Q Ms Gk Mss Syr: MT *I*

3.1–5: No return possible. Jeremiah uses an abbreviated form of the Deuteronomic law on marriage and divorce in the charges against Israel. **1:** *Will he return?* The rhetorical question demands a negative answer. Deut 24.1–4 prohibits second marriages to the same person. To *return* or turn, repent, is repeated several times in the larger unit (e.g., vv. 7,10,12,14,22; 4.1; cf. Deut 4.30; 30.1–2,10). Although the analogy would exclude the possibility of repentance and reconciliation between people and God, later passages in the chapter envision such restoration. **2:** *Lain with,* the MT contains two alternate readings of the verb. One (Heb "shagal") is probably vulgar, meaning to have sex with or to be raped. Ancient editors preferred to read a passive form of "shakab," "lain with." **3:** Israel's behavior pollutes the environment and disrupts nature; see Hag 1.5–11. *Forehead*, i.e., stubbornness (cf. Isa 48.4). **4:** *The friend of my youth*, Heb "'alluph" implies God's intimacy.

3.6–11: Israel and Judah's continued unfaithfulness. Exilic-era prose continues the broken-marriage metaphor and argues that Judah is guiltier than Israel. **6:** One of few specific references other than genealogical to *King Josiah* (640–609 BCE) in Jeremiah 1–25 (also 1.2; 25.3; see also 22.15–16). *High hill . . . green tree*, high places were sites for illicit worship, and the wood pole/tree represented the goddess Asherah (see 2.27n.) **8:** *Decree of divorce*, see Deut 24.1–4. **9:** *Pollute*, a priestly term for contaminating the sacred (see also 3.1,2; Lev 19.29; Num 35.33–34).

3.12–14: Call for Israel's return. 12: *Toward the north*, the kingdom of Israel, north of Judah, had earlier been carried away by the Assyrians into captivity. What follows is directed to the Northern Kingdom. **13:** *Strangers*,

14 Return, O faithless children,
says the LORD,
for I am your master;
I will take you, one from a city and two
from a family,
and I will bring you to Zion.

15 I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. 16 And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the LORD, they shall no longer say, "The ark of the covenant of the LORD." It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; nor shall another one be made. 17 At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no longer stubbornly follow their own evil will. 18 In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your ancestors for a heritage.

19 I thought
how I would set you among my
children,
and give you a pleasant land,
the most beautiful heritage of all the
nations.
And I thought you would call me, My
Father,
and would not turn from following me.
20 Instead, as a faithless wife leaves her
husband,
so you have been faithless to me,
O house of Israel,
says the LORD.

21 A voice on the bare heights[a] is heard,
the plaintive weeping of Israel's
children,
because they have perverted their way,
they have forgotten the LORD their God:
22 Return, O faithless children,
I will heal your faithlessness.

"Here we come to you;
for you are the LORD our God.
23 Truly the hills are[b] a delusion,
the orgies on the mountains.
Truly in the LORD our God
is the salvation of Israel.
24 "But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our ancestors had labored, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. 25 Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us; for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our ancestors, from our youth even to this day; and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God."

[a] Or *the trails*
[b] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *Truly from the hills is*

implying a dangerous and defiling foreignness. **14:** *Return, O faithless children*, the metaphor shifts from promiscuous spouse to disobedient children. *I am your master* (Heb "ba'alti bakem"), the Heb word "ba'al" also means husband; see 2.23n.

3.15–18: Israel's restoration. 15: *Shepherds*, kings and leaders. *Feed you,* lit., "shepherd you." *After my own heart,* a description reminiscent of David (1 Sam 13.14). **16:** *Ark of the covenant*, Judah's central religious symbol may have been removed in a military attack and no longer in the Temple by Jeremiah's time. Later tradition credited Jeremiah with hiding the Ark following the destruction of the Temple (2 Macc 2.4–5) on Mount Nebo, the site of Moses's secret burial (Deut 34.1,6). **17:** As part of the divine throne, the ark was God's footstool (1 Chr 28.2; Ps 132.7–8); now *Jerusalem* itself will become God's *throne*. **18:** *Land of the north*, both Assyria and Babylon were symbolically located in the north; see 1.14n.

3.19–4:4: God's plea for Israel's return. A return to the motif of God's prodigal children and promiscuous spouse to speak of Israel's apostasy and God's longing for reconciliation. **19:** Addressed to the young woman. Normally women did not inherit property, as illustrated by the case of the daughters of Zelophehad (Num 26.33; 27.1–7; 36.2–9; cf. also Job 42.15). *A pleasant land*, cf. Ps 106.24; Zech 7.14. *Father,* see 3.4. **21:** *Bare heights,* hot, dry, barren land, scene of Israel's misery (see 14.6). **23:** *A delusion* (Heb "sheqer"), a play on code language for the Canaanite god Baal. *Orgies* is a strong translation; Heb "hamon" implies only the tumultuous noise of a crowd out of control. **24:** *Shameful thing*, a reference to Baal; see 2.26n. *Devoured*, on voracious divine appetites see 51.33–44; cf. Bel 1–28. **25:** As Israel lay with Baal (3.2), so now they will *lie down* in their *shame* (see v. 24) as

4 If you return, O Israel,
says the LORD,
if you return to me,
if you remove your abominations from my presence,
and do not waver,
2 and if you swear, "As the LORD lives!"
in truth, in justice, and in uprightness,
then nations shall be blessed[a] by him,
and by him they shall boast.
3 For thus says the LORD to the people of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem:
Break up your fallow ground,
and do not sow among thorns.
4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,
remove the foreskin of your hearts,
O people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
or else my wrath will go forth like fire,
and burn with no one to quench it,
because of the evil of your doings.

5 Declare in Judah, and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say:
Blow the trumpet through the land;
shout aloud[b] and say,
"Gather together, and let us go
into the fortified cities!"
6 Raise a standard toward Zion,
flee for safety, do not delay,
for I am bringing evil from the north,
and a great destruction.
7 A lion has gone up from its thicket,
a destroyer of nations has set out;
he has gone out from his place
to make your land a waste;
your cities will be ruins
without inhabitant.
8 Because of this put on sackcloth,
lament and wail:
"The fierce anger of the LORD
has not turned away from us."

9 On that day, says the LORD, courage shall fail the king and the officials; the priests shall be appalled and the prophets astounded. 10 Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD, how utterly you have deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'It shall be well with you,' even while the sword is at the throat!"

11 At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A hot wind comes from me out of the bare heights[c] in the desert toward my poor people, not to winnow or cleanse—
12 a wind too strong for that. Now it is I who speak in judgment against them.
13 Look! He comes up like clouds,
his chariots like the whirlwind;
his horses are swifter than eagles—
woe to us, for we are ruined!

[a] Or *shall bless themselves*
[b] Or *shout, take your weapons*: Heb *shout, fill* (your hand)
[c] Or *the trails*

the consequence mirrors the offense. **4.1:** *Return*, see 3.1n. The conditions of return involve renunciation of other gods and commitment to the LORD. **2:** *As the LORD lives*, a call for sincere oath-taking in God's name in judicial cases. *Nations shall be blessed,* cf. Gen 12.2–3; 18.18. **3–4:** Two images of reconciliation: *break up your fallow ground* (see also Hos 10.12), an agricultural metaphor based on cultivating land for growth; *circumcise yourselves,* a sign of Israel's covenant relationship with God (Gen 17.10–14); *foreskin of your hearts* is a Deuteronomic expression that suggests sincere and faithful obedience to God (see Deut 10.16; 30.6; see also Jer 9.25–26; Ezek 44.7).

4.5–18: A state of emergency. The enemy approaches at God's command, making the threat mythic in scope. **5.** *The trumpet*, lit., "ram's horn" (Heb "shophar") was used for signaling, especially in battle (4.19; Judg 3.27; 6.34). Here the signal is for taking refuge inside the walled city. **6:** *A standard,* any visible marker, such as a pole or signal fire, that could be seen from a distance. The letters from Lachish, contemporary to this period, refer to the signal fire from Azekah as no longer visible; cf. 34.7. **7:** *A lion has gone up*, Nebuchadrezzar II of Babylon (605–562 BCE), though God, too, can be described as a lion on the prowl (25.36–38; 49.19; 50.44), or as a predator watching its prey (1.12; 5.6; 44.27). **9–10:** Jeremiah charges God with deceiving the people by convincing them that everything will be *well,* lit., "peace" (Heb "shalom"). *Deceived this people and Jerusalem*, perhaps an allegation that God is responsible for sending prophets who speak ill-timed words of hope (6.14; 8.11; 23.17; cf. 1 Kings 22.19–23). **11:** *From me* is lacking in the Hebrew, though clearly God stands behind this invasion. *My poor people*, lit., "the daughter of my people." No sympathy is suggested, however. **12:** The *wind* is *too strong*

14 O Jerusalem, wash your heart clean of
wickedness
so that you may be saved.
How long shall your evil schemes
lodge within you?
15 For a voice declares from Dan
and proclaims disaster from Mount
Ephraim.
16 Tell the nations, "Here they are!"
Proclaim against Jerusalem,
"Besiegers come from a distant land;
they shout against the cities of Judah.
17 They have closed in around her like
watchers of a field,
because she has rebelled against me,
says the LORD.
18 Your ways and your doings
have brought this upon you.
This is your doom; how bitter it is!
It has reached your very heart."

19 My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain!
Oh, the walls of my heart!
My heart is beating wildly;
I cannot keep silent;
for I[a] hear the sound of the trumpet,
the alarm of war.
20 Disaster overtakes disaster,
the whole land is laid waste.
Suddenly my tents are destroyed,
my curtains in a moment.
21 How long must I see the standard,
and hear the sound of the trumpet?
22 "For my people are foolish,
they do not know me;
they are stupid children,
they have no understanding.
They are skilled in doing evil,
but do not know how to do good."

23 I looked on the earth, and lo, it was
waste and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.
24 I looked on the mountains, and lo, they
were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.
25 I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,
and all the birds of the air had fled.
26 I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a
desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins
before the LORD, before his fierce anger.
27 For thus says the LORD: The whole land
shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full
end.
28 Because of this the earth shall mourn,
and the heavens above grow black;
for I have spoken, I have purposed;
I have not relented nor will I turn back.

29 At the noise of horseman and archer
every town takes to flight;
they enter thickets; they climb among rocks;
all the towns are forsaken,
and no one lives in them.
30 And you, O desolate one,
what do you mean that you dress in
crimson,
that you deck yourself with ornaments
of gold,
that you enlarge your eyes with paint?
In vain you beautify yourself.
Your lovers despise you;
they seek your life.
31 For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor,
anguish as of one bringing forth her
first child,

[a] Another reading is *for you, O my soul,*

to winnow, as it would blow both chaff and grain away. **15:** *Dan*, in the far north; *Ephraim*, in the center; the movement is toward Jerusalem. **16–17:** *Besiegers . . . watchers*, those who guard against anyone escaping from the city under siege.

4.19–28: The anguished voice of the prophet. Jeremiah is both God's spokesperson and an intercessor, an indication of being a true prophet (27.18). **20:** *Tents . . . curtains*, though often used of the sanctuary (see 10.20n.), here the terms likely refer to Israel as God's dwelling (see 49.29; Isa 54.2; Hab 3.7). **22:** *Skilled* (lit., "wise") *in doing evil*, in fact they are fools, the opposite of wise. **23:** *The earth . . . was waste and void . . . and . . . the heavens . . . had no light*, the wreckage of war is a return of the world to the primeval state of chaos (cf. Gen 1.1–3). The undoing of creation ends in *desolation,* unlike the Priestly creation account, which ends with rest. **25:** *No one*, lit., no human being (Heb "'adam"). **27:** *I will not make a full end*, wholesale judgment is mitigated; see also 5.18; 30.11; 46.28.

4.29–31: Israel the rejected whore. **30:** *Crimson . . . gold*, signs of wealth (2 Sam 1.24). Although bejeweled and fully made up, Israel has already been rejected by her lovers; cf. Ezek 16. **31:** *For I heard a cry*, a bystander

the cry of daughter Zion gasping for
breath,
stretching out her hands,
"Woe is me! I am fainting before killers!"

5 Run to and fro through the streets of
Jerusalem,
look around and take note!
Search its squares and see
if you can find one person
who acts justly
and seeks truth—
so that I may pardon Jerusalem.[a]
2 Although they say, "As the LORD lives,"
yet they swear falsely.
3 O LORD, do your eyes not look for truth?
You have struck them,
but they felt no anguish;
you have consumed them,
but they refused to take correction.
They have made their faces harder than
rock;
they have refused to turn back.

4 Then I said, "These are only the poor,
they have no sense;
for they do not know the way of the
LORD,
the law of their God.
5 Let me go to the rich[b]
and speak to them;
surely they know the way of the LORD,
the law of their God."
But they all alike had broken the yoke,
they had burst the bonds.

6 Therefore a lion from the forest shall kill
them,
a wolf from the desert shall destroy
them.
A leopard is watching against their cities;
everyone who goes out of them shall be
torn in pieces—
because their transgressions are many,
their apostasies are great.

7 How can I pardon you?
Your children have forsaken me,
and have sworn by those who are no
gods.
When I fed them to the full,
they committed adultery
and trooped to the houses of
prostitutes.
8 They were well-fed lusty stallions,
each neighing for his neighbor's wife.
9 Shall I not punish them for these things?
says the LORD;
and shall I not bring retribution
on a nation such as this?

10 Go up through her vine-rows and
destroy,

a Heb *it*
b Or *the great*

hears Jerusalem gasping for breath in the presence of her *killers*/lovers. *Daughter Zion*, metaphors shift from daughter Zion as a rejected harlot to a woman in the agony of childbirth. Both reveal the hopelessness of Judah's circumstances.

5.1–6.30: Indictments against Judah and Jerusalem. The judgment oracles in ch 5 consist of three parts, each introduced by a plural imperative (vv. 1–9,10–19,20–31). Each elucidates the offenses for which judgment is warranted. Chapter 6 is organized into five poems, three of which are introduced by the prophetic formula *Thus says the LORD of hosts* (vv. 9,16,22). Together the chapters assert that Judah and its capital city are without excuse.

5.1–9: No one is righteous. 1: *One person . . . so I may pardon*, reminiscent of Abraham's intercession for Sodom (Gen 18.16–33; cf. Ezek 14.14,20). Pardon was not granted to Sodom, nor will it be granted to Jerusalem. **2:** *As the LORD lives,* a solemn oath that occurs throughout the book (e.g., 4.2; 12.16; 16.14; 38.16). **4–5:** *The poor . . . the rich . . . all alike*, inclusive language implying systemic corruption. **6:** Vicious predatory animals symbolize the coming enemy, but God can be similarly described; see 4.7n. **7:** *How can I pardon you?* is a rhetorical question which demands a negative response, though eventually God does pardon (see, e.g., 31.34; cf. Hos 11.8–9). *Adultery . . . prostitutes*, used symbolically of religious apostasy, perhaps resulting from international contacts; see 2.18n. **9:** A refrain in this section (see 5.29), repeated in 9.9.

5.10–19: Destruction despite Israel's deluded self-confidence. 10: For the image of Israel as a vineyard, see 12.10; Isa 5.1–7; Ezek 19.10–14. **12:** *He will do nothing*, representing the false words of the prophets (v. 14); cf. Zeph

but do not make a full end;
strip away her branches,
for they are not the LORD's.
11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah
have been utterly faithless to me,
says the LORD.
12 They have spoken falsely of the LORD,
and have said, "He will do nothing.
No evil will come upon us,
and we shall not see sword or famine."
13 The prophets are nothing but wind,
for the word is not in them.
Thus shall it be done to them!

14 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts:
Because they[a] have spoken this word,
I am now making my words in your mouth a fire,
and this people wood, and the fire shall devour them.
15 I am going to bring upon you
a nation from far away, O house of Israel,
says the LORD.
It is an enduring nation,
it is an ancient nation,
a nation whose language you do not know,
nor can you understand what they say.
16 Their quiver is like an open tomb;
all of them are mighty warriors.
17 They shall eat up your harvest and your food;
they shall eat up your sons and your daughters;
they shall eat up your flocks and your herds;
they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees;
they shall destroy with the sword
your fortified cities in which you trust.

18 But even in those days, says the LORD, I will not make a full end of you. 19 And when your people say, "Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?" you shall say to them, "As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours."

20 Declare this in the house of Jacob,
proclaim it in Judah:
21 Hear this, O foolish and senseless people,
who have eyes, but do not see,
who have ears, but do not hear.
22 Do you not fear me? says the LORD;
Do you not tremble before me?
I placed the sand as a boundary for the sea,
a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass;
though the waves toss, they cannot prevail,
though they roar, they cannot pass over it.
23 But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;
they have turned aside and gone away.
24 They do not say in their hearts,
"Let us fear the LORD our God,
who gives the rain in its season,
the autumn rain and the spring rain,
and keeps for us
the weeks appointed for the harvest."
25 Your iniquities have turned these away,
and your sins have deprived you of good.

[a] Heb *you*

1.12. The Hebrew is ambiguous, perhaps "he is nothing" or "It will not happen." **13:** *Wind*, i.e., "spirit," an ironic statement about the lack of inspiration of prophetic visions. **15–17:** Divine judgment will come in the form of military assault, likely by either Assyria (if this is an early oracle) or Babylon (if a later oracle). The fourfold use of the word *eat up* (devour) in v. 17 underscores the intensity of the attack; see Lev 26.16; Deut 28.25–37. **18–19:** *I will not make a full end of you*, mitigates the destruction described in v. 17.

5.20–31: Israel's foolishness is evident in its lack of reverence for God and in its injustice toward the vulnerable. 21: Cf. Isa 6.9–10. **22:** *Fear,* v. 24; see also Prov 1.7; Job 1.1; Eccl 12.13). *Sand as a boundary for the sea,* God set a limit for the primeval chaos (see Gen 1.2–8; Job 38.8–11; Ps 104.9). Israel, however, does not recognize its moral boundaries (vv. 22–31, esp. v. 28). **23:** *Stubborn and rebellious* recalls perverse behavior by a son that has deadly consequences (Deut 21.18–21). **24:** *The weeks appointed,* the seven-week period between the first cutting and

[26] For scoundrels are found among my
people;
they take over the goods of others.
Like fowlers they set a trap;[a]
they catch human beings.
[27] Like a cage full of birds,
their houses are full of treachery;
therefore they have become great and rich,
[28] they have grown fat and sleek.
They know no limits in deeds of
wickedness;
they do not judge with justice
the cause of the orphan, to make it
prosper,
and they do not defend the rights of the
needy.
[29] Shall I not punish them for these things?
says the LORD,
and shall I not bring retribution
on a nation such as this?

[30] An appalling and horrible thing
has happened in the land:
[31] the prophets prophesy falsely,
and the priests rule as the prophets
direct;[b]
my people love to have it so,
but what will you do when the end
comes?

6 Flee for safety, O children of Benjamin,
from the midst of Jerusalem!
Blow the trumpet in Tekoa,
and raise a signal on Beth-haccherem;
for evil looms out of the north,
and great destruction.
[2] I have likened daughter Zion
to the loveliest pasture.[c]
[3] Shepherds with their flocks shall come
against her.
They shall pitch their tents around her;
they shall pasture, all in their places.
[4] "Prepare war against her;
up, and let us attack at noon!"
"Woe to us, for the day declines,
the shadows of evening lengthen!"
[5] "Up, and let us attack by night,
and destroy her palaces!"
[6] For thus says the LORD of hosts:
Cut down her trees;
cast up a siege ramp against Jerusalem.
This is the city that must be punished;[d]
there is nothing but oppression within
her.
[7] As a well keeps its water fresh,
so she keeps fresh her wickedness;
violence and destruction are heard within
her;
sickness and wounds are ever before me.
[8] Take warning, O Jerusalem,
or I shall turn from you in disgust,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *rule by their own authority*
[c] Or *I will destroy daughter Zion, the loveliest pasture*
[d] Or *the city of license*

festival of weeks or Pentecost (Deut 16.9–10). **26–28:** Using wisdom language and motifs, the prophet charges Judah with folly, insensibility, and indifference to the plight of the poor. *They take over the goods of others,* or perhaps "They lurk like hunters crouching." The image is that of hunting birds and stuffing them into baskets. As if trapping birds, the wicked trap *the orphan* and *the needy*, the most vulnerable members of society; cf. Isa 1.17; Am 2.6–7; Mic 3.1–3; Zech 7.10; Ex. 22.21–24; Deut 24.17–18. **29:** See v. 9n. **31:** *The priests rule as the prophets direct,* lit., "the priests rule over their hands." Either the priests make decisions on the basis of false prophecy, or they dominate the prophets and censor their message; see 20.1–2; 29.26–27.

6.1–8: War out of the north is looming. A series of warnings convey a heightened sense of urgency. **1:** The advance is not merely mythic but city-specific. The tribal territory of *Benjamin* was directly north of Jerusalem. *Tekoa*, hometown of the prophet Amos (Am 1.1), ca. 11 mi (18 km) south of Jerusalem. The verb "blow (trumpet)" (Heb "tiqʿu") plays on the name "Tekoa"; see 4.5–6n. *Beth-haccherem* ("vineyard house"), a district in Judah (Neh 3.14), perhaps Ramat-rahel, ca. 3 mi (5 km) south of Jerusalem. **3:** *Shepherds with their flocks*, enemy rulers and their troops. The verb used of "pitching" a tent is the same used of "blowing" a trumpet in v. 1. **4–5:** Alternating quotations of the enemy and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. *Prepare*, lit., "sanctify," since war required a state of ritual purity; also 22.7; 51.27–28; Joel 3.9; Mic 3.5. **6:** God's word for Babylon's troops. *Cut down her trees* for building siege ramps to storm defensive walls; see 33.4; Deut 20.19–20. **7:** *Sickness and wounds*, cf. v. 14. **8:** *Turn from you in disgust*, the verb used here (Heb "teqaʿ") again plays on the name Tekoa (see vv. 1n., 3n.) and indicates a dislocation of something, as in the dislocation of Jacob's hip (Gen 32.26).

and make you a desolation,
an uninhabited land.

9 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Glean[a] thoroughly as a vine
the remnant of Israel;
like a grape-gatherer, pass your hand again
over its branches.

10 To whom shall I speak and give warning,
that they may hear?
See, their ears are closed,[b]
they cannot listen.
The word of the LORD is to them an object
of scorn;
they take no pleasure in it.
11 But I am full of the wrath of the LORD;
I am weary of holding it in.

Pour it out on the children in the street,
and on the gatherings of young men as
well;
both husband and wife shall be taken,
the old folk and the very aged.
12 Their houses shall be turned over to
others,
their fields and wives together;
for I will stretch out my hand
against the inhabitants of the land,
says the LORD.

13 For from the least to the greatest of them,
everyone is greedy for unjust gain;
and from prophet to priest,
everyone deals falsely.
14 They have treated the wound of my
people carelessly,
saying, "Peace, peace,"
when there is no peace.
15 They acted shamefully, they committed
abomination;
yet they were not ashamed,
they did not know how to blush.
Therefore they shall fall among those who
fall;
at the time that I punish them, they
shall be overthrown,
says the LORD.
16 Thus says the LORD:
Stand at the crossroads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way lies; and walk in it,
and find rest for your souls.
But they said, "We will not walk in it."
17 Also I raised up sentinels for you:
"Give heed to the sound of the trumpet!"
But they said, "We will not give heed."
18 Therefore hear, O nations,
and know, O congregation, what will
happen to them.
19 Hear, O earth; I am going to bring
disaster on this people,
the fruit of their schemes,
because they have not given heed to my
words;
and as for my teaching, they have
rejected it.
20 Of what use to me is frankincense that
comes from Sheba,
or sweet cane from a distant land?
Your burnt offerings are not acceptable,
nor are your sacrifices pleasing to me.
21 Therefore thus says the LORD:

[a] Cn: Heb *They shall glean*
[b] Heb *are uncircumcised*

6.9–15: Israel refuses to heed the sentinel's warning. Verses 12–15 are a near doublet of 8.10–12. **9:** *Glean thoroughly* conveys the scope and intensity of divine judgment. Gleaning allowed the poor to pick what remained after the regular harvest (Deut 24.21). **10:** *Their ears are closed*, see 5.21n. **11:** The prophet's personal agony; see 20.9. *Taken*, captured by the enemy. **13–14:** The city's greed, corruption, and indifference to *the wound of my people* (cf. v. 7) is systemic. Prophetic promises of peace and wellbeing are delusional; cf. Ezek 13.10.

6.16–21: Israel's refusal to heed warnings continues. 16: Considering the past, *the ancient paths*, *where the good way lies*, is a way to negotiate the present predicament. *Crossroads* and *ways* (see also vv. 25,27) may suggest the ancient covenant, Israel's core values, and the written traditions (see, e.g., 3.21; 4.18; 7.3,5; 10.2). **17:** *Sentinels*, likely an allusion to prophets (Ezek 3.17; Hos 9.8), to give further warnings, which also go unheeded. **20–21:** *Sheba*, in Arabia, valued for its spice trade (Isa 60.6; Ezek 27.22). All these items, including *sweet cane*, were offered to God in smoke (*burnt offerings*) as a pleasing odor in Israel's Temple worship (see Lev 1.9; Isa 43.24), but God rejects them because of the people's disobedience (cf. 7.21–22; see also 1 Sam 15.22; Isa 1.10–17; Mic 6.6–8).

See, I am laying before this people
stumbling blocks against which they shall stumble;
parents and children together,
neighbor and friend shall perish.

22 Thus says the LORD:
See, a people is coming from the land of the north,
a great nation is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth.
23 They grasp the bow and the javelin,
they are cruel and have no mercy,
their sound is like the roaring sea;
they ride on horses,
equipped like a warrior for battle,
against you, O daughter Zion!

24 "We have heard news of them,
our hands fall helpless;
anguish has taken hold of us,
pain as of a woman in labor.
25 Do not go out into the field,
or walk on the road;
for the enemy has a sword,
terror is on every side."

26 O my poor people, put on sackcloth,
and roll in ashes;
make mourning as for an only child,
most bitter lamentation:
for suddenly the destroyer
will come upon us.

27 I have made you a tester and a refiner[a] among my people
so that you may know and test their ways.
28 They are all stubbornly rebellious,
going about with slanders;
they are bronze and iron,
all of them act corruptly.
29 The bellows blow fiercely,
the lead is consumed by the fire;
in vain the refining goes on,
for the wicked are not removed.
30 They are called "rejected silver,"
for the LORD has rejected them.

7 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the LORD. 3 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your

[a] Or *a fortress*

6.22–26: Refusing the warning, the enemy comes and Israel is called to ritual mourning. 22: On the enemy from *the north*, see 1.14n. **23:** *Ride on horses*, that is, horse-drawn chariots, the major battlefield war machines. **25:** *Terror is on every side*, a phrase used elsewhere in the book to convey palpable danger (see 20.3,10; 46.5; 49.29; see also Ps 31.13). **26:** *O my poor people,* see 4.11n. *Put on sackcloth . . . roll in ashes,* ritual actions associated with mourning and entreaty for divine favor in crisis situations (see Jon 3.6; Isa 58.5; Dan 9.3).

6.27–30: Conclusion to the oracles from the time of King Josiah: Israel's final rejection: The ending to the larger literary unit: Jeremiah the "tester" of metals and "refiner" must determine the quality of the people's "ways" (cf. Isa 48.10; Zech 13.9; Mal 3.2–4), and discovers little of value. The first major block of the book contrasts an obedient prophet—whom God makes "an iron pillar, and a bronze wall" (1.18)— with the "stubbornly rebellious" people who are "bronze and iron" (6.28). Thus, the call of Jeremiah in ch 1 and the concluding words in ch 6 function as an inclusio, an envelope-structure that marks chs 1–6 as a unit.

7.1–8.3: The Temple is no panacea for Judah. The first major prose discourse in the book, written in a style and theological perspective similar to Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History. This and subsequent prose sermons serve to deconstruct core beliefs, institutions, and power arrangements (see also 11.1–13; 18.1–12; 21.1–10; 25.1–14).

7.1–15: The Temple sermon opens the unit 7.1–10.25, which depicts the sickness, death, and funeral of Judah along with Judah's acceptance of its fate. The Temple sermon is generally associated with the events of ch 26 and Jeremiah's first arrest in 609 BCE, given the thematic connections of chs 7 and 26. Here, Jeremiah asserts that the Temple, the center of Judean life and the divine residence on earth, is no guarantee of God's presence and protection. Jeremiah declares that true worship demands the just and gracious treatment of others, especially the vulnerable and needy, in accordance with the ethical demands of the written tradition (e.g., Deut 10.18–19; Am 5.21–24). **3:** *Let me dwell,* not a request but rather a promise that God will indeed dwell with the

doings, and let me dwell with you[a] in this place. [4] Do not trust in these deceptive words: "This is[b] the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD."

[5] For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, [6] if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, [7] then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.

[8] Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. [9] Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, [10] and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are safe!"—only to go on doing all these abominations? [11] Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the LORD. [12] Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. [13] And now, because you have done all these things, says the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, [14] therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh. [15] And I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out all your kinsfolk, all the offspring of Ephraim.

[16] As for you, do not pray for this people, do not raise a cry or prayer on their behalf, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you. [17] Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? [18] The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger. [19] Is it I whom they provoke? says the LORD. Is it not themselves, to their own hurt? [20] Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: My anger and my wrath shall be poured out on this place, on human beings and animals, on the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched.

[a] Or *and I will let you dwell*
[b] Heb *They are*

people under changed conditions. *In this place,* the land God has given to Israel; see v. 7; 14.13,15; 24.5–6. **4:** The Temple was regarded as a place of sanctuary where one might seek refuge from reprisal; see 17.1n.; 1 Kings 1.50; 2.28. The people believe that their mere presence in the Temple renders them safe (v. 10). Although liturgical tradition expressed God's protection of Jerusalem and the Temple (e.g., Pss 46; 48; 76; see also Isa 31.4; 37.35), it is *deceptive* (lit., a "lie," Heb "sheqer") to think that it assures God's protection. *The temple of the LORD*, Jeremiah parodies an entrance liturgy that celebrates the Temple as a sanctuary from misfortune. **5–7:** *The alien, the orphan, and the widow*, the most vulnerable persons at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy; see also 22.3; Deut 10.18–19; 24.17–22; 27.19; Isa 10.2; 59.7; Hos 3.1. *Innocent blood*, 19.4; 22.3,17; 26.15; cf. 2 Kings 21.16. **8:** *Deceptive words*, see v. 4n. **9–10:** Five of the ten words/commandments (Ex 20.1–17; Deut 5.6–21). *In this house, which is called by my name*, see 32.34; 34.15 cf. 25.29; 1 Kings 8.43; 2 Chr 6.33; 20.9; Dan 9.18–19); characteristic of Deuteronomistic theology, which speaks of God choosing a place "to put his name there" (Deut 12.5; 14.23). **11:** *A den of robbers,* a refuge for criminals. **12:** *At first*, or "formerly." *Shiloh,* ca. 20 mi (32 km) north of Jerusalem, was destroyed during the early Philistine wars; see 1 Sam 4–6; Ps 78.60. Jeremiah's own family was descended from the priests of Shiloh through Abiathar, David's priest who was exiled to Anathoth by Solomon (1 Kings 2.26–27). **15:** *Ephraim*, the most important northern tribal group, representing the whole Northern Kingdom, which had been defeated and deported by the Assyrians a century earlier.

7.16–20: Jeremiah prohibited from intercession. 16: The ban on prophetic prayer (11.14; 14.11) violates one of the duties of the prophet (27.18; Am 7.2,5). **18:** *Queen of heaven,* a title associated with the Assyrian-Babylonian goddess Ishtar, also known as Astarte (see 44.15–30; cf. Judg 2.13; 10.6; 1 Sam 7.3–4; 2 Kings 21.1–9; 23.13). **19:** *To their own hurt*, or "to the shame (Heb "boshet"; see 2.26n.) of their face." **20:** See also 5.17. *Burn and not be quenched*, cf. 4.4; 21.12; Isa 1.31; Am 5.6.

21 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God
of Israel: Add your burnt offerings to your
sacrifices, and eat the flesh. 22 For in the day
that I brought your ancestors out of the land
of Egypt, I did not speak to them or com-
mand them concerning burnt offerings and
sacrifices. 23 But this command I gave them,
"Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and
you shall be my people; and walk only in the
way that I command you, so that it may be
well with you." 24 Yet they did not obey or
incline their ear, but, in the stubbornness
of their evil will, they walked in their own
counsels, and looked backward rather than
forward. 25 From the day that your ancestors
came out of the land of Egypt until this day,
I have persistently sent all my servants the
prophets to them, day after day; 26 yet they
did not listen to me, or pay attention, but
they stiffened their necks. They did worse
than their ancestors did.

27 So you shall speak all these words to
them, but they will not listen to you. You
shall call to them, but they will not answer
you. 28 You shall say to them: This is the na-
tion that did not obey the voice of the LORD
their God, and did not accept discipline; truth
has perished; it is cut off from their lips.

29 Cut off your hair and throw it away;
raise a lamentation on the bare
heights,[a]
for the LORD has rejected and forsaken
the generation that provoked his wrath.

30 For the people of Judah have done evil
in my sight, says the LORD; they have set their
abominations in the house that is called by
my name, defiling it. 31 And they go on build-
ing the high place[b] of Topheth, which is in
the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their
sons and their daughters in the fire—which
I did not command, nor did it come into
my mind. 32 Therefore, the days are surely
coming, says the LORD, when it will no more
be called Topheth, or the valley of the son
of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter: for
they will bury in Topheth until there is no
more room. 33 The corpses of this people will
be food for the birds of the air, and for the
animals of the earth; and no one will frighten
them away. 34 And I will bring to an end the
sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of the
bride and bridegroom in the cities of Judah
and in the streets of Jerusalem; for the land
shall become a waste.

8 At that time, says the LORD, the bones
of the kings of Judah, the bones of its
officials, the bones of the priests, the bones
of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabi-
tants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of

[a] Or *the trails*
[b] Gk Tg: Heb *high places*

7.21–26: Sacrifice and obedience. 21: While part of the *sacrifice* was eaten by the one offering it, the *burnt offering* was offered up whole to God in smoke. Eating both typifies the ritual abuses of Israel. **22–23:** *I did not speak . . . concerning . . . sacrifices*, the Exodus preceded the giving of the sacrificial laws at Sinai; see also Am 5.25. Ritual actions are no substitute or replacement for moral integrity; see also 6.20; Isa 1.11–17 Hos 6.6; Am 5.21–24. *I will be your God, and you shall be my people*, a covenant formula; see also 11.4; 24.7; 31.32; Ex 6.7; Lev 26.12. **24:** *In the stubbornness of their evil will*, a recurrent theme (9.14; 11.8; 13.10; 16.12; 18.12; 23.17). **25:** That God has *persistently sent all my servants the prophets* is a principle of Deuteronomistic theology explicit in Jeremiah; see 25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4; 2 Kings 17.13,23; 21.10; 24.2.

7.27–8.3: Israel's death announced. Israel's lack of obedience leads to its death, consistent with the language of Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 30.19). **27:** Like Isaiah (6.9–11), Jeremiah will preach to an audience unwilling or unable to hear. **28:** *Did not accept discipline*, cf. 2.30; 5.3. **29:** *Cut off your hair . . . raise a lamentation*, funeral rituals; see also 16.6n. **30:** *The house that is called by my name*, see v. 10n. **31–32:** *High place*, see 3.6n. *Topheth* (lit., "fire pit"; cf. Isa 30.33 and textual note *a* there). *In the valley of the son of Hinnom*, a valley to the west and south of Jerusalem, which was associated with child sacrifice (19.1–13; 2 Chr 33.6), a practice strictly forbidden in Lev 18.21 and Deut 18.10, and said to be abolished by Josiah (2 Kings 23.10). The name Valley of Hinnom (Heb "ge' hinnom") lies behind the later name Gehenna, used for the netherworld as a fire-pit. **33:** *No one will frighten them away*, exposure of a dead corpse was an act of desecration and shaming; cf. 2 Sam 21.1–10. **34:** On this formulaic language see 16.9; 25.10; cf. 33.11. *The land shall become a waste*, a punishment for covenantal disobedience; see Lev 26.31–33. **8.1–3:** On exhuming the remains as a way of shaming the deceased, see 16.4; 1 Kings 13.2; 2 Kings 23.14,16. Bones were also unclean, so spreading them upon sacred sites defiled the worship of the

their tombs; [2] and they shall be spread before
the sun and the moon and all the host of
heaven, which they have loved and served,
which they have followed, and which they
have inquired of and worshiped; and they
shall not be gathered or buried; they shall
be like dung on the surface of the ground.
[3] Death shall be preferred to life by all the
remnant that remains of this evil family in all
the places where I have driven them, says the
LORD of hosts.

[4] You shall say to them, Thus says the
LORD:
When people fall, do they not get up
again?
If they go astray, do they not turn back?
[5] Why then has this people[a] turned away
in perpetual backsliding?
They have held fast to deceit,
they have refused to return.
[6] I have given heed and listened,
but they do not speak honestly;
no one repents of wickedness,
saying, "What have I done!"
All of them turn to their own course,
like a horse plunging headlong into
battle.
[7] Even the stork in the heavens
knows its times;
and the turtledove, swallow, and crane[b]
observe the time of their coming;
but my people do not know
the ordinance of the LORD.

[8] How can you say, "We are wise,
and the law of the LORD is with us,"
when, in fact, the false pen of the scribes
has made it into a lie?
[9] The wise shall be put to shame,
they shall be dismayed and taken;
since they have rejected the word of the
LORD,
what wisdom is in them?
[10] Therefore I will give their wives to
others
and their fields to conquerors,
because from the least to the greatest
everyone is greedy for unjust gain;
from prophet to priest
everyone deals falsely.
[11] They have treated the wound of my
people carelessly,
saying, "Peace, peace,"
when there is no peace.
[12] They acted shamefully, they committed
abomination;
yet they were not at all ashamed,
they did not know how to blush.
Therefore they shall fall among those who
fall;
at the time when I punish them, they
shall be overthrown,
says the LORD.
[13] When I wanted to gather them, says the
LORD,

[a] One Ms Gk: MT *this people, Jerusalem,*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

deities mentioned here. **2:** *All the host of heaven*, the stars, astral deities whose worship was forbidden (Deut 4.19; 17.3; 2 Kings 23.4–5; cf. Jer 7.17–18).

8.4–9.26: Israel's wisdom is reduced to the funeral dirge. As darkness descends on the nation, **diverse voices denounce God's people, while others lament their fate**. First is the charge that God's people "refuse to return" (8.4–13). The people's loss of moral focus and dire circumstances trigger a cacophony of suffering voices. The first wave of grief is over the realization that disaster, not peace, approaches (8.14–16). A second wave is over the inevitability of disaster: "we are not saved" (8.20). God, or God's prophet, is crushed by the corruption of God's people (9.1–3). Still another weeps and wails at the total wreckage (9.10–11). The requiem includes the work of professional mourners who weep for a fallen nation (9.17–22). **8.4–12:** Unlike migratory birds that know and follow the proper order, God's people betray the order of creation by rejecting God's ways (v. 7; see also Isa 1.2–3). They trade in avarice and falsehood (v. 10), and they shamelessly commit idolatry (v. 12). Though guilt is systemic (v. 10), the nation's failed leadership bears the brunt of responsibility. Scribes, prophets, and priests betray their sacred duties. **4–6:** The Heb root "shuv," often translated "turn" or "return" in chs 2–6, reappears five times, here also translated "go astray," "backsliding," accentuating Israel's refusal to repent. **8–9:** *False pen of the scribes*, normally it is the priest who is responsible for guarding and dispensing law or instruction (Heb "torah"), though some scribes were also priests (cf. Ezra 7.11). **10–12:** Cf. the near doublet at 6.12–15. **13–15:** *Gather*, a term associated with fall harvesting. With no produce to be gathered, the people *gather together* for

there are[a] no grapes on the vine,
nor figs on the fig tree;
even the leaves are withered,
and what I gave them has passed away from them.[b]

14 Why do we sit still?
Gather together, let us go into the fortified cities
and perish there;
for the LORD our God has doomed us to perish,
and has given us poisoned water to drink,
because we have sinned against the LORD.
15 We look for peace, but find no good,
for a time of healing, but there is terror instead.

16 The snorting of their horses is heard from Dan;
at the sound of the neighing of their stallions
the whole land quakes.
They come and devour the land and all that fills it,
the city and those who live in it.
17 See, I am letting snakes loose among you,
adders that cannot be charmed,
and they shall bite you,
says the LORD.

18 My joy is gone, grief is upon me,
my heart is sick.
19 Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide in the land:
"Is the LORD not in Zion?
Is her King not in her?"
("Why have they provoked me to anger with their images,
with their foreign idols?")
20 "The harvest is past, the summer is ended,
and we are not saved."
21 For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt,
I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me.

22 Is there no balm in Gilead?
Is there no physician there?
Why then has the health of my poor people
not been restored?

9[c] O that my head were a spring of water,
and my eyes a fountain of tears,
so that I might weep day and night
for the slain of my poor people!
2 [d]O that I had in the desert
a traveler's lodging place,
that I might leave my people
and go away from them!
For they are all adulterers,
a band of traitors.
3 They bend their tongues like bows;
they have grown strong in the land for falsehood, and not for truth;

[a] Or *I will make an end of them, says the LORD. There are*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Ch 8.23 in Heb
[d] Ch 9.1 in Heb

death, acknowledging their wrongdoing and the force of divine punishment. **16–17:** *Horses*, the chief animals of warfare (see 6.23n.). *Dan*, the northern frontier city of Israel; see also 4.15. The sound of military troops is a tangible sign of the city's doom. *Adders,* snakes known to be nonresponsive to being *charmed* by whispering; see Ps 58.4–5; Eccl 10.11.

8.18–9.3: Israel is sick unto death, and God grieves. 8.19: *My poor people*, repeated in vv. 21,22; see 4.11n. Because the LORD is *king* in *Zion*, it is an offense that they have not removed the *images* and *idols* from God's presence. **20–21:** *The harvest is past*, see 8.13–15n. Death and mourning rituals are near at hand. **22:** *Gilead*, in northern Transjordan, was known for its medicinal resins, including *balm* (46.11; Gen 37.25). With plenty of medicine at hand, Jerusalem is nevertheless dying. **9.1:** *Spring of water*, the people have drunk "poison water" (Heb "mero'sh," 8.14), but an entire "head of waters" (Heb "ro'shi mayim") cannot provide tears enough to mourn Israel's death. *Weep day and night for*, the motif of the weeping God is present also in the lament traditions of the ancient Near East. **2:** Like the psalmist (Ps 55.6–7), God imagines a far-away place *in the desert* to escape. **3:** *Bend their tongues like bows,* that is, they string (lit., "thread") their tongues so that their words can be shot like deadly arrows; cf. v. 8, where the tongue is the arrow.

for they proceed from evil to evil,
and they do not know me, says the LORD.

4 Beware of your neighbors,
and put no trust in any of your kin;[a]
for all your kin[b] are supplanters,
and every neighbor goes around like a slanderer.
5 They all deceive their neighbors,
and no one speaks the truth;
they have taught their tongues to speak lies;
they commit iniquity and are too weary to repent.[c]
6 Oppression upon oppression, deceit[d] upon deceit!
They refuse to know me, says the LORD.

7 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts:
I will now refine and test them,
for what else can I do with my sinful people?[e]
8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow;
it speaks deceit through the mouth.
They all speak friendly words to their neighbors,
but inwardly are planning to lay an ambush.
9 Shall I not punish them for these things? says the LORD;
and shall I not bring retribution on a nation such as this?

10 Take up[f] weeping and wailing for the mountains,
and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness,
because they are laid waste so that no one passes through,
and the lowing of cattle is not heard;
both the birds of the air and the animals
have fled and are gone.
11 I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins,
a lair of jackals;
and I will make the towns of Judah a desolation,
without inhabitant.

12 Who is wise enough to understand this? To whom has the mouth of the LORD spoken, so that they may declare it? Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, so that no one passes through? 13 And the LORD says: Because they have forsaken my law that I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, or walked in accordance with it, 14 but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals, as their ancestors taught them. 15 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am feeding this people with wormwood, and giving them poisonous water to drink. 16 I will scatter them among nations that neither they nor their ancestors have known; and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them.

[a] Heb *in a brother*
[b] Heb *for every brother*
[c] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *they weary themselves with iniquity.* [6] *Your dwelling*
[d] Cn: Heb *Your dwelling in the midst of deceit*
[e] Or *my poor people*
[f] Gk Syr: Heb *I will take up*

9.4–9: The LORD's warnings. Acts of incivility, including contempt, dishonesty, exploitation, and disregard for the ancient ethic of hospitality, are evidence of Israel's rejection of God; see also 9.3. **4:** *Supplanters* (Heb "'aqob ya'qob"), Israel is characterized by its name, Jacob ("ya'aqob"), as full of oppression and deceit; see Gen 25.26 (textual note *d*); 27.36; Hos 12.3. *Slanderer* (Heb "rakil"), perhaps a play on the name of Jacob's wife Rachel ("raḥel"). **7:** *Refine them and test them,* such efforts in purging Israel of its dross have already proven ineffective (see 6.27–30n.). *Sinful people*, lit., "daughter (of) my people," as in 8.19; see 4.11n. **9:** See 5.9n.

9.10–26: Only professional singers of the funeral dirge are truly wise. 10–11: God is both the destroyer and the one who calls for *lamentation* (Heb "qinah") for the destruction of the earth. The poet does not set divine anger against divine sorrow, as if the two are mutually exclusive; the two emotions convey the complexity of grief. *Cattle . . . birds . . . animals . . . jackals*, the displacement of domestic animals by wild animals is a conventional way of representing the destruction of a city or a land (Isa 13.20–22; 34.10–15). **13–14:** *Baals*, see 2.23n. **15:** *Wormwood*, an extremely bitter and poisonous herbal extract; cf. 23.15; Deut 29.17; Am 6.12. *Poisonous water*,

17 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Consider, and call for the mourning
women to come;
send for the skilled women to come;
18 let them quickly raise a dirge over us,
so that our eyes may run down with
tears,
and our eyelids flow with water.
19 For a sound of wailing is heard from
Zion:
"How we are ruined!
We are utterly shamed,
because we have left the land,
because they have cast down our
dwellings."

20 Hear, O women, the word of the LORD,
and let your ears receive the word of his
mouth;
teach to your daughters a dirge,
and each to her neighbor a lament.
21 "Death has come up into our
windows,
it has entered our palaces,
to cut off the children from the streets
and the young men from the
squares."
22 Speak! Thus says the LORD:
"Human corpses shall fall
like dung upon the open field,
like sheaves behind the reaper,
and no one shall gather them."

23 Thus says the LORD: Do not let the
wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the
mighty boast in their might, do not let the
wealthy boast in their wealth; 24 but let
those who boast boast in this, that they
understand and know me, that I am the
LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and
righteousness in the earth, for in these
things I delight, says the LORD.

25 The days are surely coming, says the
LORD, when I will attend to all those who are
circumcised only in the foreskin: 26 Egypt,
Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all
those with shaven temples who live in the
desert. For all these nations are uncircum-
cised, and all the house of Israel is uncircum-
cised in heart.

10 Hear the word that the LORD speaks to
you, O house of Israel. 2 Thus says the
LORD:
Do not learn the way of the nations,
or be dismayed at the signs of the
heavens;
for the nations are dismayed at them.
3 For the customs of the peoples are false:
a tree from the forest is cut down,
and worked with an ax by the hands of
an artisan;
4 people deck it with silver and gold;
they fasten it with hammer and nails
so that it cannot move.

cf. 8.14. Israel is experiencing death by poisoning. **17:** God marshals professional mourners, *skilled* (lit., "wise") *women*, to lead the nation in a public ritual of grief. **21:** Death entering through the window echoes a theme from Canaanite mythology regarding the god Baal's own palace. **22:** *No one shall gather them*, echoing 8.13–14. **25:** *Circumcised only in the foreskin*, other nations also practiced physical circumcision, but that is no substitute for circumcision of the heart, i.e., obedience. Alternatively, by calling the house of Israel *uncircumcised in heart,* and by grouping Israel with other nations, the text questions Judah's privileged status; see 4.4n.; Ezek 44.7. **26:** *Shaven temples*, lit., "cutting the corners," a custom of desert inhabitants (25.23; 49.32) but prohibited for Israelites (Lev 19.27; 21.5).

10.1–25: Praise for the living God. Reflections on worship frame the larger literary unit, 7.1–10.25. Whereas the Temple sermon in ch 7 is an indictment for abuses in worship, 10.1–16 is a hymn of praise that expresses deep and abiding devotion.

10.1–18: Israel's judgment doxology contrasts the living God with nations' idols, which are referred to as "gods" only in v. 11, an Aramaic gloss. This Temple liturgy lauds the power and wisdom of the LORD, and denigrates "the way of the nations." For exilic and postexilic readers who were challenged by competing religious systems, the song celebrates the God of Israel as trustworthy, dependable, and in control of human destiny. **1–10:** A characteristic satire of human-made idols, similar to Isa 44.9–20. **2:** *Dismayed at the signs of the heavens*, i.e., obsessed by astrological phenomena. Many deities were associated with stars and planets. **3**: The word *false*—as well as the words *idols* (v. 8) and *worthless* (v. 15)—are translations of Heb "hevel," which conveys the notion of emptiness, vapor or a puff of air (see also 2.5; 8.19; 14.22; 51.18; Eccl 1.2,14,2.11). **4:** *Deck it*, that is "adorn

5 Their idols[a] are like scarecrows in a
cucumber field,
and they cannot speak;
they have to be carried,
for they cannot walk.
Do not be afraid of them,
for they cannot do evil,
nor is it in them to do good.

6 There is none like you, O LORD;
you are great, and your name is great in
might.
7 Who would not fear you, O King of the
nations?
For that is your due;
among all the wise ones of the nations
and in all their kingdoms
there is no one like you.
8 They are both stupid and foolish;
the instruction given by idols
is no better than wood![b]
9 Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish,
and gold from Uphaz.
They are the work of the artisan and of the
hands of the goldsmith;
their clothing is blue and purple;
they are all the product of skilled workers.
10 But the LORD is the true God;
he is the living God and the everlasting
King.
At his wrath the earth quakes,
and the nations cannot endure his
indignation.

11 Thus shall you say to them: The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.[c]

12 It is he who made the earth by his power,
who established the world by his
wisdom,
and by his understanding stretched out
the heavens.
13 When he utters his voice, there is a
tumult of waters in the heavens,
and he makes the mist rise from the
ends of the earth.
He makes lightnings for the rain,
and he brings out the wind from his
storehouses.
14 Everyone is stupid and without knowledge;
goldsmiths are all put to shame by their
idols;
for their images are false,
and there is no breath in them.
15 They are worthless, a work of delusion;
at the time of their punishment they
shall perish.
16 Not like these is the LORD,[d] the portion
of Jacob,
for he is the one who formed all things,
and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance;
the LORD of hosts is his name.

17 Gather up your bundle from the ground,
O you who live under siege!

[a] Heb *They*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] This verse is in Aramaic
[d] Heb lacks *the* LORD

it, beautify it" (cf. Isa 40.18–20; 41.6–7). *So that it cannot move*, or "so that it will not teeter." **5:** *Like scarecrows in a cucumber field*, obscure reference, meaning they are either as stiff as a post or totally lifeless, although made to look human (or divine); cf. Isa 1.8; Let Jer 1.70. *They cannot speak . . . cannot walk*, for similar caricatures of idols see Pss 115.3–8; 135.15–18; Isa 44.9–20. Whereas God carried Israel (e.g., Deut 1.31; Hos 11.3), such idols have to be carried themselves (Isa 46.3–7). That such gods can do neither good nor harm is a complaint also used against God (Zeph 1.12). **6–10:** A hymn of praise, contrasting God with foreign idols. The incomparability of God is a common theme in such doxologies; see Ex 15.11; Deut 33.26; Ps 113.5. **9:** *Tarshish*, most likely Tarsus in Turkey, or perhaps Tartessus in southern Spain; on Tarshish as a source of *silver*, see 1 Kings 10.22; Isa 60.9. *Uphaz*, unknown (Dan 10.5), perhaps an error for Ophir, a region in southern Arabia famous for gold (see 1 Kings 9.28). **10:** *The earth quakes*, God's wrath disrupts the created order (cf. 9.10n.). **11:** This verse is in Aramaic (see textual note *c*), indicating that it is a later gloss. **12–16:** Continues the doxology using traditional creation language (Isa 42.5; 44.24; Job 9.8; Zech 12.1). **12:** On creation as effected by divine *wisdom*, see 51.15; Prov 8.22–31. **13:** An ancient mythological image was that of the creator god giving his *voice* in thunder, defeating the chaotic power of the primeval seas; see Ps 29.1–11. *Storehouses*, see Deut 28.12; Job 38.22; Pss 33.7; 135.7. **14:** *False*, the same Heb word ("sheqer") that describes worship at the Jerusalem Temple in 7.4; cf. 7.8. **17–18:** *Gather* together (cf. 8.13,14; 9.22) in preparation for exile.

18 For thus says the LORD:
I am going to sling out the inhabitants of the land
at this time,
and I will bring distress on them,
so that they shall feel it.

19 Woe is me because of my hurt!
My wound is severe.
But I said, "Truly this is my punishment,
and I must bear it."
20 My tent is destroyed,
and all my cords are broken;
my children have gone from me,
and they are no more;
there is no one to spread my tent again,
and to set up my curtains.
21 For the shepherds are stupid,
and do not inquire of the LORD;
therefore they have not prospered,
and all their flock is scattered.

22 Hear, a noise! Listen, it is coming—
a great commotion from the land of the north
to make the cities of Judah a desolation,
a lair of jackals.

23 I know, O LORD, that the way of human beings is not in their control,
that mortals as they walk cannot direct their steps.
24 Correct me, O LORD, but in just measure;
not in your anger, or you will bring me to nothing.

25 Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not know you,
and on the peoples that do not call on your name;
for they have devoured Jacob;
they have devoured him and consumed him,
and have laid waste his habitation.

11 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 3 You shall say to them, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel:

10.19–25: Israel accepts God's judgment. Following her doxology, Israel confesses guilt and accepts divine punishment. **19:** *Wound,* Heb "shever," has a range of meanings in Jeremiah, including "destruction" (4.6; 6.1), "disaster" (4.20), "hurt" (8.21), and "a crushing blow" (14.17). **20–21:** *Tent . . . cords . . . curtains* are used metaphorically of Jerusalem and the Temple; see Ex 26.12; 35.18; 39.40. The invading Babylonians destroyed Judah's infrastructure in 586 BCE and carried the leaders (*shepherds*) and wealthy into captivity (52.1–30). Other critiques of their failed leadership occur in 22.13–23,24–30; 23.1–2; Ezek 34.1–6). **22:** As elsewhere, this invasion comes *from . . . the north* (1.13–15; 4.6; 6.22; 25.9). **23–25:** A prayer, citing Prov 20.24 (v. 23) and Ps 79.6–7 (v. 25). **23:** Cf. Prov 16.9; 20.24. **24:** Cf. 46.28; Ps 141.5. **25:** Biblical piety allows the one experiencing divine judgment also to call for divine action against the enemies who "devour" God's portion; see 2.3; Pss 7.6,9; 79.6–7.

11.1–17.27: Accusation and lament. The unit has three parts: 11.1–12.17; 13.1–15.21; and 16.1–17.27. Each begins with a prose sermon or prose account that highlights divine judgment, followed by one or more laments (11.18–12.13; 15.15–21; 17.14–18). This juxtaposition creates a degree of narrative coherence. At God's command, Jeremiah challenges aspects of Israel's cherished beliefs, traditions, and institutions; the people retaliate, determined to silence God's voice; and Jeremiah cries out to God for justice, declaring his innocence and his adversaries' culpability.

11.1–12.17: The covenant is no panacea for Judah. Whereas the first prose sermon made the case that the Temple and its liturgical systems would not save Judah from disaster (7.1–15), the second prose sermon (11.1–14) emphasizes the devastating consequences of breaking the ancient covenant. It claims that the people, not God, are responsible for the collapse of their world. Jeremiah's disturbing message (11.1–8) incites conspiracies (11.9–10) and attempts on his life (11.18–23), which in turn contribute to the prophet's first lament (12.1–4; see also 12.7–13).

11.1–17: Broken covenant. The prose discourse depicts Jeremiah, like Moses, imploring God's people to obey the terms of the covenant. The disobedience of Israel's ancestors and their punishment has not prompted Israel to any greater degree of faithfulness. Even intercession is of no assistance. Much of the language echoes the book of Deuteronomy (v. 3, Deut 27.26; v. 4, Deut 4.20; v. 5, *oath . . . ancestors*, Deut 7.8,12–13; *a land flowing with milk and honey*, Deut 6.3; 11.9; *as at this day,* Deut 6.24; 10.15). Heb "shama'," translated as "hear," "heed,"

Cursed be anyone who does not heed the
words of this covenant, [4] which I commanded
your ancestors when I brought them out of
the land of Egypt, from the iron-smelter, say-
ing, Listen to my voice, and do all that I com-
mand you. So shall you be my people, and
I will be your God, [5] that I may perform the
oath that I swore to your ancestors, to give
them a land flowing with milk and honey, as
at this day. Then I answered, "So be it, LORD."

[6] And the LORD said to me: Proclaim all
these words in the cities of Judah, and in
the streets of Jerusalem: Hear the words of
this covenant and do them. [7] For I solemnly
warned your ancestors when I brought them
up out of the land of Egypt, warning them
persistently, even to this day, saying, Obey my
voice. [8] Yet they did not obey or incline their
ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness
of an evil will. So I brought upon them all the
words of this covenant, which I commanded
them to do, but they did not.

[9] And the LORD said to me: Conspiracy
exists among the people of Judah and the
inhabitants of Jerusalem. [10] They have turned
back to the iniquities of their ancestors of
old, who refused to heed my words; they
have gone after other gods to serve them;
the house of Israel and the house of Judah
have broken the covenant that I made with
their ancestors. [11] Therefore, thus says the
LORD, assuredly I am going to bring disaster
upon them that they cannot escape; though
they cry out to me, I will not listen to them.
[12] Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants
of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods
to whom they make offerings, but they will
never save them in the time of their trouble.
[13] For your gods have become as many as your
towns, O Judah; and as many as the streets of
Jerusalem are the altars to shame you have
set up, altars to make offerings to Baal.

[14] As for you, do not pray for this people,
or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for
I will not listen when they call to me in the
time of their trouble. [15] What right has my
beloved in my house, when she has done vile
deeds? Can vows[a] and sacrificial flesh avert
your doom? Can you then exult? [16] The LORD
once called you, "A green olive tree, fair with
goodly fruit"; but with the roar of a great
tempest he will set fire to it, and its branches
will be consumed. [17] The LORD of hosts, who
planted you, has pronounced evil against you,
because of the evil that the house of Israel
and the house of Judah have done, provoking
me to anger by making offerings to Baal.

[18] It was the LORD who made it known to
me, and I knew;

[a] Gk: Heb *Can many*

"listen," and "obey," occurs nine times in this brief sermon, five of which are negated—e.g., "they did not obey" or "they refused to heed," culminating in the alarming prospect of a God who will "not listen" to Judah's entreaties. **1–5:** Recalls the curses and blessings that typically conclude a treaty or covenant agreement. **1:** Customary introduction to prose sermons; see 7.1; 18.1; 21.1; 25.1. **2–3:** An invocation of the covenant curses upon the noncompliant (Deut 27.26). **4:** *Your ancestors*, those led by Moses from Egypt in the Exodus. In this tradition, the covenant was made with Moses at Sinai. *So shall you be my people . . .*, see 7.23n. **5:** *The oath that I swore to your ancestors,* that is, to the generations of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These ancestors did not receive a "covenant" but rather an "oath" or "promissory note." The promissory note was for the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey (see Ex 13.5; Deut 6.3; 11.9; 26.15). *So be it* (Heb "'amen"), *LORD,* the technical response accepting the consequences of a self-imprecation when swearing an oath; see Deut 27.15–26. **6–8:** Given the failure of their ancestors, the people are subject to the treaty curses. **7:** *Your ancestors*, that is, the generation of Moses. **8:** *All the words of this covenant,* the curse of v. 3, but more generally of Deut 28.15–44. **9–13:** Israel's present disobediences (going "after other gods," v. 10) is a return to the "iniquities of their ancestors," that is, of the generation of Moses. **9:** *Conspiracy*, used specifically of plots of rebellion against the king; see 2 Sam 15.12; 2 Kings 11.14. **13:** *Shame* (Heb "boshet"), is a metaphor for the Canaanite god Baal (see 2.26n.; 3.24; 7.19). **14:** God's refusal to listen to Israel's cry (v. 11) has as its corollary God's refusal to allow Jeremiah to intercede on their behalf (see 7.16n.). **16:** *Green olive tree*, on the high status of this tree, see Judg 9.8–9; Hos 14.6; Ps 52.8.

11.18–12.17: Jeremiah's complaints and divine response. The first of Jeremiah's complaints (often called "confessions"), these words were shaped by the editor utilizing typical psalm language and attributed to Jeremiah to construct the persona of the suffering prophet; see also 15.10–21; 17.14–18; 18.18–23; 20.7–13; 20.14–18.

then you showed me their evil deeds.
19 But I was like a gentle lamb
led to the slaughter.
And I did not know it was against me
that they devised schemes, saying,
"Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,
let us cut him off from the land of the
living,
so that his name will no longer be
remembered!"
20 But you, O LORD of hosts, who judge
righteously,
who try the heart and the mind,
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.
21 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning
the people of Anathoth, who seek your life, and
say, "You shall not prophesy in the name of the
LORD, or you will die by our hand"— 22 therefore
thus says the LORD of hosts: I am going to pun-
ish them; the young men shall die by the sword;
their sons and their daughters shall die by fam-
ine; 23 and not even a remnant shall be left of
them. For I will bring disaster upon the people
of Anathoth, the year of their punishment.

12 You will be in the right, O LORD,
when I lay charges against you;
but let me put my case to you.
Why does the way of the guilty prosper?
Why do all who are treacherous thrive?
2 You plant them, and they take root;
they grow and bring forth fruit;
you are near in their mouths
yet far from their hearts.
3 But you, O LORD, know me;
You see me and test me—my heart is
with you.
Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,
and set them apart for the day of
slaughter.
4 How long will the land mourn,
and the grass of every field wither?
For the wickedness of those who live in it
the animals and the birds are swept
away,
and because people said, "He is blind to
our ways."[a]

5 If you have raced with foot-runners and
they have wearied you,
how will you compete with horses?
And if in a safe land you fall down,
how will you fare in the thickets of the
Jordan?
6 For even your kinsfolk and your own
family,
even they have dealt treacherously with
you;
they are in full cry after you;
do not believe them,
though they speak friendly words to
you.

7 I have forsaken my house,
I have abandoned my heritage;

[a] Gk: Heb *to our future*

Characteristically, he cries to God, blames adversaries for his distress, declares his innocence, and prays for justice and retribution. **18–23:** If Jeremiah cannot pray on behalf of the people (see v. 14), he will pray and lament on his own behalf. **19:** *Gentle lamb led to the slaughter*, cf. Isa 53.7. **20:** *Who try the heart and the mind*, see Pss 17.3; 26.2; 139.23. *My cause*, see also 12.1. **21:** *The people of Anathoth*, that is, from Jeremiah's own hometown; see 1.1n. and 7.12n. **22:** *Famine*, a shortage of food prompted by the Babylonian siege; cf. 19.9 and 2 Kings 6.24–29.

12.1–17: The complaints of Jeremiah and God merge in their grief over Israel. Such accusation against God and, at the same time, against one's enemies is characteristic of Israelite piety. Just as Jeremiah is alienated from his own family (v. 6), so God is alienated from God's own house (v. 7). **1:** *Lay charges*, technical term for a formal legal appeal; cf. Job 9.3; 23.1–17 for the notion of a suit against God. Jeremiah's complaints refer to the conventional belief that sin is punished and righteousness is rewarded. For similar complaints, see Hab 1.17–17. **3:** *Know me . . . test me*, see 11.20n. This request functions as a declaration of Jeremiah's moral standing. *Like sheep for the slaughter*, cf. 11.19n.

12:5–6: God's response to Jeremiah. 5: *Foot-runners,* or, more likely foot soldiers (Judg 20.2; 1 Sam 4.10; 15.4), as opposed to horse-drawn chariots. *Thickets of the Jordan*, the "pride" or lush river banks of the Jordan River was the abode of wild lions (49.19; Zech 11.3). **6:** See 11.21n.

12.7–13: God's lament over Israel for abandoning her to her enemies. The surplus of first-person singular pronouns—"my house" (cf. Hos 9.15), "my heritage," "the beloved of my heart" (cf. 11.15), "my pleasant

I have given the beloved of my heart
into the hands of her enemies.
8 My heritage has become to me
like a lion in the forest;
she has lifted up her voice against me—
therefore I hate her.
9 Is the hyena greedy[a] for my heritage at
my command?
Are the birds of prey all around her?
Go, assemble all the wild animals;
bring them to devour her.
10 Many shepherds have destroyed my
vineyard,
they have trampled down my portion,
they have made my pleasant portion
a desolate wilderness.
11 They have made it a desolation;
desolate, it mourns to me.
The whole land is made desolate,
but no one lays it to heart.
12 Upon all the bare heights[b] in the desert
spoilers have come;
for the sword of the LORD devours
from one end of the land to the other;
no one shall be safe.
13 They have sown wheat and have reaped
thorns,
they have tired themselves out but
profit nothing.
They shall be ashamed of their[c] harvests
because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

14 Thus says the LORD concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage that I have given my people Israel to inherit: I am about to pluck them up from their land, and I will pluck up the house of Judah from among them. 15 And after I have plucked them up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again to their heritage and to their land, every one of them. 16 And then, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, "As the LORD lives," as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people. 17 But if any nation will not listen, then I will completely uproot it and destroy it, says the LORD.

13 Thus said the LORD to me, "Go and buy yourself a linen loincloth, and put it on your loins, but do not dip it in water." 2 So I bought a loincloth according to the word of the LORD, and put it on my loins. 3 And the word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, 4 "Take the loincloth that you bought and are wearing, and go now to the Euphrates,[d] and hide it there in

[a] Cn: Heb *Is the hyena, the bird of prey*
[b] Or *the trails*
[c] Heb *your*
[d] Or *to Parah*; Heb *perath*

portion"—conveys divine pathos. **8:** *I hate her*, a technical term in treaty contexts of becoming an enemy to another nation. God has become Israel's enemy. **10:** *Many shepherds*, Israel's kings; see 23.1–4. *My vineyard,* see 5.10n. **11:** The repetition of the words *desolate* and *desolation* (the same Heb root is also translated "mourns") creates a dirge-like quality that unites Jeremiah, God, and the victims of war in suffering and vulnerability.

12.14–17: An addition to the divine lament, reshaping it to promise Judah's restoration in the midst of universal restoration. **14:** *Heritage*, a catchword in vv. 7– 9 and 14–15 that connects this unit with the preceding lament. *Pluck them up*, cf. 1.10. **15:** *Every one of them* refers not simply to Judah but to all nations, who will live figuratively in Judah's midst (vv. 16–17). **16:** *Baal*, the Canaanite deity. **17:** *Uproot . . . destroy,* along with the terms *pluck up* (vv. 14–15) and *built up* (v. 16), echo Jeremiah's call in 1.4–10.

13.1–15.21: Signs of destruction. The story of the loincloth (13.1–11), a prophetic symbolic action, introduces this composite unit, followed by a judgment statement based on a conventional proverb (13.12–14) and a series of poems (13.15–17,18–19,20–27). All accuse Judah of sins that will lead to its collapse. Such accusations and warnings elicit intense expressions of grief by the community (14.1–9 and 14.19–22)—to which God responds (14.10–12 and 15.1–4,5–9)—and by Jeremiah (14.13; 15.10,15–18) to which God also responds (14.14–18; 15.11–14,19–21).

13.1–27: The sign of the loincloth. A series of oracles held together by word associations. The series is introduced with the symbolic story of Jeremiah's loincloth, representing God's intimacy with Israel and Israel's "clinging" to God (v. 11); it also represents the "ruined" nature of the relationship that was now "good for nothing" (v. 10). **1–11:** Sign-acts are a common feature of prophetic behavior (cf. chs 16; 18; 19; 32; Ezek 4.1–5.17). **1:** *Linen loincloth*, an undergarment, perhaps a sign of priestly purity (see Lev 8.1–9; Ezek 44.17–18; Zech 3.1–5). **4:** *Euphrates*

a cleft of the rock." 5 So I went, and hid it by
the Euphrates,[a] as the LORD commanded me.
6 And after many days the LORD said to me,
"Go now to the Euphrates,[b] and take from
there the loincloth that I commanded you to
hide there." 7 Then I went to the Euphrates,[b]
and dug, and I took the loincloth from the
place where I had hidden it. But now the loin-
cloth was ruined; it was good for nothing.

8 Then the word of the LORD came to me:
9 Thus says the LORD: Just so I will ruin the
pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusa-
lem. 10 This evil people, who refuse to hear my
words, who stubbornly follow their own will
and have gone after other gods to serve them
and worship them, shall be like this loincloth,
which is good for nothing. 11 For as the loin-
cloth clings to one's loins, so I made the whole
house of Israel and the whole house of Judah
cling to me, says the LORD, in order that they
might be for me a people, a name, a praise,
and a glory. But they would not listen.

12 You shall speak to them this word: Thus
says the LORD, the God of Israel: Every wine-
jar should be filled with wine. And they will
say to you, "Do you think we do not know
that every wine-jar should be filled with
wine?" 13 Then you shall say to them: Thus
says the LORD: I am about to fill all the in-
habitants of this land—the kings who sit on
David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and
all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—with drunk-
enness. 14 And I will dash them one against
another, parents and children together, says
the LORD. I will not pity or spare or have com-
passion when I destroy them.

15 Hear and give ear; do not be haughty,
for the LORD has spoken.

16 Give glory to the LORD your God
before he brings darkness,
and before your feet stumble
on the mountains at twilight;
while you look for light,
he turns it into gloom
and makes it deep darkness.
17 But if you will not listen,
my soul will weep in secret for your
pride;
my eyes will weep bitterly and run down
with tears,
because the LORD's flock has been taken
captive.

18 Say to the king and the queen mother:
"Take a lowly seat,
for your beautiful crown
has come down from your head."[c]
19 The towns of the Negeb are shut up
with no one to open them;
all Judah is taken into exile,
wholly taken into exile.

20 Lift up your eyes and see
those who come from the north.
Where is the flock that was given you,
your beautiful flock?
21 What will you say when they set as head
over you
those whom you have trained
to be your allies?
Will not pangs take hold of you,
like those of a woman in labor?

[a] Or *by Parah*; Heb *perath*
[b] Or *to Parah*; Heb *perath*
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

(Heb "perat") may be an error for the town of Parah (textual note *b*), mentioned in Josh 18.23, or the sign may be a literary device; cf. the prophetic sign associated with the Euphrates in 51.60–64. **8–11:** Two different interpretations of the action are given: the ruined linen undergarment represents the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem; and the people of Israel and Judah should have clung to God the way a linen undergarment clings to the body. **9:** *Pride* is often judged negatively, whether that of Israel and Jerusalem (Hos 5.5; Am 6.8) or other nations (48.29; Isa 13.11,19; Ezek 16.49). **12–14:** Being *filled with wine* often means drunkenness or even being poisoned (25.15–16; 51.7; Ezek 23.33). *I will dash*, cf. 51.20–23; Pss 2.9; 137.9. **15:** *Haughty*, cf. 9n. **16:** *Give glory*, an invitation to provide a judgment doxology, as in 10.1–8. **18:** *The king*, either Jehoiakim, who reigned through most of the first Babylonian siege until 597 BCE, or his son Jehoiachin, who reigned briefly before being taken into exile in the same year. Those at the top of the socio-political hierarchy are brought down to a *lowly seat* (see chs 21–24). **19:** *Negeb*, the southernmost region of Judah. **20:** *From the north*, the invading Babylonian army; see 1.14n. **21:** The

22 And if you say in your heart,
"Why have these things come upon me?"
it is for the greatness of your iniquity
that your skirts are lifted up,
and you are violated.
23 Can Ethiopians[a] change their skin
or leopards their spots?
Then also you can do good
who are accustomed to do evil.
24 I will scatter you[b] like chaff
driven by the wind from the desert.
25 This is your lot,
the portion I have measured out to you,
says the LORD,
because you have forgotten me
and trusted in lies.
26 I myself will lift up your skirts over your face,
and your shame will be seen.
27 I have seen your abominations,
your adulteries and neighings, your shameless prostitutions
on the hills of the countryside.
Woe to you, O Jerusalem!
How long will it be
before you are made clean?

14 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought:

2 Judah mourns
and her gates languish;
they lie in gloom on the ground,
and the cry of Jerusalem goes up.
3 Her nobles send their servants for water;
they come to the cisterns,
they find no water,
they return with their vessels empty.
They are ashamed and dismayed
and cover their heads,
4 because the ground is cracked.
Because there has been no rain on the land
the farmers are dismayed;
they cover their heads.
5 Even the doe in the field forsakes her newborn fawn
because there is no grass.
6 The wild asses stand on the bare heights,[c]
they pant for air like jackals;
their eyes fail
because there is no herbage.

7 Although our iniquities testify against us,
act, O LORD, for your name's sake;
our apostasies indeed are many,
and we have sinned against you.
8 O hope of Israel,
its savior in time of trouble,
why should you be like a stranger in the land,
like a traveler turning aside for the night?
9 Why should you be like someone confused,
like a mighty warrior who cannot give help?
Yet you, O LORD, are in the midst of us,
and we are called by your name;
do not forsake us!

10 Thus says the LORD concerning this people:
Truly they have loved to wander,
they have not restrained their feet;
therefore the LORD does not accept them,
now he will remember their iniquity
and punish their sins.

[a] Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*
[b] Heb *them*
[c] Or *the trails*

pains of childbirth symbolize agony and despair; cf. Isa 13.8; Mic 4.9. **22:** Exposure and sexual violence violation was a form of punishment; cf. v. 26; Nah 3.5; Ezek 16.35–43. **23:** *Ethiopians*, the inhabitants of Cush, the land south of Egypt. **27:** *Your . . . neighings*, the lust of horses was a strong symbol of sexual depravity symbolizing Israel's foreign dalliances and resulting religious apostasy (5.8; Ezek 23.20).

14:1–15:21: Oracles concerning the drought. 14.1–10: In the face of critical drought (vv. 2–6), a lament and intercessory plea is voiced (vv. 7–9), only to be rejected by God (v. 10). **1:** *The drought*, the Heb term is general (the "trouble," see Pss 9.9; 10.1). **3–4:** *Cover their heads,* a sign of mourning (2 Sam 15.30; Esth 6.12). **7:** *For your name's sake*, God's own reputation was often a motivation for saving action, even when Israel sinned; cf. Num 14.13–16; Ezek 20.1–26; Pss 25.11; 79.9–10; 115.1–2. **9:** *Called by your name* indicates possession. **10:** *Love to wan-*

[11] The Lord said to me: Do not pray for the welfare of this people. [12] Although they fast, I do not hear their cry, and although they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I do not accept them; but by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence I consume them.

[13] Then I said: "Ah, Lord God! Here are the prophets saying to them, 'You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you true peace in this place.' " [14] And the Lord said to me: The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. [15] Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name though I did not send them, and who say, "Sword and famine shall not come on this land": By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed. [16] And the people to whom they prophesy shall be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword. There shall be no one to bury them—themselves, their wives, their sons, and their daughters. For I will pour out their wickedness upon them.

[17] You shall say to them this word:
Let my eyes run down with tears night and day,
and let them not cease,
for the virgin daughter—my people—is struck down with a crushing blow,
with a very grievous wound.
[18] If I go out into the field,
look—those killed by the sword!
And if I enter the city,
look—those sick with[a] famine!
For both prophet and priest ply their trade throughout the land,
and have no knowledge.

[19] Have you completely rejected Judah?
Does your heart loathe Zion?
Why have you struck us down
so that there is no healing for us?
We look for peace, but find no good;
for a time of healing, but there is terror instead.
[20] We acknowledge our wickedness, O Lord,
the iniquity of our ancestors,
for we have sinned against you.
[21] Do not spurn us, for your name's sake;
do not dishonor your glorious throne;
remember and do not break your covenant with us.
[22] Can any idols of the nations bring rain?
Or can the heavens give showers?
Is it not you, O Lord our God?
We set our hope on you,
for it is you who do all this.

15 Then the Lord said to me: Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! [2] And when they say to you, "Where shall we go?" you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord:
Those destined for pestilence, to pestilence,
and those destined for the sword, to the sword;

[a] Heb *look—the sicknesses of*

der, cf. 2.23–35. **11:** See 7.16n. **12:** *By the sword, by famine, and by pestilence* signify curses for breaking covenant with God (Lev 26.25–26) and anticipating vv. 13,15,16; see also 15.2; 18.21; 21.7,9; 29.17–18; 42.15–17,22; 44.13. **13:** See also 5.12. **14:** *They are prophesying*, using a form of the verb suggesting ecstatic prophetic utterances. **15:** *Those prophets shall be consumed*, on the consequences for false prophecy, see Deut 18.20–22; cf. Jer 28.15–17. **17–18:** The theme of "sword and famine" from the previous verses shapes this lament. **18:** *Ply their trade* implies that prophets and priests treat their responsibilities as though they were merchandise for sale. **19:** Cf. Lam 5.22; Pss 74.1; 79.5. *Healing*, 3.22; 8.22. **20:** Cf. 3.25; Ps 79.8. **21:** *For your name's sake*, see v. 7n. *Remember and do not break your covenant*, see Ps 74.20. **22:** See 10.12–16. *Hope*, see v. 8. **15.1:** *Moses* and *Samuel* were honored as Israel's chief intercessors; cf. Ex 32.11–14; Num 11.12; 21.17; 1 Sam 8.6. The only other references to Moses in the prophetic writings are Mic 6.4; Isa 63.11; Mal 4.4. *Send them out of my sight . . . let them go!* A reversal of Israel's salvation history: rather than delivering the people of Israel from slavery, God delivers them to total destruction (cf., e.g., Ex 5.1; 7.16). **2:** The usual triad is sword, famine, and pestilence; see 14.12n.; here the four terms are "death" (NRSV "pestilence"), "sword," "famine," and "captivity"; note the "four kinds of destroyers"

those destined for famine, to famine,
and those destined for captivity, to captivity.
3 And I will appoint over them four kinds of
destroyers, says the LORD: the sword to kill,
the dogs to drag away, and the birds of the air
and the wild animals of the earth to devour
and destroy. 4 I will make them a horror to all
the kingdoms of the earth because of what
King Manasseh son of Hezekiah of Judah did
in Jerusalem.

5 Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem,
or who will bemoan you?
Who will turn aside
to ask about your welfare?
6 You have rejected me, says the LORD,
you are going backward;
so I have stretched out my hand against
you and destroyed you—
I am weary of relenting.
7 I have winnowed them with a winnowing
fork
in the gates of the land;
I have bereaved them, I have destroyed my
people;
they did not turn from their ways.
8 Their widows became more numerous
than the sand of the seas;
I have brought against the mothers of
youths
a destroyer at noonday;
I have made anguish and terror
fall upon her suddenly.
9 She who bore seven has languished;
she has swooned away;
her sun went down while it was yet day;
she has been shamed and disgraced.
And the rest of them I will give to the
sword
before their enemies,
says the LORD.

10 Woe is me, my mother, that you ever bore
me, a man of strife and contention to the whole
land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet
all of them curse me. 11 The LORD said: Surely
I have intervened in your life[a] for good, surely
I have imposed enemies on you in a time of
trouble and in a time of distress.[b] 12 Can iron
and bronze break iron from the north?
13 Your wealth and your treasures I will give
as plunder, without price, for all your sins,
throughout all your territory. 14 I will make
you serve your enemies in a land that you
do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled
that shall burn forever.
15 O LORD, you know;
remember me and visit me,
and bring down retribution for me on
my persecutors.

[a] Heb *intervened with you*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

(v. 3; see also Ezek 7.15). The term *captivity* denotes exile. **4:** *King Manasseh* (698/687–642 BCE) was blamed for singlehandedly assuring Judah's destruction, despite his grandson Josiah's reforming efforts (2 Kings 23.26–27).

15:5–9: God's lament over Jerusalem. 6: *Going backward*, i.e., going in the wrong direction by rebellion; cf. 7.24; Isa 50.5. *Relenting*, the term used of God "repenting of" or "regretting" a decision; see Gen 6.6; Jon 4.2; Joel 2.13. **7:** *Winnowed them with a winnowing fork*, imagery of threshing to describe judgment (cf. 51.2; Isa 21.10; 27.12). *Bereaved them*, that is, made them childless. **8:** *Widows . . . more numerous than the sand of the seas*, a reversal of God's promise to make Israel's offspring as numerous as the sand on the seashore (Gen 22.17; 32.12). **9:** Bearing seven children or sons, a sign of blessing and good fortune (Gen 46.25; Ruth 4.15; 1 Sam 2.5; Job 42.13), just as the loss of seven signified absolute bereavement (2 Sam 21.5–14; 2 Macc 7.20).

15.10–21: Jeremiah's second complaint and God's response. See 11.18–12.17n. Linked to the preceding lament by the suffering mother motif (see vv. 8–9,10), the passage consists of two laments followed by divine responses. **10:** Jeremiah, like Job (Job 3), laments his birth, cries out in pain, and insists that he has done nothing to deserve his condition. Declarations of innocence, not confessions of guilt, are common to the lament genre. *Lent . . . borrowed*, Israel had strict limits to borrowing and lending; see Ex 22.25; Deut 24.10–11; Neh 5.10–11; and cf. 1 Sam 12.3. **11–14:** The divine response apparently reassures Jeremiah of protection, although some interpreters read the divine reply as a rebuke. **11:** *The LORD said,* or perhaps, with LXX, Jeremiah continues, "So be it LORD," with more claims of his innocence. **12:** *Iron and bronze*, see also 1.18; 6.28. The question, though obscure, requires a negative response and must refer to the onslaught of the enemy *from the north* (see 1.14n.). **14:** *Forever,* not in the Hebrew. **15–18:** The second lament reflects many of the typical elements of the genre as attested in

In your forbearance do not take me away;
know that on your account I suffer
insult.
16 Your words were found, and I ate them,
and your words became to me a joy
and the delight of my heart;
for I am called by your name,
O LORD, God of hosts.
17 I did not sit in the company of
merrymakers,
nor did I rejoice;
under the weight of your hand I sat alone,
for you had filled me with indignation.
18 Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?
Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook,
like waters that fail.

19 Therefore thus says the LORD:
If you turn back, I will take you back,
and you shall stand before me.
If you utter what is precious, and not what
is worthless,
you shall serve as my mouth.
It is they who will turn to you,
not you who will turn to them.
20 And I will make you to this people
a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you,
but they shall not prevail over you,
for I am with you
to save you and deliver you,
says the LORD.
21 I will deliver you out of the hand of the
wicked,
and redeem you from the grasp of the
ruthless.

16 The word of the LORD came to me:
2 You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place. 3 For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning the mothers who bear them and the fathers who beget them in this land: 4 They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried; they shall become like dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall become food for the birds of the air and for the wild animals of the earth.

5 For thus says the LORD: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament, or bemoan them; for I have taken away my peace from this people, says the LORD, my steadfast

the Psalms: an address or invocation (v. 15a), a petition (v. 15b), and a lament (vv. 16–18). It is followed by a divine response (vv. 19–21), which is rarely attested in the Psalter. A concluding vow to praise—usually present in the laments in the Psalter—is absent. **15:** *In your forbearance*, God's "slowness to anger" is normally prized (Ex 34.6; Num 14.18) but becomes a scandalous problem for the one hoping for speedy divine intervention against the enemy. *On your account*, Jeremiah suffers because of devotion to God; see Ps 69.7. **16:** *Your words were found* may refer either to 1.9 or to the finding of the book of the law in the Temple (2 Kings 22.8). *I ate them,* cf. 1.9; Ezek 3.3. **17:** *Merrymakers*, Jeremiah is deprived of celebrating the normal joys of life. **18:** *A deceitful brook,* see also 2.13; cf. Job 6.15–20. **19:** *I will take you back*, or "I shall bring you back." Heb "shuv," translated *turn* and *take . . . back*, occurs four times. Jeremiah has prophesied that Israel must *turn/return* to God. Now God demands that Jeremiah *turn/return*. **20:** *A fortified wall of bronze,* cf. 1.18.

16.1–17.27: The end of ordinary life. Although the third and final section of the larger literary unit (11.1–17.27) is diverse and fragmented, it has several unifying features. Like earlier sections, it begins with a prose discourse (16.1–18) that triggers responses, including laments. In this case, the section also ends with a prose piece (17.19–27). Jeremiah 16.1–17.27 continues to focus on facets of uprooting and tearing down Judah's preexilic world (1.10), a world that had already ended for the writers and first readers of Jeremiah. The literary unit addresses the pressing questions of survivors— why their world had collapsed, what it meant, and how they could cope in their dangerous new world.

16.1–21: Further prohibitions for Jeremiah as sign-acts of coming judgment. Like the prohibition of intercession, now Jeremiah is prohibited from the normal patterns of family life and mourning rituals as signs of the coming judgment. **1–2:** The command not to marry or have children is a poignant sign of death, especially in light of the mandate in Gen 1.28 and the conviction that progeny is a sign of divine blessing (e.g., Gen 15.5; 22.17). *In this place*, see also 7.3,6,7; 14.13; 19.7. **3:** *Mothers*, a catchword, also used in 15.8–9,10. **4:** Common themes in Jeremiah relating to the desecration of corpses; cf. 7.33; 8.2; 9.21; 19.7; 22.18; 25.33. *Sword . . . famine*,

love and mercy. 6 Both great and small shall die in this land; they shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them; there shall be no gashing, no shaving of the head for them. 7 No one shall break bread[a] for the mourner, to offer comfort for the dead; nor shall anyone give them the cup of consolation to drink for their fathers or their mothers. 8 You shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink. 9 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to banish from this place, in your days and before your eyes, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

10 And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, "Why has the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?" 11 then you shall say to them: It is because your ancestors have forsaken me, says the LORD, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law; 12 and because you have behaved worse than your ancestors, for here you are, every one of you, following your stubborn evil will, refusing to listen to me. 13 Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.

14 Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, "As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt," 15 but "As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them." For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their ancestors.

16 I am now sending for many fishermen, says the LORD, and they shall catch them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. 17 For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from my presence, nor is their iniquity concealed from my sight. 18 And[b] I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations.

19 O LORD, my strength and my stronghold,
my refuge in the day of trouble,
to you shall the nations come
from the ends of the earth and say:
Our ancestors have inherited nothing but lies,
worthless things in which there is no profit.
20 Can mortals make for themselves gods?
Such are no gods!

21 "Therefore I am surely going to teach them, this time I am going to teach them my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is the LORD."

17 The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen; with a diamond point it is engraved on the tablet of their hearts, and

[a] Two Mss Gk: MT *break for them*
[b] Gk: Heb *And first*

characteristic language; see, e.g., 5.12; 11.22; 14.12–16; 21.9. **6:** *Gashing* and *shaving of the head*, actions of mourning; cf. 7.29; Lev 19.28; Deut 14.1; Hos 7.14. **7–8:** The house of mourning, with its meal rituals, is connected with the *house of feasting*, lit., "house of drinking," with emphasis upon the consumption of wine. **9:** See 7.34n. **10–12:** Cf. Deut. 4.25–28; 29.24–29. **12:** Cf. 11.6–10. **13:** The punishment will fit the crime. **14–15:** A brief interpolation from 23.7–8; see note there. **16–18:** Fishing and hunting are metaphors for divine judgment; cf. Hab 1.14–15. **18:** Double punishment is warranted for the offense; cf. Ex 22.7; Isa 40.2. Since dead carcasses pollute, as do things that are "detestable" (Lev 11.10–12), the dead carcasses of detestable things (*idols*) would be particularly defiling. **19–21:** A brief concluding hymn of praise and divine oath regarding the conversion of the nations; cf. Isa 2.2; 60.3; 66.18; Mic 4.2; Zech 8.22; 14.16; Ps 86.9. *Worthless things*, a term used of idols of false gods (Deut 22.31; Ps 31.6). *No profit*, an allusion to the Canaanite god Baal; see 2.8n.

17.1–18: Various oracles on the theme of the drought. Fragments brought together under the theme established in 14.1, these oracles present a collage of coming judgment. **1–4:** Israel's intransigence is likened to an

on the horns of their altars, [2] while their
children remember their altars and their
sacred poles,[a] beside every green tree, and
on the high hills, [3] on the mountains in
the open country. Your wealth and all your
treasures I will give for spoil as the price of
your sin[b] throughout all your territory. [4] By
your own act you shall lose the heritage that
I gave you, and I will make you serve your
enemies in a land that you do not know, for
in my anger a fire is kindled[c] that shall burn
forever.

[5] Thus says the LORD:
Cursed are those who trust in mere
mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the LORD.
[6] They shall be like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see when relief comes.
They shall live in the parched places of the
wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

[7] Blessed are those who trust in the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD.
[8] They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.
It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

[9] The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse—
who can understand it?
[10] I the LORD test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their
doings.

[11] Like the partridge hatching what it did
not lay,
so are all who amass wealth unjustly;
in mid-life it will leave them,
and at their end they will prove to be
fools.

[12] O glorious throne, exalted from the
beginning,
shrine of our sanctuary!
[13] O hope of Israel! O LORD!
All who forsake you shall be put to
shame;
those who turn away from you[d] shall be
recorded in the underworld,[e]
for they have forsaken the fountain of
living water, the LORD.

[14] Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be
healed;
save me, and I shall be saved;
for you are my praise.

[a] Heb *Asherim*
[b] Cn: Heb *spoil your high places for sin*
[c] Two Mss Theodotion: *you kindled*
[d] Heb *me*
[e] Or *in the earth*

engraver writing on rock; cf. Job 19.24. **1:** *Diamond point*, a rare phrase; cf. Ezek 3.9; Zech 7.12; Job 19.24. *Tablets of their hearts*: Elsewhere, the Torah is written on the human heart (30.14) and on stone tablets (Ex 24.12; 31.18), but now their sinfulness is so engraved. The human heart represented the center of resolve and will (cf. 31.33; Prov 3.3). *Horns of their altars*, protrusions at each of the four corners of a cut-stone altar, symbolizing divine strength and functioning to hold in place the wood and animal parts. Sanctuary could be gained by seizing the horns; see 7.4n. This language is also commonly associated with mercy and forgiveness of sins (see, e.g., Ex 29.12; 30.10; Lev 4.7). **2:** *Sacred poles,* Heb "'asherim," sacred trees to honor the Canaanite mother-goddess Asherah; see, e.g., Ex 34.13; 2 Kings 21.7; 23.4. **3–4:** A variant of 15.13–14. **5–8:** A curse and accompanying blessing, linked to the theme of drought in vv. 6 and 8; cf. similar imagery in Ps 1. **9–10:** God discerns hidden motives and treats humans impartially. See Pss 11.5; 44.21. **9:** *Devious* (Heb "'aqob"), a play on the name "Jacob" (Heb "ya'aqob"); see 9.4n. **10:** See 11.20. *Mind*, Heb "lev," lit., "heart," the place of rational reflection. *Heart*, Heb "kilayot," lit., "kidneys," the seat of strong emotion and feeling; see Pss 7.9; 26.2; 73.21; Prov 23.16. **11:** A wisdom saying. **12–13:** Another voice, perhaps a priestly representative, reaffirms the truth of the sages (17.1–4,5–8) that those who *turn away* from God, *the fountain of living water* (see 2.13), will suffer disgrace.

17.14–18: Jeremiah's third complaint (see 11.18–12.6n.). Many formal elements of the lament are attested: a petition for help (v. 14), a motivation (v. 15), which includes a declaration of innocence (vv. 15–16), an affirmation

15 See how they say to me,
"Where is the word of the LORD?
Let it come!"
16 But I have not run away from being a
shepherd[a] in your service,
nor have I desired the fatal day.
You know what came from my lips;
it was before your face.
17 Do not become a terror to me;
you are my refuge in the day of disaster;
18 Let my persecutors be shamed,
but do not let me be shamed;
let them be dismayed,
but do not let me be dismayed;
bring on them the day of disaster;
destroy them with double destruction!

19 Thus said the LORD to me: Go and stand in the People's Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, 20 and say to them: Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. 21 Thus says the LORD: For the sake of your lives, take care that you do not bear a burden on the sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. 22 And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the sabbath or do any work, but keep the sabbath day holy, as I commanded your ancestors. 23 Yet they did not listen or incline their ear; they stiffened their necks and would not hear or receive instruction.

24 But if you listen to me, says the LORD, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but keep the sabbath day holy and do no work on it, 25 then there shall enter by the gates of this city kings[b] who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall be inhabited forever. 26 And people shall come from the towns of Judah and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the Shephelah, from the hill country, and from the Negeb, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the LORD. 27 But if you do not listen to me, to keep the sabbath day holy, and to carry in no burden through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates; it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.

18 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn: Heb *kings and officials*

of trust (v. 17), and an appeal for retribution (v. 18). The expression of praise is missing, as is a divine response. **15:** *Word of the LORD*, the prophetic oracle of judgment. **18:** *Double destruction*, see 16.18n.

17.19–27: A command to honor the sabbath. The prose sermon envisions the wellbeing of the nation dependent upon its devotion to the sabbath (see Ex 20.8–11; Deut 5.12–16). If the text is exilic or postexilic (see, e.g., Isa 56.1–8; Ezek 46.1–3; Neh 13.15–22), as most scholars argue, it attributes the destruction of Jerusalem to Judah's failure to keep the sabbath. By concluding the larger literary unit with this prose sermon, the Jeremiah tradition creates a framework for the montage of voices and interprets Judah's massive losses as a consequence of breaking the covenant. **19:** *People's Gate*, location unknown. **23:** See 7.26,28. **26:** *Benjamin . . . the Shephelah . . . the hill country . . . the Negeb*, the regions surrounding Jerusalem to the north, west, and south; see also 32.44; 33.13. **27:** *Kindle a fire*, cf. 15.14; 17.4.

18.1–20.18: Judah's salvation history is no panacea. Another major division of the book (see also chs 2–6,7–10,11–17). As is customary, the literary unit opens with a prose account written in the style, diction, theology, and structure of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History. Like other prose sermons it dismantles a belief, practice, or institution of Israel's pre-587 BCE world, in this case Israel's election tradition and salvation history. Jeremiah declares that this tradition will not save the nation from massive losses: chosen Israel will become rejected Israel. The image of God as potter and people as clay is central to the unit. However, unlike its more benign usage (see Isa 29.16; 45.9; 64.8; cf. Sir 33.13; Wis 15.7–8), the image of shattered pottery conveys the irreparable character of the relationship between God and Israel. Such frontal prophetic attacks incite persecution and the final two laments of Jeremiah.

18.1–23: The potter's house and pottery as signs of judgment. 1–17: A sign-act. See 13.1–11n. The motif of the deity as potter and humanity as clay is well attested in the ancient Near East. At the potter's house, Jeremiah

my words." [3] So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. [4] The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

[5] Then the word of the LORD came to me: [6] Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? says the LORD. Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. [7] At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, [8] but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. [9] And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, [10] but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. [11] Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the LORD: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

[12] But they say, "It is no use! We will follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of our evil will."

[13] Therefore thus says the LORD:
Ask among the nations:
  Who has heard the like of this?
The virgin Israel has done
  a most horrible thing.
[14] Does the snow of Lebanon leave
  the crags of Sirion?[a]
Do the mountain[b] waters run dry,[c]
  the cold flowing streams?
[15] But my people have forgotten me,
  they burn offerings to a delusion;
they have stumbled[d] in their ways,
  in the ancient roads,
and have gone into bypaths,
  not the highway,
[16] making their land a horror,
  a thing to be hissed at forever.
All who pass by it are horrified
  and shake their heads.
[17] Like the wind from the east,
  I will scatter them before the enemy.
I will show them my back, not my face,
  in the day of their calamity.

[18] Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah—for instruction shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us bring charges against him,[e] and let us not heed any of his words."

[a] Cn: Heb *of the field*
[b] Cn: Heb *foreign*
[c] Cn: Heb *Are . . . plucked up?*
[d] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they made them stumble*
[e] Heb *strike him with the tongue*

observes the potter at work as God's power to reshape Israel's future; cf. Isa 45.9. **3:** *At his wheel*, lit., "upon the stones," referring to the stones used for turning pots. **7–9:** *Pluck up and break down . . . build and plant*, see 1.10n. **8:** *I will change my mind*, see 15.6n; 26.3; Jon 3.10. **11:** The metaphor of the potter shifts from representing God's freedom to change course to that of God *shaping evil*. **12:** A self-implicating statement; see also 16.12. **13–17:** Three incriminating questions reveal the character of Judah's actions and the depths of God's anguish. **14:** Israel acts contrary to the laws of nature by forgetting God, a common theme in the book; see 2.32n. *Lebanon*, the mountain range north of Israel that parallels the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The name "Lebanon" is related to the word for "white," alluding to the snowy peaks. *Sirion* is a conjecture (see textual note *a*); if correct, it refers to Mount Hermon in Israel's far north (cf. Deut 3.9; Ps 29.6). **16:** Hissing and shaking the head are gestures of abhorrence and shaming; see 19.8; 1 Kings 9.8; Mic 6.16; 2 Chr 29.8. **17:** *Show them my back*, lit., "neck" or "back of the neck," a sign of stubbornness or neglect; just as Israel can be "stiff-necked" (Ex 32.9), so can God; cf. 2.27; 7.26.

18.18–23: Jeremiah's fourth complaint (see 11.18–12.6n.), concerning his enemies. The sentiments are bitter, but not unusual for the piety of the Psalms. **18:** *Make plots,* this is a catchword in the section; cf. 18.8,11,12, though the English translation obscures the wordplay. *Priests, the wise*, and *prophets* were each associated with a primary form of divine revelation: *instruction* (Heb "torah"), *counsel*, and *word*; cf. Ezek 7.26. Jeremiah's adversaries claim these traditional forms of authority over Jeremiah's claim to an alternative word. *Bring charges*

19 Give heed to me, O LORD,
and listen to what my adversaries say!
20 Is evil a recompense for good?
Yet they have dug a pit for my life.
Remember how I stood before you
to speak good for them,
to turn away your wrath from them.
21 Therefore give their children over to famine;
hurl them out to the power of the sword,
let their wives become childless and widowed.
May their men meet death by pestilence,
their youths be slain by the sword in battle.
22 May a cry be heard from their houses,
when you bring the marauder suddenly upon them!
For they have dug a pit to catch me,
and laid snares for my feet.
23 Yet you, O LORD, know
all their plotting to kill me.
Do not forgive their iniquity,
do not blot out their sin from your sight.
Let them be tripped up before you;
deal with them while you are angry.

19 Thus said the LORD: Go and buy a potter's earthenware jug. Take with you[a] some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests, 2 and go out to the valley of the son of Hinnom at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you. 3 You shall say: Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to bring such disaster upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. 4 Because the people have forsaken me, and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah have known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent, 5 and gone on building the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it enter my mind; 6 therefore the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter. 7 And in this place I will make void the plans of Judah and Jerusalem, and will make them fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth. 8 And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at; everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters. 9 And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and all shall eat the flesh of their neighbors in the siege, and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life afflict them.

[a] Syr Tg Compare Gk: Heb lacks *take with you*

against him, as an enemy of the state. **19–23:** Jeremiah's lament is a direct response to the threat on his life (v. 23). As in other laments, Jeremiah confesses his innocence (v. 20) and prays for divine intervention (vv. 21–22), i.e., for justice (v. 23) and relief from suffering. **20:** A surprising claim, given prohibitions against Jeremiah interceding (7.16; 11.14). **23:** *While you are angry*, an appeal that God's mercy not be extended to the prophet's adversaries; see 15.15n.

19.1–20.18: The potter's flask and Jeremiah at Topheth. This section continues the theme of pottery as a symbol of divine judgment, concluding with Jeremiah's fifth complaint. No date is given, but by 605 BCE Jeremiah had been barred from the Temple (36.5), perhaps as a result of his confinement by the priest Pashur, the chief officer of the Temple personnel (20.1–2). This section is the last of the oracles in the first cycle dated prior to the reign of Zedekiah.

19.1–20.6: Jeremiah at Topheth and its aftermath: 1–2: *Valley of the son of Hinnom* (or *Topheth,* used five times in 19.6,11–14); see 7.31–32n. *Potsherd Gate*, nowhere else named, but since the Hinnom Valley was south of Jerusalem, this is likely the later Dung Gate (Neh 3.13–14), used to discard refuse (thus "Potsherd Gate"). **4:** *Blood of the innocent*, a reference to the practice of sacrificing children at this site. **5:** *Baal*, but elsewhere Molech (32.35; 2 Kings 23.10). **7:** *Make void*, a verb (Heb "baqaq") related to the word for "jug" ("baqbuq," vv. 1,10), thereby explaining the connection with the prophetic sign. **8:** *Hiss,* see 18.16n. **9:** The horrors of siege warfare; see 11.22n.;

10 Then you shall break the jug in the sight
of those who go with you, 11 and shall say to
them: Thus says the LORD of hosts: So will I
break this people and this city, as one breaks
a potter's vessel, so that it can never be mend-
ed. In Topheth they shall bury until there
is no more room to bury. 12 Thus will I do to
this place, says the LORD, and to its inhabit-
ants, making this city like Topheth. 13 And the
houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the
kings of Judah shall be defiled like the place
of Topheth—all the houses upon whose roofs
offerings have been made to the whole host
of heaven, and libations have been poured
out to other gods.

14 When Jeremiah came from Topheth,
where the LORD had sent him to prophesy, he
stood in the court of the LORD's house and
said to all the people: 15 Thus says the LORD
of hosts, the God of Israel: I am now bring-
ing upon this city and upon all its towns all
the disaster that I have pronounced against
it, because they have stiffened their necks,
refusing to hear my words.

20 Now the priest Pashhur son of Immer,
who was chief officer in the house of
the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these
things. 2 Then Pashhur struck the prophet
Jeremiah, and put him in the stocks that were
in the upper Benjamin Gate of the house of
the LORD. 3 The next morning when Pashhur
released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah
said to him, The LORD has named you not
Pashhur but "Terror-all-around." 4 For thus
says the LORD: I am making you a terror to
yourself and to all your friends; and they
shall fall by the sword of their enemies while
you look on. And I will give all Judah into the
hand of the king of Babylon; he shall carry
them captive to Babylon, and shall kill them
with the sword. 5 I will give all the wealth of
this city, all its gains, all its prized belongings,
and all the treasures of the kings of Judah
into the hand of their enemies, who shall
plunder them, and seize them, and carry
them to Babylon. 6 And you, Pashhur, and all
who live in your house, shall go into captivity,
and to Babylon you shall go; there you shall
die, and there you shall be buried, you and all
your friends, to whom you have prophesied
falsely.

7 O LORD, you have enticed me,
and I was enticed;
you have overpowered me,
and you have prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all day
long;
everyone mocks me.
8 For whenever I speak, I must cry out,
I must shout, "Violence and
destruction!"
For the word of the LORD has become
for me
a reproach and derision all day long.
9 If I say, "I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,"
then within me there is something like a
burning fire
shut up in my bones;
I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot.
10 For I hear many whispering:
"Terror is all around!

Deut 28.53–57. **10:** Jeremiah is to perform the sign-act, unleashing the curse he has spoken. **13:** *Host of heaven*, 8.2n. **14–15:** Another Temple sermon of Jeremiah; see also 7.1–15; 26.1–6. **20.1:** *Chief officer*, the chief Temple administrator in charge of monitoring prophetic activity; cf. the role of Zephaniah in 29.26–28 and Amaziah in Am 7.10–13. **2:** The confinement and beating may be because Pashhur viewed Jeremiah as an enemy of the state (see Am 7.10–13; see also Deut 25.2–3). *Stocks*, cf. 29.26 and 2 Chr 16.10, where they are similarly used to confine prophets. **3:** *Terror-all-around*, a phrase used elsewhere in Jeremiah to express of the horrors of war (see v. 10; 6.25n.). The renaming of Pashhur serves as a prophetic sign of the destruction to come. **6:** Cf. Am 7.17. *You have prophesied*, priests could function as prophets, like Jeremiah himself and Ezekiel.

20.7–18: Jeremiah's final complaint (see 11.18–12.6n.). Using strong language with sexual overtones, Jeremiah complains of having been tricked or seduced by God. **7–13:** The first lament reflects most of the constitutive elements of the genre: an address (v. 7a), the lament proper (vv. 7b–10), a petition (v. 12b), an expression of confidence, which is not often attested (vv. 11–12a), and concluding praise (v. 13). **7:** *Enticed*, though the term can be used positively (Hos 2.14), it can also be used of seduction (Ex 22.16; Deut 22.25; Judg 14.15) and deception (2 Sam 3.25; Ps 78.36); see 1 Kings 22.20–21 for its use in a prophetic context. **10:** *Terror is all around*,

Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"
All my close friends
are watching for me to stumble.
"Perhaps he can be enticed,
and we can prevail against him,
and take our revenge on him."
11 But the LORD is with me like a dread warrior;
therefore my persecutors will stumble,
and they will not prevail.
They will be greatly shamed,
for they will not succeed.
Their eternal dishonor
will never be forgotten.
12 O LORD of hosts, you test the righteous,
you see the heart and the mind;
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.

13 Sing to the LORD;
praise the LORD!
For he has delivered the life of the needy
from the hands of evildoers.

14 Cursed be the day
on which I was born!
The day when my mother bore me,
let it not be blessed!
15 Cursed be the man
who brought the news to my father,
saying,
"A child is born to you, a son,"
making him very glad.
16 Let that man be like the cities
that the LORD overthrew without pity;
let him hear a cry in the morning
and an alarm at noon,
17 because he did not kill me in the womb;
so my mother would have been my grave,
and her womb forever great.
18 Why did I come forth from the womb
to see toil and sorrow,
and spend my days in shame?

21 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur son of Malchiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, saying,
2 "Please inquire of the LORD on our behalf, for King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon is making war against us; perhaps the LORD will perform a wonderful deed for us, as he has often done, and will make him withdraw from us."
3 Then Jeremiah said to them: 4 Thus you shall say to Zedekiah: Thus says the LORD,

cf. v. 3; 6.25n. *Enticed . . . prevail*, key words in this section, cf. v. 7. **11:** Cf. Pss 6.8–10; 12.6–7. **12:** *My cause*, the complaint is cast as a legal case before God (cf. 12.1). **13:** For the call to praise in a psalm of complaint, cf. Pss 22.22–31; 31.19–24). **14–18:** The second and last of Jeremiah's laments, a self-curse in the tradition of Job 3 (cf. Jon 4.3,8). "Womb" (vv. 17–18) ironically recalls the origin of the prophetic mission (1.5). Jeremiah's final laments have no divine response (see also 17.14–18). **16:** *The cities that the LORD overthrew,* Sodom and Gomorrah (23.14; Gen 19.24–25; Deut 29.23; Isa 13.19; Am 4.11). **17:** *Forever great*, pregnant.

21.1–24.10: **Oracles from the reign of Zedekiah.** The final phase of the first cycle of oracles. Zedekiah was the last of Judah's kings who reigned from the first deportation in 597 until the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. These oracles focus upon the royal house and establishment. They problematize the unconditional promise of the Davidic dynasty (2 Sam 7.1–29), a pillar of Judean life. The section has four composite parts: a prose discourse addressed to King Zedekiah and his envoys affirming Jerusalem's fall (21.1–10), a series of judgment oracles accusing Judah's final kings of crimes against the nation (21.11–23.8), oracles against prophets (23.9–40), and a prose vision report (24.1–10).

21.1–14: Oracles directed to Zedekiah, the people, and the royal house. Zedekiah repeatedly sent envoys to Jeremiah for divine guidance and information, always with similar results: Zedekiah should capitulate to the Babylonian armies; cf. 37.3–10; 38.1–3. The historical setting is apparently 588 BCE, after Zedekiah had committed himself to a rebellion against Babylon (see 52.3). **1:** One of the few historical references in Jeremiah 1–25. *King Zedekiah* (597–586 BCE). *Pashhur son of Malchiah*, not the same Pashhur of ch 20 (see also 38.1). *Zephaniah son of Maaseiah*, the chief Temple officer who was apparently sympathetic toward Jeremiah (29.24–29) and who was later executed by Nebuchadrezzar (52.24–27). **2:** *Nebuchadrezzar*, king of Babylon (605–562 BCE). This is the first time he is mentioned by name, also written as "Nebuchadnezzar" (e.g., 27.6). *A wonderful deed*, a term denoting God's saving acts (32.17–27), often on behalf of suffering people; e.g., Gen 18.14; Ex 3.20; Ps 31.21. **4:** *Chaldeans*, the inhabitants of the lower plain formed by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, a term often meaning

the God of Israel: I am going to turn back
the weapons of war that are in your hands
and with which you are fighting against the
king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans
who are besieging you outside the walls; and
I will bring them together into the center
of this city. 5 I myself will fight against you
with outstretched hand and mighty arm, in
anger, in fury, and in great wrath. 6 And I will
strike down the inhabitants of this city, both
human beings and animals; they shall die of
a great pestilence. 7 Afterward, says the LORD,
I will give King Zedekiah of Judah, and his
servants, and the people in this city—those
who survive the pestilence, sword, and fam-
ine—into the hands of King Nebuchadrezzar
of Babylon, into the hands of their enemies,
into the hands of those who seek their lives.
He shall strike them down with the edge of
the sword; he shall not pity them, or spare
them, or have compassion.

8 And to this people you shall say: Thus says
the LORD: See, I am setting before you the way
of life and the way of death. 9 Those who stay
in this city shall die by the sword, by famine,
and by pestilence; but those who go out and
surrender to the Chaldeans who are besieg-
ing you shall live and shall have their lives as
a prize of war. 10 For I have set my face against
this city for evil and not for good, says the
LORD: it shall be given into the hands of the
king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

11 To the house of the king of Judah say:
Hear the word of the LORD, 12 O house of
David! Thus says the LORD:

Execute justice in the morning,
and deliver from the hand of the
oppressor
anyone who has been robbed,
or else my wrath will go forth like fire,
and burn, with no one to quench it,
because of your evil doings.

13 See, I am against you, O inhabitant of the
valley,
O rock of the plain,
says the LORD;
you who say, "Who can come down against
us,
or who can enter our places of refuge?"
14 I will punish you according to the fruit of
your doings,
says the LORD;
I will kindle a fire in its forest,
and it shall devour all that is around it.

22 Thus says the LORD: Go down to the
house of the king of Judah, and speak
there this word, 2 and say: Hear the word
of the LORD, O King of Judah sitting on the
throne of David—you, and your servants,
and your people who enter these gates. 3 Thus
says the LORD: Act with justice and righteous-
ness, and deliver from the hand of the op-
pressor anyone who has been robbed. And do
no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan,
and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this
place. 4 For if you will indeed obey this word,
then through the gates of this house shall
enter kings who sit on the throne of David,

Babylonians. **5:** See also 32.27; the language is Deuteronomic: see, e.g., Deut 7.19; 29.28. **7:** *By the sword, by famine, and by pestilence*, see 14.12n. **8–10:** The future of Judah rests on its response to Babylonian rule. **8:** *The way of life and the way of death,* cf. Deut 30.15,19. Jerusalem, however, will be destroyed (38.17). *A prize of war*, that is the spoil divided among soldiers after battle (Gen 49.27; Ex 5.9; Josh 22.8). **11–14:** As custodians of justice, Judah's kings are to defend their people (e.g., Isa 1.16–17; 11.1–9; see also Deut 17.14–20). **12:** *In the morning*, likely an idiom conveying the priority of juridical decisions in the affairs of kings (see, e.g., Ex 18.13–23). **13:** *O inhabitant of the valley*, a cryptic allusion to a king (cf. Am 1.5,8 where *inhabitants* probably refers to kings of Syria and Philistia, respectively). Jerusalem was built on a narrow ridge and neighboring hill, protected on the west, south, and east, but vulnerable from the north. To refer to it as built in a "valley" and "plain" is derogatory language, as is "*come down against*," indicating its critical vulnerability; one usually "went up" to Jerusalem; cf. 2 Sam 5.6. **14:** *Its forests*, likely a reference to the royal palaces and their grounds (1 Kings 7.2; 10.17,21).

22.1–9: Oracles directed to the king. The future of an unidentified Judean king (perhaps even the Davidic dynasty itself) is contingent upon the faithful execution of "justice and righteousness." **1:** *House*, here referring to the palace; cf. 2.1–12, where it refers to the royal family and the dynasty. **2–3:** The language repeats that of 21.12, tying these sections together thematically. See also 7.5–7n.; Ps 72.1–4. **4–5:** Cf. 17.25. Rooted in the Sinai tradition, the "if-then" clauses challenge a royal theology that imagines the Davidic dynasty as unconditional;

riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their servants, and their people. 5 But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, says the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation. 6 For thus says the LORD concerning the house of the king of Judah:

You are like Gilead to me,
like the summit of Lebanon;
but I swear that I will make you a desert,
an uninhabited city.[a]
7 I will prepare destroyers against you,
all with their weapons;
they shall cut down your choicest cedars
and cast them into the fire.

8 And many nations will pass by this city, and all of them will say one to another, "Why has the LORD dealt in this way with that great city?" 9 And they will answer, "Because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshiped other gods and served them."

10 Do not weep for him who is dead,
nor bemoan him;
weep rather for him who goes away,
for he shall return no more
to see his native land.

11 For thus says the LORD concerning Shallum son of King Josiah of Judah, who succeeded his father Josiah, and who went away from this place: He shall return here no more, 12 but in the place where they have carried him captive he shall die, and he shall never see this land again.

13 Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
and his upper rooms by injustice;
who makes his neighbors work for nothing,
and does not give them their wages;
14 who says, "I will build myself a spacious house
with large upper rooms,"
and who cuts out windows for it,
paneling it with cedar,
and painting it with vermilion.
15 Are you a king
because you compete in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink
and do justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.
16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
then it was well.
Is not this to know me?
says the LORD.
17 But your eyes and heart
are only on your dishonest gain,
for shedding innocent blood,
and for practicing oppression and violence.

18 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah:

They shall not lament for him, saying,
"Alas, my brother!" or "Alas, sister!"
They shall not lament for him, saying,
"Alas, lord!" or "Alas, his majesty!"
19 With the burial of a donkey he shall be buried—
dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

[a] Cn: Heb *uninhabited cities*

cf. 2 Sam 7. **6–7:** Judgment declared on the unspecified Judean king (v. 1; see also 21.13–14). *Gilead,* fertile agricultural land in northern Transjordan. *Lebanon* (see 18.14n.) was famous for its *cedar* forests; see v. 23. *Prepare,* lit., "sanctify," see 6.4–5n. **8–9:** A later comment (5.19; Deut 29.23–28; 1 Kings 9.8–9) referring to Jerusalem, not the palace.

22.10–30: A chronological survey of Israel's kings from Josiah to Zedekiah (see chart on p. 1070). Rather than serving as custodians of justice and defenders of the poor, Judah's final kings are guilty of corruption, abuse of power, and repression, and thus responsible for the collapse of the nation. **10–12:** The banishment of *Shallum* (Jehoahaz) to Egypt (2 Kings 23.31–35) is more distressing than the death of his father *Josiah* (2 Kings 23.28–30). *Him who is dead*, Josiah was killed at Megiddo in 609 BCE in a battle with Pharaoh Neco. **13–23:** An oracle against Jehoiakim, Shallum's brother and successor (see 2 Kings 23.36–24.7). **13:** *Work for nothing*, the royal building projects were carried out by conscripted laborers; see 1 Sam 8.10–18. Jehoiakim was perceived as imitating Solomon's grandeur and autocratic power (1 Kings 5.13–18). **15:** *Your father*, i.e., Josiah. **18:** *King Jehoiakim*, nameless until this verse, is the antithesis of his father Josiah. *Shall not lament*, the lack of professional mourners at one's funeral was a mark of shame and degradation; cf. 2 Kings 24.6, which suggests that nothing

20 Go up to Lebanon, and cry out,
and lift up your voice in Bashan;
cry out from Abarim,
for all your lovers are crushed.
21 I spoke to you in your prosperity,
but you said, "I will not listen."
This has been your way from your youth,
for you have not obeyed my voice.
22 The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds,
and your lovers shall go into captivity;
then you will be ashamed and dismayed
because of all your wickedness.
23 O inhabitant of Lebanon,
nested among the cedars,
how you will groan[a] when pangs come upon you,
pain as of a woman in labor!

24 As I live, says the LORD, even if King Coniah son of Jehoiakim of Judah were the signet ring on my right hand, even from there I would tear you off 25 and give you into the hands of those who seek your life, into the hands of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hands of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and into the hands of the Chaldeans. 26 I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die. 27 But they shall not return to the land to which they long to return.

28 Is this man Coniah a despised broken pot,
a vessel no one wants?
Why are he and his offspring hurled out
and cast away in a land that they do not know?
29 O land, land, land,
hear the word of the LORD!
30 Thus says the LORD:
Record this man as childless,
a man who shall not succeed in his days;
for none of his offspring shall succeed
in sitting on the throne of David,
and ruling again in Judah.

23 Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. 2 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. 3 Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. 4 I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

5 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a

[a] Gk Vg Syr: Heb *will be pitied*

was unusual about Jehoiakim's death and burial. **20–23:** An interlude that laments the fate of unfaithful Jerusalem. The addressee is an individual feminine figure, presumably Jerusalem; cf. 2.30–25,33–37. **20:** From distant regions (*Lebanon*, *Bashan* in northern Transjordan, *Abarim* east of the Dead Sea), lamentation will be made for Jerusalem, whose *lovers* (military and political allies) have been defeated. **22–23:** The words *shepherd/shepherds* and *cedars* (vv. 7,14,15) connect this obscure poem to its larger context. **24–30:** Last to be denounced is *Coniah* (also known as Jeconiah and Jehoiachin), who reigned for three months in Jerusalem in 598 BCE before surrendering and being deported to Babylon (2 Kings 24.8–12); see also 52.31–34. **24:** *Signet ring on my right hand*, a sign of dynastic authority; cf. Hag 2.23. **30:** *Childless*, symbolizing the end of the royal line. *None of his offspring*, but Sheshbazzar, "prince of Judah" (Ezra 1.8), may be the "Shenazzar" listed among the sons of Jehoiachin in 1 Chr 3.18, and appointed by the Persians as governor of Judah (1 Esd 2.12).

23.1–8: Conclusion. The chronological survey of Judah's kings concludes with a general oracle against those "shepherds" and a veiled reference to Zedekiah (vv. 5–6). **2:** *Not attended . . . attend to you*, an ambiguous term connoting both attentive care (Ex 3.16; 4.31) and especially scrutinizing punishment (Am 3.14; Zech 10.3); see also v. 4n. **3:** *They shall be fruitful and multiply*, the promise of progeny is an assurance of the survival of the decimated community (29.6; Gen 1.28). **4:** *Be missing*, a third meaning of the term "attend" (v. 2). The basic meaning of the word is to "muster" or "count off." In counting and arranging in order some may be discovered to be missing. **5:** *Righteous Branch*, cf. 33.15; Isa 4.2; 11.1; Zech 3.8; 6.12; here the metaphor implies the survival

righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king
and deal wisely, and shall execute justice
and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days
Judah will be saved and Israel will live in
safety. And this is the name by which he
will be called: "The LORD is our righteous-
ness."

7 Therefore, the days are surely coming,
says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said,
"As the LORD lives who brought the people of
Israel up out of the land of Egypt," 8 but "As
the LORD lives who brought out and led the
offspring of the house of Israel out of the land
of the north and out of all the lands where
he[a] had driven them." Then they shall live in
their own land.

9 Concerning the prophets:
My heart is crushed within me,
all my bones shake;
I have become like a drunkard,
like one overcome by wine,
because of the LORD
and because of his holy words.
10 For the land is full of adulterers;
because of the curse the land mourns,
and the pastures of the wilderness are
dried up.
Their course has been evil,
and their might is not right.
11 Both prophet and priest are ungodly;
even in my house I have found their
wickedness,
says the LORD.
12 Therefore their way shall be to them
like slippery paths in the darkness,
into which they shall be driven
and fall;
for I will bring disaster upon them
in the year of their punishment,
says the LORD.
13 In the prophets of Samaria
I saw a disgusting thing:
they prophesied by Baal
and led my people Israel astray.
14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem
I have seen a more shocking thing:
they commit adultery and walk in lies;
they strengthen the hands of evildoers,
so that no one turns from wickedness;
all of them have become like Sodom to me,
and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.
15 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts
concerning the prophets:
"I am going to make them eat wormwood,
and give them poisoned water to drink;
for from the prophets of Jerusalem
ungodliness has spread throughout the
land."

16 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Do not
listen to the words of the prophets who
prophesy to you; they are deluding you.
They speak visions of their own minds, not
from the mouth of the LORD. 17 They keep
saying to those who despise the word of the
LORD, "It shall be well with you"; and to all
who stubbornly follow their own stubborn
hearts, they say, "No calamity shall come
upon you."

18 For who has stood in the council of the
LORD
so as to see and to hear his word?

[a] Gk: Heb *I*

of an endangered dynasty. The possession of wisdom and the execution of justice and righteousness were the hallmarks of the just king throughout the ancient Near East. **6:** *The LORD is our righteousness,* Heb "yhwh tsidqenu,"a play on the name of Zedekiah ("tsidqi-yahu"), the last king of Judah (597–586 BCE), appointed to the throne by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24.17). The reversal of the two elements of the name suggests that he will be the antithesis of Zedekiah. **7–8:** *The days are surely coming*, promising restoration. Like Isa 43.16–21; 51.9–11, Jeremiah imagines a new Exodus which makes the first obsolete.

23.9–40: Oracles directed to the prophets as royal agents, who function alongside the priests in the Temple (v. 11) and who preach soothing words of well-being at a time of crisis. This composite prose and poetic diatribe is the longest discourse on prophecy in the Bible. **13–15:** To associate *prophets of Jerusalem* with *prophets of Samaria* is a blanket condemnation of the prophetic enterprise. **13:** *Samaria*, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. For *prophets* of the Canaanite god *Baal* there, see 1 Kings 18.20–24. **14:** Jerusalem outdoes Samaria with its offenses; cf. Ezek 16 46–55; 23.2–11. *Sodom . . . Gomorrah*, see 20.16n. **15:** *Wormwood*, see 9.15n. **16–17:** For an example, see Hananiah in ch 28. **18:** *Council of the LORD*, God presided over a royal court with many

Who has given heed to his word so as to
proclaim it?
19 Look, the storm of the LORD!
Wrath has gone forth,
a whirling tempest;
it will burst upon the head of the
wicked.
20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back
until he has executed and accomplished
the intents of his mind.
In the latter days you will understand it
clearly.

21 I did not send the prophets,
yet they ran;
I did not speak to them,
yet they prophesied.
22 But if they had stood in my council,
then they would have proclaimed my
words to my people,
and they would have turned them from
their evil way,
and from the evil of their doings.

23 Am I a God near by, says the LORD, and not a God far off? 24 Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them? says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD. 25 I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed!" 26 How long? Will the hearts of the prophets ever turn back—those who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart? 27 They plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, just as their ancestors forgot my name for Baal. 28 Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? says the LORD. 29 Is not my word like fire, says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? 30 See, therefore, I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who steal my words from one another. 31 See, I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who use their own tongues and say, "Says the LORD." 32 See, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, says the LORD, and who tell them, and who lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or appoint them; so they do not profit this people at all, says the LORD.

33 When this people, or a prophet, or a priest asks you, "What is the burden of the LORD?" you shall say to them, "You are the burden,[a] and I will cast you off, says the LORD." 34 And as for the prophet, priest, or the people who say, "The burden of the LORD," I will punish them and their households. 35 Thus shall you say to one another, among yourselves, "What has the LORD answered?" or "What has the LORD spoken?" 36 But "the burden of the LORD" you shall mention no more, for the burden is everyone's own word, and so you pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God. 37 Thus you shall ask the prophet, "What has the

[a] Gk Vg: Heb *What burden*

divine beings (e.g., Pss 29.1; 82.1; 89.7). **19–20**: See 30.23–24. *Storm* imagery is frequently used to represent the coming of the LORD as a warrior. **21:** *They ran*, like a runner bringing a message (2 Sam 18.19–26; cf. Isa 52.7). **22:** *Stood in my council,* prophets sometimes described themselves as eyewitnesses and even participants in the deliberations of the heavenly court (1 Kings 22.19–23; Isa 6). **23–32:** God is not a domesticated local deity who can be manipulated but one who fills *heaven and earth* (v. 24). **23:** *Am I a God near by?* a question supposing a negative response. God is not near by, but rather is far off; see 1 Kings 8.27. **26:** *How long* (v. 26), a frequent question in laments (see Pss 6.3; 74.10; 80.4; Isa 6.11; Hab 1.2). *Deceit* or falsehood (see also 5.31; 6.13; 14.14). **27:** *Plan* or scheme; cf., 11.9; 18.18. **28–29:** *Dream . . . word*, a contrast between common wishful thinking and powerful visionary experience producing God's fiery word. Num 12.6 and Joel 2.28, however, suggest that both dreams and visionary experiences were legitimate means of receiving oracles from God, so this is not likely a disparaging of the one for the sake of the other (*but* is not in the MT). The divine word surpasses any medium of its conveyance and is powerful. **30–32:** Note the threefold, first-person divine condemnation: *I am against . . .*, concluding with *I did not send them*. **31:** *Says the LORD*, these prophets are not prophesying in the name of Baal (vv. 13,27), but rather in the very name of God. They are, however, simply mimicking one another and plagiarizing each other's messages (v. 30). **33:** *Burden*, a term also used for an "oracle" (see Nah 1.1; Zech 9.1; 12.1; Mal 1.1). A sarcastic play on words: the people seek an oracle from Jeremiah but they are declared to be a burden

LORD answered you?" or "What has the LORD spoken?" [38] But if you say, "the burden of the LORD," thus says the LORD: Because you have said these words, "the burden of the LORD," when I sent to you, saying, You shall not say, "the burden of the LORD," [39] therefore, I will surely lift you up[a] and cast you away from my presence, you and the city that I gave to you and your ancestors. [40] And I will bring upon you everlasting disgrace and perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

24 The LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD. This was after King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem King Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim of Judah, together with the officials of Judah, the artisans, and the smiths, and had brought them to Babylon. [2] One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. [3] And the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I said, "Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten."

[4] Then the word of the LORD came to me: [5] Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. [6] I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. [7] I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

[8] But thus says the LORD: Like the bad figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten, so will I treat King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who live in the land of Egypt. [9] I will make them a horror, an evil thing, to all the kingdoms of the earth—a disgrace, a byword, a taunt, and a curse in all the places where I shall drive them. [10] And I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them, until they are utterly destroyed from the land that I gave to them and their ancestors.

25 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah (that was the first year of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon), [2] which the prophet Jeremiah spoke to all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: [3] For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, to

[a] Heb Mss Gk Vg: MT *forget you*

to God; cf. 17.21. **39:** *I will surely lift you up*, a further play on the term "burden" (Heb "massa'"), derived from the verb "nasa'," "to carry or lift."

24.1–10: Conclusion to this group of oracles from the time of Zedekiah. The exiled Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) was held in high esteem by those exiled with him in Babylon and by the supporters of Jeremiah's program. Those left in Judah who supported Zedekiah were regarded as rotten and inedible figs; see further 22.27; 29.17; 2 Kings 24.10–17. In this perspective, the future hope lay with those in exile. This language was a polemical support for the community which eventually returned from exile and reestablished control in the postexilic reconstruction under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. **5:** *Chaldeans*, see 21.4n. **6:** See 1.10. **7:** *They shall be my people. . . ,* see 7.23n. **8:** *In the land of Egypt*, many Judeans fled to Egypt, an ally of Judah in its struggle against the Babylonians; cf. 42.13–14.

25.1–38: Judah among all the nations. The conclusion of the first cycle of oracles with its reference to the scroll of 605 BCE (see ch 36). With Nebuchadrezzar's victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish in 605, Judah's fate became a part of unfolding world events. Its destruction here is placed in cosmic perspective as God's wrath is directed against all the nations, and finally against Babylon itself. In the LXX, the oracles against the nations (chs 46–51) follow 25.13. **1–14:** The prose discourse is associated with "the fourth year of King Jehoiakim . . . the first year of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon" (605 BCE), a year fraught with symbolic and historical significance. Nebuchadnezzar's ascension to the throne sets in motion the events that lead to the end of Judean life as it was long known. The sermon is similar to speeches in the Deuteronomistic History (see, e.g., 2 Kings 17.13–23): God sends prophets to warn Israel (vv. 4–6), Israel refuses to heed their message (v. 7), and God brings judgment in the form of disaster (vv. 8–14). Recent scholars suggest that the language of sin and judgment

this day, the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened. [4] And though the LORD persistently sent you all his servants the prophets, you have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear [5] when they said, "Turn now, every one of you, from your evil way and wicked doings, and you will remain upon the land that the LORD has given to you and your ancestors from of old and forever; [6] do not go after other gods to serve and worship them, and do not provoke me to anger with the work of your hands. Then I will do you no harm." [7] Yet you did not listen to me, says the LORD, and so you have provoked me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm.

[8] Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, [9] I am going to send for all the tribes of the north, says the LORD, even for King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these nations around; I will utterly destroy them, and make them an object of horror and of hissing, and an everlasting disgrace.[a] [10] And I will banish from them the sound of mirth and the sound of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. [11] This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. [12] Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste. [13] I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. [14] For many nations and great kings shall make slaves of them also; and I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.

[15] For thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. [16] They shall drink and stagger and go out of their minds because of the sword that I am sending among them.

[17] So I took the cup from the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to whom the LORD sent me drink it: [18] Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a desolation and a waste, an object of hissing and of cursing, as they are today; [19] Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his officials, and all his people; [20] all the mixed people;[b] all the kings of the land of Uz; all the kings of the land of the Philistines—Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod; [21] Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites; [22] all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coastland across the sea; [23] Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who have shaven temples; [24] all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed peoples[b] that live in the desert; [25] all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of Media; [26] all the kings of the

[a] Gk Compare Syr: Heb *and everlasting desolations*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

serves as a survival mechanism to make the trauma of war manageable. It assures survivors that their suffering is not arbitrary, that God is not capricious, and that they can alter their future. **4:** See 7.25n. **9:** *All the tribes of the north*, the direction of coming disaster; see 1.14n. *Nebuchadrezzar* is the only non-Israelite identified as God's *servant* in the Hebrew Bible; see also 27.6; 43.10; cf. Isa 44.28–45.13. **11:** *Seventy years*, an expected lifetime; see Ps 90.10; Isa 23.15; see also 29.10; Dan 9.2; Zech 7.5. Here it is interpreted both literally and metaphorically. **10:** See 7.34n. **13:** *This book*, either chs 1–25 or the scroll of 605 BCE. By placing the oracles against the nations at this point, however, the LXX takes "this book" to refer to chs 46–51. **15:** *Cup of the wine of wrath*, see 13.12–14n. **18:** *As they are today*, presumes an exilic perspective (after 586 BCE) rather than that of 605 BCE as indicated in 25.1. **19–26:** The nations are listed in their proximity to Judah from nearest to farthest; see map on p. 1145. Although oracles against the nations usually signal hope for Israel, here *Jerusalem and the towns of Judah* are the first in line to drink from the cup of divine judgment. Last to drink is *the king of Sheshach* (v. 26), a cryptic allusion to Babylon. **20:** *Mixed people*, a term associated with the desert dwellers in v. 24. *Uz* is in Edom, the home of Job (Job 1.1); precise location unknown. **23:** *Dedan, Tema, Buz*, cities in Arabia. *Shaven temples*, see 9.26n. **25:** *Zimri,* otherwise unknown. **26:** *Sheshach*, code language for "Babel" (Babylon) derived by substituting the letters of

north, far and near, one after another, and all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth. And after them the king of Sheshach[a] shall drink.

27 Then you shall say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink, get drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I am sending among you.

28 And if they refuse to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them: Thus says the LORD of hosts: You must drink! 29 See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that is called by my name, and how can you possibly avoid punishment? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, says the LORD of hosts.

30 You, therefore, shall prophesy against them all these words, and say to them:

The LORD will roar from on high,
and from his holy habitation utter his voice;
he will roar mightily against his fold,
and shout, like those who tread grapes,
against all the inhabitants of the earth.
31 The clamor will resound to the ends of the earth,
for the LORD has an indictment against the nations;
he is entering into judgment with all flesh,
and the guilty he will put to the sword,
says the LORD.

32 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
See, disaster is spreading
from nation to nation,
and a great tempest is stirring
from the farthest parts of the earth!
33 Those slain by the LORD on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become dung on the surface of the ground.

34 Wail, you shepherds, and cry out;
roll in ashes, you lords of the flock,
for the days of your slaughter have come—
and your dispersions,[b]
and you shall fall like a choice vessel.
35 Flight shall fail the shepherds,
and there shall be no escape for the lords of the flock.
36 Hark! the cry of the shepherds,
and the wail of the lords of the flock!
For the LORD is despoiling their pasture,
37 and the peaceful folds are devastated,
because of the fierce anger of the LORD.
38 Like a lion he has left his covert;
for their land has become a waste
because of the cruel sword,
and because of his fierce anger.

26 At the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, this word came from the LORD: 2 Thus says the

[a] *Sheshach* is a cryptogram for *Babel*, Babylon
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

the alphabet in reverse order, an encryption method called "atbash"; see also 51.1,41. **30:** Divine wrath is portrayed in conventional terms as a roaring lion (Am 1.2; Hos 11.10; Joel 3.16) or one treading out grapes like blood (Gen 49.11; Isa 63.1–3; Zech 9.15). **31:** *An indictment*, for lawsuit language in Jeremiah, see 2.9,29; 11.20; 12.1; 20.12; 50.34; and 51.36. **33:** Using common themes; cf. 16.4. **34:** *Roll in ashes*, characteristic mourning ritual; cf. 6.26. **38:** *He has left*, that is, God, the lion of Judah, has abandoned his abode.

26:1–52:34: Overtures of hope beyond shattered worlds. The second half of the book narrates the events of Judah's final years. At important intervals, however, it punctuates the literary performance with strategies for survival. Readers can discern these overtures of hope in Jeremiah's survival (ch 26), in his letter to the Judean exiles in Babylon (ch 29), and in the endurance of the prophetic scroll (ch 36). They are also evident in individuals who are receptive to Jeremiah's message and come to his aid (e.g., Ahikam, Ebed-melech, and Baruch). They emerge most visibly in the Book of Comfort (chs 30–31, 33) and in the oracles against the nations (chs 46–51), which conclude with a lengthy diatribe against Judah's archenemy Babylon (chs 50–51).

26:1–29.32: Jeremiah in conflict. These narratives begin the second cycle of prophetic oracles, and detail several episodes in which Jeremiah was in conflict with Temple and royal officials and other prophets. This cycle includes chs 26–35, and concludes with ch 36. It spans the time from Jehoiakim's reign (609 BCE) to that of Zedekiah and the final siege of Jerusalem (586 BCE). Some attribute the narrative material in chs 26–29 to "Baruch's memoirs," but this is conjectural.

LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD; speak to them all the words that I command you; do not hold back a word. 3 It may be that they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil way, that I may change my mind about the disaster that I intend to bring on them because of their evil doings. 4 You shall say to them: Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, 5 and to heed the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently—though you have not heeded— 6 then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.

7 The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. 8 And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, "You shall die! 9 Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant'?" And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

10 When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the LORD and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the LORD. 11 Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, "This man deserves the sentence of death because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears."

12 Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, "It is the LORD who sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. 13 Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will change his mind about the disaster that he has pronounced against you. 14 But as for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. 15 Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears."

16 Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man does not deserve the sentence of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God." 17 And some of the elders of the land arose and said to all the assembled people, 18 "Micah of Moresheth, who prophesied during the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the LORD of hosts,

Zion shall be plowed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the mountain of the house a
wooded height.'

19 Did King Hezekiah of Judah and all Judah actually put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD change his mind about the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster on ourselves!"

26.1–24: Jeremiah's Temple sermon. This abridged account of Jeremiah's Temple sermon (7.1–15) focuses on its mixed reception by Judah's leaders. **1:** *The beginning of the reign*, 609 BCE. **3:** *That I may change my mind*, see 18.8,10n. **5:** See 7.25n. **6:** *Shiloh*, see 7.12n. **9:** To prophesy threats against the royal sanctuary was tantamount to treason; cf. Am 7.10–13. **10:** *Seat in the entry of the New Gate*, indicates that this is a formal judicial hearing, with justice administered "in the gate" (Isa 29.21; Am 5.15). **12:** As elsewhere in the ancient Near East, prophets were granted some degree of protection because they were constrained to bring their message by the gods (cf. v. 15). **15:** Killing an *innocent* person was a crime with disastrous consequences (see Deut 19.10–13; 21.8–9; 27.25); cf. 7.6. **16–19:** For the first time in the book, individuals—*the officials and all the people . . . and some of the elders*—come to Jeremiah's aid. The charge is mitigated for two reasons: they recognize the prophet's claim to immunity on the basis of being constrained by God to deliver a message; and the precedent of Micah is invoked, with a rare quotation of an earlier book (Mic 3.12). Micah's prediction of disaster did not come to pass because, it is argued, he successfully prompted Hezekiah to plead for divine favor. This event is not mentioned in the historical books, where only Isaiah is mentioned in connection with Hezekiah and the Assyrian

20 There was another man prophesying in
the name of the LORD, Uriah son of Shemaiah
from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against
this city and against this land in words ex-
actly like those of Jeremiah. 21 And when King
Jehoiakim, with all his warriors and all the
officials, heard his words, the king sought to
put him to death; but when Uriah heard of it,
he was afraid and fled and escaped to Egypt.
22 Then King Jehoiakim sent[a] Elnathan son
of Achbor and men with him to Egypt, 23 and
they took Uriah from Egypt and brought him
to King Jehoiakim, who struck him down
with the sword and threw his dead body into
the burial place of the common people.

24 But the hand of Ahikam son of Shaphan
was with Jeremiah so that he was not given
over into the hands of the people to be put to
death.

27 In the beginning of the reign of King
Zedekiah[b] son of Josiah of Judah, this
word came to Jeremiah from the LORD. 2 Thus
the LORD said to me: Make yourself a yoke of
straps and bars, and put them on your neck.
3 Send word[c] to the king of Edom, the king of
Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king
of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand
of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem
to King Zedekiah of Judah. 4 Give them this
charge for their masters: Thus says the LORD
of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you
shall say to your masters: 5 It is I who by my
great power and my outstretched arm have
made the earth, with the people and animals
that are on the earth, and I give it to whom-
ever I please. 6 Now I have given all these
lands into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar
of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him
even the wild animals of the field to serve
him. 7 All the nations shall serve him and
his son and his grandson, until the time of
his own land comes; then many nations and
great kings shall make him their slave.

8 But if any nation or kingdom will not
serve this king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon,
and put its neck under the yoke of the king of
Babylon, then I will punish that nation with
the sword, with famine, and with pestilence,
says the LORD, until I have completed its[d] de-
struction by his hand. 9 You, therefore, must

[a] Heb adds *men to Egypt*
[b] Another reading is *Jehoiakim*
[c] Cn: Heb *send them*
[d] Heb *their*

crisis (2 Kings 18.13–20.19). **20–23:** The precedent of Uriah, however, who was hunted down by Jehoiakim and executed, indicated the danger facing Jeremiah. **22:** *Elnathan*, see 36.12,25. **24:** *Ahikam son of Shaphan*, see also 39.14; 40.5,9,11; 2 Kings 22.12; 25.22. As Josiah's secretary, Shaphan had been instrumental in the reform movement of Josiah (2 Kings 22.3–13), of which Jeremiah was likely an enthusiastic supporter. This particular family, comprised of Shaphan's sons Ahikam and Gemariah and others, was one of Jeremiah's chief advocates within the royal ranks of the princes; see 36.11–19. That Ahikam had to rescue Jeremiah indicates that, in spite of the sentiments of the officials and people, Jeremiah was still in grave danger.

27.1–28.17: Jeremiah's ox yoke and his confrontation with Hananiah. These chapters focus on the length and meaning of Babylonian sovereignty, questions especially pertinent to survivors in Babylon. Should Judah resist or surrender to Babylonian rule? Is Babylonian hegemony part of God's plan or an obstacle to be overcome? How long will Judean refugees remain in Babylon? These core questions come to the fore in a confrontation between two prophets, Hananiah and Jeremiah, who hold opposing views. The date of Jeremiah's confrontation with Hananiah, according to 28.1, is August 594 BCE (contrast 27.1, where MT has a scribal error, dating the event to the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, under the influence of 26.1).

27.1–11: Jeremiah's words to the foreign emissaries. 2: *A yoke*, lacking in the text, where Jeremiah is simply told to make "straps" and "bars"; these were components of a yoke; see Lev 26.13; Ezek 34.27. A yoke, used across the neck of oxen to pull heavy loads, here denotes servitude to Babylonian authority. **3:** *Send word*, lit., "send them" (see textual note *c*), which suggests that it was the straps and bars of the yoke that were sent via the emissaries. **6:** *Nebuchadnezzar*, this form of the name, used in chs 27–29, shows the influence of the Deuteronomistic editor. Elsewhere in Jeremiah the form is more correctly rendered as Nebuchadrezzar. *My servant*, see 25.9n. **7:** A prophecy concerning the limited time span of Babylonian rule, an indication of God's authority over the Babylonian conquest (see v. 6). **8–14:** Jeremiah offers a choice and limited hope: willing submission to vassalage or destruction. **9:** *Diviners . . . dreamers . . . soothsayers . . . sorcerers*, banned in Deut 18.10,14, although prophetic texts indicate that they were present in Israel.

not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers,[a] your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, "You shall not serve the king of Babylon." [10] For they are prophesying a lie to you, with the result that you will be removed far from your land; I will drive you out, and you will perish. [11] But any nation that will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land, says the LORD, to till it and live there.

[12] I spoke to King Zedekiah of Judah in the same way: Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. [13] Why should you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, as the LORD has spoken concerning any nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? [14] Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are telling you not to serve the king of Babylon, for they are prophesying a lie to you. [15] I have not sent them, says the LORD, but they are prophesying falsely in my name, with the result that I will drive you out and you will perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you.

[16] Then I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, Thus says the LORD: Do not listen to the words of your prophets who are prophesying to you, saying, "The vessels of the LORD's house will soon be brought back from Babylon," for they are prophesying a lie to you. [17] Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should this city become a desolation? [18] If indeed they are prophets, and if the word of the LORD is with them, then let them intercede with the LORD of hosts, that the vessels left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem may not go to Babylon. [19] For thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, the sea, the stands, and the rest of the vessels that are left in this city, [20] which King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon did not take away when he took into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon King Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim of Judah, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem— [21] thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: [22] They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall stay, until the day when I give attention to them, says the LORD. Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.

28 In that same year, at the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, in the fifth month of the fourth year, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur, from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying, [2] "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. [3] Within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, which King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. [4] I will also bring back to this place King Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon, says the LORD, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon."

[5] Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the

[a] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *dreams*

27.12–22: Jeremiah's words to Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem. 12–15: Jeremiah reiterates this message to Zedekiah: the king should not follow prophets who incite insurrection against Babylon. **16:** *The vessels*, ritual paraphernalia used in the Temple that had been taken by the Babylonians in 597 BCE; see 28.3; 2 Kings 24.13; Ezra 5.14–15. **19:** The *pillars* Jachin and Boaz (1 Kings 7.15–22), the large basin known as the *sea* (1 Kings 7.23–26), and the *stands* and *vessels* (1 Kings 7.27–39) were furnishings of the Temple taken to Babylon in 586 BCE (2 Kings 25.13–17). The vessels that were not broken up were later returned by Cyrus in 538 BCE(Ezra 1.7–11).

28.1–17: Jeremiah's confrontation with the prophet Hananiah. Continuing the "yoke" motif, and by pressing questions regarding Babylonian hegemony, this story pits two prophets and their respective interpretations of the Judean exile against each other. Hananiah represented the message of "peace" being proclaimed by the "lying prophets," encouraging resistance to Babylon and false hopes of a quick end to the political crisis, a restoration not only of the Temple vessels but of King Jehoiachin to the throne. Jeremiah cites prophetic tradition in support of his message of disaster. The contest is resolved by the death of Hananiah two months later. **1:** On the date see 27.1–28.17n. **4:** *Jeconiah*, Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24.8–12). **5:** The first-person perspective of

priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD; [6] and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD fulfill the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. [7] But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. [8] The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. [9] As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet."

[10] Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, and broke it. [11] And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, "Thus says the LORD: This is how I will break the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon from the neck of all the nations within two years." At this, the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

[12] Sometime after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: [13] Go, tell Hananiah, Thus says the LORD: You have broken wooden bars only to forge iron bars in place of them! [14] For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put an iron yoke on the neck of all these nations so that they may serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and they shall indeed serve him; I have even given him the wild animals. [15] And the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, and you made this people trust in a lie. [16] Therefore thus says the LORD: I am going to send you off the face of the earth. Within this year you will be dead, because you have spoken rebellion against the LORD."

[17] In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died.

29 These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. [2] This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem. [3] The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It said: [4] Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: [5] Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. [6] Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. [7] But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. [8] For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen

a Jeremiah memoir (27.2,12,16; 28.1) suddenly shifts to a third-person account, illustrating the composite nature of this material. **6:** It is unclear whether Jeremiah is sincere in his wish or is speaking with bitter irony. Because the story, under Deuteronomistic editing, is committed to the theme of prophetic fulfillment (see v. 9), the reader cannot doubt Jeremiah's word. **8:** For earlier prophetic oracles against foreign nations, see Am 1–2; Isa 13–24; cf. Jer 46.1. **9:** On the criterion of prophetic fulfillment, see Deut 18.21–22. **16–17:** *Send you off*, a play on the fact that Hananiah has not been sent by God (v. 15). *Hananiah died*, the Deuteronomic penalty for speaking *rebellion*; see Deut 18.20.

29.1–32: Jeremiah in conflict with prophets among the exiled community. A narrative containing letters written by Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon. The letters dispute claims by prominent members of the community that Judah's captivity will be brief. **2:** *Jeconiah*, Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24.8–12). *The court officials*, or "eunuchs"; see 34.19n. **3:** *Elasah son of Shaphan*, presumably the brother of Ahikam (26.24); *Gemariah son of Hilkiah*, son of the priest who discovered the scroll during the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 22.3–20). **5:** *Build . . . plant*, characteristic language of Jeremiah's vision of restoration (1.10), which will first occur in Babylon itself. **6:** *Multiply there, and do not decrease*, see 23.3n. **7:** *Welfare,* that is "peace" (Heb "shalom"). They are to pray for the peace not of Jerusa-

to the dreams that they dream,[a] 9 for it is a lie
that they are prophesying to you in my name;
I did not send them, says the LORD.

10 For thus says the LORD: Only when
Babylon's seventy years are completed will I
visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise
and bring you back to this place. 11 For surely I
know the plans I have for you, says the LORD,
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to
give you a future with hope. 12 Then when you
call upon me and come and pray to me, I will
hear you. 13 When you search for me, you will
find me; if you seek me with all your heart, 14 I
will let you find me, says the LORD, and I will
restore your fortunes and gather you from all
the nations and all the places where I have
driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring
you back to the place from which I sent you
into exile.

15 Because you have said, "The LORD has
raised up prophets for us in Babylon,"—
16 Thus says the LORD concerning the king
who sits on the throne of David, and con-
cerning all the people who live in this city,
your kinsfolk who did not go out with you
into exile: 17 Thus says the LORD of hosts, I am
going to let loose on them sword, famine, and
pestilence, and I will make them like rotten
figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten.
18 I will pursue them with the sword, with
famine, and with pestilence, and will make
them a horror to all the kingdoms of the
earth, to be an object of cursing, and horror,
and hissing, and a derision among all the
nations where I have driven them, 19 because
they did not heed my words, says the LORD,
when I persistently sent to you my servants
the prophets, but they[b] would not listen, says
the LORD. 20 But now, all you exiles whom I
sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon, hear
the word of the LORD: 21 Thus says the LORD of
hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab son
of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah,
who are prophesying a lie to you in my name:
I am going to deliver them into the hand of
King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and he
shall kill them before your eyes. 22 And on ac-
count of them this curse shall be used by all
the exiles from Judah in Babylon: "The LORD
make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the
king of Babylon roasted in the fire," 23 because
they have perpetrated outrage in Israel and
have committed adultery with their neigh-
bors' wives, and have spoken in my name
lying words that I did not command them;
I am the one who knows and bears witness,
says the LORD.

24 To Shemaiah of Nehelam you shall say:
25 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel: In your own name you sent a letter to
all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to
the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, and to
all the priests, saying, 26 The LORD himself has
made you priest instead of the priest Jehoia-
da, so that there may be officers in the house
of the LORD to control any madman who plays
the prophet, to put him in the stocks and the
collar. 27 So now why have you not rebuked
Jeremiah of Anathoth who plays the prophet
for you? 28 For he has actually sent to us in
Babylon, saying, "It will be a long time; build
houses and live in them, and plant gardens
and eat what they produce."

29 The priest Zephaniah read this letter in
the hearing of the prophet Jeremiah. 30 Then
the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah:
31 Send to all the exiles, saying, Thus says
the LORD concerning Shemaiah of Nehelam:
Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you,
though I did not send him, and has led you to
trust in a lie, 32 therefore thus says the LORD:
I am going to punish Shemaiah of Nehelam
and his descendants; he shall not have any-
one living among this people to see[c] the good

[a] Cn: Heb *your dreams that you cause to dream*
[b] Syr: Heb *you*
[c] Gk: Heb *and he shall not see*

lem (cf. Ps 122.6) but of Babylon. **10:** *Babylon's seventy years,* see 25.11n. **16–20:** Attested only in the MT, this later interpretive comment encourages the Judean exiles to see themselves as heirs of God's gracious promises. **16:** *This city*, that is, Jerusalem. **17:** *Sword, famine, and pestilence,* see 14.12n. *Rotten figs*, cf. 24.1–10. **19:** See 7.25n. **21:** *Ahab . . . Zedekiah*, two of the prophets among the exiled community referred to in v. 15. **22:** *Roasted in the fire*, cf. Dan 3.19–23. **26:** *Officers*, see 20.1n. *Madman*, indicating the ecstatic qualities of typical prophetic behavior; see 1 Sam 10.10–13; 19.20–24. *Who plays the prophet*, that is, who engages in such ecstatic behavior. *Stocks and the collar*, cf. 20.2n.

that I am going to do to my people, says the LORD, for he has spoken rebellion against the LORD.

30 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: [2] Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. [3] For the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their ancestors and they shall take possession of it.

[4] These are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah:

[5] Thus says the LORD:
We have heard a cry of panic,
of terror, and no peace.
[6] Ask now, and see,
can a man bear a child?
Why then do I see every man
with his hands on his loins like a
woman in labor?
Why has every face turned pale?
[7] Alas! that day is so great
there is none like it;
it is a time of distress for Jacob;
yet he shall be rescued from it.
[8] On that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will break the yoke from off his[a] neck, and I will burst his[a] bonds, and strangers shall no more make a servant of him. [9] But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

[10] But as for you, have no fear, my servant
Jacob, says the LORD,
and do not be dismayed, O Israel;
for I am going to save you from far away,
and your offspring from the land of
their captivity.
Jacob shall return and have quiet and
ease,
and no one shall make him afraid.
[11] For I am with you, says the LORD, to save
you;
I will make an end of all the nations
among which I scattered you,
but of you I will not make an end.
I will chastise you in just measure,
and I will by no means leave you
unpunished.

[12] For thus says the LORD:
Your hurt is incurable,
your wound is grievous.
[13] There is no one to uphold your cause,
no medicine for your wound,
no healing for you.

[a] Cn: Heb *your*

30.1–31.40: The book of comfort. A cluster of oracles looking forward to God's restoration of Judah and Jerusalem, prompted by the reference to "the good" in 29.32. These oracles are said to be in a book or scroll (30.2,4) centering on the theme of "restoring the fortunes" of Israel/Judah. Since Israel (Ephraim) and Judah often appear as two separate political entities in this material, and because there is a frequent northern orientation (cf. 30.4; 31.5,6,15), some of the oracles may be early, envisioning Josiah's desire to reunify Judah with the former territory of Israel. Although the section's vision is of restoration, it is fraught with realism. Rarely does it deviate from the exigencies of war and forced migration. Note, for example, the retrieval of disaster language in its treatment of the future: *panic . . . terror . . . no peace* in 30.5 (6.14); *yoke* in 30.8 (28.2,4,12); *wilderness* in 31.2 (2.2); *north* in 31.8 (1.14; 4.6); *Ramah* in 31.15 (40.1), *to pluck up and break down* in 31.28 (1.10); and *dead bodies* in 31.40. **30.1–4: Introduction.** The expressions "for the days are surely coming" and "restore the fortunes" sound the theme of this material. **2:** *Write in a book*, far more than a mere surrogate of the spoken word, written prophecy plays a crucial role in Jeremiah's vision of hope. Written prophecy is less restricted by spatial and temporal limitations than the spoken prophetic word (29.1–14); it can endure various forms of attack (e.g., 36.1–3,32; 51.59–64); it enjoys its own independent authority (e.g., 25.13; 26.17–19); and its very presence bears witness to a future of Israel/Judah. **3:** *Fortunes*, or perhaps the spoils and persons lost in warfare, captivity or in crisis. **5–11:** Using the imagery of breaking the yoke of captivity (v. 8) from chs 27–28, God's salvation is promised. The language is akin to that of Second Isaiah, especially in vv. 10–11 (cf. Isa 35.4; 43.1). **6:** The pain of labor in childbirth is a common metaphor for distress; see 4.31; 6.24; 13.21. **9:** *David their king,* cf. v.21n. **10:** *My servant Jacob*, the reassurances (see also 46.27–28; Isa 41.8; 44.2; 45.4) echo God's initial promises to Jeremiah (1.8,17). **12–17:** Shift to female subject. Lady Zion seems incurably wounded (cf. 14.17; 15.8,18) having suffered God's punishment, but the time of healing and

14 All your lovers have forgotten you;
they care nothing for you;
for I have dealt you the blow of an enemy,
the punishment of a merciless foe,
because your guilt is great,
because your sins are so numerous.
15 Why do you cry out over your hurt?
Your pain is incurable.
Because your guilt is great,
because your sins are so numerous,
I have done these things to you.
16 Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured,
and all your foes, every one of them, shall go into captivity;
those who plunder you shall be plundered,
and all who prey on you I will make a prey.
17 For I will restore health to you,
and your wounds I will heal,
says the LORD,
because they have called you an outcast:
"It is Zion; no one cares for her!"

18 Thus says the LORD:
I am going to restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob,
and have compassion on his dwellings;
the city shall be rebuilt upon its mound,
and the citadel set on its rightful site.
19 Out of them shall come thanksgiving,
and the sound of merrymakers.
I will make them many, and they shall not be few;
I will make them honored, and they shall not be disdained.
20 Their children shall be as of old,
their congregation shall be established before me;
and I will punish all who oppress them.
21 Their prince shall be one of their own,
their ruler shall come from their midst;
I will bring him near, and he shall approach me,
for who would otherwise dare to approach me?
says the LORD.
22 And you shall be my people,
and I will be your God.

23 Look, the storm of the LORD!
Wrath has gone forth,
a whirling[a] tempest;
it will burst upon the head of the wicked.
24 The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back
until he has executed and accomplished
the intents of his mind.
In the latter days you will understand this.

31 At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.
2 Thus says the LORD:
The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness;
when Israel sought for rest,
3 the LORD appeared to him[b] from far away.[c]
I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.
4 Again I will build you, and you shall be built,
O virgin Israel!

[a] One Ms: Meaning of MT uncertain
[b] Gk: Heb *me*
[c] Or *to him long ago*

restoration is at hand. **14:** *Lovers*, i.e., political allies; see 2.18–19; cf. 2.33; 3.1. **18–24:** Shift to male subject. The city and its ruler will be restored. **18:** *Its mound*, that is, its "tell." Cities were built on occupation mounds and, when destroyed, the mound was cleared and the city *rebuilt* and refortified on it. **21:** *Prince . . . ruler*, avoiding the term for "king," perhaps reflecting a more subdued expectation than that expressed in v. 9. **22:** *You shall be my people . . .*, see 7.23n. **23–24:** Duplicates 23.19–20, and was likely a fragment appended to this section. **31.1–6:** Shift to female subject. "Virgin Israel" will dance and celebrate her vineyards. Motifs drawn from Israel's most formative traditions—the Exodus from Egypt, the wilderness wanderings, and the promise of land—help organize the chaos of war and the vision of newness (see, e.g., Ex 5.1; 6.7; 33.12–17; Deut 8.2–4). **1:** *All the families of Israel*. The promise of restoration includes all the displaced, including the former northern kingdom; note the mention of Ephraim in vv. 6,9,18. **2:** *Grace in the wilderness*, an Exodus theme (Ex 33.12–17) appropriated as a metaphor for return from exile (see Isa 40.3; 41.18–19; 43.19). **3–4:** *From far away*, see 23.23. *I have loved you . . .*, seen through the eyes of the

Again you shall take[a] your tambourines,
and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.
5 Again you shall plant vineyards
on the mountains of Samaria;
the planters shall plant,
and shall enjoy the fruit.
6 For there shall be a day when sentinels will call
in the hill country of Ephraim:
"Come, let us go up to Zion,
to the LORD our God."

7 For thus says the LORD:
Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
"Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel."
8 See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here.
9 With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations[b] I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock."
11 For the LORD has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
12 They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
14 I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the LORD.

[a] Or *adorn yourself with*
[b] Gk Compare Vg Tg: Heb *supplications*

beloved, Israel is no longer "faithless Israel" but *virgin Israel*. **6:** One of the few portrayals of Temple worship in Jeremiah's vision of the future: Israel's homecoming includes a pilgrimage to *Zion*. *Come, let us go up*, whereas the double plural imperative previously rallied troops to war against Israel/Judah ("up, and let us [attack]," 6.4–5), it now serves as a call to worship. **7–14:** Shift to male subject. The repatriation of the remnant of Israel. **7:** *Save, O LORD,* a festival cry lying behind the term "Hosanna"; see Ps 118.25. **8:** *Blind. . . lame*, the most pitiful and often discriminated against; cf. Lev 21.18; 2 Sam 5.8. **9:** *Ephraim*, one of the Joseph tribes, the central power base of Israel (the north). Because of its significant political power base, it was considered the *firstborn*; see Gen 48.8–20. In poetic texts Ephraim is often synecdoche for the entire northern kingdom. **10–14:** God's announcement to the nations. **10–11:** The poetic sequence of verbs, *gather*, *keep*, *ransomed*, and *redeemed*—the last two recalling the deliverance from Egypt (Ex 6.6; Deut 7.8; 9.26; Ps 74.2)—expresses God's compassion for oppressed people. Cf. 23.2–3. **12–14:** Bracketed by Heb "tov," translated *goodness* and *bounty,* the verses contain images of newness, similar to Isaiah: *sing aloud* (Isa 26.19); *they shall be radiant* (Isa 60.5); a *watered garden* (Isa 58.11); *mourning into joy* (cf. Isa 60.20; 61.3; Ps 30.11); *I will comfort them* (Isa 40.1–2; 49.13; 51.3; 52.9). **12:** *Grain . . . wine . . . oil*, images of agricultural bounty; see Deut 11.14; Hos 2.8; Joel 2.19,24. **14:** *Fatness*, the fat of sacrifices was not to be eaten (Lev 3.17; 7.23–25), as it was reserved for God and was burned to ashes. This fatty ash residue was removed by

15 Thus says the LORD:
A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.
16 Thus says the LORD:
Keep your voice from weeping,
and your eyes from tears;
for there is a reward for your work,
says the LORD:
they shall come back from the land of the enemy;
17 there is hope for your future,
says the LORD:
your children shall come back to their own country.

18 Indeed I heard Ephraim pleading:
"You disciplined me, and I took the discipline;
I was like a calf untrained.
Bring me back, let me come back,
for you are the LORD my God.
19 For after I had turned away I repented;
and after I was discovered, I struck my thigh;
I was ashamed, and I was dismayed
because I bore the disgrace of my youth."
20 Is Ephraim my dear son?
Is he the child I delight in?
As often as I speak against him,
I still remember him.
Therefore I am deeply moved for him;
I will surely have mercy on him,
says the LORD.

21 Set up road markers for yourself,
make yourself signposts;
consider well the highway,
the road by which you went.
Return, O virgin Israel,
return to these your cities.
22 How long will you waver,
O faithless daughter?
For the LORD has created a new thing on the earth:
a woman encompasses[a] a man.

23 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Once more they shall use these words in the land of Judah and in its towns when I restore their fortunes:
"The LORD bless you, O abode of righteousness,
O holy hill!"
24 And Judah and all its towns shall live there together, and the farmers and those who wander[b] with their flocks.
25 I will satisfy the weary,
and all who are faint I will replenish.
26 Thereupon I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me.
27 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn Compare Syr Vg Tg: Heb *and they shall wander*

the priests following sacrificial rites (Lev 6.3–4), and was a symbol of divine bounty (Ps 36.9). **15–20:** *Rachel* comforted and her children restored. Rachel's sons were the ancestors of the Joseph tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) and the tribe of Benjamin. As she once longed for children (Gen 30.1), now she laments her children's deportation to Babylon. **15:** *Ramah,* ca. 5 mi (8 km) north of Jerusalem, associated in one tradition with the burial place of Rachel (1 Sam 10.2; but see Gen 35.16; 48.7); the town also served as a transit camp for Judeans being deported to Babylon (Jer 40.1). **19:** *Struck my thigh*, a sign of mourning and regret; see Ezek 21.12. **20:** Though *Ephraim* does not act like a dear son or delightful child, nevertheless God cannot ultimately turn against him; cf. Hos 11.1–9. **21–22:** The faithless daughter's return. **21:** *Road markers*, or more likely grave markers (see 2 Kings 23.17; Ezek 39.15). *Signposts*, a word also used in v. 15 ("bitter weeping"), so likely associated with the mourning at a grave. Israel is to recall its deadly path to exile. **22:** *A new thing*, cf. Isa 42.9; 43.19. *A woman encompasses a man*, a cryptic phrase, perhaps playing on the term "faithless." The word translated "encompasses" is used of God's protective care in Deut 32.10. Normally women were under the protection of male members of their family. **23–26:** Conclusion to an earlier dream-vision sequence, a sign of the editing of this material. *When I restore their fortunes*, the restoration of the destruction and overthrowing of Judah (1.10).

31.27–40: Three oracles looking forward to God's radically new future. Each is introduced by "The days are surely coming, says the LORD" (vv. 27,31,38).

the house of Judah with the seed of humans
and the seed of animals. [28] And just as I have
watched over them to pluck up and break
down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil,
so I will watch over them to build and to
plant, says the LORD. [29] In those days they
shall no longer say:
"The parents have eaten sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are set on edge."
[30] But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth
of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set
on edge.
[31] The days are surely coming, says the
LORD, when I will make a new covenant with
the house of Israel and the house of Judah.
[32] It will not be like the covenant that I made
with their ancestors when I took them by the
hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—
a covenant that they broke, though I was
their husband,[a] says the LORD. [33] But this is
the covenant that I will make with the house
of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will
put my law within them, and I will write it
on their hearts; and I will be their God, and
they shall be my people. [34] No longer shall
they teach one another, or say to each other,
"Know the LORD," for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest, says
the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and
remember their sin no more.

[35] Thus says the LORD,
who gives the sun for light by day
and the fixed order of the moon and the
stars for light by night,
who stirs up the sea so that its waves
roar—
the LORD of hosts is his name:
[36] If this fixed order were ever to cease
from my presence, says the LORD,
then also the offspring of Israel would
cease
to be a nation before me forever.

[37] Thus says the LORD:
If the heavens above can be measured,
and the foundations of the earth below
can be explored,
then I will reject all the offspring of Israel
because of all they have done,
says the LORD.

[38] The days are surely coming, says the
LORD, when the city shall be rebuilt for
the LORD from the tower of Hananel to the
Corner Gate. [39] And the measuring line shall
go out farther, straight to the hill Gareb, and
shall then turn to Goah. [40] The whole valley
of the dead bodies and the ashes, and all the
fields as far as the Wadi Kidron, to the corner
of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be
sacred to the LORD. It shall never again be
uprooted or overthrown.

32 The word that came to Jeremiah from
the LORD in the tenth year of King
Zedekiah of Judah, which was the eighteenth
year of Nebuchadrezzar. [2] At that time the

[a] Or *master*

31.27–30: God will build and plant the new Israel. 27: God promises to repopulate a war-torn and decimated community by reuniting northern and southern Israel; cf. 3.18; Ezek 36.8–11. **28:** *Watched over . . . to build and to plant*, the central theme of the book; see 1.10,11–12. **29–30:** A new rendering of an ancient proverb; see Ezek 8.1–4. Unlike Ezekiel, Jeremiah does not refute the saying but simply retires it from its traditional usage as a respected and honored truth about the nature of God; cf. Ex 20.5; 34.7.

31.31–37: The new covenant. 31: Because Israel and Judah broke the covenant that God made with their ancestors (see 11.10), God proclaims a *new* (or renewed) one. **32:** *I was their husband* (Heb "ba'al), see 2.23n. **33–34:** Though the *law* (Heb "torah," which also means "teaching") was traditionally thought of as being "in the heart" (Deut 30.14), it would become so instinctual that "teaching" would become unnecessary, a radical idea given the strong Deuteronomic concern for teaching (Deut 4.10; 5.1,31; 11.19; 31.12–13). *I will be their God . . .*, see 7.24n. **35–37:** Later additions using standard hymnic language; cf. 33.19–26.

31.38–40: Jerusalem rebuilt. A later oracle depicting the restoration of Jerusalem's walls around its perimeter, asserting that the rebuilt city will be safe and secure. On these places, several of which are otherwise unknown, see Neh 3.1,28; 12.39; Zech 14.10; 2 Kings 14.13.

32.1–33.26: God's restoration of Israel. These chapters are thematically linked to the "book of comfort" (chs 30–31) and so are included here, even though they should follow ch 34 chronologically; they are dated to

army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah, 3 where King Zedekiah of Judah had confined him. Zedekiah had said, "Why do you prophesy and say: Thus says the LORD: I am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; 4 King Zedekiah of Judah shall not escape out of the hands of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye; 5 and he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain until I attend to him, says the LORD; though you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed?"

6 Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came to me: 7 Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours." 8 Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself." Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

9 And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. 10 I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. 11 Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions, and the open copy; 12 and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard. 13 In their presence I charged Baruch, saying, 14 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, in order that they may last for a long time. 15 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.

16 After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD, saying: 17 Ah Lord GOD! It is you who made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. 18 You show steadfast love to the thousandth generation,[a] but repay the guilt of parents into the laps of their children after them, O great and mighty God whose name is the LORD of hosts, 19 great in counsel and mighty in deed; whose eyes are open to all the ways of mortals, rewarding all according to their ways and according to the fruit of their doings. 20 You showed signs and

[a] Or *to thousands*

the very end of the reign of Zedekiah and of the Babylonian siege (588–586 BCE), during which Jeremiah was in confinement. In ch 32, the focus is on the theme that *fields shall be bought . . . and deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed* (v. 44), using Jeremiah's offer of redeeming family property in Anathoth as a sign. Chapter 33 centers on the rebuilding of the city and the promise that the city will be given a new name, *"the LORD is our righteousness"* (v. 16).

32.1–25: Jeremiah purchases the family property. 1: *The tenth year . . . the eighteenth year*, 588 BCE. **3–5:** Jeremiah's arrest is narrated in 37.1–38.28. The prophetic oracle alluded to is 34.2–3. During a brief lifting of the siege (see 34.8–22) Jeremiah tried to leave the city, was accused of desertion, and was arrested (37.11–16). **4:** *Chaldeans*, i.e., Babylonians. **5:** *Zedekiah* ultimately died while in prison in Babylon (52.11). **6–15:** Jeremiah's encounter with Hanamel is a prophetic sign act. The economic transaction of vv. 9–14 is the most detailed in the Bible. **7:** *Right of redemption*, to keep property within the extended family, members who could do so were expected to "redeem" land that was in jeopardy of being fortified or sold outside the family; see Lev 25.23–28. **9:** *Seventeen shekels*, ca. 7 oz (194 grams). At this time there was no coinage, and *money* (lit., "silver") was *weighed*. **11:** *Sealed deed . . . open copy*, contracts were sealed with a signet on a clay "bulla," but a copy or summary of the contents was left available on the outside of the scroll for reference and public scrutiny. Storage of such documents in clay jars was common practice. **12:** *Baruch, son of Neriah*, Jeremiah's scribe; see 36.4; 51.59. This is the first mention of Baruch in the book. **16–25:** A formal prayer, uttered in the first-person. **17–18:** Standard hymnic language in creedal form; see 20.5–6; 34.6–7. **20:** *Signs and wonders*, a reference to

wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all humankind, and have made yourself a name that continues to this very day. 21 You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror; 22 and you gave them this land, which you swore to their ancestors to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; 23 and they entered and took possession of it. But they did not obey your voice or follow your law; of all you commanded them to do, they did nothing. Therefore you have made all these disasters come upon them. 24 See, the siege ramps have been cast up against the city to take it, and the city, faced with sword, famine, and pestilence, has been given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. What you spoke has happened, as you yourself can see. 25 Yet you, O Lord God, have said to me, "Buy the field for money and get witnesses"—though the city has been given into the hands of the Chaldeans.

26 The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: 27 See, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too hard for me? 28 Therefore, thus says the Lord: I am going to give this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and he shall take it. 29 The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city shall come, set it on fire, and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs offerings have been made to Baal and libations have been poured out to other gods, to provoke me to anger. 30 For the people of Israel and the people of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth; the people of Israel have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands, says the Lord. 31 This city has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built until this day, so that I will remove it from my sight 32 because of all the evil of the people of Israel and the people of Judah that they did to provoke me to anger—they, their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets, the citizens of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33 They have turned their backs to me, not their faces; though I have taught them persistently, they would not listen and accept correction. 34 They set up their abominations in the house that bears my name, and defiled it. 35 They built the high places of Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter my mind that they should do this abomination, causing Judah to sin.

36 Now therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, "It is being given into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence": 37 See, I am going to gather them from all the lands to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation; I will bring them back to this place, and I will settle them in safety. 38 They shall be my people, and I will be their God. 39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for all time, for their own good and the good of their children after them. 40 I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me. 41 I will rejoice in doing good to them, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

42 For thus says the Lord: Just as I have brought all this great disaster upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good fortune that I now promise them. 43 Fields shall be bought in this land of which you

the plagues tradition (cf. Ex 3.20; 4.21; Deut 34.11). **26–44:** A typically Deuteronomic sermon (vv. 26–35) is followed by words of promise. **27:** *Is anything too hard for me?* God reiterates Jeremiah's declaration in v. 17 as a rhetorical question; cf. Gen 18.14. **28–35:** God echoes Jeremiah's prior judgment oracles in the form of a recital of Judah's sins (see, e.g., 3.6–11; 7.30–32). **29:** *Roofs* were commonly used for many purposes, including religious rituals both legitimate (Neh 8.16) and illegitimate (19.13; Zeph 1.5). **34:** *The house that bears my name*, see 7.10n. **35:** On the rituals in the Hinnom Valley, see 7.31; 19.5–6. *Molech* is either the name of a foreign god (1 Kings 11.7) or an epithet for Baal, formed by combining the vowels of the word for "shame" (Heb "boshet") with the consonants of the word for "king" ("melek"). **36:** *Of which you say*, the pronoun here, as in v. 43, is plural, indicating that this is the popular sentiment at this critical time of the siege. **39–41:** As in 31.31–34, the

are saying, It is a desolation, without human beings or animals; it has been given into the hands of the Chaldeans. 44 Fields shall be bought for money, and deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, of the hill country, of the Shephelah, and of the Negeb; for I will restore their fortunes, says the LORD.

33 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still confined in the court of the guard: 2 Thus says the LORD who made the earth,[a] the LORD who formed it to establish it—the LORD is his name: 3 Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. 4 For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that were torn down to make a defense against the siege ramps and before the sword:[b] 5 The Chaldeans are coming in to fight[c] and to fill them with the dead bodies of those whom I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their wickedness. 6 I am going to bring it recovery and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them abundance[b] of prosperity and security. 7 I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. 8 I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. 9 And this city[d] shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them; they shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

10 Thus says the LORD: In this place of which you say, "It is a waste without human beings or animals," in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without inhabitants, human or animal, there shall once more be heard 11 the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD:

"Give thanks to the LORD of hosts,
for the LORD is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!"

For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the LORD.

12 Thus says the LORD of hosts: In this place that is waste, without human beings or animals, and in all its towns there shall again be pasture for shepherds resting their flocks. 13 In the towns of the hill country, of the Shephelah, and of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places around Jerusalem, and in the towns of Judah, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the LORD.

14 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

17 For thus says the LORD: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house

[a] Gk: Heb *it*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Cn: Heb *They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans*
[d] Heb *And it*

saving action is here solely God's, who acts unilaterally in the face of Israel's own utter failure. **44:** *Benjamin . . . Negeb*, see 17.26n.

33.1–26: Oracles of restoration, connected to the previous oracles by their presumed location (Jeremiah in confinement). **1:** An editorial link to the larger literary context (see 32.2). **4:** *Houses of this city*, introduces the theme of the restoration of Jerusalem's buildings. Now the city itself becomes the subject of visions of restoration; cf. v. 9. **5:** *I have hidden my face*, withdrawn my presence and favor (e.g., Ps 30.7). **10–11:** A reversal of 7.34. **10:** *You say*, the pronoun is plural, expressing popular pessimistic sentiment. **11:** *Give thanks. . .*, this thanksgiving uses standard psalmic language (Pss 106.1; 107.1; 136.1–26; Sir 51.12). **13:** *Shephelah . . . Negeb*, see 17.26n. **14–16:** Echoes 23.5–6, except that in v. 6 ("by which it will be called"), it is now the city of Jerusalem that is given the name rather than the anticipated Davidic ruler. **17–18**: The first of three appended oracles regarding

of Israel, [18] and the levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to make grain offerings, and to make sacrifices for all time.

[19] The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: [20] Thus says the LORD: If any of you could break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night would not come at their appointed time, [21] only then could my covenant with my servant David be broken, so that he would not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with my ministers the Levites. [22] Just as the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will increase the offspring of my servant David, and the Levites who minister to me.

[23] The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: [24] Have you not observed how these people say, "The two families that the LORD chose have been rejected by him," and how they hold my people in such contempt that they no longer regard them as a nation? [25] Thus says the LORD: Only if I had not established my covenant with day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth, [26] would I reject the offspring of Jacob and of my servant David and not choose any of his descendants as rulers over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes, and will have mercy upon them.

34 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms of the earth and all the peoples under his dominion were fighting against Jerusalem and all its cities: [2] Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Go and speak to King Zedekiah of Judah and say to him: Thus says the LORD: I am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. [3] And you yourself shall not escape from his hand, but shall surely be captured and handed over to him; you shall see the king of Babylon eye to eye and speak with him face to face; and you shall go to Babylon. [4] Yet hear the word of the LORD, O King Zedekiah of Judah! Thus says the LORD concerning you: You shall not die by the sword; [5] you shall die in peace. And as spices were burned[a] for your ancestors, the earlier kings who preceded you, so they shall burn spices[b] for you and lament for you, say-

[a] Heb *as there was burning*
[b] Heb *shall burn*

Jerusalem's leadership, using late language reflecting 2 Chr 7.18. The vision of the future includes a succession of Davidic rulers and levitical priests. The term *levitical priests* is common to Deuteronomy but used only here in Jeremiah. **19–22:** Second appended oracle recalling the argument of 31.36–37, characteristic of the postexilic hopes for both a Davidic and a priestly leader (cf. Zech 4.11–14). On the cosmological language, see also 31.35–37. **23–26:** Third appended oracle. Again celebrates the promise to the "two families," but now this is a reference to the entire land of Israel represented by Jacob (Israel) and David (Judah); cf. the cosmic argument of 31.36–37. Bracketing chs 30–33 is God's pledge to create newness out of the ruins of war: *I will restore their fortunes* (30.3 and 33.26). **25:** *Covenant with day and night*, radical language echoing the Priestly language in Gen 9.8–16 that God's covenant is with "all flesh" and, indeed, with "the earth," that is, the cosmos.

34.1–35.19: Two contrasting trajectories. Although these chapters represent distinct text traditions, they are juxtaposed in their present context to emphasize the themes of devotion and fidelity. The peculiar twist to these common themes is that insiders act like outsiders (ch 34), and outsiders act like insiders (ch 35). Judeans betray their identity as God's people when they become perpetrators of injustice, and the Rechabites, an outlying group that has set up temporary residence in Jerusalem, become exemplars of obedience when they observe the teachings of their ancestors.

34.1–7: Judgment against Zedekiah: Historical and symbolic language converge when envisaging the siege of Jerusalem (January 588 BCE; see also, e.g., 21.1–7; 37.3–10). Note the threefold use of "all" in v. 1 (see also v. 6). The assault upon the capital city and its king is no ordinary military event but one orchestrated by God. Only Lachish and Azekah, two cities of the Shephelah, withstand the Babylonian attack, although eventually Azekah likely falls (see 4.6n.). Divine judgment against Zedekiah is mitigated in v. 5, promising him a normal death and burial with full honor; contrast the fate of Jehoiakim in 22.18–19, for whom these normal rituals of burial would not be conducted. In fact, Zedekiah's fate was less peaceful, according to 52.9–11; 2 Kings 25.6–7.

ing, "Alas, lord!" For I have spoken the word, says the LORD.

6 Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah, in Jerusalem, 7 when the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the cities of Judah that were left, Lachish and Azekah; for these were the only fortified cities of Judah that remained.

8 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to make a proclamation of liberty to them— 9 that all should set free their Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no one should hold another Judean in slavery. 10 And they obeyed, all the officials and all the people who had entered into the covenant that all would set free their slaves, male or female, so that they would not be enslaved again; they obeyed and set them free. 11 But afterward they turned around and took back the male and female slaves they had set free, and brought them again into subjection as slaves. 12 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 13 Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I myself made a covenant with your ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, saying, 14 "Every seventh year each of you must set free any Hebrews who have been sold to you and have served you six years; you must set them free from your service." But your ancestors did not listen to me or incline their ears to me. 15 You yourselves recently repented and did what was right in my sight by proclaiming liberty to one another, and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name; 16 but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back your male and female slaves, whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them again into subjection to be your slaves. 17 Therefore, thus says the LORD: You have not obeyed me by granting a release to your neighbors and friends; I am going to grant a release to you, says the LORD—a release to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 18 And those who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make like[a] the calf when they cut it in two and passed between its parts: 19 the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf 20 shall be handed over to their enemies and to those who seek their lives. Their corpses shall become food for the birds of the air and the wild animals of the earth. 21 And as for King Zedekiah of Judah and his officials, I will hand them over to their enemies and to those who seek their lives, to the army of the king of Babylon, which has withdrawn

[a] Cn: Heb lacks *like*

34.8–22: The aborted manumission of slaves. The context for this event is the period when the siege was briefly lifted when Egyptian forces under Pharaoh Hophra (Apries) arrived in Judah to attempt to break the siege of the Babylonian army. Babylonian forces temporarily withdrew from Jerusalem in order to face Hophra's army (37.5,11). The manumission was in accord with the principles of Ex 21.2 and Deut 15.12, as referenced in Jer 34.14. The manumission likely also served practical purposes, given scarcity of food resources and the need for male support troops. As soon as the siege was lifted, however, the people presumed that normality would return and therefore the manumission was retracted. **11:** The Hebrew word to describe the people's broken promise and act of injustice is "shuv" ("*took back*"), a term Jeremiah uses repeatedly to call Judah/Israel to return to God. The text suggests that Judah's only turning is away from God ("shuv" is also used in vv. 15,16 [twice]), 22; see also 35.15). **12–16:** The memory of God's fidelity in the Exodus makes Israel's infidelity more preposterous: the once oppressed have become the oppressors. *The house that is called by my name*, see 7.10n. **17:** *A release to you*, using the term for the "amnesty" or "manumission," Jeremiah offers a play on words. **18:** *Like the calf when they cut it in two*, a reference to the fact that covenants were "cut" (Heb "karat," see v. 13) rather than "made," and were accompanied by rituals in which the covenant makers would dismember one or more animals, invoking a similar fate on themselves if they violated the terms of the oath; see Gen 15.9–18. **19:** *The eunuchs*, the Heb term "saris" is often used of court officials (1 Sam 8.15; 2 Kings 8.6; Jer 29.2; 52.25), indicating perhaps how highly in Judean

from you. 22 I am going to command, says the LORD, and will bring them back to this city; and they will fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire. The towns of Judah I will make a desolation without inhabitant.

35 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah: 2 Go to the house of the Rechabites, and speak with them, and bring them to the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers; then offer them wine to drink. 3 So I took Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah son of Habazziniah, and his brothers, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites. 4 I brought them to the house of the LORD into the chamber of the sons of Hanan son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, above the chamber of Maaseiah son of Shallum, keeper of the threshold. 5 Then I set before the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, "Have some wine." 6 But they answered, "We will drink no wine, for our ancestor Jonadab son of Rechab commanded us, 'You shall never drink wine, neither you nor your children; 7 nor shall you ever build a house, or sow seed; nor shall you plant a vineyard, or even own one; but you shall live in tents all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you reside.' 8 We have obeyed the charge of our ancestor Jonadab son of Rechab in all that he commanded us, to drink no wine all our days, ourselves, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, 9 and not to build houses to live in. We have no vineyard or field or seed; 10 but we have lived in tents, and have obeyed and done all that our ancestor Jonadab commanded us. 11 But when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon came up against the land, we said, 'Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans and the army of the Arameans.' That is why we are living in Jerusalem."

12 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 13 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Go and say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Can you not learn a lesson and obey my words? says the LORD. 14 The command has been carried out that Jonadab son of Rechab gave to his descendants to drink no wine; and they drink none to this day, for they have obeyed their ancestor's command. But I myself have spoken to you persistently, and you have not obeyed me. 15 I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, "Turn now every one of you from your evil way, and amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall live in the land that I gave to you and your ancestors." But you did not incline your ear or obey me. 16 The descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab have carried out the command that their ancestor gave them, but this people has not obeyed me. 17 There-

court life such persons of ambiguous gender could ascend. Some scholars, however, suggest that the term has two distinct meanings ("official" and "eunuch"). **22:** *Bring them back*, the siege will be resumed.

35.1–19: The sign of the Rechabites. The clan of the Rechabites traced their origins to Jonadab son of Rechab (v. 6), and rallied around the antiagrarian policies indicated in vv. 8–10, perhaps as a fundamentalist reaction against cultural assimilation to the perceived values of the Canaanites. Jonadab was remembered as an ally of the conservative Yahwist Jehu (842–814 BCE) in his revolt against the syncretistic policies of the Omri dynasty in the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 10.15,23). Their faithfulness to their extreme values was used by Jeremiah as a stark contrast with the faithlessness of the people of Jerusalem, who could not obey even divinely sanctioned norms. **1:** *King Jehoiakim* (608–598 BCE) a surprising regression in time, perhaps to prepare the reader for ch 36, also set during the reign of Jehoiakim. **4:** *Chamber*, prominent families had open rooms in the Temple complex where they gathered, shared sacrificial meals, and conducted other business (36.10; 2 Kings 23.11). *Keeper of the threshold*, on this important priestly function, see 2 Kings 12.9; 22.24; 23.4; 25.18. **11:** *When King Nebuchadrezzar . . . came up against the land*, must refer to the Babylonian (Chaldean) incursion into the Levant in 605–604 BCE, setting the stage for ch 36. *Arameans*, centered in Damascus, were often the historical enemies of Israel and perhaps always a problem for the nomadic clans of herders in the eastern steppes. **12–19:** Heb "shema'," "to listen or obey" occurs seven times in vv. 12–18 and fourteen times in Jeremiah 34–35. The prophetic sign act, and its larger literary context, exhorts (exilic) readers/listeners to embrace Torah devotion. **15:** See 7.25n.

fore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to bring on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem every disaster that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken to them and they have not listened, I have called to them and they have not answered.

18 But to the house of the Rechabites Jeremiah said: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Because you have obeyed the command of your ancestor Jonadab, and kept all his precepts, and done all that he commanded you, 19 therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab son of Rechab shall not lack a descendant to stand before me for all time.

36 In the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today. 3 It may be that when the house of Judah hears of all the disasters that I intend to do to them, all of them may turn from their evil ways, so that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the LORD that he had spoken to him. 5 And Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, "I am prevented from entering the house of the LORD; 6 so you go yourself, and on a fast day in the hearing of the people in the LORD's house you shall read the words of the LORD from the scroll that you have written at my dictation. You shall read them also in the hearing of all the people of Judah who come up from their towns. 7 It may be that their plea will come before the LORD, and that all of them will turn from their evil ways, for great is the anger and wrath that the LORD has pronounced against this people." 8 And Baruch son of Neriah did all that the prophet Jeremiah ordered him about reading from the scroll the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

9 In the fifth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the towns of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the LORD. 10 Then, in the hearing of all the people, Baruch read the words of Jeremiah from the scroll, in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of

36.1–45.5: The Baruch narrative. In these chapters Jeremiah's scribe Baruch plays a dominant role in the opening and closing chapters. It is debated whether Baruch actually penned the narrative or simply functions as a main character. The intention of the narrative is also disputed. Some suggest it reflects historical interests: to recount the final years of Judah, especially for the exilic community. Others propose that the narrative highlights Jeremiah's (innocent) suffering, especially as a way to justify the nation's downfall. Still others read the narrative as a story of the word of God, its rejection and eventual triumph. Although these chapters are more coherent than much of the book, they still resist singularity and give voice to competing and converging interests and ideologies.

36.1–32: Commissioning and reading the scroll. In 605 BCE, the Babylonians defeated the Egyptians in battle and asserted themselves as the dominant power over Judah, forcing the radical reshaping of Judean aspirations and allegiances, events introduced in 35.11. As in ch 25, the editor's use of the "scroll tradition" concludes a major section of the oracles (chs 26–35), the second such cycle. The oracles include the chief collection of Jeremiah's utterances from 627 to 605 BCE (compare 25.3 and 36.2), when Jeremiah was already under a temporary ban from the Temple quarters (36.5), so the story likely follows the event of his being arraigned and beaten by the Temple overseer Pashhur (20.1–6), a possible occasion for the ban. As elsewhere, Jeremiah has the assistance of Baruch, who serves as his scribe (see 32.12–16; 51.59), and is supported by the family of Shaphan within the royal court, who send Baruch and Jeremiah into protective hiding (v. 19). Piece by piece Jehoiakim burned the scroll, likely as a means of mitigating the effects of the words of judgment, which would have been received as a type of "curse." Most scholars assume that the second scroll, produced to replace the first destroyed by Jehoiakim (vv. 27–32), contained the core of material now found in chs 1–24 (compare 36.29 with 7.20 and 21.6). **1:** *The fourth year of King Jehoiakim,* **605** BCE. **6:** *A fast day*, a day especially set aside for public mourning and divine intercession in the face of Judah's political crisis (v. 9). **9:** Late in 604 BCE, perhaps a national fast following the Babylonian victory at Ashkelon (see 47.5). **10:** The first reading of *the scroll* takes place *in the chamber of*

Gemariah son of Shaphan the secretary, which was in the upper court, at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's house.

11 When Micaiah son of Gemariah son of Shaphan heard all the words of the LORD from the scroll, 12 he went down to the king's house, into the secretary's chamber; and all the officials were sitting there: Elishama the secretary, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Achbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the officials. 13 And Micaiah told them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the scroll in the hearing of the people. 14 Then all the officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah son of Shelemiah son of Cushi to say to Baruch, "Bring the scroll that you read in the hearing of the people, and come." So Baruch son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand and came to them. 15 And they said to him, "Sit down and read it to us." So Baruch read it to them. 16 When they heard all the words, they turned to one another in alarm, and said to Baruch, "We certainly must report all these words to the king." 17 Then they questioned Baruch, "Tell us now, how did you write all these words? Was it at his dictation?" 18 Baruch answered them, "He dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink on the scroll." 19 Then the officials said to Baruch, "Go and hide, you and Jeremiah, and let no one know where you are."

20 Leaving the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the secretary, they went to the court of the king; and they reported all the words to the king. 21 Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it from the chamber of Elishama the secretary; and Jehudi read it to the king and all the officials who stood beside the king. 22 Now the king was sitting in his winter apartment (it was the ninth month), and there was a fire burning in the brazier before him. 23 As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king[a] would cut them off with a penknife and throw them into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. 24 Yet neither the king, nor any of his servants who heard all these words, was alarmed, nor did they tear their garments. 25 Even when Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them. 26 And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son and Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest the secretary Baruch and the prophet Jeremiah. But the LORD hid them.

27 Now, after the king had burned the scroll with the words that Baruch wrote at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 28 Take another scroll and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which King Jehoiakim of Judah has burned. 29 And concerning King Jehoiakim of Judah you shall say: Thus says the LORD, You have dared to burn this scroll, saying, Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and will cut off from it human beings and animals? 30 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning King Jehoiakim of Judah: He shall have no one to sit upon the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night. 31 And I will punish him and his offspring and his servants for their iniquity; I will bring on them, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the people of Judah, all the disasters with which I have threatened them—but they would not listen.

[a] Heb *he*

Gemariah, one of the *sons of Shaphan* (see 26.24n.). **12:** *Elnathan son of Achbor*, perhaps the king's father-in-law (2 Kings 24.8) and the head of the mission that brought the prophet Uriah back from Egypt for execution (Jer 26.22–23). **20–26:** *Jehudi* reads the scroll a third time, this time to King Jehoiakim who destroys it. The word "hear, listen" (Heb "shema'") occurs in vv. 11,13,16,25; its last use concerns the king, who would *not listen* to those who urged him not to burn the scroll (v. 25), unlike his righteous father Josiah, who listened to the words of the scroll read to him (2 Kings 22.11,19). Moreover, whereas King Josiah tore/cut his clothes in mourning when hearing the words of the scroll (2 Kings 22.11,19), his son Jehoiakim tears/*cuts* the prophetic scroll. Josiah humbled himself before God (2 Kings 22.19), but Jehoiakim is not *alarmed* by the words of the scroll (v. 24; cf. also v. 16), but orders the military police to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch. **22:** *Winter apartment*, or "harvest quarters." *Ninth month*, November-December.

32 Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the secretary Baruch son of Neriah, who wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the scroll that King Jehoiakim of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them.

37 Zedekiah son of Josiah, whom King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon made king in the land of Judah, succeeded Coniah son of Jehoiakim. 2 But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the LORD that he spoke through the prophet Jeremiah.

3 King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to the prophet Jeremiah saying, "Please pray for us to the LORD our God." 4 Now Jeremiah was still going in and out among the people, for he had not yet been put in prison. 5 Meanwhile, the army of Pharaoh had come out of Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they withdrew from Jerusalem.

6 Then the word of the LORD came to the prophet Jeremiah: 7 Thus says the LORD, God of Israel: This is what the two of you shall say to the king of Judah, who sent you to me to inquire of me: Pharaoh's army, which set out to help you, is going to return to its own land, to Egypt. 8 And the Chaldeans shall return and fight against this city; they shall take it and burn it with fire. 9 Thus says the LORD: Do not deceive yourselves, saying, "The Chaldeans will surely go away from us," for they will not go away. 10 Even if you defeated the whole army of Chaldeans who are fighting against you, and there remained of them only wounded men in their tents, they would rise up and burn this city with fire.

11 Now when the Chaldean army had withdrawn from Jerusalem at the approach of Pharaoh's army, 12 Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin to receive his share of property[a] among the people there. 13 When he reached the Benjamin Gate, a sentinel there named Irijah son of Shelemiah son of Hananiah arrested the prophet Jeremiah saying, "You are deserting to the Chaldeans." 14 And Jeremiah said, "That is a lie; I am not deserting to the Chaldeans." But Irijah would not listen to him, and arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials. 15 The officials were enraged at Jeremiah, and they beat him and imprisoned him in the house of the secretary Jonathan, for it had been made a prison. 16 Thus Jeremiah was put in the cistern house, in the cells, and remained there many days.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

37.1–38.28: The final arrest of Jeremiah. Two different accounts of what was likely one event have been juxtaposed, recounting the story of Jeremiah's final confinement just before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. The main story (37.1–21 and 38.14–28), concerning Jeremiah's desire to escape imprisonment in the house of the secretary Jonathan (37.15,20; 38.26), is embellished with the story of Jeremiah's rescue by the Ethiopian courtier, Ebed-melech (38.1–13). As this material begins the third cycle, it resets chronologically to a period prior to the events mentioned in chs 32–33. Jeremiah, not yet under arrest, is still prophesying publicly and openly (37.4; 38.1). During the brief lifting of the Babylonian siege (v. 5, see 34.8–22), Jeremiah attempted to leave Jerusalem to take care of some family business (vv. 11–12). He was arrested for desertion and his fate, which would have been severe at the hands of the officials, was softened by allowance of King Zedekiah. In both accounts, Jeremiah is threatened with harsh incarceration but is allowed to stay under royal protection in the court of the guard.

37.1–10: Jeremiah's response to Zedekiah's request for intercession: The context of the lifting of the siege provides the language for Jeremiah's oracle: the Babylonians (Chaldeans) will be back, so no comfort should be taken in the brief respite. **1:** *Coniah*, Jehoiachin. **3:** *Please pray for us to the LORD our God*, cf. Ex 8.8,28; 9.28; 10.17; see also Num 21.4–9; 1 Sam 12.19. **5:** See 34.8–22n.

37.11–21: Jeremiah's incarceration in the court of the guard. This episode as well as those in ch 38 are characterized by dialogues between Jeremiah and Zedekiah, Zedekiah and Ebed-melech, and Ebed-melech and Jeremiah. **12:** Jeremiah was from the Benjaminite town of Anathoth (1.1) and would later be invited to redeem some family property there (32.7–9). **13:** *Benjamin Gate*, see also 20.2. **16:** *Cistern house*, apparently a vaulted room formerly used as a cistern for water storage. Jeremiah believed that incarceration here would be deadly (v. 20), perhaps because while there he was under threat of some particularly hostile princes and did not enjoy

17 Then King Zedekiah sent for him, and received him. The king questioned him secretly in his house, and said, "Is there any word from the LORD?" Jeremiah said, "There is!" Then he said, "You shall be handed over to the king of Babylon." 18 Jeremiah also said to King Zedekiah, "What wrong have I done to you or your servants or this people, that you have put me in prison? 19 Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, 'The king of Babylon will not come against you and against this land'? 20 Now please hear me, my lord king: be good enough to listen to my plea, and do not send me back to the house of the secretary Jonathan to die there." 21 So King Zedekiah gave orders, and they committed Jeremiah to the court of the guard; and a loaf of bread was given him daily from the bakers' street, until all the bread of the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

38 Now Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah was saying to all the people, 2 Thus says the LORD, Those who stay in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but those who go out to the Chaldeans shall live; they shall have their lives as a prize of war, and live. 3 Thus says the LORD, This city shall surely be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon and be taken. 4 Then the officials said to the king, "This man ought to be put to death, because he is discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, and all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm." 5 King Zedekiah said, "Here he is; he is in your hands; for the king is powerless against you." 6 So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. Now there was no water in the cistern, but only mud, and Jeremiah sank in the mud.

7 Ebed-melech the Ethiopian,[a] a eunuch in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. The king happened to be sitting at the Benjamin Gate, 8 So Ebed-melech left the king's house and spoke to the king, 9 "My lord king, these men have acted wickedly in all they did to the prophet Jeremiah by throwing him into the cistern to die there of hunger, for there is no bread left in the city." 10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian,[a] "Take three men with you from here, and pull the prophet Jeremiah up from the cistern before he dies." 11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to the house of the king, to a wardrobe of[b] the storehouse, and took from there old rags and worn-out clothes, which he let down to Jeremiah in the cistern by ropes. 12 Then Ebed-melech the Ethiopian[a] said to Jeremiah, "Just put the rags and clothes between your armpits and the ropes." Jeremiah did so. 13 Then they drew Jeremiah up by the ropes and pulled him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

[a] Or *Nubian*; Heb *Cushite*
[b] Cn: Heb *to under*

any royal protection. **17:** *The king questioned him*, see also 21.1–10; 37.3–10. **21:** *The court of the guard* was located in the royal palace itself, under direct supervision of the king (32.2).

38.1–13: An alternate account regarding Jeremiah and Ebed-melech. This story develops the theme of the conflict between Zedekiah and his pro-Egyptian advisers, who were particularly opposed to Jeremiah's message of capitulation to the Babylonians. Here the cistern into which Jeremiah is thrown has a different name and is located in the court of the guard itself (v. 6). **1:** *Gedaliah son of Pashhur*, see 20.1; *Jucal* (Jehucal), see 37.3; *Pashhur*, see 21.1. **2–3:** See 21.9–10. **4:** Zedekiah's pro-Egyptian counselors again treat Jeremiah as a Babylonian sympathizer. **5–6:** Once more Jeremiah is arrested and sentenced to death (see 26.7–9; see also 37.13–16). The cistern was nearly dry, indicating a time shortly before Nebuchadrezzar's final assault, August 586 BCE (52.5–7). **7:** *Ebed-melech*, whose name means "servant/slave of the king," is one of few in the book who come to the aid of the imperiled prophet (see also 26.24; 36.19). In 39.15–18 he is assured of his future deliverance in a prophetic message from Jeremiah. *A eunuch* (see 34.19n.). **9:** *No bread left in the city,* relates this alternate account sequentially to the main story line (see 37.21).

14 King Zedekiah sent for the prophet Jeremiah and received him at the third entrance of the temple of the LORD. The king said to Jeremiah, "I have something to ask you; do not hide anything from me." 15 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I tell you, you will put me to death, will you not? And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me." 16 So King Zedekiah swore an oath in secret to Jeremiah, "As the LORD lives, who gave us our lives, I will not put you to death or hand you over to these men who seek your life."

17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, If you will only surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then your life shall be spared, and this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live. 18 But if you do not surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then this city shall be handed over to the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and you yourself shall not escape from their hand." 19 King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Judeans who have deserted to the Chaldeans, for I might be handed over to them and they would abuse me." 20 Jeremiah said, "That will not happen. Just obey the voice of the LORD in what I say to you, and it shall go well with you, and your life shall be spared. 21 But if you are determined not to surrender, this is what the LORD has shown me— 22 a vision of all the women remaining in the house of the king of Judah being led out to the officials of the king of Babylon and saying,

'Your trusted friends have seduced you
and have overcome you;
Now that your feet are stuck in the mud,
they desert you.'

23 All your wives and your children shall be led out to the Chaldeans, and you yourself shall not escape from their hand, but shall be seized by the king of Babylon; and this city shall be burned with fire."

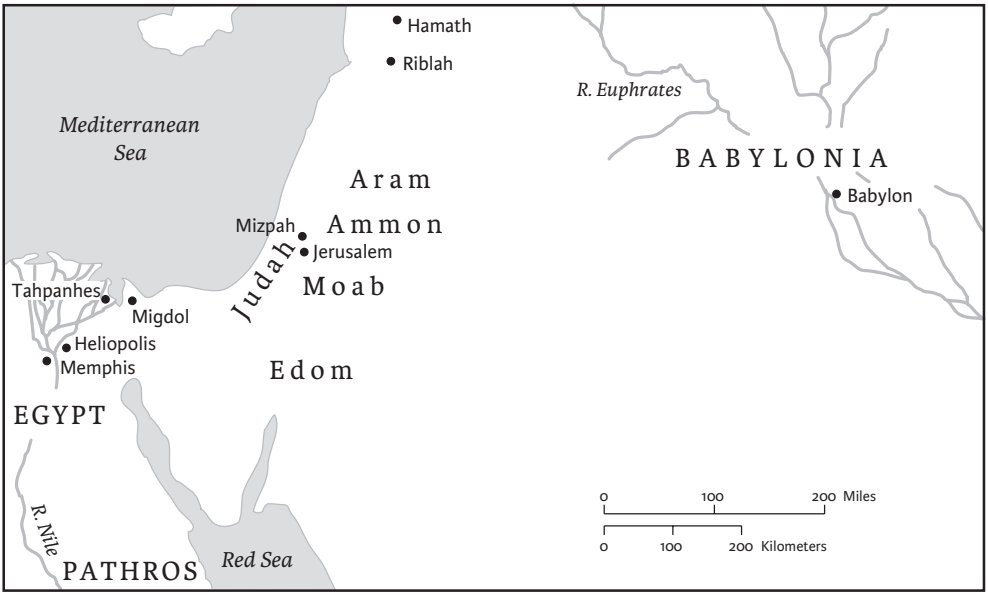
24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Do not let anyone else know of this conversation, or you will die. 25 If the officials should hear that I have spoken with you, and they should come and say to you, 'Just tell us what you said to the king; do not conceal it from us, or we will put you to death. What did the king say to you?' 26 then you shall say to them, 'I was presenting my plea to the king not to send me back to the house of Jonathan to die there.' " 27 All the officials did come to Jeremiah and questioned him; and he answered them in the very words the king had commanded. So they stopped questioning him, for the conversation had not been overheard. 28 And Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard until the day that Jerusalem was taken.

39 In the ninth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, in the tenth month, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and besieged it; 2 in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city. 3 When Jerusalem was taken,[a] all the officials of the king of Babylon came and sat in the middle gate: Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim the Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer the Rabmag, with all the rest of the officials of the king of Babylon. 4 When King Zedekiah of Judah

[a] This clause has been transposed from 38.28

38.14–28: An alternate account of 37.17–21. 17: *Surrender*, that is, "go out," abandon the city. **22:** *Your feet are stuck in the mud*, an image recalling Jeremiah's experience in v. 6 and possibly accounting for the linking of these variant traditions. **26:** *House of Jonathan*, connecting this story to that of the main story line of 37.20–21 rather than to 38.1–13.

39.1–18: The fall of Jerusalem. The Hebrew text indicates that ch 39 is a smooth continuation of ch 38 (see textual note *a* at 39.3), as does the reference to the court of the guard (39.14; see 38.28). The account here basically follows that of 52.4–16 and 2 Kings 25.1–22. Its historical mode of narration lacks dialogue, motive, emotion, or theological commentary. Only later does Nebuzaradan, the head of Babylon's special guard, provide an explanation of the national disaster, which in effect vindicates Jeremiah's contested message (40.2–3). Verses 4–13 are not attested in the LXX. **1–2:** *The ninth year . . . the eleventh year*, the siege of Jerusalem began in January 587 and lasted until July 586 BCE when the walls were breached. **3:** *Rabsaris*, and *Rabmag* are titles of Babylonian officials. *Sat in the middle gate*, on dispensing justice in the gate as a sign of foreign conquest, see 1.15; 43.10. **4:** *Arabah*, the rift valley of the Jordan River and Dead Sea, which continues southward to the Gulf



Chs 39, 52: Babylon and Judah in the early sixth century BCE.

and all the soldiers saw them, they fled, going out of the city at night by way of the king's garden through the gate between the two walls; and they went toward the Arabah. [5] But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and when they had taken him, they brought him up to King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, at Riblah, in the land of Hamath; and he passed sentence on him. [6] The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah at Riblah before his eyes; also the king of Babylon slaughtered all the nobles of Judah. [7] He put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters to take him to Babylon. [8] The Chaldeans burned the king's house and the houses of the people, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. [9] Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard exiled to Babylon the rest of the people who were left in the city, those who had deserted to him, and the people who remained. [10] Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left in the land of Judah some of the poor people who owned nothing, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

[11] King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon gave command concerning Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, saying, [12] "Take him, look after him well and do him no harm, but deal with him as he may ask you." [13] So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, Nebushazban the Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer the Rabmag, and all the chief officers of the king of Babylon sent [14] and took Jeremiah from the court of the guard. They entrusted him to Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan to be brought home. So he stayed with his own people.

[15] The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah while he was confined in the court of the guard: [16] Go and say to Ebed-melech the

of Aqaba/Eilat. **5:** *Riblah*, about 70 mi (110 km) north of Damascus, had earlier served as the Egyptian provincial capital (2 Kings 23.33), and was where the Babylonian governorship likewise was temporarily established. According to 52.6–13 and 2 Kings 25.3–9, there was a one-month lag between the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem and the sacking of the city. **8:** No mention is made of the destruction of the Temple; cf. 52.13. **9:** According to 52.29, the Babylonians deported a total of eight hundred thirty-two persons in this second deportation; cf. 52.15–16; 2 Kings 25.11–12. **14:** Because Gedaliah was a member of the pro-Babylonian party, from the family of Shaphan (see 26.24n.; 36.10), Nebuchadrezzar appointed him to serve as "governor" of the new Babylonian province (40.5).

Ethiopian:[a] Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to fulfill my words against this city for evil and not for good, and they shall be accomplished in your presence on that day. [17] But I will save you on that day, says the LORD, and you shall not be handed over to those whom you dread. [18] For I will surely save you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but you shall have your life as a prize of war, because you have trusted in me, says the LORD.

40 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he took him bound in fetters along with all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon. [2] The captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, "The LORD your God threatened this place with this disaster; [3] and now the LORD has brought it about, and has done as he said, because all of you sinned against the LORD and did not obey his voice. Therefore this thing has come upon you. [4] Now look, I have just released you today from the fetters on your hands. If you wish to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will take good care of you; but if you do not wish to come with me to Babylon, you need not come. See, the whole land is before you; go wherever you think it good and right to go. [5] If you remain,[b] then return to Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon appointed governor of the towns of Judah, and stay with him among the people; or go wherever you think it right to go." So the captain of the guard gave him an allowance of food and a present, and let him go. [6] Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah, and stayed with him among the people who were left in the land.

[7] When all the leaders of the forces in the open country and their troops heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed to him men, women, and children, those of the poorest of the land who had not been taken into exile to Babylon, [8] they went to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, Jezaniah son of the Maacathite, they and their troops.

[a] Or *Nubian*; Heb *Cushite*
[b] Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

15–18: An oracle assuring *Ebed-melech* (see 38.7–13) deliverance on account of his trust in God. **17:** *I will save you*, cf. 15.21; 46.5.

40.1–43.13: Political crisis results in the flight of Judeans to Egypt. Following the destruction of Jerusalem, the territorial governorship under Gedaliah was established in Mizpah, the site associated with the ancient judgeship of Samuel (1 Sam 7.16), between Jerusalem and Bethel. An attempted insurrection led by a member of the royal family, Ishmael son of Nethaniah (41.1), led to the assassination of Gedaliah and a debate by the Judeans who were left as to whether their future lay in staying in Judah or in flight to Egypt to avoid certain Babylonian repercussions. Against the advice of Jeremiah, the decision is made to flee to Egypt.

40.1–6: This account is likely an embellishment of the previous story of Jeremiah's release (39.11–14). Though the opening of the speech of the captain of the guard (vv. 2–4) contains Deuteronomistic rhetoric (the phrases *the LORD your God, as he said, sinned against the LORD, did not obey his voice* occur in Deuteronomy), victorious kings in fact did claim the support of the deity of the conquered territory. **1:** *Ramah* (see 31.15n.) was a transit point for deportees. Jeremiah was allowed to choose exile or residence in Judah. Choosing the latter, he was placed in the custody of Gedaliah, the newly appointed governor of Judah with whose family Jeremiah had long been friendly (26.24n.; 36.10).

40.7–41.18: Gedaliah's governorship and his assassination. 40.7–12: At this juncture the narrator focuses on the establishment of a provisional government in Judah, which is now little more than a small province of the Babylonian empire. Gedaliah governs this postwar community in *Mizpah*, modern Tell en-Naṣbeh, ca. 7.5 mi (12 km) northwest of Jerusalem. **7–10:** Unlike Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, *Gedaliah* is portrayed as a benevolent leader who is responsive to the needs of the people. For their pledge of loyalty to Babylonian rule, he offers amnesty to

9 Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan
swore to them and their troops, saying, "Do
not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Stay
in the land and serve the king of Babylon,
and it shall go well with you. 10 As for me,
I am staying at Mizpah to represent you
before the Chaldeans who come to us; but
as for you, gather wine and summer fruits
and oil, and store them in your vessels, and
live in the towns that you have taken over."
11 Likewise, when all the Judeans who were
in Moab and among the Ammonites and in
Edom and in other lands heard that the king
of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and
had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam son
of Shaphan as governor over them, 12 then
all the Judeans returned from all the places
to which they had been scattered and came
to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah;
and they gathered wine and summer fruits in
great abundance.

13 Now Johanan son of Kareah and all the
leaders of the forces in the open country
came to Gedaliah at Mizpah 14 and said to
him, "Are you at all aware that Baalis king
of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of
Nethaniah to take your life?" But Gedaliah
son of Ahikam would not believe them.
15 Then Johanan son of Kareah spoke secretly
to Gedaliah at Mizpah, "Please let me go and
kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah, and no one
else will know. Why should he take your
life, so that all the Judeans who are gathered
around you would be scattered, and the rem-
nant of Judah would perish?" 16 But Gedaliah
son of Ahikam said to Johanan son of Kareah,
"Do not do such a thing, for you are telling a
lie about Ishmael."

41 In the seventh month, Ishmael son
of Nethaniah son of Elishama, of the
royal family, one of the chief officers of the
king, came with ten men to Gedaliah son
of Ahikam, at Mizpah. As they ate bread
together there at Mizpah, 2 Ishmael son of
Nethaniah and the ten men with him got up
and struck down Gedaliah son of Ahikam son
of Shaphan with the sword and killed him,
because the king of Babylon had appointed
him governor in the land. 3 Ishmael also killed
all the Judeans who were with Gedaliah at
Mizpah, and the Chaldean soldiers who hap-
pened to be there.

4 On the day after the murder of Gedaliah,
before anyone knew of it, 5 eighty men ar-
rived from Shechem and Shiloh and Samaria,
with their beards shaved and their clothes
torn, and their bodies gashed, bringing grain
offerings and incense to present at the temple
of the LORD. 6 And Ishmael son of Nethaniah
came out from Mizpah to meet them, weep-
ing as he came. As he met them, he said to
them, "Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam."
7 When they reached the middle of the city,
Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the men with
him slaughtered them, and threw them[a] into
a cistern. 8 But there were ten men among
them who said to Ishmael, "Do not kill us,
for we have stores of wheat, barley, oil, and
honey hidden in the fields." So he refrained,
and did not kill them along with their com-
panions.

9 Now the cistern into which Ishmael had
thrown all the bodies of the men whom he
had struck down was the large cistern[b] that
King Asa had made for defense against King
Baasha of Israel; Ishmael son of Nethaniah
filled that cistern with those whom he had
killed. 10 Then Ishmael took captive all the
rest of the people who were in Mizpah, the
king's daughters and all the people who were

[a] Syr: Heb lacks *and threw them*; compare verse 9
[b] Gk: Heb *whom he had killed by the hand of Gedaliah*

Judean nationalists. **9:** *Serve the king of Babylon,* see also 27.12,17. **14:** The Ammonites, when not fighting Israel, were often their allies against larger imperial powers. *Baalis* of Ammon supported a nationalistic revolution in Judah led by *Ishmael*, a member of the royal family, but *Gedaliah* refused to heed the warnings for his safety. **41:1–2:** Ishmael's royal ancestry juxtaposed with Gedaliah's pro-Babylonian loyalties (v. 2) suggests that the violence is politically motivated. *As they ate bread . . .*, Ishamel violates ancient rules of hospitality and table fellowship. **3:** *Chaldean*, Babylonian. **5:** Eighty pilgrims from the north going to Jerusalem, likely to commemorate the day of atonement. Since animal sacrifice was suspended, they brought what might be appropriate for the occasion. **6:** To lure them to their deaths, Ishmael feigns mourning. **9:** On the building projects of King Asa of Judah (908–867 BCE) in conjunction with his war against King Baasha of Israel (906–883 BCE), including those

left at Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, had committed to Gedaliah son of Ahikam. Ishmael son of Nethaniah took them captive and set out to cross over to the Ammonites.

11 But when Johanan son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him heard of all the crimes that Ishmael son of Nethaniah had done, 12 they took all their men and went to fight against Ishmael son of Nethaniah. They came upon him at the great pool that is in Gibeon. 13 And when all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him, they were glad. 14 So all the people whom Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah turned around and came back, and went to Johanan son of Kareah. 15 But Ishmael son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. 16 Then Johanan son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him took all the rest of the people whom Ishmael son of Nethaniah had carried away captive[a] from Mizpah after he had slain Gedaliah son of Ahikam—soldiers, women, children, and eunuchs, whom Johanan brought back from Gibeon.[b] 17 And they set out, and stopped at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem, intending to go to Egypt 18 because of the Chaldeans; for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael son of Nethaniah had killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

42 Then all the commanders of the forces, and Johanan son of Kareah and Azariah[c] son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest, approached 2 the prophet Jeremiah and said, "Be good enough to listen to our plea, and pray to the LORD your God for us—for all this remnant. For there are only a few of us left out of many, as your eyes can see. 3 Let the LORD your God show us where we should go and what we should do." 4 The prophet Jeremiah said to them, "Very well: I am going to pray to the LORD your God as you request, and whatever the LORD answers you I will tell you; I will keep nothing back from you." 5 They in their turn said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act according to everything that the LORD your God sends us through you. 6 Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, in order that it may go well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God."

7 At the end of ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah. 8 Then he summoned Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces who were with him, and all the people from the least to the greatest, 9 and said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your plea before him: 10 If you will only remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I am sorry for the disaster that I

[a] Cn: Heb *whom he recovered from Ishmael son of Nethaniah*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Gk: Heb *Jezaniah*

at Mizpah, see 1 Kings 15.16–22; Asa's construction of a *large cistern* is not mentioned elsewhere. **12:** *The great pool . . . in Gibeon,* ca. 3 mi (5 km) southwest of Mizpah; see 2 Sam 2.13. **17:** *Geruth Chimham,* perhaps meaning "fief of Chimham," referring to property given to Barzillai's son Chimham (see 2 Sam 19.37–40); precise location unknown. This encampment *near Bethlehem* indicates that the Johanan group was already moving south, which sets the stage for its journey to Egypt.

42.1–44.30: Flight to Egypt. The final episodes of the Baruch narrative focus on the failure of Johanan to heed the prophetic word proclaimed by Jeremiah; his departure to Egypt, taking with him the surviving Judeans, including Jeremiah and Baruch (42.1–43.7); and Jeremiah's denunciation of the community in Egypt for its idolatry and disobedience to the prophetic word (43.8–44.30). The two episodes make a case that the Judeans who reside in Egypt have forfeited their stake in the land and their future as God's people. Such accusations support the interests of the Judeans residing in Babylon who later receive support from the Persian government to rebuild Jerusalem.

42.1–22: The remnant under the leadership of Johanan asks Jeremiah for divine guidance regarding their plan to go to Egypt. As in earlier times, Egypt was a place of refuge for those fleeing Judah for one reason or another; see 26.21; Gen 12.10; 46.6; 1 Kings 11.40. **1:** *Azariah,* MT reads "Jezaniah," but see textual note *c* and cf. 43.2. **10:** Cf. 1.10.

have brought upon you. 11 Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, as you have been; do not be afraid of him, says the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to rescue you from his hand. 12 I will grant you mercy, and he will have mercy on you and restore you to your native soil. 13 But if you continue to say, 'We will not stay in this land,' thus disobeying the voice of the LORD your God 14 and saying, 'No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or be hungry for bread, and there we will stay,' 15 then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you are determined to enter Egypt and go to settle there, 16 then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there, in the land of Egypt; and the famine that you dread shall follow close after you into Egypt; and there you shall die. 17 All the people who have determined to go to Egypt to settle there shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; they shall have no remnant or survivor from the disaster that I am bringing upon them.

18 "For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Just as my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You shall become an object of execration and horror, of cursing and ridicule. You shall see this place no more. 19 The LORD has said to you, O remnant of Judah, Do not go to Egypt. Be well aware that I have warned you today 20 that you have made a fatal mistake. For you yourselves sent me to the LORD your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the LORD our God, and whatever the LORD our God says, tell us and we will do it.' 21 So I have told you today, but you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God in anything that he sent me to tell you. 22 Be well aware, then, that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go and settle."

43 When Jeremiah finished speaking to all the people all these words of the LORD their God, with which the LORD their God had sent him to them, 2 Azariah son of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the other insolent men said to Jeremiah, "You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you to say, 'Do not go to Egypt to settle there'; 3 but Baruch son of Neriah is inciting you against us, to hand us over to the Chaldeans, in order that they may kill us or take us into exile in Babylon." 4 So Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces and all the people did not obey the voice of the LORD, to stay in the land of Judah. 5 But Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to settle in the land of Judah from all the nations to which they had been driven— 6 the men, the women, the children, the princesses, and everyone whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan; also the prophet Jeremiah and Baruch son of Neriah. 7 And they came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the LORD. And they arrived at Tahpanhes.

16–17: *Sword, famine, pestilence,* see 14.12n. **21–22:** Jeremiah concludes his address by anticipating the community's disastrous response.

43:1–13: The flight to Tahpanhes and Jeremiah's oracle. The leaders dismiss Jeremiah's oracles as a "lie," suggesting that he is colluding with Baruch for their destruction. This insinuates a role for Baruch otherwise left unexplored in the book. The fears of Babylonian reprisal may not have been overdrawn, since 52.30 indicates that five years following the destruction of Jerusalem, there was a third deportation of Judeans, perhaps in response to political crises such as that of the assassination of Gedaliah. **2:** *A lie*, cf. 8.8; 14.14; 27.10; 40.16. Using Jeremiah's own way of accusing false prophets against him, they claim that God has not sent him; see also 28.15; 29.8–9. **4:** The narrative collapses a range of complex issues and intense political rivalries into one unambiguous statement: the Johanan group *did not obey the voice of the LORD* (repeated in v. 7). **6:** *Nebuzaradan*, see 39.11–14; 40.1–6. **7:** The Johanan group's culpability is exacerbated when they take Jeremiah and Baruch as hostages to *Tahpanhes*, an Egyptian border fortress in the eastern Nile Delta (modern Tell Defenneh); see 2.16. There were Judean refugee settlements in many areas of Egypt (see 44.1), especially at the military garrison of Elephantine in the upper Nile. **8–13:** Jeremiah's first prophetic message in Egypt, sometime after 582 BCE, is a

[8] Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes: [9] Take some large stones in your hands, and bury them in the clay pavement[a] that is at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes. Let the Judeans see you do it, [10] and say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to send and take my servant King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and he[b] will set his throne above these stones that I have buried, and he will spread his royal canopy over them. [11] He shall come and ravage the land of Egypt, giving

those who are destined for pestilence, to pestilence,
and those who are destined for captivity, to captivity,
and those who are destined for the sword, to the sword.

[12] He[c] shall kindle a fire in the temples of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them and carry them away captive; and he shall pick clean the land of Egypt, as a shepherd picks his cloak clean of vermin; and he shall depart from there safely. [13] He shall break the obelisks of Heliopolis, which is in the land of Egypt; and the temples of the gods of Egypt he shall burn with fire.

44 The word that came to Jeremiah for all the Judeans living in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros, [2] Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You yourselves have seen all the disaster that I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the towns of Judah. Look at them; today they are a desolation, without an inhabitant in them, [3] because of the wickedness that they committed, provoking me to anger, in that they went to make offerings and serve other gods that they had not known, neither they, nor you, nor your ancestors. [4] Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, "I beg you not to do this abominable thing that I hate!" [5] But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their wickedness and make no offerings to other gods. [6] So my wrath and my anger were poured out and kindled in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they became a waste and a desolation, as they still are today. [7] And now

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *I*
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *I*

symbolic act in front of the royal palace in *Tahpanhes*. **9–10:** A prophetic sign-act indicating Babylonian control over Egypt, perhaps an allusion to Babylon's successful attack in 568 BCE. On setting up the royal throne at the gate, see 39.3. **10:** *My servant*, see 25.9n. **11:** See 15.2 for a similar judgment oracle against those presumably residing in Jerusalem. **12:** *Pick clean*, the Hebrew suggests a shepherd wrapping himself in a garment (see 1 Sam 28.14; Ps 109.19), but the LXX understood it to refer to removing lice (so NRSV). The verb can mean "to grasp tightly" (Isa 22.17). **13:** *Obelisks of Heliopolis*, lit., "the stone pillars of Beth-shemesh," but "Beth-shemesh" means "house of the sun." Heliopolis (Gk for "city of the sun"), also called "On" (Gen 41.45,50; 46.20), was a city ca. 6 mi (10 km) northeast of modern Cairo with a temple for the worship of the sun.

44.1–30: Dispute over disaster and divine purpose. A final oracle against the Judean refugee communities in Egypt (cf. ch 43), in the context of a confrontation concerning why Judah has experienced the present crisis. In standard Deuteronomistic language, Jeremiah associates the disaster with the people's faithlessness toward God (vv. 2–10). He meets popular resistance from those who insist that the disaster has come precisely because they had discontinued their syncretistic ritual practices, especially that of the adoration of and homage paid to the goddess known as the "queen of heaven," probably Astarte, variously known as Ishtar in Babylon and Ashtart in Canaan (vv. 15–19). The insinuation is that the reform movement of Josiah, with its restriction of worship to the Jerusalem Temple and its purging of the land of all syncretistic and foreign worship elements, was the cause of offense. Jeremiah's Deuteronomistic argument brackets that of the people, because it represents the fundamental theological principle of the book as prepared by its Deuteronomistic editors. **1:** Expands the focus far beyond the Judean community in Tahpahnes (43.1–13). *Migdol*, like *Tahpanhes*, lay in the eastern Nile Delta and was associated with the Exodus (Ex 14.2). It was apparently the closest Egyptian garrison to Judah (Ezek 29.10). *Memphis*, ca. 3 mi (21 km) south of modern Cairo, the ancient imperial capital located at the head of the Nile Delta; see 2.16. *Pathros*, a designation for upper (i.e., southern) Egypt, listed alongside and parallel to Egypt in several lists (e.g., Isa 11.11); on the Judean colony at Elephantine in upper Egypt, see 43.7n. The three Judean settlements in Egypt suggest the passage of time. **4:** See 7.25n.

thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel: Why are you doing such great harm to yourselves, to cut off man and woman, child and infant, from the midst of Judah, leaving yourselves without a remnant? 8 Why do you provoke me to anger with the works of your hands, making offerings to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have come to settle? Will you be cut off and become an object of cursing and ridicule among all the nations of the earth? 9 Have you forgotten the crimes of your ancestors, of the kings of Judah, of their[a] wives, your own crimes and those of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10 They have shown no contrition or fear to this day, nor have they walked in my law and my statutes that I set before you and before your ancestors.

11 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am determined to bring disaster on you, to bring all Judah to an end. 12 I will take the remnant of Judah who are determined to come to the land of Egypt to settle, and they shall perish, everyone; in the land of Egypt they shall fall; by the sword and by famine they shall perish; from the least to the greatest, they shall die by the sword and by famine; and they shall become an object of execration and horror, of cursing and ridicule. 13 I will punish those who live in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, 14 so that none of the remnant of Judah who have come to settle in the land of Egypt shall escape or survive or return to the land of Judah. Although they long to go back to live there, they shall not go back, except some fugitives.

15 Then all the men who were aware that their wives had been making offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah: 16 "As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we are not going to listen to you. 17 Instead, we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out libations to her, just as we and our ancestors, our kings and our officials, used to do in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. We used to have plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no misfortune. 18 But from the time we stopped making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her, we have lacked everything and have perished by the sword and by famine." 19 And the women said,[b] "Indeed we will go on making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her; do you think that we made cakes for her, marked with her image, and poured out libations to her without our husbands' being involved?"

20 Then Jeremiah said to all the people, men and women, all the people who were giving him this answer: 21 "As for the offerings that you made in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your ancestors, your kings and your officials, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them? Did it not come into his mind? 22 The LORD could no longer bear the sight of your evil doings, the abominations that you committed; therefore your land became a desolation and a waste and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is to this day. 23 It is because you burned offerings, and because you sinned against the LORD and did not obey the voice of the LORD or walk in his law and in his statutes and in his decrees, that this disaster has befallen you, as is still evident today."

24 Jeremiah said to all the people and all the women, "Hear the word of the LORD, all you Judeans who are in the land of Egypt, 25 Thus

[a] Heb *his*
[b] Compare Syr: Heb lacks *And the women said*

9: *Their wives*, lit., "his wives," perhaps referring to Solomon (1 Kings 11.1–13), whose wives led him to apostasy and the schism of the empire. **15:** It is strange that Jeremiah, who apparently settled as a hostage in Tahpanhes, is here addressed by Judeans residing in upper Egypt. **17:** The worship of the *queen of heaven* was popular throughout the ancient world, including popular religious expression in Israel. Her worship included the making of raisin cakes, expressive of prayers for fertility (v. 19). This goddess represented the evening-star phase of the planet Venus, while in Canaan her brother, Ashtar, represented the morning-star phase (see Isa 14.12–15); see also 7.18n. *Have plenty of food . . . prospered . . . saw no misfortune*, the claim that all was well when worshiping

says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You and your wives have accomplished in deeds what you declared in words, saying, 'We are determined to perform the vows that we have made, to make offerings to the queen of heaven and to pour out libations to her.' By all means, keep your vows and make your libations! 26 Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all you Judeans who live in the land of Egypt: Lo, I swear by my great name, says the LORD, that my name shall no longer be pronounced on the lips of any of the people of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, 'As the Lord GOD lives.' 27 I am going to watch over them for harm and not for good; all the people of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall perish by the sword and by famine, until not one is left. 28 And those who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah, few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, who have come to the land of Egypt to settle, shall know whose words will stand, mine or theirs! 29 This shall be the sign to you, says the LORD, that I am going to punish you in this place, in order that you may know that my words against you will surely be carried out: 30 Thus says the LORD, I am going to give Pharaoh Hophra, king of Egypt, into the hands of his enemies, those who seek his life, just as I gave King Zedekiah of Judah into the hand of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, his enemy who sought his life."

45 The word that the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Baruch son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah: 2 Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: 3 You said, "Woe is me! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest." 4 Thus you shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: I am going to break down what I have built, and pluck up what I have planted—that is, the whole land. 5 And you, do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for I am going to bring disaster upon all flesh, says the LORD; but I will give you your life as a prize of war in every place to which you may go."

46 The word of the LORD that came to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the nations.

2 Concerning Egypt, about the army of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, which was by

the queen of heaven may refer to the period before the reform of King Josiah (2 Kings 22–23). **27:** *Watch over them for harm*, this last oracle addressed to the people ironically echoes language with which the book began (1.11–12). **29–30:** *Pharaoh Hophra,* also known as Apries (589–570 BCE), a long-standing enemy of Nebuchadrezzar, was deposed by Amasis (569–526 BCE).

45.1–5: Words of promise to Baruch. This third and final cycle of oracles concludes, as did the first two, by recollecting the scroll of 605 BCE (see 36.4–6,27–32). Using the central code language of the book, a final negative judgment is given: building yields to breaking down and planting yields to plucking up (see 1.10; etc.). But Baruch is reassured of his own survival. **1:** *The fourth year of King Jehoiakim* **(605** BCE, the year of Nebuchadrezzar's ascension to the throne), **connects this individual oracle to chs 25 and 36.** All three chapters allude to the dismantling of the Judean state and the transition of oral prophecy to written or scribal prophecy, in which Baruch would play a central role. **5:** *Prize of war*, **see 21.9; 38.2; 39.18.**

46.1–51.64 Oracles against the nations. Jeremiah's role as "a prophet to the nations" (1.5) is most clearly realized in this final section of the book, commonly referred to as the oracles against the nations (OAN). Collections of oracles against foreign nations are frequent in the prophetic literature (see, e.g., Am 1–2; Isa 13–23; Ezek 25–23). These oracles may preserve one of the early functions of prophecy as "war prophecy": undermining the strength of the enemy with curses and psychologically fortifying troops for victory. The placement of these oracles is a major difference between the Hebrew (MT) and the Greek (LXX) traditions of the book of Jeremiah, with the latter locating these oracles within the context of ch 25. In the MT, Jeremiah's oracles of judgment are directed against Egypt (46.2–28), Israel's first nemesis, Philistia (47.1–7), Moab (48.1–47), Ammon (49.1–6), Edom (49.7–22), Damascus (49.23–27), Kedar and Hazor (49.28–33), Elam (49.34–39), and culminate in a lengthy diatribe against Babylon, Israel/Judah's then present oppressor (50.1–51.64). This particular organization and placement of the OAN at the end of the book in the MT emphasizes the defeat of Israel's oppressors and the promise of hope for Judean exiles in Babylonia.

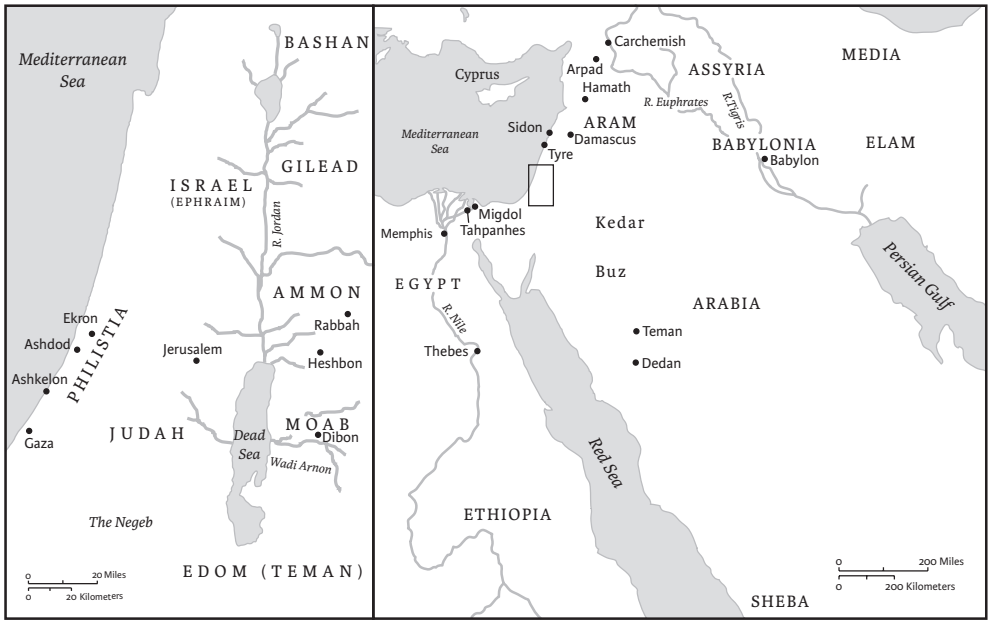
the river Euphrates at Carchemish and which
King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon defeated
in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of
Josiah of Judah:
[3] Prepare buckler and shield,
and advance for battle!
[4] Harness the horses;
mount the steeds!
Take your stations with your helmets,
whet your lances,
put on your coats of mail!
[5] Why do I see them terrified?
They have fallen back;
their warriors are beaten down,
and have fled in haste.
They do not look back—
terror is all around!
says the LORD.
[6] The swift cannot flee away,
nor can the warrior escape;
in the north by the river Euphrates
they have stumbled and fallen.

[7] Who is this, rising like the Nile,
like rivers whose waters surge?
[8] Egypt rises like the Nile,
like rivers whose waters surge.
It said, Let me rise, let me cover the earth,
let me destroy cities and their
inhabitants.
[9] Advance, O horses,
and dash madly, O chariots!
Let the warriors go forth:
Ethiopia[a] and Put who carry the shield,
the Ludim, who draw[b] the bow.
[10] That day is the day of the Lord GOD of
hosts,
a day of retribution,
to gain vindication from his foes.
The sword shall devour and be sated,
and drink its fill of their blood.
For the Lord GOD of hosts holds a sacrifice
in the land of the north by the river
Euphrates.
[11] Go up to Gilead, and take balm,
O virgin daughter Egypt!
In vain you have used many medicines;
there is no healing for you.
[12] The nations have heard of your shame,
and the earth is full of your cry;
for warrior has stumbled against warrior;
both have fallen together.

[13] The word that the LORD spoke to the
prophet Jeremiah about the coming of King
Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon to attack the land
of Egypt:
[14] Declare in Egypt, and proclaim in
Migdol;
proclaim in Memphis and Tahpanhes;
Say, "Take your stations and be ready,
for the sword shall devour those around
you."
[15] Why has Apis fled?[c]
Why did your bull not stand?
—because the LORD thrust him down.
[16] Your multitude stumbled[d] and fell,
and one said to another,[e]

[a] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
[b] Cn: Heb *who grasp, who draw*
[c] Gk: Heb *Why was it swept away*
[d] Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Gk: Heb *and fell one to another and they said*

46.1–28: Against Egypt, two oracles. The first oracle (vv. 3–12) is set in the context of Babylon's defeat of Egypt in 605 BCE at Carchemish on the Euphrates, solidifying Babylonian control over the Levant; cf. 25.1; 36.1; 45.1. The second oracle (vv. 13–28) is set in the context of the later invasion of Egypt by the Babylonian army (cf. 43.9–13). **1:** An introduction to the OAN as a whole. **2:** *Pharaoh Neco* II, ca. 610–595 BCE. **3:** *Buckler . . . shield*, two different sizes of shields: the first smaller and the second covering the entire body. The unusual poetic meter of these verses mimics the sound of marching armies (cf. Nah 2.1–9). **5:** *Terror is all around*, language celebrating the Egyptian defeat; see 6.25n. **7–8:** Egypt's hubris and politics of domination is ridiculed in light of its present plight: like the annual flooding of the Nile, Egypt's pretensions rose above manageable levels. **9:** *Put,* location uncertain; perhaps Libya. *Ludim,* Lydians, a people in west-central Asia Minor; see Gen 10.6,13; Ezek 27.10. **11:** *Gilead . . . balm*, see 8.22n. **13:** A brief note relates the oracle to Nebuchadrezzar's assault on Egypt, perhaps in 588 BCE. **14:** *Migdol . . . Memphis . . . Tahpanhes*, see 44.1n. **15:** *Why has Apis fled*, following the Greek text, underlying which is a different word division; MT reads "Why is it fallen?" The LXX reads *Apis*, a *bull* deity worshiped in Memphis and the subject of elaborate sacrificial and burial rituals. The flight of Apis represents the retreat of the imperial Egyptian armies. **16–24:** Mighty Egypt, the nation that once enslaved the Hebrew



Chs 46–51: Places mentioned in the oracles against foreign nations.

"Come, let us go back to our own people
and to the land of our birth,
because of the destroying sword."
17 Give Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the name
"Braggart who missed his chance."

18 As I live, says the King,
whose name is the LORD of hosts,
one is coming
like Tabor among the mountains,
and like Carmel by the sea.
19 Pack your bags for exile,
sheltered daughter Egypt!
For Memphis shall become a waste,
a ruin, without inhabitant.

20 A beautiful heifer is Egypt—
a gadfly from the north lights upon her.
21 Even her mercenaries in her midst
are like fatted calves;
they too have turned and fled together,
they did not stand;
for the day of their calamity has come
upon them,
the time of their punishment.

22 She makes a sound like a snake gliding
away;
for her enemies march in force,
and come against her with axes,
like those who fell trees.
23 They shall cut down her forest,
says the LORD,
though it is impenetrable,
because they are more numerous
than locusts;
they are without number.
24 Daughter Egypt shall be put to shame;
she shall be handed over to a people
from the north.

25 The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,
said: See, I am bringing punishment upon
Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh, and Egypt

people, is no match for *the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts*. The oracle is a parody on Egypt whose power arrangements are now turned on their head. **18:** *Like Tabor*, a prominent mountain in the Galilee. *Like Carmel*, a prominent mountain point protecting the seaward (west) end of the Jezreel valley. But the meaning of the Hebrew is unclear. **20:** *Gadfly from the north*, that is, Babylon. **21:** Egypt's troops have fled like their Apis bull (v. 15). **22:** The *snake gliding away* may recall an emblem on the Egyptian crown, the uraeus. **25:** *Amon*, the sun god

and her gods and her kings, upon Pharaoh and those who trust in him. [26] I will hand them over to those who seek their life, to King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and his officers. Afterward Egypt shall be inhabited as in the days of old, says the LORD.

[27] But as for you, have no fear, my servant Jacob,
and do not be dismayed, O Israel;
for I am going to save you from far away,
and your offspring from the land of their captivity.
Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease,
and no one shall make him afraid.
[28] As for you, have no fear, my servant Jacob, says the LORD,
for I am with you.
I will make an end of all the nations among which I have banished you,
but I will not make an end of you!
I will chastise you in just measure,
and I will by no means leave you unpunished.

47 The word of the LORD that came to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh attacked Gaza:

[2] Thus says the LORD:
See, waters are rising out of the north
and shall become an overflowing torrent;
they shall overflow the land and all that fills it,
the city and those who live in it.
People shall cry out,
and all the inhabitants of the land shall wail.
[3] At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his stallions,
at the clatter of his chariots, at the rumbling of their wheels,
parents do not turn back for children,
so feeble are their hands,
[4] because of the day that is coming
to destroy all the Philistines,
to cut off from Tyre and Sidon
every helper that remains.
For the LORD is destroying the Philistines,
the remnant of the coastland of Caphtor.
[5] Baldness has come upon Gaza,
Ashkelon is silenced.
O remnant of their power![a]
How long will you gash yourselves?
[6] Ah, sword of the LORD!
How long until you are quiet?
Put yourself into your scabbard,
rest and be still!
[7] How can it[b] be quiet,
when the LORD has given it an order?
Against Ashkelon and against the seashore—
there he has appointed it.

48 Concerning Moab.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:
Alas for Nebo, it is laid waste!

[a] Gk: Heb *their valley*
[b] Gk Vg: Heb *you*

whose temple was in *Thebes* in southern Egypt. **26:** *Afterward Egypt shall be inhabited*, that the oracle concludes with a brief word of promise for the restoration of Egypt is strange, but consistent with 48.47; 49.6,39. **27–28:** A doublet of 30.10–11 in the exilic language of Second Isaiah, which serves to contrast the defeat of Egypt with the liberation of Judean refugees.

47.1–7: Against Philistia. A pentapolis (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath) located on the southern Mediterranean coast, **Philistia** was a traditional rival of Israel (see, e.g., Judg 13–16; 1 Sam 4–7). **1:** A vague historical allusion which some scholars associate with Pharaoh Neco II's military campaign in 609 BCE, although other parts of the judgment oracle point to an invasion from the north, perhaps the Babylonian assault on Ashkelon in 604 BCE (vv. 5,7). **2:** Cf. Isa 8.7–8. **4:** *Tyre and Sidon*, part of Phoenicia rather than Philistia, and elsewhere are listed separately from Philistia (25.20–22; Am 1.6–10; Ezek 25.15–28.26). The Philistines were associated with the ancestral land of Caphtor (Crete, Gen 10.14; Deut 2.23; Am 9.7). Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia were later connected with incursions of Hellenic groups (Joel 3.4–6). **5:** For similar signs of lamentation, cf. 16.6; 41.5. **6–7:** *Sword of the LORD*, 12.1; 25.31; Isa 34.6.

48.1–47: Against Moab. The most extensive oracle against Moab in the Bible (see also Isa 15–16; Ezek 25.8–11; Am 2.1–3; Zeph 2.8–11; for a more positive perspective on Moab, see Ruth). Numerous voices announce the

Kiriathaim is put to shame, it is taken;
the fortress is put to shame and broken down;
2 the renown of Moab is no more.
In Heshbon they planned evil against her:
"Come, let us cut her off from being a nation!"
You also, O Madmen, shall be brought to silence;[a]
the sword shall pursue you.

3 Hark! a cry from Horonaim,
"Desolation and great destruction!"
4 "Moab is destroyed!"
her little ones cry out.
5 For at the ascent of Luhith
they go[b] up weeping bitterly;
for at the descent of Horonaim
they have heard the distressing cry of anguish.
6 Flee! Save yourselves!
Be like a wild ass[c] in the desert!

7 Surely, because you trusted in your strongholds[d] and your treasures,
you also shall be taken;
Chemosh shall go out into exile,
with his priests and his attendants.
8 The destroyer shall come upon every town,
and no town shall escape;
the valley shall perish,
and the plain shall be destroyed,
as the LORD has spoken.

9 Set aside salt for Moab,
for she will surely fall;
her towns shall become a desolation,
with no inhabitant in them.

10 Accursed is the one who is slack in doing the work of the LORD; and accursed is the one who keeps back the sword from bloodshed.

11 Moab has been at ease from his youth,
settled like wine[e] on its dregs;
he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel,
nor has he gone into exile;
therefore his flavor has remained
and his aroma is unspoiled.
12 Therefore, the time is surely coming, says the LORD, when I shall send to him decanters to decant him, and empty his vessels, and break his[f] jars in pieces. 13 Then Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.

14 How can you say, "We are heroes
and mighty warriors"?
15 The destroyer of Moab and his towns has come up,
and the choicest of his young men have gone down to slaughter,
says the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

a The place-name *Madmen* sounds like the Hebrew verb *to be silent*
b Cn: Heb *he goes*
c Gk Aquila: Heb *like Aroer*
d Gk: Heb *works*
e Heb lacks *like wine*
f Gk Aquila: Heb *their*

fall of a state whose crimes of arrogance and abuse of power had long gone unpunished. Although the poetic-prose diatribe is repetitive and jumbled, the chapter can be broken down into five parts: vv. 1–13,14–27,28–33,34–39,40–47. **1:** *Nebo*, one of the cities conquered by Israelites (Num 32.3–4). *Kiriathaim* is mentioned in the Moabite Mesha Inscription as a city rebuilt in the ninth century (see also Ezek 25.9). Although *Nebo*, *Kiriathaim*, and other Moabite cities were sometimes controlled by the Israelites (Mesha Inscription; Num 32.37), they were traditionally part of Moabite territory (Deut 32.49). **2:** *In Heshbon they planned evil*, wordplay: "plot, plan," Heb "ḥashab." *Heshbon*, Tell Hisban, ca. 12 mi (19 km) south-southwest of Amman. **3–5:** *Horonaim* and the *ascent of Luhith*, see Isa 15.15; locations uncertain. **6:** *Like a wild ass* (Heb "'aro'er") *in the desert*, a reference to the Moabite town Aroer (17.6; Deut 2.36; 2 Kings 10.33). **7:** Moab's crime is identified as reliance upon its military might (*strongholds* or "works" [see textual note *d*]) and financial systems (*treasures*). *Chemosh,* the chief Moabite god (see Num 21.29; Judg 11.24; 1 Kings 11.7). **9:** *Salt for Moab* refers to the practice of "salting" a conquered territory to destroy its soil's fertility for generations to come; see Judg 9.45. This is also a wordplay on the terms "salt" (Heb "tsits") and "fall" or "go out" (Heb "tetse'"). **10:** Probably an editorial comment. **11–12:** Uses language referring to Moab's viticulture; see vv. 32–33. **13:** *Bethel* represented religious apostasy in prophetic critique

16 The calamity of Moab is near at hand
and his doom approaches swiftly.
17 Mourn over him, all you his neighbors,
and all who know his name;
say, "How the mighty scepter is broken,
the glorious staff!"

18 Come down from glory,
and sit on the parched ground,
enthroned daughter Dibon!
For the destroyer of Moab has come up
against you;
he has destroyed your strongholds.
19 Stand by the road and watch,
you inhabitant of Aroer!
Ask the man fleeing and the woman
escaping;
say, "What has happened?"
20 Moab is put to shame, for it is broken
down;
wail and cry!
Tell it by the Arnon,
that Moab is laid waste.

21 Judgment has come upon the tableland,
upon Holon, and Jahzah, and Mephaath,
22 and Dibon, and Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim,
23 and Kiriathaim, and Beth-gamul, and Beth-
meon, 24 and Kerioth, and Bozrah, and all
the towns of the land of Moab, far and near.
25 The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is
broken, says the LORD.

26 Make him drunk, because he magnified
himself against the LORD; let Moab wallow
in his vomit; he too shall become a laughing-
stock. 27 Israel was a laughingstock for you,
though he was not caught among thieves; but
whenever you spoke of him you shook your
head!

28 Leave the towns, and live on the rock,
O inhabitants of Moab!
Be like the dove that nests
on the sides of the mouth of a gorge.
29 We have heard of the pride of Moab—
he is very proud—
of his loftiness, his pride, and his
arrogance,
and the haughtiness of his heart.
30 I myself know his insolence, says the
LORD;
his boasts are false,
his deeds are false.
31 Therefore I wail for Moab;
I cry out for all Moab;
for the people of Kir-heres I mourn.
32 More than for Jazer I weep for you,
O vine of Sibmah!
Your branches crossed over the sea,
reached as far as Jazer;[a]
upon your summer fruits and your vintage
the destroyer has fallen.
33 Gladness and joy have been taken away
from the fruitful land of Moab;
I have stopped the wine from the wine
presses;
no one treads them with shouts of joy;
the shouting is not the shout of joy.

34 Heshbon and Elealeh cry out;[b] as far
as Jahaz they utter their voice, from Zoar to
Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah. For even the
waters of Nimrim have become desolate. 35 And
I will bring to an end in Moab, says the LORD,
those who offer sacrifice at a high place and
make offerings to their gods. 36 Therefore my
heart moans for Moab like a flute, and my heart
moans like a flute for the people of Kir-heres;
for the riches they gained have perished.

37 For every head is shaved and every beard
cut off; on all the hands there are gashes, and

[a] Two Mss and Isa 16.8: MT *the sea of Jazer*
[b] Cn: Heb *From the cry of Heshbon to Elealeh*

(Hos 10.15; Am 3.14; 4.4; 5.5–6), because of the worship associated with the calf that Jeroboam installed there (1 Kings 12.26–31; 2 Kings 10.29). Bethel was also the name of a deity, and that may be implied here by the parallel with Chemosh. **18:** *Dibon*, a Moabite city near Aroer north of the Wadi Arnon (v. 20). **19:** *Aroer*, see v. 6n. **21–24:** A later prose voice drives home the comprehensive nature of the divine judgment: judgment will come upon the towns of the central plateau and Moab's fortified settlements (those that can be located are shown on color Map 6 at the end of the book); cf. Num 32.3; Isa 15.4–6. **25–26:** *Horn* and *arm*, God's wrath crushes Moab's power. **29–33:** See Isa 16.6–10. **31:** *Kir-heres*, otherwise known as Kir-hareseth (see Isa 16.7,11) is modern el-Kerak, the imposing and easily defended Moabite city 11 mi (18 km) east of the Dead Sea. **32:** *Vine of Sibmah*, see vv. 11–12n.; Isa 16.8,9. **34–36:** For the towns, see vv. 21–24n. **37:** *Shaved* heads, *cut off* beards, slashed *hands*,

on the loins sackcloth. 38 On all the housetops
of Moab and in the squares there is nothing
but lamentation; for I have broken Moab like
a vessel that no one wants, says the LORD.
39 How it is broken! How they wail! How
Moab has turned his back in shame! So Moab
has become a derision and a horror to all his
neighbors.
40 For thus says the LORD:
Look, he shall swoop down like an eagle,
and spread his wings against Moab;
41 the towns[a] shall be taken
and the strongholds seized.
The hearts of the warriors of Moab, on
that day,
shall be like the heart of a woman in
labor.
42 Moab shall be destroyed as a people,
because he magnified himself against
the LORD.
43 Terror, pit, and trap
are before you, O inhabitants of Moab!
says the LORD.
44 Everyone who flees from the terror
shall fall into the pit,
and everyone who climbs out of the pit
shall be caught in the trap.
For I will bring these things[b] upon Moab
in the year of their punishment,
says the LORD.

45 In the shadow of Heshbon
fugitives stop exhausted;
for a fire has gone out from Heshbon,
a flame from the house of Sihon;
it has destroyed the forehead of Moab,
the scalp of the people of tumult.[c]
46 Woe to you, O Moab!
The people of Chemosh have perished,
for your sons have been taken captive,
and your daughters into captivity.
47 Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab
in the latter days, says the LORD.
Thus far is the judgment on Moab.

49 Concerning the Ammonites.

Thus says the LORD:
Has Israel no sons?
Has he no heir?
Why then has Milcom dispossessed Gad,
and his people settled in its towns?
2 Therefore, the time is surely coming,
says the LORD,
when I will sound the battle alarm
against Rabbah of the Ammonites;
it shall become a desolate mound,
and its villages shall be burned with
fire;
then Israel shall dispossess those who
dispossessed him,
says the LORD.

3 Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai is laid waste!
Cry out, O daughters[d] of Rabbah!
Put on sackcloth,
lament, and slash yourselves with
whips![e]
For Milcom shall go into exile,
with his priests and his attendants.

[a] Or *Kerioth*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *bring upon it*
[c] Or *of Shaon*
[d] Or *villages*
[e] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

and *sackcloth* are all conventional forms of mourning; cf. 41.5 and 49.3. **42:** *He magnified himself against the LORD*, Moab's crime is its arrogance. **45–46:** See Num 21.26–30. *Sihon*, the legendary Amorite king of Heshbon. **47:** Moab's fortunes will be restored, as will those of Ammon (49.6) and Elam (49.39).

49.1–6: Against Ammon. Located in Transjordan north of Moab, long-time rival Ammon is accused of confiscating Israelite territory as if Israel had no heirs; see also Am 1.13–15. The oracle against Ammon follows that of Moab, as the two are connected in tradition; see Gen 19.30–38; Deut 23.3. Both had recently been used by the Babylonians as proxies in the effort to subdue Judah (2 Kings 24.2). The oracle does not mention Ammon's complicity in the overthrow of Gedaliah's post-587 government (40.13–41.3). Instead, it condemns the unauthorized seizure of Gad under the auspices of its national god Milcom. **1:** *Milcom . . . Gad*, as the east-Jordanian tribe of Reuben tried to establish itself in territory claimed by Moab, so the east-Jordanian tribe of Gad was in competition with the Ammonites, whose national god was Milcom (1 Kings 11.5,33) and who eventually became independent of Israel, thereby claiming their own territory (2 Kings 15.29). **3:** Reference to several major Ammonite towns, including *Heshbon*, the old Amorite city of Sihon (see 48.2n.; Num 21.21–24) and the capital,

[4] Why do you boast in your strength?
Your strength is ebbing,
O faithless daughter.
You trusted in your treasures, saying,
"Who will attack me?"
[5] I am going to bring terror upon you,
says the Lord GOD of hosts,
from all your neighbors,
and you will be scattered, each
headlong,
with no one to gather the fugitives.
[6] But afterward I will restore the fortunes
of the Ammonites, says the LORD.

[7] Concerning Edom.

Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Is there no longer wisdom in Teman?
Has counsel perished from the
prudent?
Has their wisdom vanished?
[8] Flee, turn back, get down low,
inhabitants of Dedan!
For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon
him,
the time when I punish him.
[9] If grape-gatherers came to you,
would they not leave gleanings?
If thieves came by night,
even they would pillage only what they
wanted.
[10] But as for me, I have stripped Esau
bare,
I have uncovered his hiding places,
and he is not able to conceal himself.
His offspring are destroyed, his kinsfolk
and his neighbors; and he is no more.
[11] Leave your orphans, I will keep them
alive;
and let your widows trust in me.
[12] For thus says the LORD: If those who
do not deserve to drink the cup still have to
drink it, shall you be the one to go unpun-
ished? You shall not go unpunished; you
must drink it. [13] For by myself I have sworn,
says the LORD, that Bozrah shall become an
object of horror and ridicule, a waste, and an
object of cursing; and all her towns shall be
perpetual wastes.
[14] I have heard tidings from the LORD,
and a messenger has been sent among
the nations:
"Gather yourselves together and come
against her,
and rise up for battle!"
[15] For I will make you least among the
nations,
despised by humankind.
[16] The terror you inspire
and the pride of your heart have
deceived you,
you who live in the clefts of the rock,[a]
who hold the height of the hill.
Although you make your nest as high as
the eagle's,
from there I will bring you down,
says the LORD.
[17] Edom shall become an object of horror;
everyone who passes by it will be horrified
and will hiss because of all its disasters. [18] As
when Sodom and Gomorrah and their neigh-
bors were overthrown, says the LORD, no one

[a] Or *of Sela*

Rabbah (2 Sam 11.1), modern Amman. *Ai* here probably does not refer to the ancient city of Ai near Bethel; the word means "ruin," and may be used here in reference to Rabbah. **6:** *Restore the fortunes*, see 48.47n.

49.7–22: Against Edom. South of Ammon and Moab, Edom was the third east-Jordanian country that competed with Israel for territory and independence. It is the target of numerous denunciations; e.g., Ps 137; Isa 34.1–17; Ezek 25.12–14; 35.1–9; Ob; Mal 1.2–5. According to Gen 25.19–34, the rivalry originated in Rebekah's womb between the twin brothers Esau/Edom and Jacob/Israel, intensified with their descendants (see Gen 36; Num 20.14–21; Ob; 1 Kings 11.14–17), and culminated in the sixth century BCE when Edom colluded with Babylon in the destruction of Jerusalem (see Ps 137.7–9; Ezek 25.12–14) and the seizure of southern parts of Judean territory (Ezek 35.1–5; 36.5; Ob 11–14). The only transgression of Edom mentioned in this oracle, however, is national hubris (v. 16). **7:** *Teman,* perhaps in northern Arabia, was associated with Esau, the ancestor of Edom (Gen 36.1,8–11,15). **8:** *Dedan,* a region in northwest Arabia associated with trade (Ezek 25.15–29. **9–10:** A variation of Ob 5–6. **12:** Cf. 25.15–29. **13:** *Bozrah*, modern Buseirah, a prominent fortified city in northern Edom, will be the target of the divine offensive (see also v. 22). **14–16:** Cf. Ob 1–4. *Clefts of the rock*, Edom was known for its mountainous and hill-top dwellings such as at Sela ("rock"). **18:** *Sodom and Gomorrah*, see 20.16n. A doublet of

shall live there, nor shall anyone settle in it.
19 Like a lion coming up from the thickets of
the Jordan against a perennial pasture, I will
suddenly chase Edom[a] away from it; and I
will appoint over it whomever I choose.[b] For
who is like me? Who can summon me? Who
is the shepherd who can stand before me?
20 Therefore hear the plan that the LORD has
made against Edom and the purposes that
he has formed against the inhabitants of Te-
man: Surely the little ones of the flock shall
be dragged away; surely their fold shall be
appalled at their fate. 21 At the sound of their
fall the earth shall tremble; the sound of their
cry shall be heard at the Red Sea.[c] 22 Look, he
shall mount up and swoop down like an ea-
gle, and spread his wings against Bozrah, and
the heart of the warriors of Edom in that day
shall be like the heart of a woman in labor.

23 Concerning Damascus.

Hamath and Arpad are confounded,
for they have heard bad news;
they melt in fear, they are troubled like the
sea[d]
that cannot be quiet.
24 Damascus has become feeble, she
turned to flee,
and panic seized her;
anguish and sorrows have taken hold of her,
as of a woman in labor.
25 How the famous city is forsaken,[e]
the joyful town![f]
26 Therefore her young men shall fall in her
squares,
and all her soldiers shall be destroyed in
that day,
says the LORD of hosts.
27 And I will kindle a fire at the wall of
Damascus,
and it shall devour the strongholds of
Ben-hadad.

28 Concerning Kedar and the kingdoms of
Hazor that King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon
defeated.

Thus says the LORD:
Rise up, advance against Kedar!
Destroy the people of the east!
29 Take their tents and their flocks,
their curtains and all their goods;
carry off their camels for yourselves,
and a cry shall go up: "Terror is all
around!"
30 Flee, wander far away, hide in deep
places,
O inhabitants of Hazor!
says the LORD.
For King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon
has made a plan against you
and formed a purpose against you.

[a] Heb *him*
[b] Or *and I will single out the choicest of his rams*: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Or *Sea of Reeds*
[d] Cn: Heb *there is trouble in the sea*
[e] Vg: Heb *is not forsaken*
[f] Syr Vg Tg: Heb *the town of my joy*

50.40, appropriate here given Edomite associations with the southern Arabah. **19:** *Lion . . . thickets of the Jordan*, see 12.5n. **21:** *Red Sea*, or "Sea of Reeds" (see textual note *c*), here probably referring to the eastern arm of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aqaba/Eilat.

49.23–27: Against Damascus, the capital of Syria (Aram), likely a designation for all of western Syria in this context. Another nemesis of Israel, especially during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE (see Isa 7.1–8.4), Syria's military clout had long waned, but 2 Kings 24.1–2 mentions bands of Syrians harassing Judah during Nebuchadrezzar's reign. **23:** On the connection of the neighboring kingdoms of *Hamath and Arpad*, see, e.g., Isa 10.9; 36.19. **27:** Cf. Am 1.4,14. *Ben-hadad*, a general allusion to kings of Aram/Syria; see, e.g., 1 Kings 15.18–20; 2 Kings 6.24; 8.7–15; 13.24–25.

49.28–33: Against Kedar and Hazor. *Kedar* is likely the designation of Arab tribes located in the desert to the southeast of Judah (see 2.10n.), who lived in unwalled villages (v. 31) and whose economy was based upon camel caravaneering (vv. 29,32). Unlike other nations featured thus far, these Arab tribes were not perennial adversaries of Israel or Judah. The oracle gives no reason for the assault against Kedar and Hazor apart from Nebuchadrezzar's "plan/purpose" against them (v. 30). **28:** In midwinter 599–598 BCE Nebuchadrezzar led a successful campaign against the Arab tribes in the eastern desert. **29:** *Terror is all around*, see 46.5n. **30:** Hazor

31 Rise up, advance against a nation at ease,
that lives secure,
says the LORD,
that has no gates or bars,
that lives alone.
32 Their camels shall become booty,
their herds of cattle a spoil.
I will scatter to every wind
those who have shaven temples,
and I will bring calamity
against them from every side,
says the LORD.
33 Hazor shall become a lair of jackals,
an everlasting waste;
no one shall live there,
nor shall anyone settle in it.

34 The word of the LORD that came to the prophet Jeremiah concerning Elam, at the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah.

35 Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am going to break the bow of Elam, the mainstay of their might; 36 and I will bring upon Elam the four winds from the four quarters of heaven; and I will scatter them to all these winds, and there shall be no nation to which the exiles from Elam shall not come. 37 I will terrify Elam before their enemies, and before those who seek their life; I will bring disaster upon them, my fierce anger, says the LORD. I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them; 38 and I will set my throne in Elam, and destroy their king and officials, says the LORD.

39 But in the latter days I will restore the fortunes of Elam, says the LORD.

50 The word that the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by the prophet Jeremiah:

2 Declare among the nations and proclaim,
set up a banner and proclaim,
do not conceal it, say:
Babylon is taken,
Bel is put to shame,
Merodach is dismayed.
Her images are put to shame,
her idols are dismayed.
3 For out of the north a nation has come up against her; it shall make her land a desolation, and no one shall live in it; both human beings and animals shall flee away.

4 In those days and in that time, says the LORD, the people of Israel shall come, they and the people of Judah together; they shall come weeping as they seek the LORD their God. 5 They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, and they shall come and join[a] themselves to the LORD by an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.

[a] Gk: Heb *toward it. Come! They shall join*

(v. 30), not to be mistaken for the city in northern Galilee (Josh 11.1), here must also refer to desert nomadic wanderers. **32:** *Shaven temples*, see 9.26n.

49.34–39: Against Elam. The unusually long introduction to this oracle suggests that it was a later addition to the collection. One of the few dated oracles, it is placed in the context of the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah following the first deportation (597 BCE). East of Babylon and north of the Persian Gulf, *Elam* represents the full geographical scope of the divine program. *Bow of Elam* (v. 35), cf. Isa 22.6. **34:** *Beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah*, 597 BCE. **36:** On the traditional division of the heavens into four quadrants, each with its wind, see Ezek 37.9; Zech 2.6; 6.5. **39:** See 48.47; 49.6.

50.1–51.58: Against Babylon. The length of the oracle against Babylon—almost half the size of the entire collection—emphasizes its importance. The cosmic assault on Judah's archenemy, whose king had previously been described as God's servant (see 25.9n.), signals the establishment of divine justice and hope for victims of the empire's repressive power.

50.1–3: Babylon's destruction is announced. 2: *Bel*, a title of Marduk, the chief deity of Babylon, related to the Canaanite title "ba'al," "lord, master" (Isa 46.1); cf. Bel 1.1–22. *Merodach*, a rendering of Marduk. The name appears in the Bible only otherwise in the royal names of the Babylonian kings, Merodach-baladan (2 Kings 20.12) and Evil-merodach (2 Kings 25.27). **3:** The nation *out of the north*, likely an allusion to Persia, which defeated Babylon in 539 BCE (see also vv. 8–9).

50.4–10: Israel and Judah restored. 8: Cf. Isa 48.20.

6 My people have been lost sheep; their
shepherds have led them astray, turning them
away on the mountains; from mountain to
hill they have gone, they have forgotten their
fold. 7 All who found them have devoured
them, and their enemies have said, "We are
not guilty, because they have sinned against
the LORD, the true pasture, the LORD, the hope
of their ancestors."

8 Flee from Babylon, and go out of the
land of the Chaldeans, and be like male goats
leading the flock. 9 For I am going to stir up
and bring against Babylon a company of
great nations from the land of the north; and
they shall array themselves against her; from
there she shall be taken. Their arrows are
like the arrows of a skilled warrior who does
not return empty-handed. 10 Chaldea shall be
plundered; all who plunder her shall be sated,
says the LORD.

11 Though you rejoice, though you exult,
O plunderers of my heritage,
though you frisk about like a heifer on the
grass,
and neigh like stallions,
12 your mother shall be utterly shamed,
and she who bore you shall be
disgraced.
Lo, she shall be the last of the nations,
a wilderness, dry land, and a desert.
13 Because of the wrath of the LORD she
shall not be inhabited,
but shall be an utter desolation;
everyone who passes by Babylon shall be
appalled
and hiss because of all her wounds.
14 Take up your positions around Babylon,
all you that bend the bow;
shoot at her, spare no arrows,
for she has sinned against the LORD.
15 Raise a shout against her from all sides,
"She has surrendered;
her bulwarks have fallen,
her walls are thrown down."
For this is the vengeance of the LORD:
take vengeance on her,
do to her as she has done.
16 Cut off from Babylon the sower,
and the wielder of the sickle in time of
harvest;
because of the destroying sword
all of them shall return to their own
people,
and all of them shall flee to their own
land.

17 Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by
lions. First the king of Assyria devoured it,
and now at the end King Nebuchadrezzar of
Babylon has gnawed its bones. 18 Therefore,
thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:
I am going to punish the king of Babylon and
his land, as I punished the king of Assyria. 19 I
will restore Israel to its pasture, and it shall
feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and on the
hills of Ephraim and in Gilead its hunger shall
be satisfied. 20 In those days and at that time,
says the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be
sought, and there shall be none; and the sins
of Judah, and none shall be found; for I will
pardon the remnant that I have spared.

21 Go up to the land of Merathaim;[a]
go up against her,
and attack the inhabitants of Pekod[b]
and utterly destroy the last of them,[c]
says the LORD;
do all that I have commanded you.
22 The noise of battle is in the land,
and great destruction!

[a] Or *of Double Rebellion*
[b] Or *of Punishment*
[c] Tg: Heb *destroy after them*

50.11–16: The LORD's vengeance against Babylon. 12: *Your mother*, i.e., Babylon. Cities are often spoken of as "mothers" to their inhabitants or surrounding villages.

50.17–20: Israel restored. 19: *Carmel,* a promontory in the western Jezreel Valley, and *Bashan* and *Gilead* in Transjordan were known for their fertility (Isa 33.9; Nah 1.4; Ezek 39.18).

50.21–32: The military assault on Babylon. 21: *Merathaim*, used only here, perhaps a derisive term for Babylon meaning "double rebellion," probably playing on the name of southern Babylon, "mat marrati," "land of the salt-marshes." *Pekod* was part of Babylonian territory or an allied territory; see Ezek 23.23; also a play on words, since Heb "paqad" commonly means to "attend to," as in punishing (vv. 18,27; see 23.2n.). *Utterly*

23 How the hammer of the whole earth
is cut down and broken!
How Babylon has become
a horror among the nations!
24 You set a snare for yourself and you were
caught, O Babylon,
but you did not know it;
you were discovered and seized,
because you challenged the LORD.
25 The LORD has opened his armory,
and brought out the weapons of his
wrath,
for the Lord GOD of hosts has a task to do
in the land of the Chaldeans.
26 Come against her from every quarter;
open her granaries;
pile her up like heaps of grain, and destroy
her utterly;
let nothing be left of her.
27 Kill all her bulls,
let them go down to the slaughter.
Alas for them, their day has come,
the time of their punishment!

28 Listen! Fugitives and refugees from the land of Babylon are coming to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, vengeance for his temple.

29 Summon archers against Babylon, all who bend the bow. Encamp all around her; let no one escape. Repay her according to her deeds; just as she has done, do to her—for she has arrogantly defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. 30 Therefore her young men shall fall in her squares, and all her soldiers shall be destroyed on that day, says the LORD.

31 I am against you, O arrogant one,
says the Lord GOD of hosts;
for your day has come,
the time when I will punish you.
32 The arrogant one shall stumble and fall,
with no one to raise him up,
and I will kindle a fire in his cities,
and it will devour everything around
him.

33 Thus says the LORD of hosts: The people of Israel are oppressed, and so too are the people of Judah; all their captors have held them fast and refuse to let them go. 34 Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.

35 A sword against the Chaldeans, says the
LORD,
and against the inhabitants of Babylon,
and against her officials and her sages!
36 A sword against the diviners,
so that they may become fools!
A sword against her warriors,
so that they may be destroyed!
37 A sword against her[a] horses and against
her[a] chariots,
and against all the foreign troops in her
midst,
so that they may become women!
A sword against all her treasures,
that they may be plundered!
38 A drought[b] against her waters,
that they may be dried up!
For it is a land of images,
and they go mad over idols.

[a] Cn: Heb *his*
[b] Another reading is *A sword*

destroy, technical language for the complete destruction/devotion of an enemy and its assets (see, e.g., Num 21.2–3; Deut 20.17; 1 Sam 15). **24:** *You set*, Heb "I set."

50.33–34: Israel's redeemer will plead her cause. The terminology is of family redemption in a legal suit (cf. Isa 47.4). *Oppressed*, *refuse to let them go*, *their Redeemer*, allusions to the Exodus.

50.35–40: Judgment against Babylon. 35–38: The sixfold sword oracle (see v. 38n.) intensifies the language of divine judgment against the empire. The poet employs imagery from the Exodus plagues against Pharaoh to imagine the defeat of Babylon; see "sages," v. 35 and Ex 7.11 ("wise men"); "horses and chariots," v. 37 and Ex 14.9,23; 15.19; and "waters," v. 38 and Ex 14.21–22). **36:** *Diviners*, but Heb suggests a derogatory term for "those who prattle on about nothing." **37:** *They may become women*, a common slander made against foreign soldiers; cf. 51.30; Isa 19.16; Nah 3.13. **38:** *Drought,* Heb "ḥoreb," wordplay with "sword," Heb "ḥereb," **40:** *Sodom and Gomorrah*, see 20.16n.

39 Therefore wild animals shall live with
hyenas in Babylon,[a] and ostriches shall
inhabit her; she shall never again be peopled,
or inhabited for all generations. 40 As when
God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and
their neighbors, says the LORD, so no one
shall live there, nor shall anyone settle in
her.

41 Look, a people is coming from the north;
a mighty nation and many kings
are stirring from the farthest parts of
the earth.
42 They wield bow and spear,
they are cruel and have no mercy.
The sound of them is like the roaring sea;
they ride upon horses,
set in array as a warrior for battle,
against you, O daughter Babylon!

43 The king of Babylon heard news of
them,
and his hands fell helpless;
anguish seized him,
pain like that of a woman in labor.

44 Like a lion coming up from the thickets
of the Jordan against a perennial pasture, I
will suddenly chase them away from her; and
I will appoint over her whomever I choose.[b]
For who is like me? Who can summon me?
Who is the shepherd who can stand before
me? 45 Therefore hear the plan that the LORD
has made against Babylon, and the purposes
that he has formed against the land of the
Chaldeans: Surely the little ones of the flock
shall be dragged away; surely their[c] fold shall
be appalled at their fate. 46 At the sound of
the capture of Babylon the earth shall trem-
ble, and her cry shall be heard among the
nations.

51 Thus says the LORD:
I am going to stir up a destructive
wind[d]
against Babylon
and against the inhabitants of Leb-
qamai;[e]
2 and I will send winnowers to Babylon,
and they shall winnow her.
They shall empty her land
when they come against her from every
side
on the day of trouble.
3 Let not the archer bend his bow,
and let him not array himself in his coat
of mail.
Do not spare her young men;
utterly destroy her entire army.
4 They shall fall down slain in the land of
the Chaldeans,
and wounded in her streets.
5 Israel and Judah have not been forsaken
by their God, the LORD of hosts,
though their land is full of guilt
before the Holy One of Israel.

6 Flee from the midst of Babylon,
save your lives, each of you!
Do not perish because of her guilt,
for this is the time of the LORD's
vengeance;
he is repaying her what is due.
7 Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD's
hand,
making all the earth drunken;

[a] Heb lacks *in Babylon*
[b] Or *and I will single out the choicest of her rams*: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Syr Gk Tg Compare 49.20: Heb lacks *their*
[d] Or *stir up the spirit of a destroyer*
[e] *Leb-qamai* is a cryptogram for *Kasdim*, Chaldea

50.41–43 The assault of the enemy from the north: A doublet of 6.22–24, although now Babylon, not Judah, is the target of the attack.

50.44–46: A quote from the oracle against Edom (49.19–21), although with Babylon as its object. *Thickets of the Jordan*, see 12.5n. *Shepherd*, a metaphor for king.

51.1–10: A wind will blow against Babylon. The poet employs the harvest motif (vv. 1–2) and language from the "ḥerem" or "ban" (vv. 3–4) to convey Babylon's wholesale destruction. The image of winnowing is used ironically to depict a destructive wind that goes far beyond simply separating grain from chaff. **1:** *Leb-qamai*, see textual note *e*; cf. 25.26n.; 51.41; the term *qamai* sounds like the word for "standing grain" (Heb "qamah") which is being winnowed, so that the *Leb-qamai* suggests "heart" of the standing grain." **7:** On God's cup of wine, see 25.15–29. Here it is Babylon herself who is God's cup. The nations drink and "go mad" (see 50.38).

the nations drank of her wine,
and so the nations went mad.
8 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and is
shattered;
wail for her!
Bring balm for her wound;
perhaps she may be healed.
9 We tried to heal Babylon,
but she could not be healed.
Forsake her, and let each of us go
to our own country;
for her judgment has reached up to heaven
and has been lifted up even to the skies.
10 The LORD has brought forth our
vindication;
come, let us declare in Zion
the work of the LORD our God.

11 Sharpen the arrows!
Fill the quivers!
The LORD has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because his purpose concerning Babylon is to destroy it, for that is the vengeance of the LORD, vengeance for his temple.
12 Raise a standard against the walls of
Babylon;
make the watch strong;
post sentinels;
prepare the ambushes;
for the LORD has both planned and done
what he spoke concerning the
inhabitants of Babylon.
13 You who live by mighty waters,
rich in treasures,
your end has come,
the thread of your life is cut.
14 The LORD of hosts has sworn by himself:
Surely I will fill you with troops like a
swarm of locusts,
and they shall raise a shout of victory
over you.

15 It is he who made the earth by his power,
who established the world by his
wisdom,
and by his understanding stretched out
the heavens.
16 When he utters his voice there is a
tumult of waters in the heavens,
and he makes the mist rise from the
ends of the earth.
He makes lightnings for the rain,
and he brings out the wind from his
storehouses.
17 Everyone is stupid and without
knowledge;
goldsmiths are all put to shame by their
idols;
for their images are false,
and there is no breath in them.
18 They are worthless, a work of delusion;
at the time of their punishment they
shall perish.
19 Not like these is the LORD,[a] the portion
of Jacob,
for he is the one who formed all things,
and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance;
the LORD of hosts is his name.

20 You are my war club, my weapon of
battle:
with you I smash nations;
with you I destroy kingdoms;
21 with you I smash the horse and its rider;
with you I smash the chariot and the
charioteer;
22 with you I smash man and woman;
with you I smash the old man and the
boy;
with you I smash the young man and the
girl;

[a] Heb lacks *the LORD*

51.11–14: The Medes attack Babylon: Cyrus was king of the empire of Media and Persia, and attacked Babylon in 539 BCE. **11:** *Stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes*, cf. 2 Chr 36.22; Ezra 1.1. **13:** *Mighty waters*, Babylon was surrounded by the Euphrates and other waterways as natural defenses. **14:** *Troops like a swarm of locusts*, cf. Joel 1.1–2.11.

51.15–19: A hymn of praise to God. A doublet of 10.12–16 appended here to contrast the power of the God of Israel with the impotence of the idols of Babylon. See also Pss 115.3–8; 135.15–18.

51.20–24: The kings of the Medes (v. 11) are God's weapon of war to be used against Babylon. The repeated term *I smash* (Heb "nippatsti") is related to the term for "war club" (Heb "mappets"), a common weapon in the ancient Near East. The poet again alludes to the Exodus to imagine the collapse of the empire: *the horse and its rider*, see Ex 15.1,19,21; *chariot and the charioteer*, see Ex 14.21–26.

23 with you I smash shepherds and their
flocks;
with you I smash farmers and their teams;
with you I smash governors and deputies.

24 I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the wrong that they have done in Zion, says the LORD.

25 I am against you, O destroying
mountain,
says the LORD,
that destroys the whole earth;
I will stretch out my hand against you,
and roll you down from the crags,
and make you a burned-out mountain.
26 No stone shall be taken from you for a
corner
and no stone for a foundation,
but you shall be a perpetual waste,
says the LORD.

27 Raise a standard in the land,
blow the trumpet among the nations;
prepare the nations for war against her,
summon against her the kingdoms,
Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz;
appoint a marshal against her,
bring up horses like bristling locusts.
28 Prepare the nations for war against her,
the kings of the Medes, with their
governors and deputies,
and every land under their dominion.
29 The land trembles and writhes,
for the LORD's purposes against Babylon
stand,
to make the land of Babylon a desolation,
without inhabitant.
30 The warriors of Babylon have given up
fighting,
they remain in their strongholds;
their strength has failed,
they have become women;
her buildings are set on fire,
her bars are broken.
31 One runner runs to meet another,
and one messenger to meet another,
to tell the king of Babylon
that his city is taken from end to end:
32 the fords have been seized,
the marshes have been burned with
fire,
and the soldiers are in panic.
33 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God
of Israel:
Daughter Babylon is like a threshing floor
at the time when it is trodden;
yet a little while
and the time of her harvest will come.

34 "King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon has
devoured me,
he has crushed me;
he has made me an empty vessel,
he has swallowed me like a monster;
he has filled his belly with my delicacies,
he has spewed me out.
35 May my torn flesh be avenged on
Babylon,"
the inhabitants of Zion shall say.
"May my blood be avenged on the
inhabitants of Chaldea,"
Jerusalem shall say.

51.25–33: Babylon is destroyed and left desolate as Babylon's famous ziggurat (artificial temple mound) will be made an extinct burned-out volcano (v. 25). Babylon has committed war crimes against the whole earth (see, e.g., 50.23), and, therefore God summons the nations to witness and participate in Babylon's subjugation **26:** After cities were destroyed, their stone blocks were often reused in the rebuilding process. Even Babylon's ruins, however, will be unfit for future use. **27–33:** *Ararat*, ancient Urartu, modern Armenia, north of Lake Van. *Minni*, Manneans living south of Lake Urmia. *Ashkenaz*, the Scythians. See Gen 8.4; 10.3. All were defeated by the Medes in the early sixth century. **27:** *Marshal*, a military official (Nah 3.17). **28:** *Prepare*, lit., "sanctify"; see 6.4–5n. **30:** *Become women*, see 50.37n.

51.34–44: God will seek vengeance against Babylon for devouring Judah. The Judean exiles, voice their own grievance against Babylon. The lawsuit genre is used for accusations of wrongdoing (e.g., 2.9; 11.20; 12.1). The indictment against Babylon and its king is for war crimes. The theme of Babylon "devouring" Judah (v. 34) recurs throughout this section. That Israel is "devoured" is a common theme (see 10.25; 30.16), but here the image is combined with the mythological image of a deity "swallowing" with a voracious appetite (v. 34; Ps 69.15; Prov 1.12) and with the polemic that Bel, the god of Babylon, has such a voracious appetite (v. 44), but will be forced

36 Therefore thus says the LORD:
I am going to defend your cause
and take vengeance for you.
I will dry up her sea
and make her fountain dry;
37 and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins,
a den of jackals,
an object of horror and of hissing,
without inhabitant.

38 Like lions they shall roar together;
they shall growl like lions' whelps.
39 When they are inflamed, I will set out their drink
and make them drunk, until they become merry
and then sleep a perpetual sleep
and never wake, says the LORD.
40 I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter,
like rams and goats.

41 How Sheshach[a] is taken,
the pride of the whole earth seized!
How Babylon has become
an object of horror among the nations!
42 The sea has risen over Babylon;
she has been covered by its tumultuous waves.
43 Her cities have become an object of horror,
a land of drought and a desert,
a land in which no one lives,
and through which no mortal passes.
44 I will punish Bel in Babylon,
and make him disgorge what he has swallowed.
The nations shall no longer stream to him;
the wall of Babylon has fallen.

45 Come out of her, my people!
Save your lives, each of you,
from the fierce anger of the LORD!
46 Do not be fainthearted or fearful
at the rumors heard in the land—
one year one rumor comes,
the next year another,
rumors of violence in the land
and of ruler against ruler.

47 Assuredly, the days are coming
when I will punish the images of Babylon;
her whole land shall be put to shame,
and all her slain shall fall in her midst.
48 Then the heavens and the earth,
and all that is in them,
shall shout for joy over Babylon;
for the destroyers shall come against them out of the north,
says the LORD.
49 Babylon must fall for the slain of Israel,
as the slain of all the earth have fallen
because of Babylon.

50 You survivors of the sword,
go, do not linger!
Remember the LORD in a distant land,
and let Jerusalem come into your mind:
51 We are put to shame, for we have heard insults;
dishonor has covered our face,
for aliens have come
into the holy places of the LORD's house.

52 Therefore the time is surely coming, says the LORD,
when I will punish her idols,

[a] *Sheshach* is a cryptogram for *Babel*, Babylon

by God to disgorge all he has devoured in conquest; cf. Bel 1–22. **36:** *Dry up her sea*, that is, the mythological enemy, the sea-dragon, representing the power of destructive chaos. Marduk, the patron deity of Babylon, was the hero god who slew the sea-dragon Tiamat, and who himself was depicted as a dragon on murals throughout Babylon. **41:** *Sheshach*, cryptogram for Babel (*Babylon*); see v. 1; 25.26n. **42:** See v. 36. See also Ps 46.2–3. **44:** *Make him disgorge*, lit., "bring out," leading to what follows; cf. v. 34.

51.45–49: Israel is urged to "come out" as that which is "disgorged" from Babylon. The poetry becomes increasingly cosmic in scope, albeit with localized implications: the defeat of Babylonian hegemony, the liberation of the empire's victims, and the celebration of divine justice. The figure of Babylon continued to symbolize the power of God's great destructive enemy; see Rev 18.2–2.

51.50–58: Babylon's ultimate destruction: 50: *Remember . . . distant land*, cf. Ps 137.4. **51:** *Aliens* (Heb "zarim"), unlike "strangers" (Heb "gerim," "sojourners"), are dangerous to the solidarity of the community and

and through all her land
the wounded shall groan.
53 Though Babylon should mount up to heaven,
and though she should fortify her strong height,
from me destroyers would come upon her,
says the LORD.

54 Listen!—a cry from Babylon!
A great crashing from the land of the Chaldeans!
55 For the LORD is laying Babylon waste,
and stilling her loud clamor.
Their waves roar like mighty waters,
the sound of their clamor resounds;
56 for a destroyer has come against her,
against Babylon;
her warriors are taken,
their bows are broken;
for the LORD is a God of recompense,
he will repay in full.
57 I will make her officials and her sages drunk,
also her governors, her deputies, and her warriors;
they shall sleep a perpetual sleep and never wake,
says the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

58 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
The broad wall of Babylon
shall be leveled to the ground,
and her high gates
shall be burned with fire.
The peoples exhaust themselves for nothing,
and the nations weary themselves only for fire.[a]

59 The word that the prophet Jeremiah commanded Seraiah son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, when he went with King Zedekiah of Judah to Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. Seraiah was the quartermaster. 60 Jeremiah wrote in a[b] scroll all the disasters that would come on Babylon, all these words that are written concerning Babylon. 61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah: "When you come to Babylon, see that you read all these words, 62 and say, 'O LORD, you yourself threatened to destroy this place so that neither human beings nor animals shall live in it, and it shall be desolate forever.' 63 When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it, and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates, 64 and say, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the disasters that I am bringing on her.' "[c]

Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

52 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

[a] Gk Syr Compare Hab 2.13: Heb *and the nations for fire, and they are weary*
[b] Or *one*
[c] Gk: Heb *on her. And they shall weary themselves*

threaten its integrity. **53:** *Mount up to heaven*, that is, assert itself against God's authority; cf. Gen 11.1–9; Isa 14.13.

51.59–64: The scroll thrown into the Euphrates. Another allusion to the shift from oral to written prophecy (see also, 25.1–14; 36.1–32; 45.1). The oracles against Babylon were, according to this account, sealed in a scroll and then taken to the Euphrates by courier and thrown in as a prophetic sign and curse that Babylon would so sink in divine disaster. This action is dated to 594 BCE, the year of the likely aborted revolt against Babylon; see 27.1–28.17n. The emissaries sent by Zedekiah to Babylon here may have been in response to a reaffirmation of treaty support by Zedekiah of his Babylonian overlords. **59:** *Seraiah son of Neriah*, apparently Seraiah was Baruch's brother; see 32.12. *Quartermaster*, or perhaps "chief of storage houses," an appropriate official to send to convince the king of Babylon that no revolt was planned. **64:** *Thus far are the words of Jeremiah*, an additional comment calling attention to the supplementary character of the appendix in ch 52. The book of Jeremiah begins and ends with the phrase *the words of Jeremiah* (see 1.1).

52.1–34: The fall and looting of Jerusalem. A historical appendix derived from 2 Kings 24.18–25.30, although it includes a reference to three deportations to Babylon (in 598, 587, and 582 BCE) and excludes any mention of Gedaliah's postwar government (see 40.7; 2 Kings 25.22–26). Verses 1–27 are nearly identical to 2 Kings 24.18–25.21. Verses 28–30 provide statistics regarding the numbers of Judeans taken into exile during

2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. 3 Indeed, Jerusalem and Judah so angered the LORD that he expelled them from his presence.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. 4 And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and they laid siege to it; they built siegeworks against it all around. 5 So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 6 On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine became so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. 7 Then a breach was made in the city wall;[a] and all the soldiers fled and went out from the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. They went in the direction of the Arabah. 8 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered, deserting him. 9 Then they captured the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence on him. 10 The king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and also killed all the officers of Judah at Riblah. 11 He put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters, and the king of Babylon took him to Babylon, and put him in prison until the day of his death.

12 In the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month—which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard who served the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. 13 He burned the house of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. 14 All the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down all the walls around Jerusalem. 15 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile some of the poorest of the people and the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the artisans. 16 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil.

17 The pillars of bronze that were in the house of the LORD, and the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried all the bronze to Babylon. 18 They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the basins, the ladles, and all the vessels of bronze used in the temple service. 19 The captain of the guard took away the small bowls also, the firepans, the basins, the pots, the lampstands, the ladles, and the bowls for libation, both those of gold and those of silver. 20 As for the two pillars, the one sea, the twelve bronze bulls that were under the sea, and the stands,[b] which King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weighing. 21 As for the pillars, the height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, its circumference was twelve cubits; it was hollow and its thickness was four fingers. 22 Upon it was a capital of bronze; the height of the capital was five cubits; latticework and pomegranates, all of bronze, encircled the top of the capital. And the second pillar had the same, with pomegranates. 23 There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides; all the pomegranates encircling the latticework numbered one hundred.

[a] Heb lacks *wall*

[b] Cn: Heb *that were under the stands*

the three deportations, figures not recorded elsewhere. Verses 31–34 are excerpted nearly verbatim from 2 Kings 25.27–30. This historical recitation from the Deuteronomistic History makes a fitting ending to the Deuteronomistically edited book of Jeremiah. **1:** *Zedekiah*, the last king of Judah (597–586 BCE). **3:** A tragic theological conclusion consistent with the Deuteronomistic perspective; see 2 Kings 23.26–27. 4–11: January 587 to August 586 BCE. On the attempted escape and capture of Zedekiah and his fate, cf. 39.1–10. **6:** *The fifth month* was memorialized in commemoration of the destruction of the Temple; see Zech 7.3,5; 8.19. **17:** *Pillars of bronze*, see 1 Kings 7.15–16. *Bronze sea,* 1 Kings 7.23–26; 2 Kings 16.17. **22–23:** *Pomegranates,* a particularly important symbol used in Israel's ritual decorations, adorning both priestly wear and Temple furnishings; see Ex 28.33;

[24] The captain of the guard took the chief priest Seraiah, the second priest Zephaniah, and the three guardians of the threshold; [25] and from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the soldiers, and seven men of the king's council who were found in the city; the secretary of the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found inside the city. [26] Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. [27] And the king of Babylon struck them down, and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah went into exile out of its land.

[28] This is the number of the people whom Nebuchadrezzar took into exile: in the seventh year, three thousand twenty-three Judeans; [29] in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he took into exile from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty-two persons; [30] in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took into exile of the Judeans seven hundred forty-five persons; all the persons were four thousand six hundred.

[31] In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year he began to reign, showed favor to King Jehoiachin of Judah and brought him out of prison; [32] he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the seats of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. [33] So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes, and every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table. [34] For his allowance, a regular daily allowance was given him by the king of Babylon, as long as he lived, up to the day of his death.

29.24–25; 1 Kings 7.18–20,42. **24:** *Chief priest*, a relatively late title for the principal priest ("head" priest, or "first" priest), alongside his principal assistant, the "second" priest; compare with the term "high priest" (lit., "great" priest) in 2 Kings 12.10; 22.4,8; Hag 1.1. **27:** *So Judah went into exile out of its land*, the motifs of war and exile frame the book of Jeremiah; see 1.3. **30:** On the significance of the third deportation (581 BCE), see 43.1–13. **31–34:** The final vignette describes Jehoiachin's release from prison in Babylon (see 22.18n.) in 560 BCE, which the refugee community might have interpreted as an overture of hope; on Jehoiachin, see 22.24–30n. **31:** *Evil-merodach* (562–560 BCE), Babylonian king whose name means "man of Marduk"; see 50.2n.

LAMENTATIONS

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND LOCATION IN CANON

The name Lamentations is a translation of the Greek *Threnoi*, the Septuagint's title of the book. In the Hebrew Bible the book is named after its initial word, *'Ekah*, "How," as in "How lonely sits the city."

In the Christian canon, Lamentations follows the book of Jeremiah because Jeremiah was traditionally thought to have been the author of Lamentations. Jewish tradition also ascribes the book's authorship to Jeremiah, but in the Hebrew Bible Lamentations is located in the Writings, among the Five Scrolls. It is read liturgically on the Ninth of Av (July-August), the day of public mourning for the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. In Christian tradition, readings from Lamentations are part of the Holy Week liturgies. The ascription of authorship to Jeremiah derives from the impetus to ascribe all biblical books to inspired biblical authors. Jeremiah, a prophet who lived during the last days of the kingdom of Judah and prophesied its demise, was an obvious choice for Lamentations. Already by late Second Temple times, he was known for composing laments; 2 Chr 35.25 says that Jeremiah composed laments for the death of King Josiah. Modern scholars do not think that Jeremiah actually wrote Lamentations; like most ancient literature, the author remains anonymous. Most likely, each of the book's chapters was written by a different poet, and they then were joined together to form the book.

DATE AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The five poems that comprise Lamentations, each with its distinctive tone and theme, lament the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians (see 2 Kings 25.8–21). This was a major and unprecedented catastrophe, both politically and religiously: Judah ceased to exist as an independent country, and sacrificial worship to God could no longer be performed. The sequence of the chapters is not chronological, and despite the vividness of their descriptions, the poems need not to have been written by eyewitnesses to the events. The book was compiled after 586 BCE and before the end of the sixth century BCE, when the Temple was rebuilt. Because Second Isaiah, whose work is dated to 550–538 BCE, seems to have known at least parts of Lamentations, the book was probably in circulation by the mid-sixth century, but the exact time, place, and reason for its composition are unknown.

GENRE

An ancient Near Eastern tradition of laments over the destruction of cities goes back to the Sumerian laments of the early second millennium BCE (e.g., "Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur," "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," "Nippur Lament"). Despite the generic similarity, however, we cannot draw a direct line of influence from the Sumerian laments to the book of Lamentations. Moreover, the Sumerian laments were recited on the occasion of the rebuilding of a temple, so their "story" has a happy ending. Not so in the book of Lamentations, where hopes for the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple remain unrealized, and God, who is so movingly implored to end his people's suffering and exile and to restore them to their former condition, never responds. The origin and development of laments for Jerusalem remain unknown. Perhaps the unprecedented event of the destruction gave rise to a new genre.

STRUCTURE AND INTERPRETATION

The book's first four poems (chs 1; 2; 3; 4) are alphabetic acrostics, a formal device found elsewhere in the Bible (e.g., Pss 111; 112; 145; Prov 31.10–31), in which each verse or stanza begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, twenty-two in all. Chapter 3 is a triple acrostic; each stanza has three short verses beginning with the same letter. Chapter 5, although not an acrostic, also contains twenty-two verses. In Lamentations this formal device gives expression to the enormity or totality of the destruction ("from A to Z") and also gives structure and closure to the incomprehensible events and unstructured pain that engulfed Judah and its inhabitants.

The language of the book is highly poetic and extraordinarily moving, so that at times we want to avert our eyes from the violence and suffering described. The experience of warfare, siege, famine, and death are individualized—brave men are reduced to begging, mothers are unable to nourish their children. The national

catastrophe is thus made concrete, as society disintegrates and people languish and die or are deported. All of this is addressed to God, so that he may feel the suffering of his people and bring it to an end. The entire book may be thought of as an appeal for God's mercy. Yet God remains silent.

If the book fails to move God, it fulfills another function, that of public mourning which both relives and commemorates a catastrophe of incomprehensible proportion. Lamentations does not create a new theology. It assumes the theology of Deuteronomy, where sin leads to divine punishment and exile (see, e.g., Deut 28). God is responsible for the disaster; the Babylonians are merely divine agents. So, God, whose power is not diminished despite the Temple's destruction, must be the one to end the Babylonian dominance and bring about the return from exile. Repentance, the antidote to sin, is mentioned but is not central—this is not penitential prayer; rather, the idea in Lamentations is that the punishment, even if deserved, is unbearable. The immediacy and magnitude of the punishment drowns out everything else.

Adele Berlin

1 How lonely sits the city
that once was full of people!
How like a widow she has become,
she that was great among the nations!
She that was a princess among the provinces
has become a vassal.

[2] She weeps bitterly in the night,
with tears on her cheeks;
among all her lovers
she has no one to comfort her;
all her friends have dealt treacherously with her,
they have become her enemies.

[3] Judah has gone into exile with suffering
and hard servitude;
she lives now among the nations,
and finds no resting place;
her pursuers have all overtaken her
in the midst of her distress.

[4] The roads to Zion mourn,
for no one comes to the festivals;
all her gates are desolate,
her priests groan;
her young girls grieve,[a]
and her lot is bitter.

[5] Her foes have become the masters,
her enemies prosper,
because the LORD has made her suffer
for the multitude of her transgressions;
her children have gone away,
captives before the foe.

[6] From daughter Zion has departed
all her majesty.
Her princes have become like stags
that find no pasture;
they fled without strength
before the pursuer.

[7] Jerusalem remembers,
in the days of her affliction and wandering,
all the precious things
that were hers in days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of the foe,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

1.1–22. Lament over the destroyed Jerusalem. The chapter has two parts, vv. 1–11, the lament of the narrator, and vv. 12–22, the lament of the city. Shame, mourning, and suffering are the main themes. The phrase "no one to comfort her/me" occurs four times (vv. 2,9,17,21; cf. vv. 7,16) and emphasizes unceasing mourning.

1.1–11: The poet laments Jerusalem. Jerusalem, personified as a woman, is widowed, abandoned, and shamed. **1:** *How*, or "woe," a common beginning of dirges (Isa 1.21; Jer 48.17; Lam 2.1; 4.1). **2:** *Lovers,* Judah's political allies who failed to support her. The term also hints that by taking lovers, Jerusalem was unfaithful to God. **3:** *Suffering and hard servitude* is reminiscent of the Egyptian bondage (Ex 1.14; 2.23; 3.7,17; 4.31; 5.11; 6.6), to which the Babylonian exile is likened. **4:** *Zion*, the eastern hill (also called Ophel) in Jerusalem that was the site of the original Jebusite city (2 Sam 5:6–9), often used as a synonym for Jerusalem (this is a synecdoche, or using a part of something to stand for the whole thing). **6:** *Daughter Zion,* or "Mistress Zion," a common epithet (e.g.,

and there was no one to help her,
the foe looked on mocking
over her downfall.

8 Jerusalem sinned grievously,
so she has become a mockery;
all who honored her despise her,
for they have seen her nakedness;
she herself groans,
and turns her face away.

9 Her uncleanness was in her skirts;
she took no thought of her future;
her downfall was appalling,
with none to comfort her.
"O LORD, look at my affliction,
for the enemy has triumphed!"

10 Enemies have stretched out their hands
over all her precious things;
she has even seen the nations
invade her sanctuary,
those whom you forbade
to enter your congregation.

11 All her people groan
as they search for bread;
they trade their treasures for food
to revive their strength.
Look, O LORD, and see
how worthless I have become.

12 Is it nothing to you,[a] all you who pass by?
Look and see
if there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
which was brought upon me,
which the LORD inflicted
on the day of his fierce anger.

13 From on high he sent fire;
it went deep into my bones;
he spread a net for my feet;
he turned me back;
he has left me stunned,
faint all day long.

14 My transgressions were bound[a] into a yoke;
by his hand they were fastened together;
they weigh on my neck,
sapping my strength;
the Lord handed me over
to those whom I cannot withstand.

15 The LORD has rejected
all my warriors in the midst of me;
he proclaimed a time against me
to crush my young men;
the Lord has trodden as in a wine press
the virgin daughter Judah.

16 For these things I weep;
my eyes flow with tears;
for a comforter is far from me,
one to revive my courage;
my children are desolate,
for the enemy has prevailed.

17 Zion stretches out her hands,
but there is no one to comfort her;
the LORD has commanded against Jacob
that his neighbors should become his foes;

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

1.15; 2.1; 4.22), meaning "dear little Zion." **8:** *Mockery,* or "banished." *Nakedness*, shame, especially sexual shame (cf. Isa 47.5; Jer 13.22; Ezek 16.37; Nah 3.5). **9:** *Uncleanness*, probably not from menstruation but from sexual impropriety; see Num 5.19. Jerusalem's sin was unfaithfulness to God, the taking of other "lovers." **10:** *Precious things,* the Temple treasures looted by the victors (cf. 2 Chr 36.10). The Babylonian invasion is conveyed in sexual terms, as a rape of Jerusalem by someone who had no right of access to her. **11:** Jerusalem speaks in the final line, and continues speaking in vv. 12–16 and 18–22.

1.12–22. Jerusalem's lament. **12:** *Was brought*, the Heb word is much stronger and actually conveys violence (cf. 1 Sam 31.4; Jer 38.19; Judg 19.25). *Day . . . anger*, like "the day of the LORD," when God comes in judgment against Judah itself (e.g., Am 5.18). **15:** *Trodden as in a wine press,* crushed so the blood runs out (see Deut 32.14; Isa 63.1–2). *Virgin,* part of the epithet *daughter Judah* (compare "daughter Zion and see 1.6n.), Heb "betulah" means a girl of marriageable age. **17:** *Jacob*, a common postexilic term for Judah. *Filthy thing,* a menstruant, who is ritually impure, not fit to come into contact with holy things and off-limits for sexual relations (see Lev 18.19). Jerusalem's "lovers" (vv. 2,19) distance themselves from her. The narrator interrupts Jerusalem's speech, just

Jerusalem has become
a filthy thing among them.

18 The LORD is in the right,
for I have rebelled against his word;
but hear, all you peoples,
and behold my suffering;
my young women and young men
have gone into captivity.

19 I called to my lovers
but they deceived me;
my priests and elders
perished in the city
while seeking food
to revive their strength.

20 See, O LORD, how distressed I am;
my stomach churns,
my heart is wrung within me,
because I have been very rebellious.
In the street the sword bereaves;
in the house it is like death.

21 They heard how I was groaning,
with no one to comfort me.
All my enemies heard of my trouble;
they are glad that you have done it.
Bring on the day you have announced,
and let them be as I am.

22 Let all their evil doing come before you;
and deal with them
as you have dealt with me
because of all my transgressions;
for my groans are many
and my heart is faint.

2 How the Lord in his anger
has humiliated[a] daughter Zion!
He has thrown down from heaven to earth
the splendor of Israel;
he has not remembered his footstool
in the day of his anger.

2 The Lord has destroyed without mercy
all the dwellings of Jacob;
in his wrath he has broken down
the strongholds of daughter Judah;
he has brought down to the ground in
dishonor
the kingdom and its rulers.

3 He has cut down in fierce anger
all the might of Israel;
he has withdrawn his right hand from
them
in the face of the enemy;
he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob,
consuming all around.

4 He has bent his bow like an enemy,
with his right hand set like a foe;
he has killed all in whom we took pride
in the tent of daughter Zion;
he has poured out his fury like fire.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

as she did his (v. 9c). **18:** An admission of sin, but the emphasis is on the suffering. **20:** *Stomach,* better "inner organs," the seat of emotions. *In the street,* better "outside," that is, outside the city walls where the fighting took place. Inside the besieged city the inhabitants were ravaged by famine and disease (see Ezek 7.15). **21:** *The day you have announced*, a day of God's judgment against the enemies of Jerusalem (cf. v. 12n.; Ob 15). **22:** Not simply vindictive revenge, this is a plea to restore the world order in which Israel is safe under God's protection and its enemies are banished; chs 3 and 4 end similarly. The trope of the destruction of the enemy is common in psalms of lament.

2.1–22: The LORD has become like an enemy. The tone changes from the despair of ch 1 to anger, and the focus shifts from the victim to God, the perpetrator. Many verbs of strong military action portray God as a destroying enemy: e.g., "thrown down," "destroyed," "cut down," "burned," "bent his bow," "killed."

2.1–10: God in his anger battles against Jerusalem, destroying the city and the country of Judah. **1:** *How*, see 1.1n. *Humiliated*, or "made loathsome." *Daughter Zion,* see 1.6n. The *splendor of Israel,* the Temple, thought of as a link between heaven and earth. That link is now broken and formal ritual access to God is cut off. *Footstool*, i.e., the ark of the covenant or the Temple. God is envisioned as a king sitting in heaven with his feet touching the Temple (see Ps 132.7; Isa 60.13; Ezek 43.7; 1 Chr 28.2). **3:** *His right hand,* God's fighting arm and the symbol of his power and protection is intentionally withheld from Judah (Ex 15.6,12; Isa 41.10; Pss 48.10; 89.13; 98.1). **4:** *Tent,* an archaic way of referring to the homes in Judah (cf. Jer 30.18) and to the Temple in Jerusalem (cf. Ps 15.1).

5 The Lord has become like an enemy;
he has destroyed Israel.
He has destroyed all its palaces,
laid in ruins its strongholds,
and multiplied in daughter Judah
mourning and lamentation.

6 He has broken down his booth like a garden,
he has destroyed his tabernacle;
the LORD has abolished in Zion
festival and sabbath,
and in his fierce indignation has spurned
king and priest.

7 The Lord has scorned his altar,
disowned his sanctuary;
he has delivered into the hand of the enemy
the walls of her palaces;
a clamor was raised in the house of the LORD
as on a day of festival.

8 The LORD determined to lay in ruins
the wall of daughter Zion;
he stretched the line;
he did not withhold his hand from destroying;
he caused rampart and wall to lament;
they languish together.

9 Her gates have sunk into the ground;
he has ruined and broken her bars;
her king and princes are among the nations;
guidance is no more,
and her prophets obtain
no vision from the LORD.

10 The elders of daughter Zion
sit on the ground in silence;
they have thrown dust on their heads
and put on sackcloth;
the young girls of Jerusalem
have bowed their heads to the ground.

11 My eyes are spent with weeping;
my stomach churns;
my bile is poured out on the ground
because of the destruction of my people,
because infants and babes faint
in the streets of the city.

12 They cry to their mothers,
"Where is bread and wine?"
as they faint like the wounded
in the streets of the city,
as their life is poured out
on their mothers' bosom.

13 What can I say for you, to what compare you,
O daughter Jerusalem?
To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you,
O virgin daughter Zion?
For vast as the sea is your ruin;
who can heal you?

14 Your prophets have seen for you
false and deceptive visions;
they have not exposed your iniquity
to restore your fortunes,
but have seen oracles for you
that are false and misleading.

6: *His booth*, a temporary shelter (Job 27.18; Jon 4.5) and also the Temple (Pss 27.5; 76.2). *Like a garden*: The Temple was destroyed easily, as if it were a booth or hut in a garden. *Tabernacle,* the "tent of meeting" (cf. Ex 25.1–31.18) constructed during the Exodus from Egypt, used as a metaphor for the Temple. **7:** *Clamor*, the exultant crowing of the invading and plundering enemy has replaced the joyful sounds of the crowds coming to the Temple on festivals. **8–10:** We see the towers, walls, and gates disintegrate. The movement is from top to bottom, ending with the inhabitants sitting on the ground in mourning. **8:** *Stretched the line.* Like an architect, God made a plan for unbuilding the city (cf. 2 Kings 21.13; Isa 34.11; Jer 31.39; Zech 1.16; Job 38.5). **9:** *Guidance,* Heb "torah." **10:** *Dust* and *sackcloth*, common rituals of mourning (cf. Gen 37.34; Job 16.15; Neh 9.1).

2.11–19: The narrator's reaction. 11: The narrator's words echo those of Jerusalem in 1.20. *Stomach,* see 1.20n. **11–12:** *Streets,* better "squares," i.e., broad places near the gates. The babies are starving in public. **12:** *Where is bread and wine?* That is, the stored-up food supplies, the staples. There is no food left anywhere. *Bread,* lit., "grain." *Bosom,* or "lap." The mothers are holding their children where they should find comfort and nourishment as they starve to death. **13:** *Virgin daughter Zion,* see 1.6n., 1.15n. **14:** *False and deceptive visions,* prophecies

15 All who pass along the way
clap their hands at you;
they hiss and wag their heads
at daughter Jerusalem;
"Is this the city that was called
the perfection of beauty,
the joy of all the earth?"

16 All your enemies
open their mouths against you;
they hiss, they gnash their teeth,
they cry: "We have devoured her!
Ah, this is the day we longed for;
at last we have seen it!"

17 The LORD has done what he purposed,
he has carried out his threat;
as he ordained long ago,
he has demolished without pity;
he has made the enemy rejoice over you,
and exalted the might of your foes.

18 Cry aloud[a] to the Lord!
O wall of daughter Zion!
Let tears stream down like a torrent
day and night!
Give yourself no rest,
your eyes no respite!

19 Arise, cry out in the night,
at the beginning of the watches!
Pour out your heart like water
before the presence of the Lord!
Lift your hands to him
for the lives of your children,
who faint for hunger
at the head of every street.

20 Look, O LORD, and consider!
To whom have you done this?
Should women eat their offspring,
the children they have borne?
Should priest and prophet be killed
in the sanctuary of the Lord?

21 The young and the old are lying
on the ground in the streets;
my young women and my young men
have fallen by the sword;
in the day of your anger you have killed
them,
slaughtering without mercy.

22 You invited my enemies from all around
as if for a day of festival;
and on the day of the anger of the LORD
no one escaped or survived;
those whom I bore and reared
my enemy has destroyed.

3 I am one who has seen affliction
under the rod of God's[b] wrath;
2 he has driven and brought me

a Cn: Heb *Their heart cried*
b Heb *his*

of deliverance from the Babylonian threat that were unfounded (see Jer 28.1–17; 29.8–9). **15:** *Clap . . . hiss . . . wag,* gestures of surprise and derision. The trope of the passerby witnessing the shame of the victims and reacting with shock is common and provides an additional perspective to that of Zion and the narrator. *Perfection of beauty,* see Ezek 16.14; 27.3; Ps 50.2; *joy of all the earth,* see Jer 51.41; Ps 48.2. **16:** The enemies mock and taunt the victims, taking credit for Judah's destruction, which v. 17 ascribes to God. The Babylonians never appear in the book; only Edom is named (4.21). **17:** *Ordained long ago*, the decree that if Judah sinned, the Temple would be destroyed and the people exiled from their land (1 Kings 9.6–9). **18:** *Wall,* the physical city should cry out to God on behalf of its people. **19:** *Watches,* the night was divided into three watches (see Ex 14.24; 1 Sam 11.11; Song 3.1–3; 5.7). Nighttime is when suffering seems hardest to bear and when many prayers are offered, with the expectation that God will respond in the morning (cf. Ps 30.5).

2.20–22: Jerusalem's address to God. 20: *Eat their offspring.* Cannibalism was a result of the famine during a siege (4.10; 2 Kings 6.28) and a punishment for violating the covenant (Deut 28.53–57); this is a common trope in describing a siege. It is the reversal of the norm, in which women feed their children. **21:** *Slaughtering*, as if preparing meat for food or sacrifice. The idea continues in the next verse, where God invites the enemies *as if for a day of festival* when they would participate in a sacrificial meal in the Temple. **22:** *Day of the anger of the LORD,* the time of punishment, like "the day of the LORD," when God will punish those who deserve it (cf. 1.12; 2.1).

3.1–66: The complaint of a male speaker who describes the deportation into exile. The longest and most complex poem of the book, arranged as a triple acrostic: each stanza has three short verses assigned to each

into darkness without any light;
3 against me alone he turns his hand,
again and again, all day long.

4 He has made my flesh and my skin waste away,
and broken my bones;
5 he has besieged and enveloped me
with bitterness and tribulation;
6 he has made me sit in darkness
like the dead of long ago.

7 He has walled me about so that I cannot escape;
he has put heavy chains on me;
8 though I call and cry for help,
he shuts out my prayer;
9 he has blocked my ways with hewn stones,
he has made my paths crooked.

10 He is a bear lying in wait for me,
a lion in hiding;
11 he led me off my way and tore me to pieces;
he has made me desolate;
12 he bent his bow and set me
as a mark for his arrow.

13 He shot into my vitals
the arrows of his quiver;
14 I have become the laughingstock of all my people,
the object of their taunt-songs all day long.
15 He has filled me with bitterness,
he has sated me with wormwood.

16 He has made my teeth grind on gravel,
and made me cower in ashes;
17 my soul is bereft of peace;
I have forgotten what happiness is;
18 so I say, "Gone is my glory,
and all that I had hoped for from the Lord."

19 The thought of my affliction and my homelessness
is wormwood and gall!
20 My soul continually thinks of it
and is bowed down within me.
21 But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:

successive letter of the alphabet. The logical subdivisions according to content do not correspond to the alphabetic structure, with the result that the reader is pulled along from one thought to the next and interrupted by a new stanza in midthought. The chapter uses the language of lament and of wisdom or theological reflection on God's punishment and mercy. The mood alternates between despair and hope. The identity of the male speaker has long been debated. Some think he was a historical individual (Jeremiah, Jehoiachin, or Zedekiah have been suggested), but it is preferable to take him as a literary persona, the counterpart of the female city speaking in 1.12–22. He is a Job-like figure, using some phraseology similar to Job's (especially in vv. 1–19; cf. Job 16:7–15), crying out to God from his suffering, trying to make sense of the terrible event, and to provoke God's response. But unlike Job, this speaker is not successful, for God never answers him.

3.1–20: The lament of the male persona, who speaks in the voice of a survivor in exile, or perhaps in the collective voice of the people. Verses 1–13 imagine God as a bad shepherd who leads his flock into dark and dangerous places (exile), in stark contrast to the image of God as a good shepherd (as in Ps 23). **1:** *I am one,* lit., "I am the man." Heb "geber" is clearly masculine although NRSV has stripped it of gender. *Rod of God's wrath*, the shepherd's rod, normally an instrument of protection, is here the rod with which God punishes, as in Isa 10.5, where Assyria is the rod of God's wrath. **2:** *Driven and brought*, like a flock (cf. Isa 40.11; Ps 78.52–53). **6:** *Darkness like the dead*: Exile is often compared to darkness, prison, and death. In exile the Judeans were cut off from access to God's Temple, like a dead person. *The dead of long ago,* better, "like the eternally dead," who have no hope of life. **8:** *He shuts out my prayer,* see 3.44n. **10:** *Bear . . . lion,* from being a bad shepherd God changes into the dangerous wild animals from whom the shepherd should protect his flock (cf. 1 Sam 17.34–37). **12–13:** Instead of shooting at the wild animals, God shoots at the speaker. God is elsewhere a divine archer who shoots disaster from his bow; cf. Deut 32.23–24; Ps 38.2; Job 16.12–13. **15:** *Bitterness . . . wormwood,* a common symbol of suffering, see 3.19; 4.21; Jer 9.14; Job 9.18. **17:** *My soul*, my being or self.

3.21–24: Despair turns to hope in these transitional verses framed by *Therefore I have hope / Therefore I will*

22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,[a]
his mercies never come to an end;
23 they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"therefore I will hope in him."

25 The LORD is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.
26 It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD.
27 It is good for one to bear
the yoke in youth,
28 to sit alone in silence
when the Lord has imposed it,
29 to put one's mouth to the dust
(there may yet be hope),
30 to give one's cheek to the smiter,
and be filled with insults.

31 For the Lord will not
reject forever.
32 Although he causes grief, he will have compassion
according to the abundance of his steadfast love;
33 for he does not willingly afflict
or grieve anyone.

34 When all the prisoners of the land
are crushed under foot,
35 when human rights are perverted
in the presence of the Most High,
36 when one's case is subverted
—does the Lord not see it?

37 Who can command and have it done,
if the Lord has not ordained it?
38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High
that good and bad come?
39 Why should any who draw breath complain
about the punishment of their sins?

40 Let us test and examine our ways,
and return to the LORD.
41 Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands
to God in heaven.
42 We have transgressed and rebelled,
and you have not forgiven.

43 You have wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us,
killing without pity;
44 you have wrapped yourself with a cloud
so that no prayer can pass through.
45 You have made us filth and rubbish
among the peoples.

46 All our enemies
have opened their mouths against us;
47 panic and pitfall have come upon us,
devastation and destruction.
48 My eyes flow with rivers of tears

[a] Syr Tg: Heb *LORD, we are not cut off*

hope in Him. **22:** *Steadfast love . . . mercies . . . faithfulness,* attributes of God representing covenant loyalty (Ex 34.6–7; see also 2 Sam 7.15; Ps 89.1–3). **24:** *My portion,* Pss 119.57; 142.5.

3.25–39: Drawing on wisdom thought, the poem finds reasons for hope in the face of suffering. **25–27:** *Good* begins each verse, applied to God and to human patience. Humans must wait for God's merciful help, and in the meantime accept the burden of their suffering (*bear the yoke*). **29:** *Put one's mouth to the dust*, accept God's discipline submissively (cf. Mic 7.17; Ps 72.9). **30:** Isa 50.6. **33:** *Willingly*, better "deliberately" (lit., "from his heart"). God does not mete out punishment capriciously. **34–39:** Standard biblical theology: all is ordained by God, who is the source of both good and evil (cf. Job 2.10; Isa 45.7); punishment received is punishment deserved.

3.40–47: Communal lament. The discourse shifts back to lament, although now in the first-person plural with direct address to God. At the beginning the tone is conciliatory, but then becomes accusatory. **40–41:** As if persuaded by 3.25–29, the speakers call for self-examination, repentance, and contrition. **41:** *Lift up our hearts as well as our hands,* a call for sincerity in repentance, not merely going through the motions of prayer. **42–44:** A devastating turning point: confession of sin does not bring forgiveness. **44:** *Wrapped yourself with a cloud,* the cloud through which God revealed himself at Sinai (Ex 19.16), and which protects the people from fatal direct contact with the divine, is here perceived as a barrier that God erected to prevent prayer from reaching him; cf. 3.8.

because of the destruction of my
people.

49 My eyes will flow without ceasing,
without respite,
50 until the LORD from heaven
looks down and sees.
51 My eyes cause me grief
at the fate of all the young women in
my city.

52 Those who were my enemies without
cause
have hunted me like a bird;
53 they flung me alive into a pit
and hurled stones on me;
54 water closed over my head;
I said, "I am lost."

55 I called on your name, O LORD,
from the depths of the pit;
56 you heard my plea, "Do not close your ear
to my cry for help, but give me relief!"
57 You came near when I called on you;
you said, "Do not fear!"

58 You have taken up my cause, O Lord,
you have redeemed my life.
59 You have seen the wrong done to me,
O LORD;
judge my cause.

60 You have seen all their malice,
all their plots against me.

61 You have heard their taunts, O LORD,
all their plots against me.
62 The whispers and murmurs of my
assailants
are against me all day long.
63 Whether they sit or rise—see,
I am the object of their taunt-songs.

64 Pay them back for their deeds,
O LORD,
according to the work of their hands!
65 Give them anguish of heart;
your curse be on them!
66 Pursue them in anger and destroy them
from under the LORD's heavens.

4 How the gold has grown dim,
how the pure gold is changed!
The sacred stones lie scattered
at the head of every street.

2 The precious children of Zion,
worth their weight in fine gold—
how they are reckoned as earthen pots,
the work of a potter's hands!

3 Even the jackals offer the breast
and nurse their young,

3.48–66: Individual lament. The first-person singular "I" returns, emphasizing the personal dimension of the suffering. **53:** *Pit*, a cistern for holding water or for imprisoning people (cf. Jer 38.6), and also the grave or the netherworld (Sheol; cf. Isa 14.15; Pss 30.3; 88.4). **54:** *Water closed over my head*, the water in the cistern, but also a metaphor for desperation (see Jon 2.6–7; 2 Sam 22.5–6 = Ps 18.4–5). **55–56:** Ps 130.1–2. **56:** The verbs in the past tense here and in the following verses probably express a wish for the future. **57:** *Do not fear,* the words of an oracle of assurance; see Gen 15.1; Isa 41.14; 43.5. **58–60:** Legal language. The poet casts himself as a plaintiff in court where God will judge him innocent and the enemy guilty (cf. 3.34–36). **63:** *Whether they sit or rise*, whatever they do, at all times. **64–66:** A call for retribution; see 1.22. **66:** *From under the LORD's heavens*, there is no place in God's world for the wicked.

4.1–22: The community under siege in Jerusalem. The physical and social effects of starvation are graphically described. The progression is realistic: first the children are affected and then the adults. Degradation and debasement is the main theme; those once well-off are now destitute, those once healthy are dying or dead. The "before" and the "after," is achieved by the contrast in color, as the rich palette of the colors of wealth and health (gold, scarlet, white, red, sapphire in vv. 1,2,5,7,8) is drained away to blackness. Heat is another dimension, the unrelenting heat of the summer siege, the dry and blackened skin (v. 8), the parched mouths (v. 4), God's burning anger setting fire to Zion (v. 11). There is no shade, no protection provided by God or the king (v. 20). Like chs 1 and 2, this chapter contains a single alphabetic acrostic and opens with the word *How* (see 1.1n).

4.1–10: The suffering of the siege. 1: *Sacred stones,* or gems, and gold, though appearing to be literal, are metaphors for the children (v. 2). **2:** *Zion*, see 1.4n. *Earthen pots* were cheap and easily broken and discarded, while gold was an expensive and durable material. The children are likened to throwaway objects because no one can care for them. **3:** *Jackals,* considered despicable scavengers. *Ostriches,* thought to be cruel and

but my people has become cruel,
like the ostriches in the wilderness.

4 The tongue of the infant sticks
to the roof of its mouth for thirst;
the children beg for food,
but no one gives them anything.

5 Those who feasted on delicacies
perish in the streets;
those who were brought up in purple
cling to ash heaps.

6 For the chastisement[a] of my people has
been greater
than the punishment[b] of Sodom,
which was overthrown in a moment,
though no hand was laid on it.[c]

7 Her princes were purer than snow,
whiter than milk;
their bodies were more ruddy than
coral,
their hair[c] like sapphire.[d]

8 Now their visage is blacker than soot;
they are not recognized in the streets.
Their skin has shriveled on their bones;
it has become as dry as wood.

9 Happier were those pierced by the
sword
than those pierced by hunger,
whose life drains away, deprived
of the produce of the field.

10 The hands of compassionate women
have boiled their own children;
they became their food
in the destruction of my people.

11 The Lord gave full vent to his wrath;
he poured out his hot anger,
and kindled a fire in Zion
that consumed its foundations.

12 The kings of the earth did not
believe,
nor did any of the inhabitants of the
world,
that foe or enemy could enter
the gates of Jerusalem.

13 It was for the sins of her prophets
and the iniquities of her priests,
who shed the blood of the righteous
in the midst of her.

14 Blindly they wandered through the
streets,
so defiled with blood
that no one was able
to touch their garments.

15 "Away! Unclean!" people shouted at
them;
"Away! Away! Do not touch!"
So they became fugitives and wanderers;
it was said among the nations,
"They shall stay here no longer."

16 The Lord himself has scattered them,
he will regard them no more;
no honor was shown to the priests,
no favor to the elders.

[a] Or *iniquity*
[b] Or *sin*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Or *lapis lazuli*

neglectful parents (cf. Job 39.13–18). *My people has become cruel*, not willingly but from desperation; they are no longer able to care for their children. **4:** *The tongue . . . sticks to the roof of the mouth*, an expression meaning that no sound is uttered (Ezek 3.26; Ps 137.6; Job 29.10). The children are too weak even to cry. **5:** *Purple*, better "crimson" (cf. Isa 1.18). **6:** *Sodom,* whose punishment was legendary (Gen 19.24–25), was overthrown in an instant, whereas Jerusalem was made to suffer long agony. **7–8:** The bright colors associated with vigor have turned to black; now people are dried up. **10:** See 2.20n.

4.11–16: God's wrathful punishment. 12: The Judean belief in the inviolability of Zion, that God would never permit his city to be destroyed (see Pss 46.5; 48.3–8), is here attributed even to foreigners, a creative use of the "passersby" trope (see 2.15n). **13–14:** *Priests . . . prophets*, those most associated with purity and visions are described as the most blind and defiled. **15:** *Away! Unclean!* The public warning that lepers must give so that no one will come in contact with them (Lev 13.45–46).

17 Our eyes failed, ever watching
vainly for help;
we were watching eagerly
for a nation that could not save.

18 They dogged our steps
so that we could not walk in our streets;
our end drew near; our days were numbered;
for our end had come.

19 Our pursuers were swifter
than the eagles in the heavens;
they chased us on the mountains,
they lay in wait for us in the wilderness.

20 The LORD's anointed, the breath of our life,
was taken in their pits—
the one of whom we said, "Under his shadow
we shall live among the nations."

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter Edom,
you that live in the land of Uz;
but to you also the cup shall pass;
you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare.

22 The punishment of your iniquity,
O daughter Zion, is accomplished,
he will keep you in exile no longer;
but your iniquity, O daughter Edom, he will punish,
he will uncover your sins.

5 Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us;
look, and see our disgrace!
2 Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
our homes to aliens.
3 We have become orphans, fatherless;
our mothers are like widows.
4 We must pay for the water we drink;
the wood we get must be bought.
5 With a yoke[a] on our necks we are hard driven;
we are weary, we are given no rest.
6 We have made a pact with[b] Egypt and Assyria,

[a] Symmachus: Heb lacks *With a yoke*
[b] Heb *have given the hand to*

4.17–22: The voice of the community. As in 3.40–47, the speaker is "we," describing the final days of the siege and the fall of Jerusalem. **17:** *For a nation that could not save*, most likely Egypt, the major power opposed to Babylonia (see Jer 37.5–10; Isa 30.7). Contrary to what prophets like Jeremiah advised, Judah relied on help from another nation, not from God. **19:** Perhaps an allusion to the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem, when Zedekiah and his soldiers fled the city and were pursued and captured by the Babylonian army (2 Kings 25.4–5). **20:** *The LORD's anointed, the breath of our life, . . . under his shadow,* royal epithets (1 Sam 24.7; 2 Sam 1.14,16). The reference is likely to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, whose defeat signals the failure of the Davidic dynasty to protect the people. **21–22:** A curse on Edom, a neighbor of Judah who was a vassal to Babylonia. Edom is often singled out for negative comment in postexilic literature (Ezek 35; Ob 11; Ps 137.7). Edom is synonymous with Esau (Gen 36.1) and therefore the traditional enemy or rival of Jacob/Israel (=Judah); cf. Mal 1.2–5. **21:** *Rejoice and be glad,* an ironic statement. *Daughter Edom,* an epithet parallel to *Daughter Zion* (see 1.6n.). *Uz*, a region in southern Jordan or northwestern Arabia, often connected with Edom (Gen 36.28; Jer 25.20; Job 1.1; 1 Chr 1.42). *The cup,* of God's wrath (see 3.15; Jer 25.15–29; 49.12; 51.7; Hab 2.15–16), which will make Edom drunk. *Strip yourself bare*, expose your nakedness and be shamed as Jerusalem was (1.8–10). **22:** The most hopeful sentiment in the book (cf. Joel 3).

5.1–22: A prayer of the survivors in Judah in the aftermath of the destruction. A call to God to notice the abject state of his people in Judah and to restore them to their previous condition. The chapter resembles communal laments and also penitential prayers of the Second Temple period. **1:** The plea to God to *remember* is framed by *Why have you forgotten* in v. 20. *Remember* means "to pay mind to" and *forget* means "to ignore." **2–3:** The breakdown of the institution of the family. **2:** *Our inheritance*, ancestral land was to be kept within the family. Here the reference may be to individual real estate or to the country as a whole. *Strangers,* those outside the family. *Aliens*, foreigners. **3:** *Fatherless*, an orphan is a person without a father. Widows and orphans are defenseless and required special protection (e.g., Isa 1.23; Ps 68.5). **4–5:** Harsh economic conditions; rampant inflation. *Water* and *wood* are basic necessities. **6:** *Egypt and Assyria,* traditional superpowers and enemy-invaders

to get enough bread.
7 Our ancestors sinned; they are no more,
and we bear their iniquities.
8 Slaves rule over us;
there is no one to deliver us from their hand.
9 We get our bread at the peril of our lives,
because of the sword in the wilderness.
10 Our skin is black as an oven
from the scorching heat of famine.
11 Women are raped in Zion,
virgins in the towns of Judah.
12 Princes are hung up by their hands;
no respect is shown to the elders.
13 Young men are compelled to grind,
and boys stagger under loads of wood.
14 The old men have left the city gate,
the young men their music.
15 The joy of our hearts has ceased;
our dancing has been turned to mourning.
16 The crown has fallen from our head;
woe to us, for we have sinned!
17 Because of this our hearts are sick,
because of these things our eyes have grown dim:
18 because of Mount Zion, which lies desolate;
jackals prowl over it.

19 But you, O LORD, reign forever;
your throne endures to all generations.
20 Why have you forgotten us completely?
Why have you forsaken us these many days?
21 Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored;
renew our days as of old—
22 unless you have utterly rejected us,
and are angry with us beyond measure.

of Israel, are often found in parallelism even when, as in this period, Assyria was long gone (Isa 52.4; Zech 10.10–11). **7:** *Iniquities* also means "punishment." Earlier sinful generations did not suffer punishment like the current generation. Did the current generation also see itself as sinful and deserving of punishment, or did they think they are paying unfairly for the sins of their ancestors? The verse is ambiguous. **8:** *Slaves rule over us*, previously Judah was ruled by its own king but now it is governed by the lackeys of the Babylonian king (cf. 2 Kings 25.24). **9:** Food is scarce. *The sword in the wilderness*, a difficult phrase which may mean that scavenging in the countryside was dangerous because of marauders. Alternatively, it is a metaphor for the dehydration and starvation of the inhabitants of Judah, who suffer famine that resembles the famine of the siege (v. 10 and cf. 4.8). **11–14:** Social order has disintegrated; violence and indignity abound. Women are shamed sexually; leaders are shamed publicly; young and old are denied their proper calling and subjected to abusive labor. **12:** *Hung up*, impalement of corpses was a form of public shaming (Deut 21.22; Josh 10.26–27; 1 Sam 31.10). *By their hands*, probably meaning by the hands of the enemy (see v. 8), since victims were not generally hung by their hands. A better interpretation may be that this is not a form of execution or corpse display, but a form of torture and humiliation of the living, like putting a person in the stocks. **13:** *To grind*, a task normally done by women (Ex 11.5; Isa 47.2; Job 31.10) or slaves (Judg 16.21) and therefore demeaning if undertaken by a man. The Hebrew is "pull the millstone," which may refer to a large milling operation in which a donkey would normally pull the heavy millstone, making this line parallel in meaning to the next one. *Boys stagger under loads of wood*, humans are made to do the work of animals, beasts of burden. **14:** *City gate*, the location of business and legal transactions (Ruth 4.1; Job 29.7). **16:** *The crown*, the emblem of kingship, the Davidic dynasty, or perhaps the crenellated walls of the city. *We have sinned*, an admission of guilt (cf. 3.42 and 5.7n). **18:** *Mount Zion,* see 1.4n. *Jackals,* or "foxes," proverbial inhabitants of ruined cities (see 4.3; Ezek 13.4; Isa 34.11–17; Zeph 2.13–15). **19:** A strong theological statement: Even though God's earthly throne, the Temple, lies in ruins, God continues to reign forever. **21:** A wish that Israel's former relationship with God be reinstated. **22:** The book ends in tragic despair, with the suggestion that God's rejection of the people continues. *Unless* is difficult in the Hebrew; perhaps it is better translated "but instead," or even more literally, "for if," suggesting that the conclusion of the conditional clause has been withheld, thus perpetuating indefinitely the divine rejection with which the book ends.

EZEKIEL

NAME

The book is named for the prophet to whom it is attributed. His name, "Ezekiel," means "God strengthens." God's strengthening turns out to be imperative for Ezekiel, whose rebellious audience is characterized by ingrained defiance and stubbornness; see 2.5n. ("rebellious house"); 3.8–9n. ("hard").

LOCATION IN CANON

Ezekiel is the last of the three major prophets, the others being Isaiah and Jeremiah. Their books are arranged in presumed chronological order: the first part of the book of Isaiah focuses on the prophet Isaiah's ministry in Jerusalem in the late eighth century BCE; the prophet Jeremiah was active in the late seventh and early sixth centuries; and Ezekiel's prophecies follow those of Jeremiah, his older contemporary. (In Christian canons, following the order of the Septuagint [LXX], Lamentations comes between Jeremiah and Ezekiel.) According to the Talmud and in some manuscripts there was another order for the major prophets, in which Ezekiel's combined message of judgment and salvation appears between Jeremiah's predominant tone of sorrow and Isaiah's emphatic promises.

AUTHORSHIP

The only information we have about the prophet comes from the book itself. In this collection, God's divine prerogative overshadows and submerges the prophetic personality. Since Ezekiel is a literary character within his own prophecies, his shocking and mystifying actions must often be interpreted in a highly symbolic and theological manner, not necessarily as a window into the prophet's actual personality.

Some facts seem established. Ezekiel was a Judean exile in Babylonia, living in the deportee settlement of Tel-abib (see 3.15n.). His prophetic career stretched from 593 to at least 571 BCE. The prophet and his school—the followers who edited and preserved his prophecies—were members of a lineage of priests in Israel known as the Zadokites (see 1.1–3n.; 44.15–31n.).

At the time of Ezekiel's exile, the Zadokites controlled the Israelite high priesthood and held power at the Jerusalem Temple. They took a specific priestly theology with them into exile, preserved elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as a source of the Pentateuch known as the "Holiness School." The priestly theology of the Holiness School thoroughly infuses the book of Ezekiel.

DATE OF COMPOSITION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ezekiel wrote his prophecies, and his followers edited, expanded, and preserved them, in the sixth century BCE in Babylonia, during the exile of the Judeans from their homeland. The Exile thus forms the historical context of the book, and at several points, particularly in the allegory in 17.1–24, Ezekiel refers to the Babylonian subjugation of Judah.

The Babylonians under Nebuchadrezzar II (r. 605–562 BCE) defeated the Egyptians in 605 at the battle of Carchemish. The Egyptians had allied with the great Assyrian empire, which the Babylonians destroyed between 614 and 609. Although these victories made Babylonia the leading political power in Syria-Palestine, including the territory of Judah, the Judeans, often acting in concert with other neighboring states, eventually rebelled. The Babylonians, in an escalating response to the continued efforts of the Judeans to throw them off, exiled the Judeans in two phases, spaced about a decade apart. They first besieged Jerusalem in 597 during the reign of King Jehoiakim, who died during the siege. When his successor, his son Jehoiachin, surrendered to the Babylonians, he, along with many of the Judean ruling class, was exiled to Babylon. The Babylonians installed a puppet king, Zedekiah; when he, too, attempted to rebel, they destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 586, and exiled about twenty-five percent of the population, mostly the wealthy, skilled, and educated, to Babylonia. (A third deportation is reported in 581.)

Ezekiel was among the first group of exiles, taken to Babylonia in 597. Even so, he remained well informed about events in Judah, and his prophecies concern both the exiles and those who remained in Judah. He could address both communities as a single entity, since they were in frequent contact with each other, and both

were passionately concerned about the fate of Jerusalem. Neither group accepted Ezekiel's indictment of their guilt or believed his prophecies about Jerusalem's coming destruction. After the destruction took place, the prophet's words turned to themes of renewed hope, regeneration, and blessing.

LITERARY HISTORY

The prophet and his followers composed the book in writing and preserved it for the specific purpose of instructing readers at a later time. The written composition and the careful preservation of Ezekiel contrast with much of the other prophetic literature in the Bible, which was spoken directly to a contemporaneous audience. Many of the words of prophets, such as Isaiah, were written down only a considerable time after they had been spoken; therefore they could be, and often were, modified to adapt them to situations that arose in later times. In Ezekiel, however, there are clear indications of an originally written composition and of an early intention to preserve the text. For instance, the thoroughgoing chronological notations show that Ezekiel and his followers took great care to demonstrate the timeliness and veracity of Ezekiel's oracles, and thereby their authority as prophecy. Ezekiel's character as a literary text also makes it a complex book to read and interpret. Much of the other prophetic material of the Bible, as oral literature, generally uses less elaborate forms; Ezekiel, however, is made up of intricate, deliberately composed literary creations. Although some scholars have viewed such literary ornamentation and intricacy as indicating confused layers of literary growth, more recently scholars have argued for literary integrity in the texts, even when the final form has resulted from a process of transmission and editing. This care for the written text and its accurate transmission, as well as for the preservation of authoritative traditions such as the Holiness School material (see Interpretation), mark a breakthrough in the development of written scripture in Israel, and therefore help us to understand the historical processes that created the biblical canon over the centuries.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The book of Ezekiel is complex, but fortunately its organization and outline are agreeably simple. Chapters 1–24 are set before the fall of Jerusalem and are largely prophecies of doom against the city and against Judah. An extended body of material on Ezekiel's call to prophesy begins this section in chs 1–3. Chapters 25–32 are prophecies against foreign nations, forming a bridge between Ezekiel's initial message of doom and his ultimate message of hope. The hope comes in the prophecies of restoration, chs 33–48, dating from the time after Jerusalem's fall. Clearly the capture and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE was the critical moment in Ezekiel's prophetic career. The prophecies of restoration include an apocalyptic passage (chs 38–39) and an extended utopian vision of a restored Temple and land (chs 40–48).

The prophecies in the book of Ezekiel are among the most fascinating and puzzling writings in the Bible. The prophet expresses his thought through a variety of literary forms, including symbolic action reports, visions, allegories, denunciations, and legal arguments. He sometimes uses bizarre or extreme imagery and elaborates it to an almost excessive point. He has inspired fear, awe, and wonder in readers because he attempts not merely to name but also to embody God's sovereignty, holiness, and mystery in words that come close to the limits of expression.

The style of Ezekiel does not always render reality by direct representation. Instead, it probes behind or beyond observable things and events, using metaphors and mythic poetry to portray the underlying structure of existence or the transcendent realities beneath both plain sensory observation and historical records. The visions in Ezekiel show both inner and outer realities, going beyond or abolishing normal sensory and temporal bounds.

Because of these literary qualities, reading Ezekiel requires a sophisticated approach, in order to avoid mistaking some of the descriptions for historical events, observable behaviors, or factual reports. For example, some interpretations of Ezekiel's behavior take it as evidence of a disoriented or abnormal personality. But the descriptions of these acts—such as muteness (3.22–27), holding prolonged, agonizing postures (4.4–8), and a failure to mourn (24.15–27)—are not evidence of psychological illness but are instead literary images that have rich theological import. The book portrays Ezekiel engaging in bizarre and disturbing behavior in order to provoke recollection of preceding scripture and intense theological reflection. A profound reorientation in the relationship of God and Israel is imminent, the authors believe, and they ask their audience to detect radical implications for life and faith in the metaphorical and parabolic character of their descriptions.

INTERPRETATION

Ezekiel and his editors were Jerusalem priests at the center of Judean society, whose traditions emphasized God's tangible dwelling in Jerusalem's Temple as his home, and the protection and sanctification of God's people that resulted from this divine presence. The exile of the Judean elite and the destruction of Jerusalem directly challenged this theology, since they called into question God's promises to dwell among the Israelites and be their God (Ex 29.45–46). Ezekiel answered these challenges with cosmic, eschatological, and apocalyptic visions of a rebuilt Israel that will fulfill God's promises despite the fall of the earthly Jerusalem (see 1.22–25n., 26–28n.; 37.28n.; 38.12n.; 43.7n.; 48.35n.). In these visions particularly, Ezekiel anticipated much that was yet to come in the biblical writings, including later developments of apocalypticism (see especially Dan 7–12 and, in the New Testament, the book of Revelation).

The specific language and laws of the priests and the traditions of the Temple heavily influenced Ezekiel as a Zadokite. A significant body of these traditions, the "Holiness School" (HS), can be found in the Pentateuch. The Holiness School material extends beyond the confines of Lev 17–26 (known as the "Holiness Code" or "Holiness Collection"), and includes other parts of the Pentateuch often identified as belonging to the Priestly source (P). The relationship between God and Israel assumed by the Holiness School is that of a vassal covenant (see Lev 26.9,15,25), a type of agreement in which guarantees on one side are specifically linked to responsibilities on the other, with significant sanctions if the responsibilities of vassalage are not met. For Ezekiel, this covenant form proved invaluable in interpreting the Exile, since it allowed for the possibility that defilement, injustice, and covenant infidelity on Israel's part could lead to punishments, including exile, without annulling God's eternal promises to Israel (Lev 26.42).

In his allegory of the unfaithful wife (ch 16), the prophet rehearses the failed history of the Israelites' vassal covenant with God. As in a marriage, with all its mutual obligations, God "pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you" (16.8). Because Jerusalem proved an adulterous wife, however, God determines to divorce her and expose her to be stoned (16.40; cf. Lev 20.10 [HS]). Jerusalem is doomed, because the people have "despised the oath, breaking the covenant" (16.59; cf. 17.19).

For the Holiness School, God's land is a delicately organized structure of holiness, subject to overthrow through the spread of uncleanness and bloodshed. It is like an uneasy stomach, ready to vomit out those who defile it (Lev 18.24–28). Ezekiel, in 36.16–19, insists that just such regurgitation has now happened. The land has fallen victim to defilement, and God's people have lost possession of it just as the Holiness School warned they would. Defiling any part of the land, God's holy territory, constitutes an assault of impurity on God's shrine (Lev 15.31; 19.30; 26.2; Num 5.3; 19.13; Ezek 8.6; 9.9). If the pollution of the sanctuary becomes willful and chronic, it will eventually force out God's glory (Num 35.34; Ezek 10.19; 11.22–23). Exposed to catastrophic judgment, the people become cut off (Ezek 37.11).

Despite Israel's lack of obedience to the covenant, Ezekiel prophesies a renewed covenantal relationship after the Exile (14.11; 16.60,62). God will guarantee this new vassal covenant's success by transplanting new obedient hearts into the people (11.19–20; 16.60; 36.26–28; 37.23–27). Under God's new plan, the people will "follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (11.20; cf. 36.27; Lev 26.12 [HS]).

The Holiness School stresses the unique sacredness of the people and land of Israel, in the midst of which dwells the glory of the LORD, GOD's embodied presence. This sacredness includes not only ritual and worship but also morality and social justice. The tangible dwelling of God's glory in the Temple at the center of Israel brings sanctity to all people and groups arrayed around it. It means the realization of Lev 20.26, where God proclaims: "You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine."

Since Israel is so intimately associated with God in this theology, the people must constantly grow in personal and collective holiness through their interaction with the divine presence (Ezek 11.12; 20.12; 37.28; Lev 11.44–45; 19.2; 20.7,26 [HS]). God's people, in Ezekiel's ideal world, emulate the holiness of God that sojourns in their midst (37.27; 43.9; cf. Ex 25.8; 29.45–46; 40.34; Lev 26.11; Num 5.3; 35.34 [HS]). From the midst of Israel, God radiates the divine holiness out to the entire land and to every sector of society (37.28; cf. Ex 31.13; Lev 21.15,23; 22.32 [HS]).

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1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. [2] On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), [3] the word of the LORD came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was on him there.

[4] As I looked, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. [5] In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance: they were of human form. [6] Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. [7] Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished bronze. [8] Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: [9] their wings touched one another; each of them moved straight ahead, without turning as they moved. [10] As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle; [11] such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. [12] Each moved straight ahead; wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. [13] In the middle of [a] the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and lightning issued from the fire. [14] The living creatures darted to and fro, like a flash of lightning.

[15] As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them.[b] [16] As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of beryl; and the four had

[a] Gk OL: Heb *And the appearance of*
[b] Heb *of their faces*

1.1–3.27: The call of Ezekiel. 1.1–3: Superscription. *The thirtieth year,* probably Ezekiel's own age, the age for assuming his duties at the Temple (Num 4.3 [HS]). *Fifth day,* July 31, 593 BCE. The last date in the book (40.1) is 573, so Ezekiel's career fits the normal twenty-year span of a priest's active service (Num 4.3,23,30 [HS]). *Chebar,* a canal near Nippur mentioned also in fifth-century Babylonian documents. *Exile of King Jehoiachin,* see 2 Kings 24.6-17. **3:** Ezekiel was a Zadokite *priest* (4.5–6n.; 44.15–31n.), steeped in the traditions of the Holiness School (see Introduction). Despite being a deportee, he never lost his priestly identity (cf. 43.12n.). The name *Ezekiel* means "God strengthens." *Chaldeans,* Babylonians. *Hand of the LORD* (3.14,22; 8.1; 33.22; 37.1; 40.1), Ezekiel will undergo the same divine compulsions and ecstatic trances experienced by Israel's early prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 18.46; 2 Kings 3.15).

1.4–28a: The throne-chariot vision. The first two-thirds of Ezekiel's vision describes the creatures and wheels below the platform supporting God's throne. The throne-chariot's form reveals a graduated, spatial system of layered sanctity with wheels, heavenly creatures, and a crystalline expanse separating the prophet from the divine presence. **4:** *Brightness . . . fire flashing forth continually,* as in the Holiness School, a brilliant, fiery radiance surrounds God (Ex 24.17; 40.38; Num 16.35, all HS). *Something like,* Ezekiel struggles to find words to express transcendent otherness. *Gleaming amber* (Heb "ḥashmal"), perhaps molten metal, is language about pure preternatural substance that has intrigued interpreters for centuries (see also 1.27; 8.2). Traditions in the Talmud play with translations such as "living fire" and "silent speaking." **5–14:** The *living creatures* are cherubim (10.15,20), guardians of God's throne (see Ex 25.18–22; 1 Kings 6.23–28). In ancient Near Eastern art they are winged, human-headed lions or bulls exhibiting mobility, intelligence, and strength. Such hybrid creatures often guarded entrances to ancient temples and palaces. These creatures have four *faces* (v. 10), adding the lordly *eagle,* since square configurations symbolize holiness and cosmic totality in Ezekiel's book (cf. 40.47n.; 41.4; 43.16; 48.20). **13:** *Torches,* cf. Gen 15.17. **15–21:** *The four . . . wheels* (cf. the four faces of the creatures) represent a cosmic reality lying behind earthly wheels in the Temple (1 Kings 7.27–39) or associated with the ark (2 Sam 6.3–7). The appearance of the wheels in Babylonia means that the cosmic throne of God has limitless, omnidirectional mobility and is not tied down to earthly Jerusalem, which is about to be judged and destroyed. See

the same form, their construction being something like a wheel within a wheel.
17 When they moved, they moved in any of the four directions without veering as they moved. 18 Their rims were tall and awesome, for the rims of all four were full of eyes all around. 19 When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. 20 Wherever the spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21 When they moved, the others moved; when they stopped, the others stopped; and when they rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

22 Over the heads of the living creatures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal,[a] spread out above their heads. 23 Under the dome their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another; and each of the creatures had two wings covering its body.
24 When they moved, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty,[b] a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they stopped, they let down their wings. 25 And there came a voice from above the dome over their heads; when they stopped, they let down their wings.

26 And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire;[c] and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form. 27 Upward from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendor all around. 28 Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.

2 He said to me: O mortal,[d] stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you. 2 And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. 3 He said to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation[e] of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. 4 The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus

[a] Gk: Heb *like the awesome crystal*
[b] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[c] Or *lapis lazuli*
[d] Or *son of man*; Heb *ben adam* (and so throughout the book when Ezekiel is addressed)
[e] Syr: Heb *to nations*

also 1.26–28n. **18:** *Full of eyes,* symbolic of omniscience (10.12; Zech 4.2,5,10). **22–25:** *A dome,* the cosmic firmament that separates earth and heaven (Gen 1.6–8,14; Pss 19.1; 150.1; Dan 12.3). The Temple mount symbolizes the cosmic mountain where heaven and earth intersect at the dome (see 28.14n.). **26–28:** Thus the LORD was still really enthroned atop the cosmos, even though Jerusalem, the symbol of God's cosmic dwelling (Pss 26.8; 63.2; 102.16), was to be destroyed by the Babylonians. **26:** *Seemed like a human form,* Ezekiel provides a rather humanlike image of God in keeping with the imagery of the Holiness School. Cf. images of the Mesopotamian god Ashur with a glowing upper torso and a flaming lower body. Ezekiel's imagery is controversial. Isa 40–66 and the Priestly Torah would be aghast at an association of God with any sort of likeness (see Isa 40.18,25; 46.5). **28:** *Appearance of the likeness,* the qualified language again emphasizes God's holy transcendence (see 1.4n.). *The glory*, for the Zadokites, represents God's embodied Presence on earth, tangible and accessible; see further 10.1–22n. Israel's divinely appointed role is to know the Presence, be transformed by it, and reflect it.

1.28b–3.27: Ezekiel's commissioning. The length of this section helps buttress Ezekiel's authority in the face of opposition. **1.28b–2.8a:** Ezekiel is commissioned in a series of addresses. **1.28b:** *Fell on my face*, a reaction of awe, and a posture of submission (also 3.23; 43.3). **2.1:** *Mortal* (Heb "ben ʾadam," see textual note *d*), a member of the category of "humanity." Ezekiel emphasizes that God and the divine realm tower above this category; the idiom occurs ninety-three times in the book. **2:** *Spirit* (see 3.12,14,24), a vigorous empowerment at receiving God's word. **3:** *Transgressed,* violated the terms of the vassal covenant of the Holiness School (Lev 26.9,15,25).

says the Lord GOD." [5] Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them. [6] And you, O mortal, do not be afraid of them, and do not be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns surround you and you live among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words, and do not be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. [7] You shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear; for they are a rebellious house.

[8] But you, mortal, hear what I say to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you. [9] I looked, and a hand was stretched out to me, and a written scroll was in it. [10] He spread it before me; it had writing on the front and on the back, and written on it were words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

3 He said to me, O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. [2] So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. [3] He said to me, Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey.

[4] He said to me: Mortal, go to the house of Israel and speak my very words to them. [5] For you are not sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel— [6] not to many peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to them, they would listen to you. [7] But the house of Israel will not listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. [8] See, I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. [9] Like the hardest stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not fear them or be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. [10] He said to me: Mortal, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart and hear with your ears; [11] then go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD"; whether they hear or refuse to hear.

[12] Then the spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the LORD rose[a] from its place, I heard behind me the sound of loud rumbling; [13] it was the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, that sounded like a loud rumbling. [14] The spirit lifted me up and bore me away; I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me. [15] I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who lived by the river Chebar.[b] And I sat there among them, stunned, for seven days.

[16] At the end of seven days, the word of the LORD came to me: [17] Mortal, I have made you a sentinel for the house of Israel;

[a] Cn: Heb *and blessed be the glory of the LORD*

[b] Two Mss Syr: Heb *Chebar, and to where they lived.* Another reading is *Chebar, and I sat where they sat*

Vassal covenants had punishments for disobedience: Israel can forfeit its status on God's land. **5:** *Rebellious house,* a phrase unique to Ezekiel (2.5,6,8; 3.9,26,27; 12.2,3,9,25; 17.12; 24.3) expressing the Holiness School's emphasis on the people's ingrained stubbornness and irreverence (cf. Num 17.10).

2.8b–3.3: In keeping with the emerging understanding of God's word as sacred text, Ezekiel is told to eat a *scroll* (cf. Jer 1.9; Zech 5.1–4). The scroll depicts the coming, fixed judgment of Judah; see 3.22–27n. **3.3:** Jeremiah's metaphor (Jer 15.16) becomes concrete in Ezekiel. God's word is *sweet* (Ps 19.10), even when its contents involve pain. **3.4–9:** Preparation for resistance. **5–6:** *Obscure speech,* like the language of Judah's enemies, perceived as harsh and unintelligible (Isa 33.19; Jer 5.15). **8–9:** *Hard,* or "strong"; compare the meaning of Ezekiel's name (1.3n.). **3.10–11:** A final charge.

3.12–15: Ezekiel returns to his people. 12: *Glory of the LORD*, see 1.28n.; 10.1–22n. **14:** Ezekiel feels either God's anger at the people or his own distress over his difficult task. *The hand of the LORD*, see 1.3n. **15:** *Tel-abib*, not modern Tel Aviv but a settlement of exiles near Nippur, not far from the Chebar canal. *Chebar*, 1.1–3n. *Seven days* of seclusion was what priests, like Ezekiel, observed during ordination preparations (Lev 8.33–35; Ex 29.35–37).

3.16–21: The sentinel. Prophets as sentries (Jer 6.17; Hos 9.8) provide early warnings of possible dangers (cf. 2 Kings 9.17). Ezekiel is assured that his personal responsibility is limited to delivering such warnings; the members of his audience are accountable for their responses (18.1–32; see also 33.1–9). **16:** *The word of the LORD*

whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. [18] If I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," and you give them no warning, or speak to warn the wicked from their wicked way, in order to save their life, those wicked persons shall die for their iniquity; but their blood I will require at your hand. [19] But if you warn the wicked, and they do not turn from their wickedness, or from their wicked way, they shall die for their iniquity; but you will have saved your life. [20] Again, if the righteous turn from their righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before them, they shall die; because you have not warned them, they shall die for their sin, and their righteous deeds that they have done shall not be remembered; but their blood I will require at your hand. [21] If, however, you warn the righteous not to sin, and they do not sin, they shall surely live, because they took warning; and you will have saved your life.

[22] Then the hand of the LORD was upon me there; and he said to me, Rise up, go out into the valley, and there I will speak with you. [23] So I rose up and went out into the valley; and the glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. [24] The spirit entered into me, and set me on my feet; and he spoke with me and said to me: Go, shut yourself inside your house. [25] As for you, mortal, cords shall be placed on you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the people; [26] and I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be speechless and unable to reprove them; for they are a rebellious house. [27] But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD"; let those who will hear, hear; and let those who refuse to hear, refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

4 And you, O mortal, take a brick and set it before you. On it portray a city, Jerusalem; [2] and put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it, and cast up a ramp against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around. [3] Then take an iron plate and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel.

[4] Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it; you shall bear their punishment for the number of the days that you lie there. [5] For I assign to you a number of days, three hundred ninety days, equal to the number of the

came to me, a form of expression occurring about fifty times in Ezekiel, which marks the beginnings of nearly all his main units of prophetic speech.

3.22–27: Ezekiel's speechlessness. 22: *The hand of the LORD was upon me*, a phrase that in Ezekiel frequently introduces a vision; cf. 1.3n. *The valley,* a specific site near Tel-abib (see 37.1n.). **26:** Ezekiel's *speechless* state is a powerful literary metaphor with a complex relationship to observable reality (Ezekiel is not literally speechless after this point; cf. 11.25). Its meaning relates to the growing significance of written, authoritative scripture in Ezekiel's time. Ezekiel falls speechless to let the scroll that he has swallowed (2.8b–3.3n.) have its fulfillment. The judgments of scripture (such as those of the book of Habakkuk) are now inevitable. Silence and isolation bar Ezekiel from normal efforts to intercede for the people with God (see 20.3). The judgments of the swallowed scroll play themselves out in the first half of Ezekiel's book, after which he regains his speech (24.25–27; 33.21–22).

4.1–24.27: Prophecies of doom against Judah and Jerusalem.

4.1–5.17: Actions symbolizing Jerusalem's coming siege. Like Ezekiel's speechlessness, these symbolic actions appear to be literary metaphors rather than observable events (e.g., see 4.4–8n.). **4.1–3:** A *brick* (common in Babylonia) inscribed before baking. Maps inscribed in clay were numerous in Mesopotamia. *Iron plate,* a baking griddle, standard priestly equipment (Lev 6.21), symbolizing the hostile barrier between the city and God. **4–8:** Ezekiel's symbolic, bodily actions contain complex layers of meaning. At one level the postures illustrate the coming siege of Jerusalem. Verse 6 refers to God's punishment of Judah in exile over the course of forty years (cf. Num 14.34 [HS]). At a deeper level, Ezekiel depicts God's pre-siege punishments of Israel in the land (see vv. 5–6n.), which the Holiness School anticipated (see Lev 26.14–32 [HS]). **4–5:** *Punishment*, or "iniquity." Israelite priests traditionally bore the weight of Israel's iniquity (Num 18.1 [HS]). **5–6:** The 390 years is probably the era

years of their punishment; and so you shall bear the punishment of the house of Israel. 6 When you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah; forty days I assign you, one day for each year. 7 You shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and with your arm bared you shall prophesy against it. 8 See, I am putting cords on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege.

9 And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread for yourself. During the number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred ninety days, you shall eat it. 10 The food that you eat shall be twenty shekels a day by weight; at fixed times you shall eat it. 11 And you shall drink water by measure, one-sixth of a hin; at fixed times you shall drink. 12 You shall eat it as a barley-cake, baking it in their sight on human dung. 13 The LORD said, "Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread, unclean, among the nations to which I will drive them." 14 Then I said, "Ah Lord GOD! I have never defiled myself; from my youth up until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by animals, nor has carrion flesh come into my mouth." 15 Then he said to me, "See, I will let you have cow's dung instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread."

16 Then he said to me, Mortal, I am going to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with fearfulness; and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. 17 Lacking bread and water, they will look at one another in dismay, and waste away under their punishment.

5 And you, O mortal, take a sharp sword; use it as a barber's razor and run it over your head and your beard; then take balances for weighing, and divide the hair. 2 One third of the hair you shall burn in the fire inside the city, when the days of the siege are completed; one third you shall take and strike with the sword all around the city;[a] and one third you shall scatter to the wind, and I will unsheathe the sword after them. 3 Then you shall take from these a small number, and bind them in the skirts of your robe. 4 From these, again, you shall take some, throw them into the fire and burn them up; from there a fire will come out against all the house of Israel.

5 Thus says the Lord GOD: This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. 6 But she has rebelled against my ordinances and my statutes, becoming more wicked than the nations and the countries all around her, rejecting my ordinances and not following my statutes. 7 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you are more turbulent than

[a] Heb *it*

that Israel's iniquity polluted the Temple, from its dedication by Solomon until its imminent destruction. The second figure of forty years (roughly one generation) represents the period of Babylonian exile; it echoes the period of wilderness wanderings (see Num 14.34 [HS]). As with the era of wanderings, the Exile sets the stage for a new beginning. **9–17:** Coarse bread and rationing symbolize the rigors of the coming siege of Jerusalem (cf. Jer 19.9; Lam 4.10). **9:** The necessity of mixing grains in odd combinations indicates scarcity of foodstuffs. **10–11:** Siege images and exile images blur in Ezekiel's multilevel symbolism. *Twenty shekels*, a ration of only 8 oz (228 gr) of food a day. *One-sixth of a hin*, approximately .67 qt (.64 L) of water. On this extremely meager diet, Jerusalem's inhabitants would totter on the brink of starvation (vv. 16–17). **12–13:** *Human dung,* considered unclean (Deut 23.12–14), represents the defiling effects of exile to an unclean land. The Zadokites deemed foreign lands *unclean*, since God's holy presence did not reside there to purify and sanctify the territory. **14:** Cf. Lev 17.10–16 (HS). **15:** Ezekiel was allowed to substitute dried *cow's dung*, a common fuel in the Near East. **16:** God's breaking the *staff of bread* ("food supply") is a penalty for violating the Holiness School covenant (Lev 26.26). **5.1–17:** *Barber's razor*, a foreign word, common in Mesopotamia. Acts of shaving and gathering hair appear in Babylonian ritual texts. In Ezekiel, the hair symbolizes a defeated Israel, to be destroyed in three different ways. **3–4:** A Babylonian incantation speaks of weighing a patient's shaved hair after placing it in his garment's hem. Objects could be carried in the folds of one's garments for safekeeping (Hag 2.12). Shockingly, Ezekiel portrays the hair, the surviving remnant of Judah, undergoing further judgment. **5:** *Center of the nations,* Jerusalem was viewed

the nations that are all around you, and have not followed my statutes or kept my ordinances, but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations that are all around you; [8] therefore thus says the Lord God: I, I myself, am coming against you; I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations. [9] And because of all your abominations, I will do to you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. [10] Surely, parents shall eat their children in your midst, and children shall eat their parents; I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to every wind. [11] Therefore, as I live, says the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations—therefore I will cut you down;[a] my eye will not spare, and I will have no pity. [12] One third of you shall die of pestilence or be consumed by famine among you; one third shall fall by the sword around you; and one third I will scatter to every wind and will unsheathe the sword after them.

[13] My anger shall spend itself, and I will vent my fury on them and satisfy myself; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken in my jealousy, when I spend my fury on them. [14] Moreover I will make you a desolation and an object of mocking among the nations around you, in the sight of all that pass by. [15] You shall be[b] a mockery and a taunt, a warning and a horror, to the nations around you, when I execute judgments on you in anger and fury, and with furious punishments—I, the Lord, have spoken— [16] when I loose against you[c] my deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will let loose to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you, and break your staff of bread. [17] I will send famine and wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children; pestilence and bloodshed shall pass through you; and I will bring the sword upon you. I, the Lord, have spoken.

6 The word of the Lord came to me: [2] O mortal, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, [3] and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: I, I myself will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. [4] Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense stands shall be broken; and I will throw down your slain in front of your idols. [5] I will lay the corpses of the people of Israel in front of their idols; and I will scatter

[a] Another reading is *I will withdraw*
[b] Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *It shall be*
[c] Heb *them*

as the mythic center of the earth (see 38.12, "center [lit., navel] of the earth"; 43.13–17n.). **8:** Formulaic language for challenging someone to a duel. *Sight of the nations,* Israel should have been an object lesson in holiness to the nations. **10:** Cannibalism was a curse for breaking the Holiness School covenant (Lev 26.29). **11:** *Defiled my sanctuary,* that is, they desecrated God's holy dwelling and sacred reputation, directly jeopardizing God's indwelling presence (see Lev 20.3; Num 19.20, both HS; Ezek 23.38). Sin committed anywhere in the land, no matter how far from the Temple, contaminates God's abode. If textual note *a* is the correct reading, this verse anticipates the departure of the Lord's glory from the Temple described in 10.1–22 and 11.22–25. **12:** *Pestilence . . . famine*, Holiness School covenant sanctions in Lev 26.25–26. **13:** *Jealousy*, a key divine trait for the Zadokites; see Num 25.11 (HS). *They shall know . . . ,* 6.7n. **16:** *Staff of bread,* 4.16n. **17:** 14.21; Lev 26.22 (HS).

6.1–14: Two prophecies against Israel's idolatry. 1–10: First prophecy of judgment. **2:** *Set your face toward,* an idiom of Ezekiel (cf. 13.17; 20.46; 21.2; 25.2; 28.21; 29.2; 35.2; 38.2) calling for a hostile orientation. *The mountains of Israel,* the central highland ridge of the land representing, in Ezekiel, the entire homeland territory (19.9; 33.38; 34.14; 35.12; 37.22; 38.8). Mountains symbolized the intersection of earth and heaven, so Israel's topography points to its unique status as God's holy land and the world's center (38.12; cf. Lev 26.11–12; Zech 2.12). Israel's mountains are here associated with illegitimate worship, degrading this holy status (v. 9; cf. 18.6). **3:** *High places* were ritual installations or shrines. Their destruction was a curse for breaking the Holiness School covenant (Lev 26.30). **4:** *Idols* translates Ezekiel's characteristic term "gillulim," found in Lev 26.30 (HS) and thirty-nine times in Ezekiel, compared with eight times elsewhere in the Bible. The term is contemptuous, probably

your bones around your altars. [6] Wherever you live, your towns shall be waste and your high places ruined, so that your altars will be waste and ruined,[a] your idols broken and destroyed, your incense stands cut down, and your works wiped out. [7] The slain shall fall in your midst; then you shall know that I am the LORD.

[8] But I will spare some. Some of you shall escape the sword among the nations and be scattered through the countries. [9] Those of you who escape shall remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how I was crushed by their wanton heart that turned away from me, and their wanton eyes that turned after their idols. Then they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed, for all their abominations. [10] And they shall know that I am the LORD; I did not threaten in vain to bring this disaster upon them.

[11] Thus says the Lord GOD: Clap your hands and stamp your foot, and say, Alas for all the vile abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. [12] Those far off shall die of pestilence; those nearby shall fall by the sword; and any who are left and are spared shall die of famine. Thus I will spend my fury upon them. [13] And you shall know that I am the LORD, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountain tops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing odor to all their idols. [14] I will stretch out my hand against them, and make the land desolate and waste, throughout all their settlements, from the wilderness to Riblah.[b] Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

7 The word of the LORD came to me: [2] You, O mortal, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel:

An end! The end has come
upon the four corners of the land.
[3] Now the end is upon you,
I will let loose my anger upon you;
I will judge you according to your ways,
I will punish you for all your
abominations.
[4] My eye will not spare you, I will have no
pity.
I will punish you for your ways,
while your abominations are among
you.
Then you shall know that I am the LORD.
[5] Thus says the Lord GOD:
Disaster after disaster! See, it comes.
[6] An end has come, the end has come.
It has awakened against you; see, it comes!
[7] Your doom[c] has come to you,
O inhabitant of the land.
The time has come, the day is near—
of tumult, not of reveling on the
mountains.

[a] Syr Vg Tg: Heb *and be made guilty*
[b] Another reading is *Diblah*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

equating idols with sheep droppings. **6:** *Towns shall be waste,* Lev 26.31 (HS). **7:** *You shall know . . . ,* one of over sixty similar closing declarations in Ezekiel (see vv. 10,13–14). Ezekiel shares an emphasis on recognition of the LORD with the Holiness School (e.g., Ex 6.7; 7.5; 10.2; 16.12; 31.13). He prophesies that God's judging and saving acts will prove God's sovereign identity and result in human recognition of God, which means being drawn into direct experience of God's life. The book of Ezekiel de-emphasizes the prophet's individual personality, focusing instead on God's desire to reveal the holiness, the "otherness," of God's own self. To know God's otherness is to align with God's focus on making Israel holy, "other," set apart (see Ex 10.2; 16.32; Lev 23.43 [HS]). **9:** The people will finally despair of their state of alienation from God. **11–14:** A second prophecy of judgment, beginning with an expressive action (cf. 21.14n.; Num 24.10; Job 27.23) communicating divine distress and anger. **11:** *Stamp,* as did the goddess Anat in the Ugaritic text *Aqhat*, when the hero Aqhat refuses her wishes. *Sword . . . famine . . . pestilence,* Lev 26.25–26 (HS). **14:** *Stretch out my hand,* a repeated expression of Ezekiel denoting hard, crushing judgment (14.9,13; 16.27; 25.7; 35.3). *From the wilderness* of southern Judah *to Riblah* in central Syria was the maximum historical extent of Israelite territory.

7.1–27: Prophecies on the approaching end. 1–4: *The end* (cf. 7.6; Am 8.1–3) is doomsday. *Four corners,* a sweeping totality (cf. the four cherubim in 1.5–6 and the four horns of temple altars, Ex 37.25 [HS]). **5–9:** *The day* (v. 7) is "the day of the LORD," the time of God's appearance to defeat evil and establish justice (Am 5.18–20; Isa 2.11,12–17; Joel 1.15). The experience will be nothing short of cataclysmic (cf. 21.26; Zeph 1.14–18). **6:** *Awakened*

[8] Soon now I will pour out my wrath upon you;
I will spend my anger against you.
I will judge you according to your ways,
and punish you for all your abominations.
[9] My eye will not spare; I will have no pity.
I will punish you according to your ways,
while your abominations are among you.
Then you shall know that it is I the LORD who strike.
[10] See, the day! See, it comes!
Your doom[a] has gone out.
The rod has blossomed, pride has budded.
[11] Violence has grown into a rod of wickedness.
None of them shall remain,
not their abundance, not their wealth;
no pre-eminence among them.[a]
[12] The time has come, the day draws near;
let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn,
for wrath is upon all their multitude.
[13] For the sellers shall not return to what has been sold as long as they remain alive. For the vision concerns all their multitude; it shall not be revoked. Because of their iniquity, they cannot maintain their lives.[a]
[14] They have blown the horn and made everything ready;
but no one goes to battle,
for my wrath is upon all their multitude.
[15] The sword is outside, pestilence and famine are inside;
those in the field die by the sword;
those in the city—famine and pestilence devour them.
[16] If any survivors escape,
they shall be found on the mountains
like doves of the valleys,
all of them moaning over their iniquity.
[17] All hands shall grow feeble,
all knees turn to water.
[18] They shall put on sackcloth,
horror shall cover them.
Shame shall be on all faces,
baldness on all their heads.
[19] They shall fling their silver into the streets,
their gold shall be treated as unclean.
Their silver and gold cannot save them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. They shall not satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs with it. For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity. [20] From their[b] beautiful ornament, in which they took pride, they made their abominable images, their detestable things; therefore I will make of it an unclean thing to them.
[21] I will hand it over to strangers as booty,
to the wicked of the earth as plunder;
they shall profane it.
[22] I will avert my face from them,
so that they may profane my treasured[c] place;
the violent shall enter it,
they shall profane it.
[23] Make a chain![a]
For the land is full of bloody crimes;
the city is full of violence.
[24] I will bring the worst of the nations
to take possession of their houses.
I will put an end to the arrogance of the strong,
and their holy places shall be profaned.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Syr Symmachus: Heb *its*
[c] Or *secret*

(Heb "heqits") sounds like "end" (Heb "qets"). **9:** See v. 4. **10–27:** The end spells dissolution of normal life. **10: The term** *rod* (Heb "mutteh") meaning "perversity" (9.9). **14:** The *horn* calls to the defense, but the people are too enfeebled to respond (v. 17). **18:** Wearing coarse *sackcloth* and shaving the head (*baldness*) were displays of mourning (cf. 27.31; Am 8.10; Isa 22.12). The disaster will also provoke involuntary reactions of *horror* and *shame*. **19:** Zeph 1.18. Precious metals often plated wooden idols. *Stumbling block of iniquity,* a phrase unique to Ezekiel (14.3,4,7; 18.30; 44.12). **20:** *Beautiful ornament,* the gold and silver of the Temple treasury, used to fashion idolatrous images (16.17; 2 Kings 21.7). **22:** *My treasured place,* God's Temple and its inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies. **23a:** *Chain,* a long train of prisoners for exile (cf. Nah 3.10; Jer 40.1), but see textual note *c.* **23b:** Social ethics, as well as idolatry, concern Ezekiel and the Holiness School (12.19; 28.16). **24:** Human *arrogance* has no place

25 When anguish comes, they will seek
peace,
but there shall be none.
26 Disaster comes upon disaster,
rumor follows rumor;
they shall keep seeking a vision from the
prophet;
instruction shall perish from the priest,
and counsel from the elders.
27 The king shall mourn,
the prince shall be wrapped in despair,
and the hands of the people of the land
shall tremble.
According to their way I will deal with
them;
according to their own judgments I will
judge them.
And they shall know that I am the LORD.

8 In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there. 2 I looked, and there was a figure that looked like a human being;[a] below what appeared to be its loins it was fire, and above the loins it was like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming amber. 3 It stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, to the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy. 4 And the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I had seen in the valley.

5 Then God[b] said to me, "O mortal, lift up your eyes now in the direction of the north." So I lifted up my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, in the entrance, was this image of jealousy. 6 He said to me, "Mortal, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? Yet you will see still greater abominations."

7 And he brought me to the entrance of the court; I looked, and there was a hole in the wall. 8 Then he said to me, "Mortal, dig through the wall"; and when I dug through the wall, there was an entrance. 9 He said to me, "Go in, and see the vile abominations

[a] Gk: Heb *like fire*
[b] Heb *he*

in Zadokite theology (see Introduction), where God is uncontestably sovereign (Lev 26.19 [HS]). **25–27:** The invasion and siege bring total upheaval and confusion (cf. 21.26). **27:** *Wrapped in despair*, a striking metaphor.

8.1–11.25: Visions of Temple abominations. Ezekiel experiences visions of horrendous pollution that make God's continued indwelling of Jerusalem's Temple inconceivable. As God's Presence departs, fiery holiness purges the city (10.2,6–7; cf. Num 16.35–38 [HS]). In the visions, Ezekiel saw beyond the observable offenses of his time into the ingrained, polluted spirit of Israel's land and Temple. A single locale mystically hosts separate apostasies (8.3,14); the Northern Kingdom, though now dispersed, reappears (9.9). **8.1–18: The vision of idolatry. 1:** *Sixth year . . . sixth month . . . fifth day,* September 17, 592 BCE. The *elders* in exile with the prophet (cf. 14.1; 20.1) were the traditional leaders of Israel's family lines. They have stepped in to fill a leadership vacuum. Note that they respect Ezekiel's social status. *The hand of the LORD* (see 1.3n.) yanks Ezekiel far from Babylonia. **2:** The *figure* is God described anthropomorphically in the tradition of the Holiness School (as in 1.26–27). **3:** *By a lock of my head,* cf. Bel 36. An Assyrian vision story describes Nergal, an underworld god, seizing a prince by the hair and dragging him into his presence. The north *gateway* to the Temple's inner courtyard (see 9.2; 2 Kings 15.35; Jer 20.2), also termed the *altar gate* (v. 5), led directly to the traditional zone of sacrificial slaughter (Lev 1.11). Altars and chambers oriented northward were of special Zadokite concern (40.38–43,46; Ex 40.22 [HS]). The *image of jealousy* is perhaps the carved image of the goddess Asherah that King Manasseh set up in the Temple (2 Kings 21.7; 2 Chr 33.7). The image provoked God, whom the Holiness School understands to demand exclusive allegiance (see Num 25.11 [HS]). Though removed by Ezekiel's time (2 Kings 23.6), the image stood out starkly in the prophet's transhistorical perception. **4:** See 3.22–23. *The glory,* see 10.1–22n. **5:** *Mortal,* see 2.1n. **6:** *Drive me far*, now Ezekiel sees why God's throne chariot had relocated to Babylonia. The Presence returns to a new Temple in 43.1–7. **7–13:** Ezekiel views the story of rebellion in Num 16 as prototypical, and describes the elders of Judah repeating their actions (Num 16.2,17,35 [HS]; 44.6–14n.). **8:** *Dig,* penetrating priestly chambers or

that they are committing here." [10] So I went in and looked; there, portrayed on the wall all around, were all kinds of creeping things, and loathsome animals, and all the idols of the house of Israel. [11] Before them stood seventy of the elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah son of Shaphan standing among them. Each had his censer in his hand, and the fragrant cloud of incense was ascending. [12] Then he said to me, "Mortal, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of images? For they say, 'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land.'" [13] He said also to me, "You will see still greater abominations that they are committing."

[14] Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD; women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz. [15] Then he said to me, "Have you seen this, O mortal? You will see still greater abominations than these."

[16] And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD; there, at the entrance of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, prostrating themselves to the sun toward the east. [17] Then he said to me, "Have you seen this, O mortal? Is it not bad enough that the house of Judah commits the abominations done here? Must they fill the land with violence, and provoke my anger still further? See, they are putting the branch to their nose! [18] Therefore I will act in wrath; my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; and though they cry in my hearing with a loud voice, I will not listen to them."

9 Then he cried in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Draw near, you executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand." [2] And six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand; among them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

[3] Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. The LORD called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his side; [4] and said to him, "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." [5] To the others he said in my hearing, "Pass through the city after him, and kill; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. [6] Cut down old men, young men and young women, little children and women, but touch no one who has the

sacristies flanking the gatehouse and lining the inside of the courtyard wall. **10:** The engravings are *idols,* prohibited in Lev 26.30 HS. Images of *creeping things* would be doubly detestable (Lev 20.25 [HS]). **11:** The mention of *Jaazaniah* among the encroachers is disturbing, given his family's record of faithfulness. His father *Shaphan* was active in King Josiah's reform movement (2 Kings 22), and his brother Ahikam and nephew Gedaliah assisted and protected Jeremiah (Jer 26.24; 39.14). **12:** The elders' idea that *the LORD has forsaken the land* becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (see 11.22–23). **14–15:** *Tammuz,* a Mesopotamian god; the weeping was for his periodic descent into the underworld. Transtemporal perception is again suggested here, since Ezekiel sees the weeping rite in the sixth month (v. 1) and not in the fourth month (June–July), when it was normally practiced. **16–17:** The climactic abomination seen by Ezekiel was sun worship in the Temple's very doorway. Solar veneration is evidenced by 2 Kings 23.5,11, by horse figurines with sun disks found at Lachish, Hazor, and Jerusalem, and by an Israelite ritual stand found at Taanach. **17–18:** The *branch* gesture may express an entreaty, which God then rejects in v. 18a (read "but" instead of *therefore*; a parallel rejection of all pleas then appears in v. 18b). A relief of the Assyrian king Sennacherib shows him using the branch gesture to entreat the gods.

9.1–11: The punishment of the guilty. 1–2: From the *upper gate* (8.3n.; Jer 20.2), facing the ominous *north* (cf. 38.6; Jer 1.14–15), come seven *executioners* (divine functionaries sent to punish), comparable to the seven covenant enforcers of the Aramaic Sefire inscription. Among the seven is *a man clothed in linen,* a bleached fabric signifying purity, which was worn by divine messengers (Dan 10.5) and by priests (44.17; Lev 6.10 [HS]). **3:** On the departure of the *glory,* see 10.1–22n. *The cherub,* in the singular (also 10.4), is used of the inanimate pair of statues in the Temple. The actual living entities are referred to with the Heb plural, "cherubim." **4:** The *mark* was the Heb letter "taw," made like an X. **6:** The *elders* are those of 8.16. **7:** Ezekiel's Holiness School tradi-

mark. And begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were in front of the house. 7 Then he said to them, "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go!" So they went out and killed in the city. 8 While they were killing, and I was left alone, I fell prostrate on my face and cried out, "Ah Lord GOD! will you destroy all who remain of Israel as you pour out your wrath upon Jerusalem?" 9 He said to me, "The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city full of perversity; for they say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see.' 10 As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity, but I will bring down their deeds upon their heads."

11 Then the man clothed in linen, with the writing case at his side, brought back word, saying, "I have done as you commanded me."

10 Then I looked, and above the dome that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire,[a] in form resembling a throne. 2 He said to the man clothed in linen, "Go within the wheelwork underneath the cherubim; fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city." He went in as I looked on. 3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house when the man went in; and a cloud filled the inner court. 4 Then the glory of the LORD rose up from the cherub to the threshold of the house; the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the glory of the LORD. 5 The sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty[b] when he speaks.

6 When he commanded the man clothed in linen, "Take fire from within the wheelwork, from among the cherubim," he went in and stood beside a wheel. 7 And a cherub stretched out his hand from among the cherubim to the fire that was among the cherubim, took some of it and put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen, who took it and went out. 8 The cherubim appeared to have the form of a human hand under their wings.

9 I looked, and there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like gleaming beryl. 10 And as for their appearance, the four looked alike, something like a wheel within a wheel. 11 When they moved, they moved in any of the four directions without veering as they moved; but in whatever direction the front wheel faced, the others followed without veering as they moved. 12 Their entire body, their rims, their spokes, their wings, and the wheels—the wheels of the four of them—were full of eyes all around. 13 As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing "the wheelwork." 14 Each one had four faces: the first face was that of the cherub, the second face was that of a human being, the third that of a lion, and the fourth that of an eagle.

15 The cherubim rose up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar. 16 When the cherubim moved, the

[a] Or *lapis lazuli*
[b] Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

tions stressed that corpses defile (Lev 21.1; Num 5.2–3; 9.6; 19.11,13 [HS]). **8:** *All who remain* are those still in the homeland after Ezekiel's exile in 597 BCE.

10.1–22 and **11.22–25: The departure of the LORD's glory** is described in three versions (9.3; 10.4; 11.22). *The glory* (see 1.28n.), for the Zadokites, is God's single, indivisible body. Ezek 43.2 distinguishes the glory from the radiance that it emits. Ideally, the glory remains substantively interconnected with the Temple on an ongoing basis (Ex 40.38; Num 9.15 [HS]). The glory has been present in Jerusalem (8.4,12b) but defilement forces it to depart, first to the doorway of the Temple (also 9.3), then to the east gate of the Temple's outer courtyard (10.18–19), and then, in 11.22–25, east over the Mount of Olives toward Babylon, where Ezekiel first saw it (1.28; 3.22–23; cf. 8.4; 11.16). Eventually, the glory returns to the Temple (43.2–5; 44.4). **1:** *Cherubim,* see 1.5–14n. **2:** *Man clothed in linen,* see 9.1–2n. *Wheelwork,* see **1.4–28a**. *Burning coals,* cf. 1.13; Lev 16.12; Ps 18.8,13. **3–4:** The throne-chariot comes to collect the glory from the cherub statues (see 9.3n.). The *cloud* filling the Temple recalls Ex 16.10; 40.34–35 (HS); it both conceals and reveals the divine presence. **12:** *Eyes all around,* see 1.18n. **14:** *That of the cherub,* the bull face of 1.10 (some ancient cherubim were bovine). **15:** *Chebar,* 1.1–3n.

wheels moved beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise up from the earth, the wheels at their side did not veer. 17 When they stopped, the others stopped, and when they rose up, the others rose up with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in them.

18 Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house and stopped above the cherubim. 19 The cherubim lifted up their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight as they went out with the wheels beside them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD; and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

20 These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim. 21 Each had four faces, each four wings, and underneath their wings something like human hands. 22 As for what their faces were like, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. Each one moved straight ahead.

11 The spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the LORD, which faces east. There, at the entrance of the gateway, were twenty-five men; among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur, and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, officials of the people. 2 He said to me, "Mortal, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; 3 they say, 'The time is not near to build houses; this city is the pot, and we are the meat.' 4 Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, O mortal."

5 Then the spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the LORD: This is what you think, O house of Israel; I know the things that come into your mind. 6 You have killed many in this city, and have filled its streets with the slain. 7 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: The slain whom you have placed within it are the meat, and this city is the pot; but you shall be taken out of it. 8 You have feared the sword; and I will bring the sword upon you, says the Lord GOD. 9 I will take you out of it and give you over to the hands of foreigners, and execute judgments upon you. 10 You shall fall by the sword; I will judge you at the border of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD. 11 This city shall not be your pot, and you shall not be the meat inside it; I will judge you at the border of Israel. 12 Then you shall know that I am the LORD, whose statutes you have not followed, and whose ordinances you have not kept, but you have acted according to the ordinances of the nations that are around you."

13 Now, while I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell down on my face, cried with a loud voice, and said, "Ah Lord GOD! will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?"

14 Then the word of the LORD came to me: 15 Mortal, your kinsfolk, your own kin, your fellow exiles,[a] the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, "They have gone far from the LORD; to us this land is given for a

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *people of your kindred*

11.1–25: Judgment and promise. 11.1–13: A disputation over the city. *Twenty-five men,* the elders of 8.16; 9.6, leading counselors after the first exile of 597 BCE. Among them are *Jaazaniah* (not the man in 8.11) and *Pelatiah* (see v. 13). *Wicked counsel* perhaps refers to the plot against Babylonia in Jer 27.1–3; 37.5,7,11. **3:** Focused on fortifying Jerusalem for the rebellion, the leaders postpone domestic construction. *The pot,* an impenetrable metal cauldron or sturdy crock, a metaphor of smug reliance on Zion's ironclad invulnerability (the metaphor recurs in 24.3–8). *Meat,* the choice portion, while the exiles in Babylonia are perceived as discarded bones (v. 15). **5–13:** When God's Presence departs (see 1.15–21n.,26–28n.), Zion will be defenseless and the elders *taken out* (see Lev 18.25,28 [HS]). A morally complacent trust in Zion protects no one (cf. 24.1–14), but they will be judged at *the border of Israel* (vv. 10–11; perhaps Riblah; see 6.14n.; 2 Kings 25.6,18–21). **13:** The death of *Pelatiah* (see v. 1) is a prophecy, not an actual event. Ezekiel's desperate question at the end of this verse receives a reassuring negative answer in vv. 14–21.

11.14–21: The future lies with the exiles. This early (pre-586, see v. 15) oracle of promise disputes the pretentious claims of those who remained in the land. Ezekiel warns them that the exile group constitutes the true Israel (cf. 20.41–42). **15:** *Your fellow exiles,* see textual note *a*; the rare Heb noun translated "kindred" denotes people who, according to the Holiness School, should be defended against the permanent alienation of their

possession." [16] Therefore say: Thus says the Lord God: Though I removed them far away among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a little while[a] in the countries where they have gone. [17] Therefore say: Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. [18] When they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. [19] I will give them one[b] heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, [20] so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. [21] But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations,[c] I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, says the Lord God.

[22] Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. [23] And the glory of the Lord ascended from the middle of the city, and stopped on the mountain east of the city. [24] The spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen left me. [25] And I told the exiles all the things that the Lord had shown me.

12 The word of the Lord came to me: [2] Mortal, you are living in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, who have ears to hear but do not hear; [3] for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, mortal, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight; you shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. [4] You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile; and you shall go out yourself at evening in their sight, as those do who go into exile. [5] Dig through the wall in their sight, and carry the baggage through it. [6] In their sight you shall lift the baggage on your shoulder, and carry it out in the dark; you shall cover your face, so that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.

[7] I did just as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands; I brought it out in the dark, carrying it on my shoulder in their sight.

[8] In the morning the word of the Lord came to me: [9] Mortal, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, "What are you doing?" [10] Say to them, "Thus says the Lord God: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel in it." [11] Say, "I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity." [12] And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage on his shoulder in the dark, and shall go out; he[d] shall dig through the wall and carry it through; he shall cover his face, so that he may not see the land with his eyes. [13] I will spread my net over him, and he shall

[a] Or *to some extent*
[b] Another reading is *a new*
[c] Cn: Heb *And to the heart of their detestable things and their abominations their heart goes*
[d] Gk Syr: Heb *they*

land (Lev 25.25–28). The Jerusalemites are violating Holiness School traditions (see 45.8–9n.). **16:** *A sanctuary,* the Hebrew indicates that the glory of the Lord is now tabernacling with the exiles rather than with those who remained behind (cf. v. 23). **17–21:** Promise of restoration to the exiles from before the city's fall in 586 BCE, as shown by the concerns of v. 21. **19:** New *heart,* see 36.26n. **20:** The new covenant, cf. 16.60; 36.27–28; 37.23,27.

11.22–25: Two reports conclude the Temple visions. **22–23:** See 10.1–22n. *The mountain east of the city* is the Mount of Olives. **24:** *Chaldea,* Babylonia.

12.1–20: Two symbolic actions. 12.1–16: First symbol, an exile's baggage. Ezekiel symbolizes the Jerusalemites leaving the city with exiles' typical sacks (see Jer 10.17; 46.19), such as those depicted in Assyrian reliefs showing the Judean captives from Lachish. **5:** *Dig,* fugitives would frantically dig out of the city through partially breached walls. **10–12:** Zedekiah (the *prince,* vv. 10,12) left the city by night, was captured (17.20), and blinded (*may not see,* vv. 6,12; 2 Kings 25.4,7; Jer 39.1–10). The oracle was revised to bring out its fit with events. **12:** The Heb text may mean

be caught in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it; and he shall die there. 14 I will scatter to every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will unsheathe the sword behind them. 15 And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries. 16 But I will let a few of them escape from the sword, from famine and pestilence, so that they may tell of all their abominations among the nations where they go; then they shall know that I am the LORD.

17 The word of the LORD came to me: 18 Mortal, eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and with fearfulness; 19 and say to the people of the land, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with fearfulness, and drink their water in dismay, because their land shall be stripped of all it contains, on account of the violence of all those who live in it. 20 The inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the LORD.

21 The word of the LORD came to me: 22 Mortal, what is this proverb of yours about the land of Israel, which says, "The days are prolonged, and every vision comes to nothing"? 23 Tell them therefore, "Thus says the Lord GOD: I will put an end to this proverb, and they shall use it no more as a proverb in Israel." But say to them, The days are near, and the fulfillment of every vision. 24 For there shall no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25 But I the LORD will speak the word that I speak, and it will be fulfilled. It will no longer be delayed; but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and fulfill it, says the Lord GOD.

26 The word of the LORD came to me: 27 Mortal, the house of Israel is saying, "The vision that he sees is for many years ahead; he prophesies for distant times." 28 Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be fulfilled, says the Lord GOD.

13 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are prophesying; say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: "Hear the word of the LORD!" 3 Thus says the Lord GOD, Alas for the senseless prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4 Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel. 5 You have not gone up into the breaches, or repaired a wall for the house of Israel, so that it might stand in battle on the day of the LORD. 6 They have envisioned falsehood and lying divination; they say, "Says the LORD," when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they wait for the fulfillment of their word! 7 Have you not seen a false vision or uttered a lying divination, when you have said, "Says the LORD," even though I did not speak?

8 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have uttered falsehood and envisioned lies, I am against you, says the Lord GOD. 9 My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations; they shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord GOD. 10 Because, in truth, because they

"they [the besiegers] will dig through the wall to bring [the prince] out through it" (see textual note *d*). **14:** 5.2,12; 17.21; Lev 26.33 (HS). **15–16:** 14.21–23.

12.17–20: Second symbol, eating with trembling. The people's emotional breakdown (cf. Ps 80.5) is prophesied.

12.21–28: Disputations about prophecy. Ezekiel condemns the people's skepticism (vv. 22,27; Jer 5.12; 17.15). **26–28:** Second disputation.

13.1–23: Oracles against false prophecy. 1–16: False prophets, advocating nationalistic hope, were robbing people of their chance to find life amid the inevitable judgment. **4:** Like a pack of scavenging *jackals, the false prophets preside over a coming ruined city* (Lam 5.18). **5:** To go *up into the breaches* (cf. 22.30, Ps 106.23) is to risk one's life by arguing with God on the people's behalf (9.8; 11.13). *Day of the LORD,* see 7.5–9n. **10–16:** *No peace,* cf. Jer 6.14; 8.11. Traditions of Zion's divine invulnerability are generating false hopes. *Whitewash,* better "plaster."

have misled my people, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace; and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets[a] smear whitewash on it. 11 Say to those who smear whitewash on it that it shall fall. There will be a deluge of rain,[b] great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will break out. 12 When the wall falls, will it not be said to you, "Where is the whitewash you smeared on it?" 13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: In my wrath I will make a stormy wind break out, and in my anger there shall be a deluge of rain, and hailstones in wrath to destroy it. 14 I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare; when it falls, you shall perish within it; and you shall know that I am the LORD. 15 Thus I will spend my wrath upon the wall, and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash; and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it— 16 the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for it, when there was no peace, says the Lord GOD.

17 As for you, mortal, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own imagination; prophesy against them 18 and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the women who sew bands on all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every height, in the hunt for human lives! Will you hunt down lives among my people, and maintain your own lives? 19 You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death persons who should not die and keeping alive persons who should not live, by your lies to my people, who listen to lies.

20 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I am against your bands with which you hunt lives;[c] I will tear them from your arms, and let the lives go free, the lives that you hunt down like birds. 21 I will tear off your veils, and save my people from your hands; they shall no longer be prey in your hands; and you shall know that I am the LORD. 22 Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not disheartened them, and you have encouraged the wicked not to turn from their wicked way and save their lives; 23 therefore you shall no longer see false visions or practice divination; I will save my people from your hand. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

14 Certain elders of Israel came to me and sat down before me. 2 And the word of the LORD came to me: 3 Mortal, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and placed their iniquity as a stumbling block before them; shall I let myself be consulted by them? 4 Therefore speak to them, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any of those of the house of Israel who take their idols into their hearts and place their iniquity as a stumbling block before them, and yet come to the prophet—I the LORD will answer those who come with the multitude of their idols, 5 in order that I may take hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, all of whom are estranged from me through their idols.

6 Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7 For any of those

[a] Heb *they*
[b] Heb *rain and you*
[c] Gk Syr: Heb *lives for birds*

The false prophets' flimsy messages (Jer 23; 27–29) were like mud-plaster that would dissolve in the coming storm/judgment.

13.17–23: Against sorceresses. For a meager fee (v. 19), some exiles safeguarded the wicked and attacked their enemies through black magic. *Bands* and *veils* (perhaps "head clothes" or "necklaces" with amulets attached) were likely magical devices used in Babylonian witchcraft to attack and defend, respectively. Babylonian incantations speak of "the knot of evil magic" and limbs "paralyzed" by magic. **18:** The sorceresses entrap souls like hunters trapping prey (cf. Prov 6.6).

14.1–11: A legal case involving consultation. Ezekiel uses the legal language of the Holiness School (cf. Lev 17.3–4,8–9; 20.6) to indict sinful elders who try to consult God (cf. 8.1; 20.1). Consultation is refused, since the words for the situation have already been inscribed as scripture (see 3.22–27n.). **1:** Elders, see 8.1n. **3:** *Placed their* iniquity . . . before *them,* i.e., embraced the wickedness that will ruin them. **5:** *Idols,* not necessarily only false gods here, but any religious duplicity. **6:** *Repent,* cf. 18.21,30; 33.11. **7:** *Aliens,* see 22.7,29; 47.21–23n. The Holiness

of the house of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who separate themselves from me, taking their idols into their hearts and placing their iniquity as a stumbling block before them, and yet come to a prophet to inquire of me by him, I the LORD will answer them myself. 8 I will set my face against them; I will make them a sign and a byword and cut them off from the midst of my people; and you shall know that I am the LORD.

9 If a prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, the LORD, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10 And they shall bear their punishment—the punishment of the inquirer and the punishment of the prophet shall be the same— 11 so that the house of Israel may no longer go astray from me, nor defile themselves any more with all their transgressions. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God, says the Lord GOD.

12 The word of the LORD came to me: 13 Mortal, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it, and break its staff of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it human beings and animals, 14 even if Noah, Daniel,[a] and Job, these three, were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord GOD. 15 If I send wild animals through the land to ravage it, so that it is made desolate, and no one may pass through because of the animals; 16 even if these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they would save neither sons nor daughters; they alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate. 17 Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, "Let a sword pass through the land," and I cut off human beings and animals from it; 18 though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they would save neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be saved. 19 Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off humans and animals from it; 20 even if Noah, Daniel,[a] and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they would save neither son nor daughter; they would save only their own lives by their righteousness.

21 For thus says the Lord GOD: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four deadly acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild animals, and pestilence, to cut off humans and animals from it! 22 Yet, survivors shall be left in it, sons and daughters who will be brought out; they will come out to you. When you see their ways and their deeds, you will be consoled for the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. 23 They shall console you, when you see their ways and their deeds; and you shall know that it was not without cause that I did all that I have done in it, says the Lord GOD.

15 The word of the LORD came to me:
2 O mortal, how does the wood of the vine surpass all other wood—
the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest?
3 Is wood taken from it to make anything?
Does one take a peg from it on which to hang any object?
4 It is put in the fire for fuel;

[a] Or, as otherwise read, *Danel*

School placed them under the codes of the covenant (Lev 19.33–34; Num 15.13–16). **9–11:** Prophets may be deceived into violating God's prohibition of consultation (cf. 1 Kings 13.18–19). God determines to punish swayable prophets along with idolatrous inquirers (cf. 1 Kings 22.23). **11:** Employing the covenant formula, Ezekiel prophesies a new bilateral relationship of God and people (11.20; 16.60,62; 36.28; Lev 26.12 [HS]).

14.12–23: The inevitability of God's judgment. Jerusalem's impending punishment is inevitable (a matter of scriptural record, 2.8b–3.3n.). Unlike the case of infamous Sodom (Gen 18.22–33), only righteous individuals themselves can be saved. **14:** *Noah* (Gen 6.9) and *Job* (Job 1.1), who are not Israelites, are renowned for their righteousness. *Daniel* (also 28.3) is a third non-Israelite, the ideally righteous ruler Danel (see textual note *a*) of the Ugaritic texts (ca. 1400 BCE), not the hero of the biblical book of Daniel. **21:** On the four agents of judgment, see 5.17 (cf. 5.10n.; 33.27). The four scenarios in vv. 13–14,15–16,17–18, and 19–20 each highlight one of the agents. **22–23:** *Console,* since their wicked behavior would prove the justice of God's judgment.

15.1–8: Analogy of the useless vine. A wild vine of the forest is practically useless—its fruit may be poisonous (2 Kings 4.39–40), and it is unusable for woodworking. This metaphor for Jerusalem shows it has no

when the fire has consumed both ends
of it
and the middle of it is charred,
is it useful for anything?
5 When it was whole it was used for
nothing;
how much less—when the fire has
consumed it,
and it is charred—
can it ever be used for anything!
6 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Like
the wood of the vine among the trees of the
forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel,
so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
7 I will set my face against them; although
they escape from the fire, the fire shall still
consume them; and you shall know that I am
the Lord, when I set my face against them.
8 And I will make the land desolate, because
they have acted faithlessly, says the Lord God.

16 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 Mortal, make known to Jerusalem
her abominations, 3 and say, Thus says the
Lord God to Jerusalem: Your origin and
your birth were in the land of the Canaan-
ites; your father was an Amorite, and your
mother a Hittite. 4 As for your birth, on
the day you were born your navel cord was
not cut, nor were you washed with water
to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor
wrapped in cloths. 5 No eye pitied you, to do
any of these things for you out of compas-
sion for you; but you were thrown out in the
open field, for you were abhorred on the day
you were born.

6 I passed by you, and saw you flailing
about in your blood. As you lay in your blood,
I said to you, "Live! 7 and grow up[a] like a plant
of the field." You grew up and became tall
and arrived at full womanhood;[b] your breasts
were formed, and your hair had grown; yet
you were naked and bare.

8 I passed by you again and looked on you;
you were at the age for love. I spread the edge
of my cloak over you, and covered your na-
kedness: I pledged myself to you and entered
into a covenant with you, says the Lord God,
and you became mine. 9 Then I bathed you
with water and washed off the blood from
you, and anointed you with oil. 10 I clothed
you with embroidered cloth and with sandals
of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and
covered you with rich fabric.[c] 11 I adorned
you with ornaments: I put bracelets on your
arms, a chain on your neck, 12 a ring on your
nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful
crown upon your head. 13 You were adorned
with gold and silver, while your clothing was
of fine linen, rich fabric,[c] and embroidered
cloth. You had choice flour and honey and
oil for food. You grew exceedingly beautiful,
fit to be a queen. 14 Your fame spread among

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *Live! I made you a myriad*
[b] Cn: Heb *ornament of ornaments*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

intrinsic worthiness apart from God's mysterious election. **7:** *They escape*d from total devastation in 597 BCE, when the Babylonians first attacked Jerusalem. They *shall still* see fiery destruction in 586 BCE.

16.1–63: The allegory of the unfaithful wife. Expanding the earlier prophetic symbol of Israel as an unfaithful wife, Ezekiel may be borrowing themes of excess and lewdness from the Babylonian carnival of the goddess Ishtar in order to reveal Jerusalem's chaotic spiritual state and to suggest a carnivalesque opening up of new cosmic possibilities. **1–8: Jerusalem, the foundling. 3:** The *Canaanites, Amorites,* and *Hittites* (cf. v. 45) were Israel's predecessors (e.g., Ex 3.8,17; Josh 3.10), who, according to the Holiness School, defiled the land (vv. 44–52; Lev 18.24–25). Jerusalem was a Canaanite (Jebusite) city, which King David captured and assimilated (2 Sam 5.6–10). **4:** *Salt* was thought to make the skin firm or to sanitize it. Wrapping in swaddling *cloths* was a sign of care (Wis 7.4). **5–7:** By God's intervention, the exposed infant grew into *full womanhood* (lit., "the loveliest of adornments"). **8:** *Covering* a woman's *nakedness,* taking a wife and sharing in her sexuality (Ruth 3.9; Deut 22.30; 27.20). *I pledged myself,* see 20.5. The bilateral and legally binding relationship of marriage constituted a *covenant* in the ancient world (Mal 2.14; Prov 2.17). Several biblical texts depict God's covenant with Israel as a marriage (Hos 1–3; Jer 2.2; 31.32; Isa 50.1; 54.5–6), and ancient vassal treaties spoke of the covenant relationship as "love." **9–14: The beautiful bride. 9:** Mesopotamian marriage rites describe a "day of bathing" and the future husband pouring oil on his betrothed's head. The *blood* may signify the breaking of the virginal bride's hymen (see Deut 22.13–21) or, considering the time compression of the allegory, it may be the birth blood of v. 6. **10.** The bride's clothes represent allusions to the tabernacle's materials (Ex 25.5; 35.6–7; Num 4.6 [all HS]), since

the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of my splendor that I had bestowed on you, says the Lord God.

15 But you trusted in your beauty, and played the whore because of your fame, and lavished your whorings on any passer-by.[a] 16 You took some of your garments, and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore; nothing like this has ever been or ever shall be.[b] 17 You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and my silver that I had given you, and made for yourself male images, and with them played the whore; 18 and you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set my oil and my incense before them. 19 Also my bread that I gave you—I fed you with choice flour and oil and honey—you set it before them as a pleasing odor; and so it was, says the Lord God. 20 You took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. As if your whorings were not enough! 21 You slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering to them. 22 And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, flailing about in your blood.

23 After all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! says the Lord God), 24 you built yourself a platform and made yourself a lofty place in every square; 25 at the head of every street you built your lofty place and prostituted your beauty, offering yourself to every passer-by, and multiplying your whoring. 26 You played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger. 27 Therefore I stretched out my hand against you, reduced your rations, and gave you up to the will of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. 28 You played the whore with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied. 29 You multiplied your whoring with Chaldea, the land of merchants; and even with this you were not satisfied.

30 How sick is your heart, says the Lord God, that you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen whore; 31 building your platform at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square! Yet you were not like a whore, because you scorned payment. 32 Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! 33 Gifts are given to all whores; but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from all around for your whorings. 34 So you were different from other women in your whorings: no one solicited you to play the whore; and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; you were different.

35 Therefore, O whore, hear the word of the Lord: 36 Thus says the Lord God, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whoring with your lovers, and because of all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, 37 therefore, I will gather all your lovers, with whom you took pleasure,

[a] Heb adds *let it be his*

[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain

Jerusalem houses God's shrine. **15–34: Sexual betrayal**. Ezekiel expands Hosea's (Hos 1-3) and Jeremiah's (Jer 3.1-13) metaphor of Israel as an unfaithful wife. Jerusalem's perversion runs amok, even perverting prostitution (vv. 31–34)—now the *clients* are the ones to receive payment for sex. **20–22:** Children were offered as sacrifices (20.26,31; 23.37n.; 2 Kings 23.10; Jer 7.31; 32.35; Isa 57.5,9), against the prohibitions of the Holiness School (Lev 18.21; 20.2). **26: On** illicit relations with Egypt, see 17.7n. *Lustful neighbors,* the Hebrew denotes their oversized genitals (cf. 23.20). **27: K**ing Sennacherib of Assyria transferred Judean territory to the Philistines in 701 BCE. Even pagan foreigners are *ashamed* of Jerusalem's behavior. **28:** Judah willingly became an Assyrian vassal in 734 BCE (see 2 Kings 16.7–8). Assyrian records mention that King Manasseh of Judah (698/687–642 BCE) was a loyal vassal. **29:** *Chaldea,* Babylonia. Already in the eighth century BCE, King Hezekiah of Judah entertained a Babylonian embassy (2 Kings 20.12–19). Later, King Jehoiakim of Judah (608–598 BCE) became a vassal of Babylonia (2 Kings 24.1) as did King Zedekiah (597–586 BCE; 17.13–14; 2 Kings 24.20; 2 Chr 36.13). **33:** *Gifts,* see 2 Kings 16.7–9; 18.14–16; 23.34–35; Jer 2.18 for examples of Judah's payment of tribute to foreign powers. **35–43: The threat of punishment.** God follows Holiness School rules about punishing adultery (Lev 20.10). The real subject is not the divorce of a human woman, however, but military action against Jerusalem. The stoning is a metaphor

all those you loved and all those you hated; I will gather them against you from all around, and will uncover your nakedness to them, so that they may see all your nakedness. 38 I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring blood upon you in wrath and jealousy. 39 I will deliver you into their hands, and they shall throw down your platform and break down your lofty places; they shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful objects and leave you naked and bare. 40 They shall bring up a mob against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. 41 They shall burn your houses and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women; I will stop you from playing the whore, and you shall also make no more payments. 42 So I will satisfy my fury on you, and my jealousy shall turn away from you; I will be calm, and will be angry no longer. 43 Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things; therefore, I have returned your deeds upon your head, says the Lord God.

Have you not committed lewdness beyond all your abominations? 44 See, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you, "Like mother, like daughter." 45 You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. 46 Your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. 47 You not only followed their ways, and acted according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways. 48 As I live, says the Lord God, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. 49 This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. 50 They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it. 51 Samaria has not committed half your sins; you have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed. 52 Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have brought about for your sisters a more favorable judgment; because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.

53 I will restore their fortunes, the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes along with theirs, 54 in order that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them. 55 As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state, Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former state, and you and your daughters shall return to your former state. 56 Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride, 57 before your wickedness was uncovered? Now you are a mockery to the daughters of Aram[a] and all her neighbors, and to the daughters of the Philistines, those all around who despise you. 58 You must bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, says the Lord.

59 Yes, thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have de-

[a] Another reading is *Edom*

(Deut 22.21–24); the real threat is soldiers' swords (v. 40) and the destruction of an entire city's *houses* (v. 41); cf. 2 Kings 25.8-11. **44–58: Additional accusation.** This section elaborates the preceding theme, showing Jerusalem to be so much worse than *Samaria* (2 Kings 17) and *Sodom* (Gen 19), both of which were destroyed for their sins, that they *appear righteous* by comparison (Jer 3.11). **45:** Cf. v. 3. **46:** *Elder sister,* better "bigger sister" (which makes more sense historically). Likewise, Sodom is a "smaller" sister, not a *younger* one. **49:** Sodom's characteristic sin is not sexual but social and moral. Ezekiel's Holiness School traditions especially stressed social justice and care for the poor (Lev 19.9–15,33–35; 23.22; 25.13–17 [HS]). **53–58:** God will restore all three sisters, humiliating Jerusalem. **57:** *Aram,* probably to be read as "Edom" (see textual note *a*; cf. 36.5). **59–63: Jerusalem's**

spised the oath, breaking the covenant; 60 yet
I will remember my covenant with you in the
days of your youth, and I will establish with
you an everlasting covenant. 61 Then you will
remember your ways, and be ashamed when
I[a] take your sisters, both your elder and your
younger, and give them to you as daughters,
but not on account of my[b] covenant with you.
62 I will establish my covenant with you, and
you shall know that I am the LORD, 63 in order
that you may remember and be confounded,
and never open your mouth again because of
your shame, when I forgive you all that you
have done, says the Lord GOD.

17 The word of the LORD came to me:
2 O mortal, propound a riddle, and
speak an allegory to the house of Israel. 3 Say:
Thus says the Lord GOD:

A great eagle, with great wings and long
pinions,
rich in plumage of many colors,
came to the Lebanon.
He took the top of the cedar,
4 broke off its topmost shoot;
he carried it to a land of trade,
set it in a city of merchants.
5 Then he took a seed from the land,
placed it in fertile soil;
a plant[c] by abundant waters,
he set it like a willow twig.
6 It sprouted and became a vine
spreading out, but low;
its branches turned toward him,
its roots remained where it stood.
So it became a vine;
it brought forth branches,
put forth foliage.

7 There was another great eagle,
with great wings and much plumage.
And see! This vine stretched out
its roots toward him;
it shot out its branches toward him,
so that he might water it.
From the bed where it was planted
8 it was transplanted
to good soil by abundant waters,
so that it might produce branches
and bear fruit
and become a noble vine.

9 Say: Thus says the Lord GOD:
Will it prosper?
Will he not pull up its roots,
cause its fruit to rot[c] and wither,
its fresh sprouting leaves to fade?
No strong arm or mighty army will be
needed
to pull it from its roots.
10 When it is transplanted, will it thrive?
When the east wind strikes it,
will it not utterly wither,
wither on the bed where it grew?
11 Then the word of the LORD came to me:
12 Say now to the rebellious house: Do you
not know what these things mean? Tell them:
The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, took

[a] Syr: Heb *you*
[b] Heb lacks *my*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

restoration. Though Israel had despised the covenant, God will remember the promises to the ancestors, as the Holiness School anticipated (Lev 26.42,45). **60:** *Everlasting covenant,* cf. 37.26. Woman Jerusalem here represents Israel as a whole. **61:** Samaria and Sodom go from *siblings* to *daughters*, a subordinate status that does not detract from the ancient promises. **62:** *Will establish my covenant* (see also v. 60), a phrase characteristic of the Holiness School (e.g., Gen 17.7; Ex 6.4; Lev 26.9 [HS]).

17.1–24: The allegorical fable of the eagles. 1–10: The fable. 3–4: *Great eagle,* the Babylonian king Nebuchadrezzar; *Lebanon,* Jerusalem; *top of the cedar,* house of David (Jer 22.23); *topmost shoot,* Jehoiachin, Judean king who was exiled to Babylon in 597 BCE (2 Kings 24.8–16); *land of trade,* Babylonia; *city of merchants,* Babylon. **5:** *Seed from the land,* Zedekiah, the last king of Judah (597–586 BCE); *placed it in fertile soil,* i.e., made him king in Judah (2 Kings 24.17). **6:** *Low,* submissive to King Nebuchadrezzar. *Branches turned toward him,* loyal in his vassalage. **7:** *Another great eagle,* Psammetichus II of Egypt (594–588 BCE), with whom Zedekiah negotiated for assistance against Babylonia (Jer 37.5). **8:** *Was transplanted to . . .,* or read: "remained planted in." **9–10:** Zedekiah's doom is sure, but the agent of punishment (*he,* v. 9; *the east wind*, v. 10) is not fixed. Verse 9b suggests that God's first choice had been to pull up the vine directly, without using the *mighty army* that Babylon ended up sending (see v. 17). God personally wields the desert east wind in Ex 10.13; 14.21; Isa 11.15; Hos 13.15; Jonah 4.8. **11–21: The interpretation.** See 2 Kings 24. **13:** *Under oath,* 2 Chr 36.13. Nebuchadrezzar would have to punish Zedekiah for

its king and its officials, and brought them back with him to Babylon. 13 He took one of the royal offspring and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath (he had taken away the chief men of the land), 14 so that the kingdom might be humble and not lift itself up, and that by keeping his covenant it might stand. 15 But he rebelled against him by sending ambassadors to Egypt, in order that they might give him horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Can one escape who does such things? Can he break the covenant and yet escape? 16 As I live, says the Lord God, surely in the place where the king resides who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant with him he broke—in Babylon he shall die. 17 Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in war, when ramps are cast up and siege walls built to cut off many lives. 18 Because he despised the oath and broke the covenant, because he gave his hand and yet did all these things, he shall not escape. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord God: As I live, I will surely return upon his head my oath that he despised, and my covenant that he broke. 20 I will spread my net over him, and he shall be caught in my snare; I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there for the treason he has committed against me. 21 All the pick[a] of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind; and you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken.

22 Thus says the Lord God:
I myself will take a sprig
from the lofty top of a cedar;
I will set it out.
I will break off a tender one
from the topmost of its young twigs;
I myself will plant it
on a high and lofty mountain.
23 On the mountain height of Israel
I will plant it,
in order that it may produce boughs and
bear fruit,
and become a noble cedar.
Under it every kind of bird will live;
in the shade of its branches will nest
winged creatures of every kind.
24 All the trees of the field shall know
that I am the Lord.
I bring low the high tree,
I make high the low tree;
I dry up the green tree
and make the dry tree flourish.
I the Lord have spoken;
I will accomplish it.

18 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? 3 As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. 4 Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life

[a] Another reading is *fugitives*

violating his oath of loyalty (see v. 7n.). **19–21:** Just as Nebuchadrezzar will not overlook Zedekiah's breaking his oath of loyalty, so also will God punish him for breaking the Lord's covenant with Israel (16.59). **22–24:** The fable expanded, an allegory about the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. Other passages in Ezekiel that speak of a new, ideal Davidic ruler include 29.21; 34.23–24; 37.24–25. **22:** As in v. 3, the *top of a cedar* is the house of David, but now God becomes the great eagle cultivating it. For the metaphor of the ideal coming ruler as a *sprig*, *twig,* or branch, cf. Isa 11.1; 53.2; Jer 23.5–6; 33.15; Zech 3.8; 6.12. *Tender* means the ruler will be humble and vulnerable. The ideal king Josiah had been described with this wording (2 Kings 22.19). **23:** *Noble cedar,* the archetypical "cosmic tree" in Near Eastern mythology. In a royal stele from Teima, a Babylonian king holds a symbolic cosmic tree as his scepter.

18.1–32: Being accountable. 1–4: The text does not deny the notion of corporate (communal) punishment or contradict the statement of Ex 20.5 that parents can pass on the consequences of sin to their children. In places such as 16.44 and 20.4,30 Ezekiel affirms that sins and their punishments may involve long-term consequences for individuals and for the corporate community. What Ezekiel is stressing is that the exiles cannot hide behind a defense of fatalism but must take responsibility for their present circumstances and their future. The prophet's audience is far from an innocent generation, and it is not appropriate for them to view their present fate as inexorably determined by past actions of their ancestors (cf. Jer 31.29–30, which quotes the same *proverb*). **4:** Ezekiel's stress on individual responsibility is not innovative but recalls Num 16.22–24 (HS; cf. Deut 24.16).

of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

5 If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right— 6 if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period, 7 does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, 8 does not take advance or accrued interest, withholds his hand from iniquity, executes true justice between contending parties, 9 follows my statutes, and is careful to observe my ordinances, acting faithfully—such a one is righteous; he shall surely live, says the Lord God.

10 If he has a son who is violent, a shedder of blood, 11 who does any of these things (though his father[a] does none of them), who eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor's wife, 12 oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination, 13 takes advance or accrued interest; shall he then live? He shall not. He has done all these abominable things; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.

14 But if this man has a son who sees all the sins that his father has done, considers, and does not do likewise, 15 who does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife, 16 does not wrong anyone, exacts no pledge, commits no robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, 17 withholds his hand from iniquity,[b] takes no advance or accrued interest, observes my ordinances, and follows my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live. 18 As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did what is not good among his people, he dies for his iniquity.

19 Yet you say, "Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?" When the son has done what is lawful and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. 20 The person who sins shall die. A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child; the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own.

21 But if the wicked turn away from all their sins that they have committed and keep all my statutes and do what is lawful and right, they shall surely live; they shall not die. 22 None of the transgressions that they have committed shall be remembered against them; for the righteousness that they have done they shall live. 23 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that they should turn from their ways and live? 24 But when the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity and do the same abominable things that the wicked do, shall they live? None of the righteous deeds that they have done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which they are guilty and the sin they have committed, they shall die.

[a] Heb *he*
[b] Gk: Heb *the poor*

God, who owns *all lives,* i.e., "the spirits of all flesh" (Num 16.22 [HS]), desires life for each human creature (cf. Ezek 18.23,32; 33.11), and those Israelites who separate themselves from all offenders against God's holiness will surely find salvation in the midst of God's judgment (Num 16.24 [HS]; cf. Deut 24.16). **5–9:** First, a description of a righteous generation. The list includes both ritual and ethical provisions; Ezekiel's theology shares with the Holiness School a concern with the entire range of sin from ceremonial to moral. **6:** *Eat upon the mountains,* idolatrous sacrifices at high places (6.1–14). *Lift up his eyes,* seek aid from (cf. 23.27; 33.25). *Defile his neighbor's wife,* Lev 18.20 (HS). *Menstrual period,* Lev 18.19 (HS). **7:** *Oppress anyone,* Lev 25.17 (HS). *Restores to the debtor his pledge,* returns any security on a loan once a debt is repaid. *Robbery,* Lev 19.13 (HS). **8:** *Interest,* Lev 25.36 (HS). *Executes true justice,* Lev 19.15 (HS); Zech 7.9. **10–13:** Second, a description of a wicked generation. A life opposite to that of the father. **10:** *Shedder of blood,* 16.38; 22.3; 23.45; 33.25; Num 35.33–34 (HS). **14–18:** Third, a righteous generation; another reversal. **19–20:** Summation: neither the righteousness nor the wickedness of a previous generation is transferable to the next; cf. Deut 24.16. **21–24:** Within an individual's life the same argument pertains. **23:** See v. 4n.

25 Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is
unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my
way unfair? Is it not your ways that are un-
fair? 26 When the righteous turn away from
their righteousness and commit iniquity,
they shall die for it; for the iniquity that
they have committed they shall die. 27 Again,
when the wicked turn away from the wick-
edness they have committed and do what is
lawful and right, they shall save their life.
28 Because they considered and turned away
from all the transgressions that they had
committed, they shall surely live; they shall
not die. 29 Yet the house of Israel says, "The
way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel,
are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that
are unfair?

30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of
Israel, all of you according to your ways,
says the Lord God. Repent and turn from
all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity
will be your ruin.[a] 31 Cast away from you all
the transgressions that you have committed
against me, and get yourselves a new heart
and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house
of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the
death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn,
then, and live.

19 As for you, raise up a lamentation for
the princes of Israel, 2 and say:
What a lioness was your mother
among lions!
She lay down among young lions,
rearing her cubs.
3 She raised up one of her cubs;
he became a young lion,
and he learned to catch prey;
he devoured humans.
4 The nations sounded an alarm against
him;
he was caught in their pit;
and they brought him with hooks
to the land of Egypt.
5 When she saw that she was thwarted,
that her hope was lost,
she took another of her cubs
and made him a young lion.
6 He prowled among the lions;
he became a young lion,
and he learned to catch prey;
he devoured people.
7 And he ravaged their strongholds,[b]
and laid waste their towns;
the land was appalled, and all in it,
at the sound of his roaring.
8 The nations set upon him
from the provinces all around;
they spread their net over him;
he was caught in their pit.
9 With hooks they put him in a cage,
and brought him to the king of
Babylon;
they brought him into custody,
so that his voice should be heard no
more
on the mountains of Israel.
10 Your mother was like a vine in a
vineyard[c]
transplanted by the water,
fruitful and full of branches
from abundant water.

[a] Or *so that they shall not be a stumbling block of iniquity to you*
[b] Heb *his widows*
[c] Cn: Heb *in your blood*

25–29: To object is to misunderstand God's justice; cf. 33.17,20. **30–32:** The invitation to repentance is open (cf. 14.6; 33.11). The prophet's call that the people create for themselves a *new heart and a new spirit* is later replaced by an emphasis that God will have to take the initiative and perform this action (36.26n.; cf. 11.19; Jer 32.39). *Why will you die?* see 33.11n.

19.1–14: Two funeral dirges. 1–9: First dirge. **1:** *Lamentation,* a parody of a dirge, condemning the exploitative rule of Judah's last monarchs. *Princes,* the book's preferred term for Israel's rulers (cf. 12.10; 19.1; 34.24; 37.25; 44.1–3n.). **2:** The *lioness* is Judah (cf. Gen 49.9). **3–4:** The first cub is King Jehoahaz (Shallum), taken to Egypt in 609 BCE (2 Kings 23.30–34; Jer 22.10–12). **5–9:** The second cub could be Jehoiakim, since *the land was appalled* (v. 7) during his reign (cf. 2 Kings 24.4; Jer 22.13–19). The biblical references (2 Chr 36.6; Dan 1.1–2) to his being taken into Babylonian *custody* (v. 9) are questionable historically, however, so the second cub is probably a composite symbol that also includes subsequent kings such as Zedekiah, exiled to Babylon in 586 BCE (2 Kings 25.7; Jer 39.7). Zedekiah and the first "cub" had the same literal mother, Hamutal (2 Kings 23.31; 24.18; Jer 52.1). **10–14:** Second dirge. **10:** The *vine* is Judah, and its towering growth signals arrogant pride.

[11] Its strongest stem became
a ruler's scepter;[a]
it towered aloft
among the thick boughs;
it stood out in its height
with its mass of branches.
[12] But it was plucked up in fury,
cast down to the ground;
the east wind dried it up;
its fruit was stripped off,
its strong stem was withered;
the fire consumed it.
[13] Now it is transplanted into the
wilderness,
into a dry and thirsty land.
[14] And fire has gone out from its stem,
has consumed its branches and fruit,
so that there remains in it no strong
stem,
no scepter for ruling.

This is a lamentation, and it is used as a lamentation.

20 In the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, certain elders of Israel came to consult the LORD, and sat down before me. [2] And the word of the LORD came to me: [3] Mortal, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: Why are you coming? To consult me? As I live, says the Lord GOD, I will not be consulted by you. [4] Will you judge them, mortal, will you judge them? Then let them know the abominations of their ancestors, [5] and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob—making myself known to them in the land of Egypt—I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God. [6] On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands. [7] And I said to them, Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. [8] But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; not one of them cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. [9] But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt. [10] So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. [11] I gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live. [12] Moreover I gave them my sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, so that they might know that I the LORD sanctify them. [13] But the house of Israel

[a] Heb *Its strongest stems became rulers' scepters*

11–13: The *strongest stem* is plural in Hebrew (textual note *a*), signifying that both Jehoiakim and Zedekiah are in mind (see 19.5–9n.). T*he east wind*, see 17.10n.; *transplanted,* Judah is exiled to Babylonia.

20.1–44: Israel's pattern of rebellion. Israel has repeatedly failed to appreciate the LORD's holiness (vv. 12,20,26) and exhibit it to the world (vv. 9,14,22,39,41). The effect of Ezekiel's rhetoric is to drive home how the pattern of rebellion is inevitable for the present generation (vv. 30–32). **1–4:** *Seventh year . . . fifth month . . . tenth day,* August 14, 591 BCE. The elders probably inquire about worship in exile (see v. 32), perhaps about building a shrine. Consultation of the LORD, however, is prohibited (see v. 31n.; 3.22–27n.; 14.1–11n.). **3:** *Mortal,* see 2.1n. **5–9:** Rebellion in Egypt. **5:** *I am the LORD,* Ex 6.7 (HS). **6:** Ex 6.8 (HS). *Milk and honey* (also v. 15), see Lev 20.24 (HS; cf. Ex 3.8; Deut 6.3). *Most glorious,* in Zadokite theology, God is patriotically devoted to Israel's land (Lev 25.23 [HS]; Ezek 7.22; 34.26; 35.10; 36.5). **7–8:** On idolatrous worship in Egypt, see Josh 24.14; Ezek 23.3,8. Ex 32.1–6 suggests that life in Egypt had fostered a comfort level with worship images and orgiastic rites. *I am the LORD your God,* Lev 19.4 (HS). **9:** *For the sake of my name* (vv. 14,22,39,44; cf. 36.20–23; 39.7,25; 43.7–8), God's intense concern for God's *name* is a motif from the Holiness School (see Lev 18.21; 19.12; 20.3; 21.6; 22.2,32 [HS]). The focus is not God's personal concern for honor but God's determination to act irrespective of the people's intractability. God acts in a manner set by God's character (God's "name"). **10–17:** Rebellion in the wilderness. **11:** Lev 18.5 (HS). **12–13:** The Holiness School emphasizes the sabbath (Ex 31.13; Lev 19.30; 26.2 [HS]), stressing it as a sign of priestly service even of laypeople. On the sabbath as a *sign*, see Ex 31.17. For a violation of the sabbath

rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not observe my statutes but rejected my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live; and my sabbaths they greatly profaned.

Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make an end of them. [14] But I acted for the sake of my name, so that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. [15] Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands, [16] because they rejected my ordinances and did not observe my statutes, and profaned my sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. [17] Nevertheless my eye spared them, and I did not destroy them or make an end of them in the wilderness.

[18] I said to their children in the wilderness, Do not follow the statutes of your parents, nor observe their ordinances, nor defile yourselves with their idols. [19] I the LORD am your God; follow my statutes, and be careful to observe my ordinances, [20] and hallow my sabbaths that they may be a sign between me and you, so that you may know that I the LORD am your God. [21] But the children rebelled against me; they did not follow my statutes, and were not careful to observe my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live; they profaned my sabbaths.

Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. [22] But I withheld my hand, and acted for the sake of my name, so that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. [23] Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries, [24] because they had not executed my ordinances, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their ancestors' idols. [25] Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live. [26] I defiled them through their very gifts, in their offering up all their firstborn, in order that I might horrify them, so that they might know that I am the LORD.

[27] Therefore, mortal, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: In this again your ancestors blasphemed me, by dealing treacherously with me. [28] For when I had brought them into the land that I swore to give them, then wherever they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices and presented the provocation of their offering; there they sent up their pleasing odors, and there they poured out their drink offerings. [29] (I said to them, What is the high place to which you go? So it is called Bamah[a] to this day.) [30] Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your ancestors and go astray after their detestable things? [31] When you offer your gifts and make your children pass through the fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be consulted by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord GOD, I will not be consulted by you.

[32] What is in your mind shall never happen—the thought, "Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone."

[33] As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, I will be king over you. [34] I will bring you out from the peoples

[a] That is *High Place*

within HS narrative, see Ex 16.27–30. **18–26:** Rebellion of the next generation. **25–26:** The people were probably using the "law of the firstborn" (Ex 22.29; 34.19) to legitimate child sacrifice (16.20–22n.). God let them become *defiled* through God's very law (cf. 14.9n.). On God's good gifts provoking perversion, cf. 7.20; 16.14–15,17–21; 28.14–15. **27–32:** Application of the passage to Ezekiel's contemporaries. **29:** *High place,* 6.3n. The Heb word for "high place" ("bamah") is explained by the nearby words ("what" ["mah"] and "go" ["ba"]). **31:** See 16.20–22n.; 23.37; Deut 18.10; 2 Kings 16.3; 17.17; 21.6. The end of the verse echoes v. 3, forming an inclusio (envelope) around the passage. **33–38: A new Exodus.** An oracle of promise, but with an angry tone dating prior to Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BCE. God will triumph with Israel, through force if necessary (see Introduction; Lev 26.42

and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; 35 and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. 36 As I entered into judgment with your ancestors in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, says the Lord GOD. 37 I will make you pass under the staff, and will bring you within the bond of the covenant. 38 I will purge out the rebels among you, and those who transgress against me; I will bring them out of the land where they reside as aliens, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOD: Go serve your idols, every one of you now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me; but my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols.

40 For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land; there I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred things. 41 As a pleasing odor I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. 42 You shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your ancestors. 43 There you shall remember your ways and all the deeds by which you have polluted yourselves; and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. 44 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways, or corrupt deeds, O house of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

45 [a]The word of the LORD came to me: 46 Mortal, set your face toward the south, preach against the south, and prophesy against the forest land in the Negeb; 47 say to the forest of the Negeb, Hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree in you and every dry tree; the blazing flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from south to north shall be scorched by it. 48 All flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it; it shall not be quenched. 49 Then I said, "Ah Lord GOD! they are saying of me, 'Is he not a maker of allegories?' "

21 [b] The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, set your face toward Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuaries; prophesy against the land of Israel 3 and say to the land of Israel, Thus says the LORD: I am coming against you, and will draw my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from you both righteous and wicked. 4 Because I will cut off from you both righteous and wicked, therefore my sword shall go out of its sheath against all flesh from south to north; 5 and all flesh shall know that I the LORD have drawn my sword out of its sheath; it shall not be sheathed again. 6 Moan therefore, mortal; moan with breaking heart and bitter grief before their eyes. 7 And when they say to you, "Why do you moan?" you shall say, "Because of the news that has come. Every heart will melt and all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint and all knees will turn to water. See, it comes and it will be fulfilled," says the Lord GOD.

[a] Ch 21.1 in Heb
[b] Ch 21.6 in Heb

[HS].) As in the wilderness (Num 14.26–35 [HS]), the unfaithful will be purged. **37:** *Pass under the staff,* see Lev 27.32 (HS). **39–44: Final acceptance.** After the new Exodus, deity, nation, and land will be united in covenant once and for all. **40:** The entire land, with the Temple high upon it (40.2), is God's "cosmic" mountain, the "lofty highlands" of Israel (cf. 17.23; 34.14). *All of them* includes the Northern Kingdom (37.22).

20.45–21.32: Sword prophecies (Lev 26.25,33 [HS]). **20.45–21.7: The sword against all flesh. 20.45–49:** *South* and *Negeb* (the south country) both stand for Judah and Jerusalem, which lie south of their attackers. **49:** Saying Ezekiel speaks in riddles, making up stories, the people cannot take a claim of Jerusalem's vulnerability seriously (see 3.7; 11.3n.; 13.10–16n.; 33.32). **21.1–5:** The preceding forest fire is interpreted as the sword of God. **2:** *Sanctuaries*, sacred precincts of the Temple (cf. Lev 21.28 [HS]). **6–7:** The message is reiterated through an expressive action.

[8] And the word of the LORD came to me:
[9] Mortal, prophesy and say: Thus says the Lord; Say:
A sword, a sword is sharpened,
it is also polished;
[10] it is sharpened for slaughter,
honed to flash like lightning!
How can we make merry?
You have despised the rod,
and all discipline.[a]
[11] The sword[b] is given to be polished,
to be grasped in the hand;
it is sharpened, the sword is polished,
to be placed in the slayer's hand.
[12] Cry and wail, O mortal,
for it is against my people;
it is against all Israel's princes;
they are thrown to the sword,
together with my people.
Ah! Strike the thigh!
[13] For consider: What! If you despise the rod,
will it not happen?[a] says the Lord GOD.
[14] And you, mortal, prophesy;
strike hand to hand.
Let the sword fall twice, thrice;
it is a sword for killing.
A sword for great slaughter—
it surrounds them;
[15] therefore hearts melt
and many stumble.
At all their gates I have set
the point[a] of the sword.
Ah! It is made for flashing,
it is polished[c] for slaughter.
[16] Attack to the right!
Engage to the left!
—wherever your edge is
directed.
[17] I too will strike hand to hand,
I will satisfy my fury;
I the LORD have spoken.

[18] The word of the LORD came to me:
[19] Mortal, mark out two roads for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them shall issue from the same land. And make a signpost, make it for a fork in the road leading to a city; [20] mark out the road for the sword to come to Rabbah of the Ammonites or to Judah and to[d] Jerusalem the fortified. [21] For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the fork in the two roads, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the teraphim,[e] he inspects the liver. [22] Into his right hand comes the lot for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to call out for slaughter, for raising the battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up ramps, to build siege towers. [23] But to them it will seem like a false divination; they have sworn solemn oaths; but he brings their guilt to remembrance, bringing about their capture.
[24] Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Because you have brought your guilt to remembrance, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear—because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand.[f]
[25] As for you, vile, wicked prince of Israel,
you whose day has come,
the time of final punishment,
[26] thus says the Lord GOD:
Remove the turban, take off the crown;
things shall not remain as they are.
Exalt that which is low,
abase that which is high.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *It*
[c] Tg: Heb *wrapped up*
[d] Gk Syr: Heb *Judah in*
[e] Or *the household gods*
[f] Or *be taken captive*

21.8–17: Song of the sword. The sword is first polished (vv. 8–13), and then engaged (vv. 14–17). **12:** *Strike the thigh,* a sign of mourning (Jer 31.19). **14:** *Strike hand to hand,* in vexation (also v. 17; cf. 6.11).

21.18–32: The sword of Nebuchadrezzar. 18–24: A symbolic act. **20:** *Rabbah* (modern Amman, Jordan), capital of Ammon (25.5), an ally of Judah against Babylonia (Jer 27.3). **21:** Perhaps from Riblah (see 2 Kings 25.6), Nebuchadrezzar uses *divination* to determine which rebel to attack first: belomancy: casting of *arrows* inscribed with names of projected victims; necromancy: *teraphim* were a traditional family's ancestor figurines (Gen 31.19; 1 Sam 19.13), sometimes expected to convey messages to the living (see Zech 10.2); and hepatoscopy: making predictions based on the appearance of an animal *liver*. **23:** *They have sworn*, read: "they have received sworn guarantees," i.e., guarantees of Jerusalem's invulnerability (20.49n.). **25–27:** The sword will strike King Zedekiah (Jer 21.7), and life will turn upside down. Zechariah will later envision an end-time restoration of both *turban*

27 A ruin, a ruin, a ruin—
I will make it!
(Such has never occurred.)
Until he comes whose right it is;
to him I will give it.
28 As for you, mortal, prophesy, and say,
Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; say:
A sword, a sword! Drawn for slaughter,
polished to consume,[a] to flash like
lightning.
29 Offering false visions for you,
divining lies for you,
they place you over the necks
of the vile, wicked ones—
those whose day has come,
the time of final punishment.
30 Return it to its sheath!
In the place where you were created,
in the land of your origin,
I will judge you.
31 I will pour out my indignation upon you,
with the fire of my wrath
I will blow upon you.
I will deliver you into brutish hands,
those skillful to destroy.
32 You shall be fuel for the fire,
your blood shall enter the earth;
you shall be remembered no more,
for I the LORD have spoken.

22 The word of the LORD came to me:
2 You, mortal, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then declare to it all its abominable deeds. 3 You shall say, Thus says the Lord GOD: A city! Shedding blood within itself; its time has come; making its idols, defiling itself. 4 You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made; you have brought your day near, the appointed time of your years has come. Therefore I have made you a disgrace before the nations, and a mockery to all the countries. 5 Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you, you infamous one, full of tumult.

6 The princes of Israel in you, everyone according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood. 7 Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the alien residing within you suffers extortion; the orphan and the widow are wronged in you. 8 You have despised my holy things, and profaned my sabbaths. 9 In you are those who slander to shed blood, those in you who eat upon the mountains, who commit lewdness in your midst. 10 In you they uncover their fathers' nakedness; in you they violate women in their menstrual periods. 11 One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you defiles his sister, his father's daughter. 12 In you, they take bribes to shed blood; you take both advance interest and accrued interest, and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; and you have forgotten me, says the Lord GOD.

13 See, I strike my hands together at the dishonest gain you have made, and at the blood that has been shed within you. 14 Can your courage endure, or can your hands remain strong in the days when I shall deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it. 15 I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the countries, and I will purge your filthiness out of you. 16 And I[b] shall be profaned through you in the sight of the nations; and you shall know that I am the LORD.

[a] Cn: Heb *to contain*
[b] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *you*

and *crown* in twin passages (see Zech 3.5; 6.14). **27:** *Until* . . ., language from Gen 49.10–12; it would be a full measure of time until God set things right. **21.28–32:** A **poem** addressing the Babylonian sword directly and telling it of its own eventual punishment. **28:** A prose introduction alerts the *Ammonites* (see v. 20) that their glee over the sword's work (25.3,6) will be short-lived. **29:** As with Judah, false reassurances and a belief that the Babylonians are *divining lies* (see v. 23n.) circulated in Ammon. **30–32:** Although Nebuchadrezzar served as God's agent, he himself, and Babylonia, will eventually face God's judgment (cf. Hab 3.16; Zech 1.15).

22.1–31: Prophecies of smelting judgment. 22.1–16: A prophecy against Jerusalem, the bloody city. The indictment of vv. 6–12 contains a catalogue of sins based on the regulations of the Holiness School (Lev 18–20). **13–16:** In scorn and anger (*strike my hands together,* 21.14,17) God will punish this bloody city (18.10n.; Num 35.33–34 [HS]). **16:** The Hebrew reads: "You will profane/dishonor yourself."

17 The word of the LORD came to me: 18 Mortal, the house of Israel has become dross to me; all of them, silver,[a] bronze, tin, iron, and lead. In the smelter they have become dross. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have all become dross, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20 As one gathers silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into a smelter, to blow the fire upon them in order to melt them; so I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. 21 I will gather you and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted within it. 22 As silver is melted in a smelter, so you shall be melted in it; and you shall know that I the LORD have poured out my wrath upon you.

23 The word of the LORD came to me: 24 Mortal, say to it: You are a land that is not cleansed, not rained upon in the day of indignation. 25 Its princes[b] within it are like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows within it. 26 Its priests have done violence to my teaching and have profaned my holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. 27 Its officials within it are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. 28 Its prophets have smeared whitewash on their behalf, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, "Thus says the Lord GOD," when the LORD has not spoken. 29 The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the alien without redress. 30 And I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one. 31 Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; I have returned their conduct upon their heads, says the Lord GOD.

23 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; 3 they played the whore in Egypt; they played the whore in their youth; their breasts were caressed there, and their virgin bosoms were fondled. 4 Oholah was the name of the elder and Oholibah the name of her sister. They became mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.

5 Oholah played the whore while she was mine; she lusted after her lovers the Assyrians, warriors[c] 6 clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all of them handsome young men, mounted horsemen. 7 She bestowed her favors upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them; and she defiled herself with all the idols of everyone for whom she lusted. 8 She did not give up her whorings that she had practiced since Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her and fondled her virgin bosom and poured out their lust upon her. 9 Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, into the hands of the Assyrians, for whom she lusted. 10 These

[a] Transposed from the end of the verse; compare verse 20

[b] Gk: Heb *indignation.* 25*A conspiracy of its prophets*

[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

22.17–22: Israel is slag, waste metal. The judgment will be like a smelter in which base metals are removed.

22.23–31: All classes of Judean society are corrupt. Cf. Jer 8.8–10; Zeph 3.3–4. **26:** 42.20; 44.23; Lev 10.10–11 (HS). **28:** 13.10–16n. **30:** 13.5n.

23.1–49: The allegory of the sisters, Oholah and Oholibah (cf. ch 16 and annotations there). **1–4:** Introduction. **3:** *In Egypt,* thus Israel's apostasy was deep rooted (20.5–9). **4:** The wordplay *Oholah,* "her [own] tent" (Samaria), and *Oholibah,* "my tent [is] in her," (Jerusalem), suggests that though the Northern Kingdom had shrines to the Lord, God's real dwelling (tent) was in Jerusalem, thus emphasizing the enormity of Judah's apostasy. See Gen 36.2 for a similar type of name. Oholah/Samaria is a "bigger" sister, not an *elder* one (see 16.46n.). The image of marrying sisters comes from Jeremiah (Jer 3.6–11). **5–10:** Oholah. The Northern Kingdom is condemned for its alliances with Assyria (e.g., 2 Kings 15.19; 17.3). Like Jeremiah (4.30; same rare word for "*lovers*" as in Ezek 23.5,9), Ezekiel viewed foreign alliances as disloyalty to God. **10:** The fall of Samaria to Assyria in 722 BCE.

uncovered her nakedness; they seized her sons and her daughters; and they killed her with the sword. Judgment was executed upon her, and she became a byword among women.

11 Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet she was more corrupt than she in her lusting and in her whorings, which were worse than those of her sister. 12 She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and commanders, warriors[a] clothed in full armor, mounted horsemen, all of them handsome young men. 13 And I saw that she was defiled; they both took the same way. 14 But she carried her whorings further; she saw male figures carved on the wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion, 15 with belts around their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like officers—a picture of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea. 16 When she saw them she lusted after them, and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. 17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their lust; and after she defiled herself with them, she turned from them in disgust. 18 When she carried on her whorings so openly and flaunted her nakedness, I turned in disgust from her, as I had turned from her sister. 19 Yet she increased her whorings, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt 20 and lusted after her paramours there, whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose emission was like that of stallions. 21 Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians[b] fondled your bosom and caressed[c] your young breasts.

22 Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord God: I will rouse against you your lovers from whom you turned in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side: 23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, handsome young men, governors and commanders all of them, officers and warriors,[d] all of them riding on horses. 24 They shall come against you from the north[e] with chariots and wagons and a host of peoples; they shall set themselves against you on every side with buckler, shield, and helmet, and I will commit the judgment to them, and they shall judge you according to their ordinances. 25 I will direct my indignation against you, in order that they may deal with you in fury. They shall cut off your nose and your ears, and your survivors shall fall by the sword. They shall seize your sons and your daughters, and your survivors shall be devoured by fire. 26 They shall also strip you of your clothes and take away your fine jewels. 27 So I will put an end to your lewdness and your whoring brought from the land of Egypt; you shall not long for them, or remember Egypt any more. 28 For thus says the Lord God: I will deliver you into the hands of those whom you hate, into the hands of those from whom you turned in disgust; 29 and they shall deal with you in hatred, and take away all the fruit of your labor, and leave you naked and bare, and the nakedness of your whorings shall be exposed. Your lewdness and your whorings 30 have brought this upon you, because you played the whore with the nations, and polluted yourself with their idols. 31 You have gone the way of your sister; therefore I will give her cup into your hand. 32 Thus says the Lord God:

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Two Mss: MT *from Egypt*
[c] Cn: Heb *for the sake of*
[d] Compare verses 6 and 12: Heb *officers and called ones*
[e] Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

11–21: Judah had allied itself with Assyria (2 Kings 16.7–9) and then with Babylon (17.13; 2 Kings 24.1,17; cf. Isa 39.1–8). **14–15:** Judean emissaries saw impressive painted wall reliefs. **17:** Judah swung to an anti-Babylonian policy (2 Kings 24.20; Jer 27.3). **19:** The passage moves to the contemporary event of Judah's alliance with Egypt (17.7,15). **20:** The reference is to oversized genitals and ejaculations; cf. 16.26n. Horses are proverbially oversexed (Jer 5.8). **22–35:** Announcements about Oholibah's punishment. **23:** Kindred allies of the *Babylonians* included *Pekod* (an important Aramean tribe in southeast Babylonia), *Shoa* and *Koa* (Aramean tribes from east of the Tigris called Sutu and Qutu in Babylonian texts). The three names sound like Hebrew words for "punishment" ("pequdah"), "scream" ("shuʿa"), and "shriek" ("qaʿah"). *Assyrian* troops were co-opted by their Babylonian conquerors. **32–34:** The poem of the cup of wrath (Jer 25.15–29; Hab 2.16; Ob 16) links Jerusalem's fate with

You shall drink your sister's cup,
deep and wide;
you shall be scorned and derided,
it holds so much.
33 You shall be filled with drunkenness and
sorrow.
A cup of horror and desolation
is the cup of your sister Samaria;
34 you shall drink it and drain it out,
and gnaw its sherds,
and tear out your breasts;
for I have spoken, says the Lord GOD. 35 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, therefore bear the consequences of your lewdness and whorings.

36 The LORD said to me: Mortal, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominable deeds. 37 For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands; with their idols they have committed adultery; and they have even offered up to them for food the children whom they had borne to me. 38 Moreover this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my sabbaths. 39 For when they had slaughtered their children for their idols, on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it. This is what they did in my house.

40 They even sent for men to come from far away, to whom a messenger was sent, and they came. For them you bathed yourself, painted your eyes, and decked yourself with ornaments; 41 you sat on a stately couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed my incense and my oil. 42 The sound of a raucous multitude was around her, with many of the rabble brought in drunken from the wilderness; and they put bracelets on the arms[a] of the women, and beautiful crowns upon their heads.

43 Then I said, Ah, she is worn out with adulteries, but they carry on their sexual acts with her. 44 For they have gone in to her, as one goes in to a whore. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, wanton women. 45 But righteous judges shall declare them guilty of adultery and of bloodshed; because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.

46 For thus says the Lord GOD: Bring up an assembly against them, and make them an object of terror and of plunder. 47 The assembly shall stone them and with their swords they shall cut them down; they shall kill their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses. 48 Thus will I put an end to lewdness in the land, so that all women may take warning and not commit lewdness as you have done. 49 They shall repay you for your lewdness, and you shall bear the penalty for your sinful idolatry; and you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

24 In the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, write down the name of this day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. 3 And utter an allegory to the rebellious house and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD:

Set on the pot, set it on,
pour in water also;
4 put in it the pieces,
all the good pieces, the thigh and the
shoulder;
fill it with choice bones.
5 Take the choicest one of the flock,
pile the logs[b] under it;
boil its pieces,[c]
seethe[d] also its bones in it.

[a] Heb *hands*
[b] Compare verse 10: Heb *the bones*
[c] Two Mss: Heb *its boilings*
[d] Cn: Heb *its bones seethe*

Samaria's. **36–49: The case against the sisters.** As adulterers are stoned (Lev 20.10 [HS]), so the adultery (i.e., idolatry, child sacrifice, profanation of the sabbath, foreign alliances) of Samaria and Judah has been and will be punished. **37:** 16.20–22n. **40:** Cf. vv. 16–17. **48:** Oholibah's fate becomes an object lesson (cf. v. 10; 26.16; 27.35; 30.9).

24.1–14: The allegory of the pot is a disputation with those still insisting Jerusalem is as inviolable as a cauldron (11.3). Ezekiel turns the cauldron image on its head by depicting it as a dirty pot about to be cleaned by overheating (like a modern self-cleaning oven; vv. 5,9) until the bones inside are burned (v. 10). **1:** *Ninth year . . . tenth month . . . tenth day,* January 15, 588 BCE, the day that the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began. **5:** Jerusalem

6 Therefore thus says the Lord God:
Woe to the bloody city,
the pot whose rust is in it,
whose rust has not gone out of it!
Empty it piece by piece,
making no choice at all.[a]
7 For the blood she shed is inside it;
she placed it on a bare rock;
she did not pour it out on the ground,
to cover it with earth.
8 To rouse my wrath, to take
vengeance,
I have placed the blood she shed
on a bare rock,
so that it may not be covered.
9 Therefore thus says the Lord God:
Woe to the bloody city!
I will even make the pile great.
10 Heap up the logs, kindle the fire;
boil the meat well, mix in the spices,
let the bones be burned.
11 Stand it empty upon the coals,
so that it may become hot, its copper
glow,
its filth melt in it, its rust be
consumed.
12 In vain I have wearied myself;[b]
its thick rust does not depart.
To the fire with its rust![c]
13 Yet, when I cleansed you in your filthy
lewdness,
you did not become clean from your
filth;
you shall not again be cleansed
until I have satisfied my fury upon you.
14 I the Lord have spoken; the time is coming,
I will act. I will not refrain, I will not spare, I
will not relent. According to your ways and
your doings I will judge you, says the Lord
God.

15 The word of the Lord came to me:
16 Mortal, with one blow I am about to take
away from you the delight of your eyes; yet
you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your
tears run down. 17 Sigh, but not aloud; make
no mourning for the dead. Bind on your
turban, and put your sandals on your feet;
do not cover your upper lip or eat the bread
of mourners.[d] 18 So I spoke to the people in
the morning, and at evening my wife died.
And on the next morning I did as I was com-
manded.

19 Then the people said to me, "Will you
not tell us what these things mean for us,
that you are acting this way?" 20 Then I said
to them: The word of the Lord came to me:
21 Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the
Lord God: I will profane my sanctuary, the
pride of your power, the delight of your eyes,
and your heart's desire; and your sons and
your daughters whom you left behind shall
fall by the sword. 22 And you shall do as I have
done; you shall not cover your upper lip or
eat the bread of mourners.[d] 23 Your turbans
shall be on your heads and your sandals on
your feet; you shall not mourn or weep, but
you shall pine away in your iniquities and
groan to one another. 24 Thus Ezekiel shall be
a sign to you; you shall do just as he has done.
When this comes, then you shall know that I
am the Lord God.

[a] Heb *piece, no lot has fallen on it*
[b] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Vg Tg: Heb *of men*

will be *boil*ed as its assailants heap siege equipment around it. **6–8:** Ezekiel interprets and expands the image of the pot to provide reasons for Jerusalem's punishment. *Rust,* or, alternatively, "encrusted gunk" (also vv. 11–12), represents injustice and bloodguilt (22.6–12). **7–8:** *Cover it*, see Lev 17.13 (HS); Job 16.18.

24.15–27: The death of Ezekiel's wife. Ezekiel's symbolic action echoes the language and symbolism of Aaron's silent mourning in Lev 10.1–7. Here again, the book is steeped in the theology of the Holiness School (see Introduction). **16–17:** Ezekiel must stifle all expressions of mourning, such as the unbinding of the hair, the removal of shoes, the covering of the *upper lip*, and the eating of the *bread of mourners*. See Lev 10.1–7, where the Holiness School stresses that Aaron's silence at God's epiphany must include shunning all participation in mourning rituals. Holiness and death are antithetical realities for Zadokite priests, and those in contact with God's holiness must avoid the realm of death and mourning (see 44.25n.). In acting out an avoidance of mourning like Aaron's, Ezekiel conveys to the people that the fall of Jerusalem will be a major epiphany of divine holiness on earth. **22–24:** The people's deep, silent grief will signify a profound discernment of divine judgment, in contrast to their previous skepticism and enmity toward Ezekiel. It will also entail recognition of God's

25 And you, mortal, on the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes and their heart's affection, and also[a] their sons and their daughters, 26 on that day, one who has escaped will come to you to report to you the news. 27 On that day your mouth shall be opened to the one who has escaped, and you shall speak and no longer be silent. So you shall be a sign to them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

25 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, set your face toward the Ammonites and prophesy against them. 3 Say to the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Because you said, "Aha!" over my sanctuary when it was profaned, and over the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and over the house of Judah when it went into exile; 4 therefore I am handing you over to the people of the east for a possession. They shall set their encampments among you and pitch their tents in your midst; they shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. 5 I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and Ammon a fold for flocks. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. 6 For thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within you against the land of Israel, 7 therefore I have stretched out my hand against you, and will hand you over as plunder to the nations. I will cut you off from the peoples and will make you perish out of the countries; I will destroy you. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

8 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because Moab[b] said, The house of Judah is like all the other nations, 9 therefore I will lay open the flank of Moab from the towns[c] on its frontier, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim. 10 I will give it along with Ammon to the people of the east as a possession. Thus Ammon shall be remembered no more among the nations, 11 and I will execute judgments upon Moab. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

12 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because Edom acted revengefully against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance upon them, 13 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, I will stretch out my hand against Edom, and cut off from it humans and animals, and I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they shall fall by the sword. 14 I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel; and they shall act in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath; and they shall know my vengeance, says the Lord GOD.

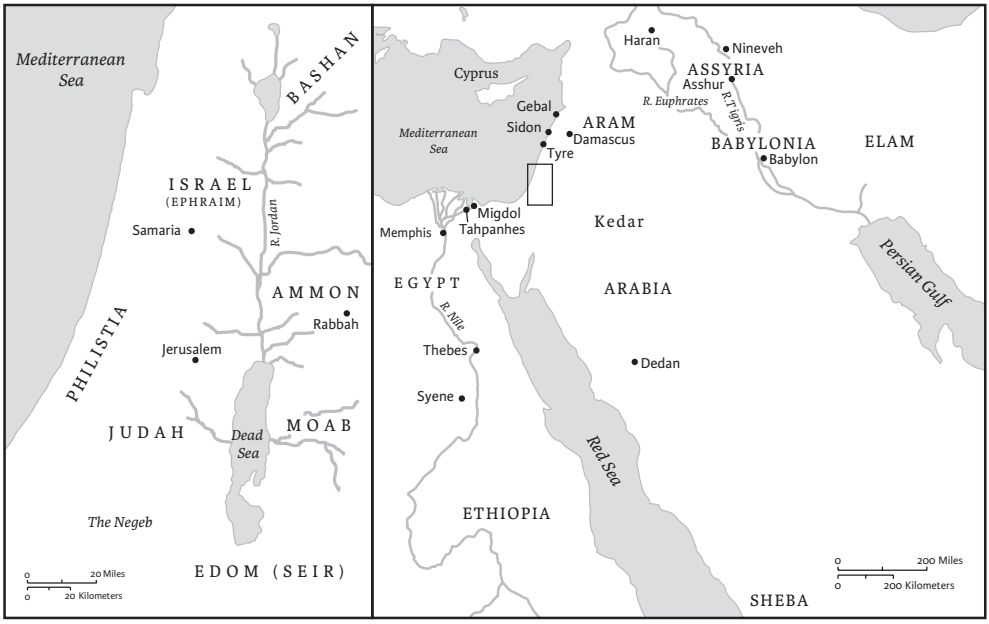
15 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because with unending hostilities the Philistines acted in vengeance, and with malice of heart took revenge in destruction; 16 therefore thus says

[a] Heb lacks *and also*
[b] Gk Old Latin: Heb *Moab and Seir*
[c] Heb *towns from its towns*

otherness (v. 24). **25–27: Release predicted.** The prophet's muted response to the death of his wife has been a continuation of his speechlessness (3.22–27). When word of Jerusalem's fall reaches Ezekiel (see 33.21–22), his tongue will be loosed (3.27) and his speechlessness transferred to the people (v. 23). That is, they will fully accept God's insistence from the start of the book on radically prioritizing the divine intention and its sure performance. They will drop a false reliance on *the pride of* their *power* (v. 21) and *their stronghold* (v. 25).

25.1–32.32: Oracles against the nations. This part of Ezekiel is an effective bridge between the book's message of doom and its message of hope. Here, doom for Israel's antagonists spells hope for Israel itself. Seven nations (Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt) will be punished before Israel is restored (36.5–7).

25.1–17: Oracles against Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia. 1–7: Against Ammon (21.28; Am 1.13–15; Jer 49.1–6). Ammon, which maliciously gloated over Judah's fall (Lam 2.15–16), is to be occupied by *the people of the east* (v. 4; cf. Isa 11.14), i.e., nomadic Arab tribes. **5:** *Rabbah* (modern Amman, Jordan) was the Ammonite capital. **8–11: Against Moab.** Cf. Jer 48. **8:** Cf. 20.32. **9:** God will lay bare Moab's high tableland (*flank*), destroying three fortified cities, *Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim,* all just east of the northern end of the Dead Sea. **12–14: Against Edom.** Cf. Jer 49.7–22; Ob; Ps 137.3. **12:** *Vengeance,* Ob 10–14; Ps 137.7. **13:** Destruction will stretch from *Teman* in southern Edom to *Dedan* in northern Arabia, localities also associated with Edom in Jer 49.7–8. **14:** Ob 18–21. **15–17: Against Philistia.** Cf. Jer 47. **16:** *Cut off the Cherethites* is a wordplay in Heb.



Chs 25–32: Places mentioned in the oracles against foreign nations.

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the Lord God, I will stretch out my hand
against the Philistines, cut off the Chereth-
ites, and destroy the rest of the seacoast. [17] I
will execute great vengeance on them with
wrathful punishments. Then they shall know
that I am the Lord, when I lay my vengeance
on them.

26 In the eleventh year, on the first day of
the month, the word of the Lord came
to me: [2] Mortal, because Tyre said concerning
Jerusalem,

"Aha, broken is the gateway of the peoples;
it has swung open to me;
I shall be replenished,
now that it is wasted,"

[3] therefore, thus says the Lord God:

See, I am against you, O Tyre!
I will hurl many nations against you,
as the sea hurls its waves.
[4] They shall destroy the walls of Tyre
and break down its towers.
I will scrape its soil from it
and make it a bare rock.
[5] It shall become, in the midst of the sea,
a place for spreading nets.
I have spoken, says the Lord God.
It shall become plunder for the nations,
[6] and its daughter-towns in the country
shall be killed by the sword.
Then they shall know that I am the Lord.
[7] For thus says the Lord God: I will
bring against Tyre from the north King

These coastal dwellers are probably Cretans; the Philistines originally came from Aegean islands; cf. 1 Sam 30.14; Am 9.7; Zeph 2.5; Jer 47.4.

26.1–28.19: Oracles against Tyre. 26.1–21: Nebuchadrezzar will destroy Tyre. 1–6: *Tyre* is judged for gloating over the fall of Jerusalem, a commercial rival, excited to take over the city's trade. **1:** The month number is missing, and even the final months of the eleventh year (mid-February or mid-March 586) would be before Jerusalem's fall. Thus, Ezekiel is either anticipating the inevitable fall of Jerusalem (v. 2) or the original Hebrew spoke of the eleventh month of the twelfth year, February 3, 585 BCE. **7–14:** Nebuchadrezzar will besiege the island city, offshore from the mainland city, after destroying the outlying settlements (*daughter-towns,* vv. 6, 8). In fact, Nebuchadrezzar besieged the island of Tyre (after the mainland fell) for thirteen years. Tyre lost the war, but it was not destroyed or pillaged (as prophesied, v. 12). This state of affairs is addressed in 29.17–21. Tyre finally fell to Alexander the Great in 332 BCE. **11:** *Strong pillars* may refer to famed columns of gold and emerald

Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, king of kings,
together with horses, chariots, cavalry, and a
great and powerful army.
[8] Your daughter-towns in the country
he shall put to the sword.
He shall set up a siege wall against you,
cast up a ramp against you,
and raise a roof of shields against you.
[9] He shall direct the shock of his battering
rams against your walls
and break down your towers with his
axes.
[10] His horses shall be so many
that their dust shall cover you.
At the noise of cavalry, wheels, and
chariots
your very walls shall shake,
when he enters your gates
like those entering a breached city.
[11] With the hoofs of his horses
he shall trample all your streets.
He shall put your people to the sword,
and your strong pillars shall fall to the
ground.
[12] They will plunder your riches
and loot your merchandise;
they shall break down your walls
and destroy your fine houses.
Your stones and timber and soil
they shall cast into the water.
[13] I will silence the music of your songs;
the sound of your lyres shall be heard
no more.
[14] I will make you a bare rock;
you shall be a place for spreading nets.
You shall never again be rebuilt,
for I the LORD have spoken,
says the Lord GOD.
[15] Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre: Shall
not the coastlands shake at the sound of
your fall, when the wounded groan, when
slaughter goes on within you? [16] Then all the
princes of the sea shall step down from their
thrones; they shall remove their robes and
strip off their embroidered garments. They
shall clothe themselves with trembling, and
shall sit on the ground; they shall tremble
every moment, and be appalled at you. [17] And
they shall raise a lamentation over you, and
say to you:
How you have vanished[a] from the seas,
O city renowned,
once mighty on the sea,
you and your inhabitants,[b]
who imposed your[c] terror
on all the mainland![d]
[18] Now the coastlands tremble
on the day of your fall;
the coastlands by the sea
are dismayed at your passing.
[19] For thus says the Lord GOD: When I make
you a city laid waste, like cities that are not
inhabited, when I bring up the deep over you,
and the great waters cover you, [20] then I will
thrust you down with those who descend
into the Pit, to the people of long ago, and I
will make you live in the world below, among
primeval ruins, with those who go down to
the Pit, so that you will not be inhabited or
have a place[e] in the land of the living. [21] I will
bring you to a dreadful end, and you shall be
no more; though sought for, you will never be
found again, says the Lord GOD.

27 The word of the LORD came to me:
[2] Now you, mortal, raise a lamentation
over Tyre, [3] and say to Tyre, which sits at the
entrance to the sea, merchant of the peoples
on many coastlands, Thus says the Lord GOD:
O Tyre, you have said,
"I am perfect in beauty."
[4] Your borders are in the heart of the seas;
your builders made perfect your beauty.

[a] Gk OL Aquila: Heb *have vanished, O inhabited one,*
[b] Heb *it and its inhabitants*
[c] Heb *their*
[d] Cn: Heb *its inhabitants*
[e] Gk: Heb *I will give beauty*

at the entrance of Tyre's temple of Melqart. **14:** Cf. vv. 4–5. **15–18:** Dirge of *the princes of the sea,* perhaps coastal cities in trade alliance with Tyre. **19–21:** The simile of the attack of the sea in v. 3 is here heightened into mythic metaphor. The primordial *deep* (Gen 1.2) will cover the wasted city, which will *descend into the* abode of the dead (Sheol, see 31.15–18; 32.17–32; Isa 14.15), never to resurface.

27.1–36: Dirge over the ship Tyre. Metaphorical language serves Ezekiel's need to push beyond the ordinarily observable and speak of ultimate realities. **1–25:** Tyre's glory. **2:** *Lamentation,* better, a funerary "dirge," in which present downfall is contrasted with past glory. **3:** *Perfect in beauty* is supposed to be Jerusalem's epithet

5 They made all your planks
of fir trees from Senir;
they took a cedar from Lebanon
to make a mast for you.
6 From oaks of Bashan
they made your oars;
they made your deck of pines[a]
from the coasts of Cyprus,
inlaid with ivory.
7 Of fine embroidered linen from Egypt
was your sail,
serving as your ensign;
blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah
was your awning.
8 The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad
were your rowers;
skilled men of Zemer[b] were within you,
they were your pilots.
9 The elders of Gebal and its artisans were
within you,
caulking your seams;
all the ships of the sea with their mariners
were within you,
to barter for your wares.
10 Paras[c] and Lud and Put
were in your army,
your mighty warriors;
they hung shield and helmet in you;
they gave you splendor.
11 Men of Arvad and Helech[d]
were on your walls all around;
men of Gamad were at your towers.
They hung their quivers all around your
walls;
they made perfect your beauty.
12 Tarshish did business with you out of the abundance of your great wealth; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares. 13 Javan, Tubal, and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged human beings and vessels of bronze for your merchandise. 14 Beth-togarmah exchanged for your wares horses, war horses, and mules. 15 The Rhodians[e] traded with you; many coastlands were your own special markets; they brought you in payment ivory tusks and ebony. 16 Edom[f] did business with you because of your abundant goods; they exchanged for your wares turquoise, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, and rubies. 17 Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged for your merchandise wheat from Minnith, millet,[g] honey, oil, and balm. 18 Damascus traded with you for your abundant goods—because of your great wealth of every kind—wine of Helbon, and white wool. 19 Vedan and Javan from Uzal[g] entered into trade for your wares; wrought iron, cassia, and sweet cane were bartered for your merchandise. 20 Dedan traded with you in saddlecloths for riding. 21 Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your favored dealers in lambs, rams, and goats; in these they did business with you. 22 The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; they exchanged for your wares

[a] Or *boxwood*
[b] Cn Compare Gen 10.18: Heb *your skilled men, O Tyre*
[c] Or *Persia*
[d] Or *and your army*
[e] Gk: Heb *The Dedanites*
[f] Another reading is *Aram*
[g] Meaning of Heb uncertain

(16.14; Lam 2.15), not Tyre's. **5–9:** The good ship Tyre was constructed of the best materials. **5:** *Senir* is Mount Hermon, located in southern Syria (Deut 3.9). **6:** *Bashan* is east of the Sea of Galilee, known for its oak forests. **7:** *Elishah* is probably Cyprus. **8–9:** The ship's crew was from *Sidon, Arvad, Zemer* (textual note *b*), and *Gebal* (Byblos), Phoenician island and port cities. **10:** The ship's warriors included those from Persia (textual note *c*), *Lud* (Lydia in western Asia Minor), and *Put* (Libya). **11:** Literal reality (Tyre as a city) momentarily intrudes into Ezekiel's ship metaphor. *Arvad,* see v. 8. *Helech,* possibly Cilicia, in southeastern Asia Minor. The *men of Gamad* are perhaps the Cimmerians or Cappadocians in eastern Asia Minor. **12–25:** A (mostly prose) description of the gallant ship's cargo of rich wares from many nations. **12–15:** Tyre's commercial empire is described first in horizontal fashion from west to east: *Tarshish,* perhaps Tarsus in southern Asia Minor, or Tartessus in southern Spain, or Sardinia; *Javan,* Ionians, i.e., the Greeks of the Aegean; *Tubal* and *Meshech,* Assyrian "Tabal" and "Mushki," peoples settled in Asia Minor; *Beth-togarmah,* Assyrian "Tilgarimmu," in eastern Asia Minor (Armenia), east of the southernmost Halys River, east of Tubal. **16–19:** The description then moves vertically from south to northeast: *Edom; Judah* and *Israel; Minnith,* an Ammonite city (Judg 11.33); *Damascus; Helbon,* a famed wine center 13 mi (21 km) northwest of Damascus. **20–22:** The Arabian region is treated next: *Dedan,* in northwest Arabia (see

the best of all kinds of spices, and all precious
stones, and gold. 23 Haran, Canneh, Eden, the
merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad
traded with you. 24 These traded with you
in choice garments, in clothes of blue and
embroidered work, and in carpets of colored
material, bound with cords and made secure;
in these they traded with you.[a] 25 The ships of
Tarshish traveled for you in your trade.
So you were filled and heavily laden
in the heart of the seas.
26 Your rowers have brought you
into the high seas.
The east wind has wrecked you
in the heart of the seas.
27 Your riches, your wares, your
merchandise,
your mariners and your pilots,
your caulkers, your dealers in
merchandise,
and all your warriors within you,
with all the company
that is with you,
sink into the heart of the seas
on the day of your ruin.
28 At the sound of the cry of your pilots
the countryside shakes,
29 and down from their ships
come all that handle the oar.
The mariners and all the pilots of the sea
stand on the shore
30 and wail aloud over you,
and cry bitterly.
They throw dust on their heads
and wallow in ashes;
31 they make themselves bald for you,
and put on sackcloth,
and they weep over you in bitterness of soul,
with bitter mourning.
32 In their wailing they raise a lamentation
for you,
and lament over you:
"Who was ever destroyed[b] like Tyre
in the midst of the sea?
33 When your wares came from the seas,
you satisfied many peoples;
with your abundant wealth and
merchandise
you enriched the kings of the earth.
34 Now you are wrecked by the seas,
in the depths of the waters;
your merchandise and all your crew
have sunk with you.
35 All the inhabitants of the coastlands
are appalled at you;
and their kings are horribly afraid,
their faces are convulsed.
36 The merchants among the peoples hiss
at you;
you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more forever."

28 The word of the LORD came to me:
2 Mortal, say to the prince of Tyre,
Thus says the Lord GOD:
Because your heart is proud
and you have said, "I am a god;
I sit in the seat of the gods,
in the heart of the seas,"
yet you are but a mortal, and no god,
though you compare your mind
with the mind of a god.
3 You are indeed wiser than Daniel;[c]
no secret is hidden from you;
4 by your wisdom and your
understanding
you have amassed wealth for yourself,
and have gathered gold and silver
into your treasuries.

[a] Cn: Heb *in your market*
[b] Tg Vg: Heb *like silence*
[c] Or, as otherwise read, *Danel*

also textual note *e*, on the previous page); *Kedar,* a tribal group of northern Arabia; *Sheba* and *Raamah,* in southwest Arabia. Several Mesopotamian cities conclude the list (v. 23): *Haran,* in northwest Mesopotamia; *Canneh,* a town near Haran; *Eden,* the Aramaean state of Bit-Adini, south of Haran; *Asshur,* south of Nineveh; *Chilmad,* unidentified. **25:** *Ships of Tarshish,* see vv. 12–15n.; 1 Kings 10.22; 22.48; Ps 48.7; Isa 23.1. **26–36:** Tyre's past glory contrasts sharply with its sudden end. As in 19.12, the *east wind* (sirocco) is an agent of destruction (cf. Ps 48.7). The sudden end of the great commercial city brings astonishment, fear, and grief to seafarers, merchants, and inhabitants of the coastlands. **31:** 7.18n.

28.1–10: Oracle against the leader of Tyre. 2: Tyre's ruler (*prince*), who represents the people of Tyre, is judged for his pride (a universal offense, Prov 16.5). Hubris leads to self-deification. Thus the prince of Tyre sat in *the seat of the gods* (cf. Isa 14.13–14). *Heart of the seas,* see 28.14n. **3:** In the Ugaritic texts, *Danel* is the wise

5 By your great wisdom in trade
you have increased your wealth,
and your heart has become proud in your wealth.
6 Therefore thus says the Lord God:
Because you compare your mind
with the mind of a god,
7 therefore, I will bring strangers against you,
the most terrible of the nations;
they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom
and defile your splendor.
8 They shall thrust you down to the Pit,
and you shall die a violent death
in the heart of the seas.
9 Will you still say, "I am a god,"
in the presence of those who kill you,
though you are but a mortal, and no god,
in the hands of those who wound you?
10 You shall die the death of the uncircumcised
by the hand of foreigners;
for I have spoken, says the Lord God.
11 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me: 12 Mortal, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God:
You were the signet of perfection,[a]
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
13 You were in Eden, the garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering,
carnelian, chrysolite, and moonstone,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire,[b] turquoise, and emerald;
and worked in gold were your settings
and your engravings.[a]
On the day that you were created
they were prepared.
14 With an anointed cherub as guardian I placed you;[a]
you were on the holy mountain of God;
you walked among the stones of fire.
15 You were blameless in your ways
from the day that you were created,
until iniquity was found in you.
16 In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,
and the guardian cherub drove you out
from among the stones of fire.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *lapis lazuli*

judge of widows and orphans (see 14.14n.). **6–10:** The leader will be slain by *the most terrible of the nations,* Babylonia (30.10–11), and come to an ignominious end (*the death of the uncircumcised*, v. 10) in *the Pit* (v. 8), that is, Sheol, a netherworld abode where the dead are cut off from life and community (32.30). Like the Israelites, the Phoenicians practiced circumcision; see also 31.18; 32.19.

28.11–19: A dirge over the king of Tyre. The passage reworks 28.1–10 based on a mythic tale in which a celestial figure met his downfall through hubris (cf. the Ugaritic myth of Athtar). Since this myth was familiar outside of Israel, it provided Ezekiel a basis for judging a nation that was outside Israel's covenant. **12:** The *king of Tyre* replicates the tragic paradigm of an archetypal being, a great cherub (see v. 14n., v. 16b n.). Cherubim are not companions to humans, as in the NRSV translation, but are interlocked with the divine presence (cf. 1.5–14n.). *Wisdom,* cf. the Ugaritic god Athtar, celebrated for knowledge and understanding, but unable successfully to occupy the throne at the cosmic center for which he longed. **13:** *Eden,* ancient images of cherubim often appear in association with stylized trees, which mark paradise, God's garden (cf. Gen 3.24; Ezek 31.9; 41.18. With the cherub's *covering* of precious stones, cf. the stones of the high priest's breastplate in Ex 28.17–20, which itself must have had a symbolic connection to Eden (cf. 43.13–17n.). **14:** See textual note *a*; the Heb reads, "You were an anointed cherub." The outstretched, shielding wings of a cherub made it an effective *guardian* of the cosmic center (cf. Gen 3.24). Tyre's ruler might initially have appreciated the comparison to a cherub. *Eden* (v. 13) sat atop the mythic cosmic mountain, *the holy mountain of God* that connects earth and heaven (cf. 40.2; 43.13–17n.). Rivers flow from God's mountain to fill earth's lakes and oceans, making the mountain the "heart of the seas" (v. 2; cf. 47.1–12; Gen 2.10–14; Ps 46.4; Zech 14.8). *Stones of fire,* the astral coterie of the cherub. **16–19:** The dirge moves from the cherub's past glory to his downfall through hubris. **16a:** The actual referent (Tyre's corrupt trade) intrudes into the allegorical figure (the primal cherub's sin) here. **16b:** The NRSV is following the Septuagint (cf. Gen 3.23–24). The Heb reads, "I drove you out, O guardian cherub." For demotions

17 Your heart was proud because of your
beauty;
you corrupted your wisdom for the sake
of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I exposed you before kings,
to feast their eyes on you.
18 By the multitude of your iniquities,
in the unrighteousness of your trade,
you profaned your sanctuaries.
So I brought out fire from within you;
it consumed you,
and I turned you to ashes on the earth
in the sight of all who saw you.
19 All who know you among the peoples
are appalled at you;
you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more forever.
20 The word of the LORD came to me: 21 Mortal, set your face toward Sidon, and prophesy against it, 22 and say, Thus says the Lord GOD:
I am against you, O Sidon,
and I will gain glory in your midst.
They shall know that I am the LORD
when I execute judgments in it,
and manifest my holiness in it;
23 for I will send pestilence into it,
and bloodshed into its streets;
and the dead shall fall in its midst,
by the sword that is against it on every
side.
And they shall know that I am the LORD.
24 The house of Israel shall no longer find a pricking brier or a piercing thorn among all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. And they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.
25 Thus says the Lord GOD: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall settle on their own soil that I gave to my servant Jacob. 26 They shall live in safety in it, and shall build houses and plant vineyards. They shall live in safety, when I execute judgments upon all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God.

29 In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt; 3 speak, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD:
I am against you,
Pharaoh king of Egypt,
the great dragon sprawling
in the midst of its channels,
saying, "My Nile is my own;
I made it for myself."
4 I will put hooks in your jaws,
and make the fish of your channels
stick to your scales.
I will draw you up from your channels,
with all the fish of your channels
sticking to your scales.
5 I will fling you into the wilderness,
you and all the fish of your channels;
you shall fall in the open field,
and not be gathered and buried.
To the animals of the earth and to the
birds of the air
I have given you as food.
6 Then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall
know
that I am the LORD
because you[a] were a staff of reed
to the house of Israel;

[a] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they*

of supernatural figures, cf. Ps 82.6–7; Isa 14.12; Lk 10.18. **17–18:** *To the ground,* in Ugaritic myth, Athtar likewise descends to the "earth"/"underworld." A priestly being (see v. 13n.) should guard all holy ground, but this diabolical cherub actually *profaned . . . sanctuaries*.

28.20–26: Oracle against Sidon, another Phoenician city, on the Mediterranean coast north of Tyre. **24–26:** Sidon's doom spells God's vindication. **24:** Cf. Num 33.55 (HS). **25–26:** Cf. 34.28; Lev 25.19.

29.1–32.32: Prophecies against Egypt. 29.1–16: Against Pharaoh 1: *Tenth year . . . tenth month . . . twelfth day,* January 7, 587 BCE. **3:** *Dragon,* the reptilian crocodile (a signature creature of Egypt). Pharaohs, such as Unas and Thutmose III, compared themselves with crocodiles and crocodile gods. The Heb term takes on more of its common mythological connotations of a monster of watery chaos in 32.1–16. *Its channels,* the Nile delta and canals. *My own; I made it,* in Egyptian religion the pharaoh created and controlled the Nile. **4:** *Hooks,* cf. 38.4; Isa 37.29. *Fish of your channels,* the Egyptians and their mercenaries. **6b–9a:** *Staff of reed,* compare the Assyrian

7 when they grasped you with the hand,
you broke,
and tore all their shoulders;
and when they leaned on you, you broke,
and made all their legs unsteady.[a]
8 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD: I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from you human being and animal; 9 and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Because you[b] said, "The Nile is mine, and I made it," 10 therefore, I am against you, and against your channels, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Ethiopia.[c] 11 No human foot shall pass through it, and no animal foot shall pass through it; it shall be uninhabited forty years. 12 I will make the land of Egypt a desolation among desolated countries; and her cities shall be a desolation forty years among cities that are laid waste. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries.

13 Further, thus says the Lord GOD: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered; 14 and I will restore the fortunes of Egypt, and bring them back to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin; and there they shall be a lowly kingdom. 15 It shall be the most lowly of the kingdoms, and never again exalt itself above the nations; and I will make them so small that they will never again rule over the nations. 16 The Egyptians[d] shall never again be the reliance of the house of Israel; they will recall their iniquity, when they turned to them for aid. Then they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

17 In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 18 Mortal, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre; every head was made bald and every shoulder was rubbed bare; yet neither he nor his army got anything from Tyre to pay for the labor that he had expended against it. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I will give the land of Egypt to King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon; and he shall carry off its wealth and despoil it and plunder it; and it shall be the wages for his army. 20 I have given him the land of Egypt as his payment for which he labored, because they worked for me, says the Lord GOD.

21 On that day I will cause a horn to sprout up for the house of Israel, and I will open your lips among them. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

30 The word of the LORD came to me:
2 Mortal, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD:
Wail, "Alas for the day!"
3 For a day is near,
the day of the LORD is near;
it will be a day of clouds,
a time of doom[e] for the nations.
4 A sword shall come upon Egypt,
and anguish shall be in Ethiopia,[c]
when the slain fall in Egypt,

[a] Syr: Heb *stand*
[b] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *he*
[c] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
[d] Heb *It*
[e] Heb lacks *of doom*

Rabshakeh's similar belittlement of Egypt in 2 Kings 18.21; Isa 36.6. Pharaoh Hophra's attack against Nebuchadrezzar in the spring of 588 BCE had failed to relieve Jerusalem (Jer 37.5–10). **10:** *Migdol to Syene,* northern and southern Egyptian localities, together signifying all Egypt. **11:** *Forty years,* 4.6; Num 14.33 (HS). **13–16:** The sole promise of Egyptian restoration in Ezekiel, though Egypt will be restored only as a *lowly kingdom*. **14:** *Pathros,* southern Egypt.

29.17–21: Egypt as "wages" for Nebuchadrezzar, instead of Tyre. 17: *Twenty-seventh year . . . first month . . . first day,* Ezekiel's latest dated oracle, April 26, 571 BCE. This unique passage amends the Tyre prophecies (26.12) in light of subsequent events. Nebuchadrezzar will get sufficient plunder from Egypt to compensate for his lack of booty from the siege of Tyre. The preservation of an earlier, embarrassingly unfulfilled prophecy (ch 26) in the book shows how quickly Ezekiel's prophecies took on scriptural authority. **21:** *Horn* may refer to a reestablished Davidic leadership in Israel (Ps 132.17); cf. 17.22–24n.

30.1–19: The doom of Egypt. 1–9: The *day of the LORD* (cf. Amos 5.18) is God's judgment day on the Israelites (7.5–9n.; 13.5) but also, as here, doomsday for the nations (38.18; 39.8; Judg 5.20; Isa 2.12; Ob 1.15).

and its wealth is carried away,
and its foundations are torn down.
5 Ethiopia,[a] and Put, and Lud, and all Arabia,
and Libya,[b] and the people of the allied land[c]
shall fall with them by the sword.

6 Thus says the LORD:
Those who support Egypt shall fall,
and its proud might shall come down;
from Migdol to Syene
they shall fall within it by the sword,
says the Lord GOD.
7 They shall be desolated among other
desolated countries,
and their cities shall lie among cities
laid waste.
8 Then they shall know that I am the
LORD,
when I have set fire to Egypt,
and all who help it are broken.
9 On that day, messengers shall go out
from me in ships to terrify the unsuspecting
Ethiopians;[d] and anguish shall come upon
them on the day of Egypt's doom;[e] for it is
coming!

10 Thus says the Lord GOD:
I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt,
by the hand of King Nebuchadrezzar of
Babylon.
11 He and his people with him, the most
terrible of the nations,
shall be brought in to destroy the
land;
and they shall draw their swords against
Egypt,
and fill the land with the slain.
12 I will dry up the channels,
and will sell the land into the hand of
evildoers;
I will bring desolation upon the land and
everything in it
by the hand of foreigners;
I the LORD have spoken.

13 Thus says the Lord GOD:
I will destroy the idols
and put an end to the images in
Memphis;
there shall no longer be a prince in the
land of Egypt;
so I will put fear in the land of Egypt.
14 I will make Pathros a desolation,
and will set fire to Zoan,
and will execute acts of judgment on
Thebes.
15 I will pour my wrath upon Pelusium,
the stronghold of Egypt,
and cut off the hordes of Thebes.
16 I will set fire to Egypt;
Pelusium shall be in great agony;
Thebes shall be breached,
and Memphis face adversaries
by day.
17 The young men of On and of Pi-beseth
shall fall by the sword;
and the cities themselves[f] shall go into
captivity.
18 At Tehaphnehes the day shall
be dark,
when I break there the dominion of
Egypt,
and its proud might shall come to
an end;
the city[g] shall be covered by a cloud,
and its daughter-towns shall go into
captivity.
19 Thus I will execute acts of judgment on
Egypt.
Then they shall know that I am the
LORD.

a Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
b Compare Gk Syr Vg: Heb *Cub*
c Meaning of Heb uncertain
d Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cush*
e Heb *the day of Egypt*
f Heb *and they*
g Heb *she*

5: *Put, and Lud,* see 27.10n. **6–9:** Egypt's allies will collapse. *Migdol to Syene,* see 29.10n. *Unsuspecting Ethiopians,* the enormity of Egypt's fall is emphasized by describing onlookers' reactions. **10–12:** Nebuchadrezzar is Egypt's destroyer. **12:** *Channels,* see 29.3n. **13–19:** All Egypt will be destroyed. *Images* are condemned in Holiness School texts, such as Lev 19.4; 26.1. *Memphis,* south of Cairo, was the ancient capital of lower (northern) Egypt. *Pathros,* see 29.14n. *Zoan,* in the northeast delta region. *Thebes,* capital of upper Egypt, is present-day Karnak and Luxor. *Pelusium,* east of Zoan, in the delta region. *On* is Heliopolis, slightly northeast of Memphis. *Pi-beseth,* Bubastis, in the eastern delta. *Tehaphnehes,* Tahpanhes, on Egypt's northeastern frontier.

20 In the eleventh year, in the first month,
on the seventh day of the month, the word
of the LORD came to me: 21 Mortal, I have
broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt;
it has not been bound up for healing or
wrapped with a bandage, so that it may
become strong to wield the sword. 22 There-
fore thus says the Lord GOD: I am against
Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his
arms, both the strong arm and the one that
was broken; and I will make the sword fall
from his hand. 23 I will scatter the Egyptians
among the nations, and disperse them
throughout the lands. 24 I will strengthen
the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my
sword in his hand; but I will break the arms
of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him
with the groans of one mortally wounded.
25 I will strengthen the arms of the king of
Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh shall fall.
And they shall know that I am the LORD,
when I put my sword into the hand of the
king of Babylon. He shall stretch it out
against the land of Egypt, 26 and I will scatter
the Egyptians among the nations and dis-
perse them throughout the countries. Then
they shall know that I am the LORD.

31 In the eleventh year, in the third
month, on the first day of the month,
the word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mor-
tal, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his
hordes:

Whom are you like in your greatness?
3 Consider Assyria, a cedar of Lebanon,
with fair branches and forest shade,
and of great height,
its top among the clouds.[a]
4 The waters nourished it,
the deep made it grow tall,
making its rivers flow[b]
around the place it was planted,
sending forth its streams
to all the trees of the field.
5 So it towered high
above all the trees of the field;
its boughs grew large
and its branches long,
from abundant water in its shoots.
6 All the birds of the air
made their nests in its boughs;
under its branches all the animals of the
field
gave birth to their young;
and in its shade
all great nations lived.
7 It was beautiful in its greatness,
in the length of its branches;
for its roots went down
to abundant water.
8 The cedars in the garden of God could
not rival it,
nor the fir trees equal its boughs;
the plane trees were as nothing
compared with its branches;
no tree in the garden of God
was like it in beauty.
9 I made it beautiful
with its mass of branches,
the envy of all the trees of Eden
that were in the garden of God.

10 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Be-
cause it[c] towered high and set its top among
the clouds,[a] and its heart was proud of its

[a] Gk: Heb *thick boughs*
[b] Gk: Heb *rivers going*
[c] Syr Vg: Heb *you*

30.20–26: Pharaoh disarmed. 20: *Eleventh year . . . first month . . . seventh day,* April 29, 587 BCE. The body imagery of broken arms represents military defeat. Nebuchadrezzar had broken one arm of Hophra the year before (vv. 20–21; see 29.6b–9a n.; Jer 37.5). The next time, he will break both arms (vv. 22–26). **26:** Cf. 29.12.

31.1–18: Assyria and Egypt compared. 1: *Eleventh year . . . third month . . . first day,* June 21, 587 BCE. Ezekiel uses the archetype of the "cosmic tree" (see 17.22–24n.; Zech 4; Dan 4) to emphasize that, as with Assyria, the cause for Egypt's fall will be pride (hubris). **3a:** See Nah 3.8–10 for a similar comparison of Egypt and Assyria. The fact of Assyria's downfall supports the credibility of Ezekiel's judgments against Egypt. Ezekiel's image of Assyria as a tree may have its source of inspiration in Isa 10.33–34. **3b–9:** A dirge for the cosmic tree begins by describing its former glory. **4–6:** *The deep* (Heb "tehom"), here, the world's subterranean sweet-waters (Gen 7.11), nourished the tree so that it reached into the heavens and sheltered all life (cf. Dan 4.11–12). **7–9:** The splendor of the great cedar was incomparable (v. 18), surpassing those *in the garden of God* (28.13). **10–18:** The tree's two-phased disaster. God will have it cut down; the life it sheltered will be dispersed (vv. 10–14). Once felled, it will

height, [11] I gave it into the hand of the prince of the nations; he has dealt with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out. [12] Foreigners from the most terrible of the nations have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs lie broken in all the watercourses of the land; and all the peoples of the earth went away from its shade and left it.

[13] On its fallen trunk settle
all the birds of the air,
and among its boughs lodge
all the wild animals.
[14] All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to lofty height or set their tops among the clouds,[a] and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height.
For all of them are handed over to death,
to the world below;
along with all mortals,
with those who go down to the Pit.

[15] Thus says the Lord God: On the day it went down to Sheol I closed the deep over it and covered it; I restrained its rivers, and its mighty waters were checked. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. [16] I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the Pit; and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that were well watered, were consoled in the world below. [17] They also went down to Sheol with it, to those killed by the sword, along with its allies,[b] those who lived in its shade among the nations.

[18] Which among the trees of Eden was like you in glory and in greatness? Now you shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the world below; you shall lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are killed by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his horde, says the Lord God.

32 In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me: [2] Mortal, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him:

You consider yourself a lion among the nations,
but you are like a dragon in the seas;
you thrash about in your streams,
trouble the water with your feet,
and foul your[c] streams.
[3] Thus says the Lord God:
In an assembly of many peoples
I will throw my net over you;
and I[d] will haul you up in my dragnet.
[4] I will throw you on the ground,
on the open field I will fling you,
and will cause all the birds of the air to settle on you,
and I will let the wild animals of the whole earth gorge themselves with you.
[5] I will strew your flesh on the mountains,
and fill the valleys with your carcass.[e]
[6] I will drench the land with your flowing blood
up to the mountains,
and the watercourses will be filled with you.

[a] Gk: Heb *thick boughs*
[b] Heb *its arms*
[c] Heb *their*
[d] Gk Vg: Heb *they*
[e] Symmachus Syr Vg: Heb *your height*

crash down still farther (vv. 15–18) into the *Pit* of the dead (v. 14), i.e., to *Sheol* in the underworld (see 32.17–32). **11:** *Prince of the nations,* Nabopolassar, founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, or possibly Nebuchadnezzar. **18:** *Uncircumcised,* see 28.6–10n., 32.17–32n.

32.1–16: Dirge over Pharaoh. 1: *Twelfth year . . . twelfth month . . . first day,* March 3, 585 BCE. Pharaohs such as Seti I and Ramesses III boasted that they were fierce or enraged lions. Ezekiel declares that Pharaoh is better viewed as a sea-dragon. Mesopotamian mythology saw lions and dragon-monsters as parallel; the creature Labbu was actually a lion-serpent. In Egyptian mythology, the demon Ammit, "Swallower of the Dead," was part lion, part crocodile, and part hippopotamus. **2:** *Dragon,* a monstrous crocodile as in 29.3, but here with the fantastic proportions of the mythological chaos monster that the term signifies in Job 7.12; Ps 74.13; Isa 27.1; 51.9. In his hubris, Pharaoh aspires to rock the cosmos (*in the seas,* cf. Isa 27.1 and the watery chaos of Pss 46.3; 93.3). Verses 2,13–14 show, however, that in reality he can stir up only a little local trouble, muddying the water with his feet. **3–8:** His punishment. Verses 6–8 recall the "day of the Lord" (see 30.1–9n.; Isa 13.10; Joel 2.2,30); they

7 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens,
and make their stars dark;
I will cover the sun with a cloud,
and the moon shall not give its light.
8 All the shining lights of the heavens
I will darken above you,
and put darkness on your land,
says the Lord God.
9 I will trouble the hearts of many peoples,
as I carry you captive[a] among the nations,
into countries you have not known.
10 I will make many peoples appalled at you;
their kings shall shudder because of you.
When I brandish my sword before them,
they shall tremble every moment
for their lives, each one of them,
on the day of your downfall.
11 For thus says the Lord God:
The sword of the king of Babylon shall come against you.
12 I will cause your hordes to fall
by the swords of mighty ones,
all of them most terrible among the nations.
They shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt,
and all its hordes shall perish.
13 I will destroy all its livestock
from beside abundant waters;
and no human foot shall trouble them any more,
nor shall the hoofs of cattle trouble them.
14 Then I will make their waters clear,
and cause their streams to run like oil,
says the Lord God.
15 When I make the land of Egypt desolate
and when the land is stripped of all that fills it,
when I strike down all who live in it,
then they shall know that I am the Lord.
16 This is a lamentation; it shall be chanted.
The women of the nations shall chant it.
Over Egypt and all its hordes they shall chant it,
says the Lord God.
17 In the twelfth year, in the first month,[b]
on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me:
18 Mortal, wail over the hordes of Egypt,
and send them down,
with Egypt[c] and the daughters of majestic nations,
to the world below,
with those who go down to the Pit.
19 "Whom do you surpass in beauty?
Go down! Be laid to rest with the uncircumcised!"
20 They shall fall among those who are killed by the sword. Egypt[d] has been handed over to the sword; carry away both it and its hordes.
21 The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: "They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, killed by the sword."
22 Assyria is there, and all its company,
their graves all around it, all of them killed,

[a] Gk: Heb *bring your destruction*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *in the first month*
[c] Heb *it*
[d] Heb *It*

also echo two Exodus plagues against Egypt: blood (Ex 7.17); darkness (Ex 10.21–23 [HS]). **9–10:** The nations' reactions (cf. 26.16; 27.35). **11–15:** The *sword* of God (v. 10; 30.4; Lev 26.25,33 [HS]) is concretely the Babylonians' sword (cf. 30.25). **14:** Reversing v. 2, God restores the Nile's natural state (cf. Lev 26.34–35 [HS]). **16:** *Women* served as mourners in the ancient world (see Jer 9.17–18).

32.17–32: Egypt in the underworld. 17: *Twelfth year . . . first month . . . fifteenth day,* helped by the Septuagint (textual note *b*), the date can be read as April 27, 586 BCE. Like Tyre (28.10), pompous Egypt belongs dumped in the depths of the underworld (*the Pit*, "Sheol"), in recesses reserved for uncircumcised heathen and those slaughtered in battle. Like Meshech and Tubal, the Egyptians belong segregated from the renowned pagan warriors who entered the netherworld in full battle dress (v. 27). The Egyptians, at least their priests and kings, practiced circumcision, as did the Edomites (v. 29) and the Sidonians (v. 30; cf. 28.10n.). Thus, their fate is to the disgrace of all three peoples. **22–30:** A roster. In its dishonorable demise Egypt will join others who were objects of God's wrath (Isa 14.9–11), such as *Assyria* (31.3–17); *Elam* (defeated by Assyria, its western neighbor); *Meshech* and *Tubal* (see 27.12–15n.); *Edom* (25.12–14); *princes of the north* (unnamed rulers in Phoenicia and Syria);

fallen by the sword. 23 Their graves are set in the uttermost parts of the Pit. Its company is all around its grave, all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.

24 Elam is there, and all its hordes around its grave; all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised into the world below, who spread terror in the land of the living. They bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit. 25 They have made Elam[a] a bed among the slain with all its hordes, their graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for terror of them was spread in the land of the living, and they bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit; they are placed among the slain.

26 Meshech and Tubal are there, and all their multitude, their graves all around them, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for they spread terror in the land of the living. 27 And they do not lie with the fallen warriors of long ago[b] who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose shields[c] are upon their bones; for the terror of the warriors was in the land of the living. 28 So you shall be broken and lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are killed by the sword.

29 Edom is there, its kings and all its princes, who for all their might are laid with those who are killed by the sword; they lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the Pit.

30 The princes of the north are there, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who have gone down in shame with the slain, for all the terror that they caused by their might; they lie uncircumcised with those who are killed by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit.

31 When Pharaoh sees them, he will be consoled for all his hordes—Pharaoh and all his army, killed by the sword, says the Lord God. 32 For he[d] spread terror in the land of the living; therefore he shall be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword—Pharaoh and all his multitude, says the Lord God.

33 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 O Mortal, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one of their number as their sentinel; 3 and if the sentinel sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people; 4 then if any who hear the sound of the trumpet do not take warning, and the sword comes and takes them away, their blood shall be upon their own heads. 5 They heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; their blood shall be upon themselves. But if they had taken warning, they would have saved their lives. 6 But if the sentinel sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any of them, they are taken away in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at the sentinel's hand.

7 So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 8 If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. 9 But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not

[a] Heb *it*
[b] Gk Old Latin: Heb *of the uncircumcised*
[c] Cn: Heb *iniquities*
[d] Cn: Heb *I*

and *Sidon* (28.20–26). **23:** *The uttermost parts of the Pit* constitute, in mythic poetry, a fate opposite to the goal of ascending the cosmic mountain (Isa 14.15; Jonah 2.4–6).

33.1–39.29: Prophecies of Israel's restoration. 33.1–20: Clarification of Ezekiel's role. The social setting is given in v. 10. The exiles are now resigned to their condemnation and to Jerusalem's destruction, but this resignation has led to an unanticipated, paralyzing hopelessness. Ezekiel delivers two responses to their demoralized state: God desires people to live, and sin is forgivable. **1–9:** God reminds Ezekiel of his commission as a *sentinel* (3.16–21). This metaphor had originally assuaged Ezekiel's reluctance about his calling. Here the prophet's role as sentinel is stressed again to explain how the intention behind Ezekiel's doom prophecy is not

turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

10 Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" 11 Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel? 12 And you, mortal, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not save them when they transgress; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, it shall not make them stumble when they turn from their wickedness; and the righteous shall not be able to live by their righteousness[a] when they sin. 13 Though I say to the righteous that they shall surely live, yet if they trust in their righteousness and commit iniquity, none of their righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. 14 Again, though I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," yet if they turn from their sin and do what is lawful and right— 15 if the wicked restore the pledge, give back what they have taken by robbery, and walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity—they shall surely live, they shall not die. 16 None of the sins that they have committed shall be remembered against them; they have done what is lawful and right, they shall surely live.

17 Yet your people say, "The way of the Lord is not just," when it is their own way that is not just. 18 When the righteous turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity, they shall die for it.[b] 19 And when the wicked turn from their wickedness, and do what is lawful and right, they shall live by it.[b] 20 Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is not just." O house of Israel, I will judge all of you according to your ways!

21 In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, someone who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has fallen." 22 Now the hand of the Lord had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; but he had opened my mouth by the time the fugitive came to me in the morning; so my mouth was opened, and I was no longer unable to speak.

23 The word of the Lord came to me: 24 Mortal, the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel keep saying, "Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land; but we are many; the land is surely given us to possess." 25 Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord God: You eat flesh with the blood, and lift up your eyes to your idols, and shed blood; shall you then possess the land? 26 You depend on your swords, you commit abominations, and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife; shall you then

[a] Heb *by it*
[b] Heb *them*

death but life, to call the people to repentance. **10–20:** Repentance as the way to life. This oracle reemphasizes ch 18 and its stress on the moral autonomy of generations. Earlier this material had aimed to convict the exiles of their personal culpability. Here, Ezekiel's theme of taking responsibility is used to show that one's personal sinfulness is forgivable. **11:** Cf. 18.23n.; 18.31. God's impassioned plea is for all to find life, even the wicked.

33.21–22: Release from speechlessness. 21: *Twelfth year . . . tenth month . . . fifth day,* the exiles from Jerusalem arrived in Babylonia on January 19, 585 BCE, about half a year after Jerusalem's fall. (See Ezra 7.9 for a comparable travel time.) *Escaped from Jerusalem,* escaped death by exile to Babylonia. **22:** *Opened my mouth,* Ezekiel's concurrent release from the speechlessness of 3.26–27 was predicted at 24.27. The event is a watershed: the written judgment on Jerusalem of scripture, symbolized by the "written scroll" of 2.9–10, had been fulfilled, and now a new prophetic message of promise was possible.

33.23–33: Resistance in the homeland and in exile. 23–29: Disputation over possession of homeland property. Verse 24 reveals the social setting. The homelanders are repeating their earlier claim to the land (11.15). Verses 25–26 indict them in terms echoing 18.1–20; 22.11; Lev 19.16,26 (HS). Isa 51.2 contrasts with Ezekiel in its positive use of the Abraham tradition (Gen 15). **25:** The Heb wording ("you eat over the blood") may refer to a sacrificial rite of augury or witchcraft (see Lev 19.26 [HS]) similar to the Assyrian *apum* and Hittite/Hurrian *api* ("pit") rites

possess the land? 27 Say this to them, Thus says the Lord God: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and those who are in the open field I will give to the wild animals to be devoured; and those who are in strongholds and in caves shall die by pestilence. 28 I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and its proud might shall come to an end; and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through. 29 Then they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have made the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations that they have committed.

30 As for you, mortal, your people who talk together about you by the walls, and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to a neighbor, "Come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord." 31 They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain. 32 To them you are like a singer of love songs,[a] one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; they hear what you say, but they will not do it. 33 When this comes—and come it will!—then they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

34 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them—to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord God: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. 4 You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. 6 My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them.

7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 8 As I live, says the Lord God, because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 10 Thus says the Lord God, I am against the shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them.

11 For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12 As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 13 I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. 14 I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pas-

[a] Cn: Heb *like a love song*

summoning up dead spirits from a pit. **27:** On the three punishments, cf. 5.17; 14.21. **30–33:** With the fulfillment of his prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction, Ezekiel's popularity grew. Unfortunately, the response of many exiles to Ezekiel's words was shallow, lacking in personal commitment. **32:** *Love songs,* the Hebrew indicates that Ezekiel's words were just erotic entertainment to them; the same word is mistranslated "flattery" in v. 31.

34.1–31: The shepherds of Israel. 1–10: Israel's kings are symbolized by *shepherds*, contracted by God to care for the people (*my sheep,* v. 6); the metaphor was widespread in the ancient Near East. But they had abused their people and scattered them. The chapter combines priestly ("Holiness School," see the next page) and Jeremianic (Jer 10.21; 23.1–4) language. **5:** *Wild animals,* Judah's attackers, especially Babylonia. **7–10:** Punishment of the shepherds and rescue of the flock. Cf. Zech 11.8. **11–16: God is the good shepherd** (Isa 40.11; Jer 31.10) who will gather the entire dispersed flock. **12:** *Day of clouds and thick darkness,* the day of the Lord, as in

ture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. 16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

17 As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: 18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? 19 And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet?

20 Therefore, thus says the Lord God to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, 22 I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

23 I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

25 I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. 26 I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. 27 The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from the hands of those who enslaved them. 28 They shall no more be plunder for the nations, nor shall the animals of the land devour them; they shall live in safety, and no one shall make them afraid. 29 I will provide for them a splendid vegetation so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the insults of the nations. 30 They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord God. 31 You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture[a] and I am your God, says the Lord God.

35 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 Mortal, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it, 3 and say to it, Thus says the Lord God:

I am against you, Mount Seir;
I stretch out my hand against you
to make you a desolation and a waste.
4 I lay your towns in ruins;
you shall become a desolation,
and you shall know that I am the Lord.

5 Because you cherished an ancient enmity, and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment;

[a] Gk OL: Heb *pasture, you are people*

Joel 2.2 and Zeph 1.15 (see 30.1–9n.; 32.3–8n.) **16:** The focus shifts to God's care for needy individuals within the flock and to God's judgment of particular sheep (not just their shepherds). **17–31: A new order for Israel. 17–24:** God will purge out oppressor "sheep" among the flock (20.38). **23–24:** God will install a Davidic ruler (37.22–25; Jer 23.3–6; 30.9; Zech 6.12). *Their shepherd,* cf. Zech 13.7. *Prince,* see 44.1–3n. **25–31:** An announcement of future blessedness dependent on the Holiness School: God will *banish wild animals* (v. 25; see Lev 26.6 [HS]), bless the people from the holy mountain (*my hill*, v. 26; cf. 40.2), and break *the bars of their yoke* (v. 27; see Lev 26.13 [HS]). Thus, the people will *live in safety* (v. 28; see Lev 26.5–6 [HS]). **25:** *Wild animals* endangered humans, though Israel did not hunt them. God removes their threat from society; cf. Lev 25.7 (HS), but still cares for the life of wild carnivores (see Lev 25.7 [HS]). **29:** *Insults,* see 36.15.

35.1–36.15: Oracle on behalf of the mountains of Israel. 35.1–15: Oracles against Edom. Edom already stands judged (see 25.12–14), but its punishment reappears here as a foil for the restoration message of 35.1–36.15. Ezekiel's prophecies of restoration generally have as foils past wrongs, which they aim to reverse. **1–4:** First oracle. **2:** *Mount Seir* is the mountain plateau of Edom's homeland (Gen 36.8). **5–9:** Second oracle. **5:** Cf. 25.12; Ob 10–14; Ps 137.7. *The ancient enmity* refers to the rivalry between Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites, and Jacob,

6 therefore, as I live, says the Lord God, I will
prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue
you; since you did not hate bloodshed, blood-
shed shall pursue you. 7 I will make Mount
Seir a waste and a desolation; and I will cut
off from it all who come and go. 8 I will fill its
mountains with the slain; on your hills and
in your valleys and in all your watercourses
those killed with the sword shall fall. 9 I will
make you a perpetual desolation, and your
cities shall never be inhabited. Then you shall
know that I am the Lord.

10 Because you said, "These two nations
and these two countries shall be mine, and
we will take possession of them,"—although
the Lord was there— 11 therefore, as I live,
says the Lord God, I will deal with you
according to the anger and envy that you
showed because of your hatred against them;
and I will make myself known among you,[a]
when I judge you. 12 You shall know that I,
the Lord, have heard all the abusive speech
that you uttered against the mountains of
Israel, saying, "They are laid desolate, they
are given us to devour." 13 And you magnified
yourselves against me with your mouth, and
multiplied your words against me; I heard it.
14 Thus says the Lord God: As the whole earth
rejoices, I will make you desolate. 15 As you
rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of
Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal
with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir,
and all Edom, all of it. Then they shall know
that I am the Lord.

36 And you, mortal, prophesy to
the mountains of Israel, and say:
O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the
Lord. 2 Thus says the Lord God: Because
the enemy said of you, "Aha!" and, "The
ancient heights have become our posses-
sion," 3 therefore prophesy, and say: Thus
says the Lord God: Because they made you
desolate indeed, and crushed you from all
sides, so that you became the possession
of the rest of the nations, and you became
an object of gossip and slander among the
people; 4 therefore, O mountains of Israel,
hear the word of the Lord God: Thus says the
Lord God to the mountains and the hills, the
watercourses and the valleys, the desolate
wastes and the deserted towns, which have
become a source of plunder and an object of
derision to the rest of the nations all around;
5 therefore thus says the Lord God: I am
speaking in my hot jealousy against the rest
of the nations, and against all Edom, who,
with wholehearted joy and utter contempt,
took my land as their possession, because of
its pasture, to plunder it. 6 Therefore proph-
esy concerning the land of Israel, and say to
the mountains and hills, to the watercourses
and valleys, Thus says the Lord God: I am
speaking in my jealous wrath, because you
have suffered the insults of the nations;
7 therefore thus says the Lord God: I swear
that the nations that are all around you shall
themselves suffer insults.

8 But you, O mountains of Israel, shall
shoot out your branches, and yield your fruit
to my people Israel; for they shall soon come
home. 9 See now, I am for you; I will turn to
you, and you shall be tilled and sown; 10 and
I will multiply your population, the whole
house of Israel, all of it; the towns shall be
inhabited and the waste places rebuilt; 11 and
I will multiply human beings and animals
upon you. They shall increase and be fruitful;
and I will cause you to be inhabited as in your
former times, and will do more good to you
than ever before. Then you shall know that I

[a] Gk: Heb *them*

the ancestor of the Israelites; see Gen 25.21–34; 27. **10–13:** Third oracle. **10:** *Two nations,* Israel and Judah. The Lord *was there* until the glory left (see 10.1–22n, 11.22–25n.); however, the glory will return (48.35). **14–15:** Fourth oracle. **15a:** As Edom rejoiced over Judah's fall (Ob 12), so the world will rejoice over Edom's fall. **36.1–12: Reversing the land's flawed past.** *Mountains of Israel,* see 6.1–10n. The highlands, representing all Israel, are here promised deliverance and blessing. Ezekiel couches the promises as divine judgments, which are rooted in God's anger over the slurs that the land has attracted. Though dispossessed by *Edom* (35.1–15) and surrounding nations (Neh 2.19), Israel will be restored to her heritage. This oracle reverses ch 6 (e.g., contrast v. 10 with 6.4–7). **5:** God's anthropopathic identification with the land of Israel is shown by the phrase *my land* (cf. Lev 25.23 [HS]). **8–12:** Beyond the people's repatriation and inner healing, God grants them new fruitfulness within a transformed environment. See also vv. 33–38. **9:** Lev 26.9 (HS). **10:** *All of it,* including the Northern Kingdom (37.21–22). **11:** Lev 26.9 (HS).

am the LORD. 12 I will lead people upon you—
my people Israel—and they shall possess
you, and you shall be their inheritance. No
longer shall you bereave them of children.
13 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they
say to you, "You devour people, and you
bereave your nation of children," 14 therefore
you shall no longer devour people and no
longer bereave your nation of children, says
the Lord GOD; 15 and no longer will I let you
hear the insults of the nations, no longer
shall you bear the disgrace of the peoples;
and no longer shall you cause your nation to
stumble, says the Lord GOD.
16 The word of the LORD came to me:
17 Mortal, when the house of Israel lived on
their own soil, they defiled it with their ways
and their deeds; their conduct in my sight
was like the uncleanness of a woman in her
menstrual period. 18 So I poured out my wrath
upon them for the blood that they had shed
upon the land, and for the idols with which
they had defiled it. 19 I scattered them among
the nations, and they were dispersed through
the countries; in accordance with their
conduct and their deeds I judged them. 20 But
when they came to the nations, wherever
they came, they profaned my holy name,
in that it was said of them, "These are the
people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out
of his land." 21 But I had concern for my holy
name, which the house of Israel had profaned
among the nations to which they came.
22 Therefore say to the house of Israel,
Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your
sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act,
but for the sake of my holy name, which you
have profaned among the nations to which
you came. 23 I will sanctify my great name,
which has been profaned among the na-
tions, and which you have profaned among
them; and the nations shall know that I am
the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through
you I display my holiness before their eyes.
24 I will take you from the nations, and gather
you from all the countries, and bring you into
your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water
upon you, and you shall be clean from all
your uncleannesses, and from all your idols
I will cleanse you. 26 A new heart I will give
you, and a new spirit I will put within you;
and I will remove from your body the heart
of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will
put my spirit within you, and make you fol-
low my statutes and be careful to observe my
ordinances. 28 Then you shall live in the land
that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall
be my people, and I will be your God. 29 I will
save you from all your uncleannesses, and I
will summon the grain and make it abundant
and lay no famine upon you. 30 I will make the
fruit of the tree and the produce of the field

12: An editorial transition to vv. 13–15. **13–15: No more disgrace.** The land had been feared as a devouring land at least since the time that Israel first reconnoitered it (Num 13.32 HS). In Ezekiel's new Exodus and settlement, there will be no place for such defamation.

36.16–38: God's honor causing the restoration. 16–21: Historical prologue. According to the Holiness School, the homeland vomits out inhabitants who defile it (Lev 18.25,28). **17:** *Uncleanness,* see Lev 15.19–30 (Priestly tradition); 18.19 (HS). **20:** *My holy name,* 20.9n. God's name was desecrated (cf. Lev 20.3; 22.2,32 [HS]) either because the Exile made God look powerless to protect the Israelites (NRSV's interpretation; cf. Num 14.16) or because God's people from God's own land proved to be depraved (alternate sense of the Hebrew). **22–32:** Verses 22 and 32 form an envelope around this section by their parallel assertions that the restoration is not something deserved. According to v. 31, the people show remorse only after their restoration to the land. This chapter thus moves beyond texts such as Lev 26.40–42; Jer 31.18–20, where repentance is the driving motivation behind restoration. **23c–38:** The absence of these verses in an important Greek papyrus suggests that this section may be a secondary addition. **24:** A reversal of v. 19. **25:** God will *sprinkle* them (cf. Num 19.20 [HS]; Ps 51.7), purifying them, since human beings cannot make themselves clean. **26:** Ezekiel's calls to repentance have failed (see 18.31n.). A radical, new creation (cf. 11.19; Ps 51.10) will be needed to break the people's bondage to the cycles of sin and retribution of Israel's past (ch 20). The concept of excising the people's old incorrigible *heart of stone* (cf. 2.4; 3.7–9; Zech 7.12) and engrafting a completely *new heart* goes beyond Jer 31.33 and Deut 30.1–6, and is in keeping with Ezekiel's focus on God's sovereignty in effecting salvation (20.33–34). **27:** The infusion of God's spirit (cf. 37.14; 39.29; Ps 51.10–11; Joel 2.29; Zech 12.10) effects a fundamental regeneration of the people, so that obedience to the covenant (Lev 26.3 [HS]) will come naturally and the restoration will be permanent. **29–30:** Lev 26.4 (HS).

abundant, so that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. 31 Then you shall remember your evil ways, and your dealings that were not good; and you shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds. 32 It is not for your sake that I will act, says the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and dismayed for your ways, O house of Israel.

33 Thus says the Lord God: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the towns to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. 34 The land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. 35 And they will say, "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined towns are now inhabited and fortified." 36 Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do it.

37 Thus says the Lord God: I will also let the house of Israel ask me to do this for them: to increase their population like a flock. 38 Like the flock for sacrifices,[a] like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed festivals, so shall the ruined towns be filled with flocks of people. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.

37 The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3 He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." 4 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath[b] to enter you, and you shall live. 6 I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath[b] in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord."

7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:[c] Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath,[c] and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." 10 I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

11 Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' 12 Therefore prophesy,

[a] Heb *flock of holy things*
[b] Or *spirit*
[c] Or *wind* or *spirit*

33–36: The skeptical nations (v. 20) will recognize Israel's transformation to a paradise as God's act. **35:** *Eden,* Gen 2.4–14; cf. Ezek 47.1–12n.; Isa 51.3. God will now be at home in Israel just as in God's own garden. **37–38:** Note the reversal of 14.3; 20.3,31. As Jerusalem always bustled with flocks at pilgrimage times, Israel will now teem with human interaction, mutuality, and spiritual energy (a blessing of the Holiness School covenant; Lev 26.9). Thus, the proliferation of the flock will signal its consecration (see textual note *a*).

37.1–14: Vision of the valley of dry bones. 1: *A valley,* in Heb "the valley," the same locale as in 3.22; 8.4. **3:** Ezekiel does not yet realize that this vision refers to the exiles' coming repatriation. At this point, he contemplates actual bodily resurrection as at least a theoretical possibility (cf. 1 Kings 17.22; 2 Kings 4.35; 13.21; Isa 26.19). Further, even to serve just as a compelling metaphor for repatriation, the original audience must have considered the idea of physical resurrection to be credible. **4–8:** The first of two prophecies that are enfolded within the vision. As in Gen 2.7, life is generated here in two stages. **9–10:** Suspense builds, as a second prophesying is required to animate the bones. Hebrew "ruaḥ" can mean "spirit," "breath," or "wind"; thus there is a constant wordplay here (see v. 14n.). *Four winds* refers to God's cosmic reach (1.17; 42.15–20n.; Zech 6.5). *These slain,* Ezekiel now assumes that he is surveying an old battlefield; the word translated *multitude* in v. 10 commonly means "army." **11–14:** The interpretation. Verse 11 finally reveals the actual life setting of the prophecy by

and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14 I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."

15 The word of the LORD came to me: 16 Mortal, take a stick and write on it, "For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it"; then take another stick and write on it, "For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with it"; 17 and join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. 18 And when your people say to you, "Will you not show us what you mean by these?" 19 say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am about to take the stick of Joseph (which is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with it; and I will put the stick of Judah upon it,[a] and make them one stick, in order that they may be one in my hand. 20 When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, 21 then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. 22 I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms. 23 They shall never again defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. I will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen,[b] and will cleanse them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

24 My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. 25 They shall live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, in which your ancestors lived; they and their children and their children's children shall live there forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever. 26 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless[c] them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. 27 My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 Then the nations shall know that I the LORD sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore.

38 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Prophesy against him

a Heb *I will put them upon it*
b Another reading is *from all the settlements in which they have sinned*
c Tg: Heb *give*

citing the exiles' lament (cf. 8.12). The exiles' *bones are dried,* a metaphor for a downcast spirit (Prov 17.22; 15.30). The metaphor of resurrection is the antidote to such despair. *Cut off,* a metaphor for being within the power of death (Ps 88.5; Lam 3.54). In vv. 12–14, the passage shifts to a metaphor of disinterment as an antidote to the latter complaint. **14:** *My spirit,* cf. v. 1. Beyond political repatriation, and even biological resuscitation, the vision is about end-time regeneration (cf. 36.27; 39.29; Joel 2.28–29; Zech 12.10).

37.15–28: The symbolic action of the two sticks (cf. Zech 11.7–14) envisions the reunification of the southern (*Judah*) and northern (*Joseph/Ephraim/Israel*) tribes. Zadokite theology is oriented toward tribal unity; see 44.1–3n. Full restoration will be realized (34.28; 36.10): covenantal living (11.20) in the promised land (28.25) under the Davidic shepherd (34.23–24) in a covenant of peace (34.25). At that time, God will permanently return to the central *sanctuary* (43.9). **22:** *Mountains of Israel,* 6.1–10n. **25:** *Prince,* ruling chieftain (cf. 12.10; 19.1; 34.24; 44.1–3n.). **27:** *Dwelling place,* in the theology of the Holiness School, God's glory properly dwells among God's people (cf. Ex 25.8; 29.45–46; 40.34; Lev 26.11; Num 5.3; 35.34 [HS]). **28:** As in the ideal of the Holiness School, God sanctifies Israel by radiating the divine holiness out to the entire land (cf. Ex 31.13; Lev 19.2; 21.15; 22.32 [HS]).

38.1–39.29: The Gog of Magog oracles are early apocalyptic prophecy, describing the imminent attack of an embodied evil from the north against the promised land. After a cataclysmic, doomsday battle, God will be acknowledged by all nations as the undisputed victor (38.23; 39.21–29). At this point in the book, Ezekiel's

3 and say: Thus says the Lord God: I am
against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech
and Tubal; 4 I will turn you around and put
hooks into your jaws, and I will lead you out
with all your army, horses and horsemen,
all of them clothed in full armor, a great
company, all of them with shield and buckler,
wielding swords. 5 Persia, Ethiopia,[a] and Put
are with them, all of them with buckler and
helmet; 6 Gomer and all its troops; Beth-
togarmah from the remotest parts of the
north with all its troops—many peoples are
with you.

7 Be ready and keep ready, you and all the
companies that are assembled around you,
and hold yourselves in reserve for them.
8 After many days you shall be mustered; in
the latter years you shall go against a land
restored from war, a land where people were
gathered from many nations on the moun-
tains of Israel, which had long lain waste; its
people were brought out from the nations
and now are living in safety, all of them. 9 You
shall advance, coming on like a storm; you
shall be like a cloud covering the land, you
and all your troops, and many peoples with
you.

10 Thus says the Lord God: On that day
thoughts will come into your mind, and you
will devise an evil scheme. 11 You will say, "I
will go up against the land of unwalled vil-
lages; I will fall upon the quiet people who
live in safety, all of them living without walls,
and having no bars or gates"; 12 to seize spoil
and carry off plunder; to assail the waste
places that are now inhabited, and the people
who were gathered from the nations, who are
acquiring cattle and goods, who live at the
center[b] of the earth. 13 Sheba and Dedan and
the merchants of Tarshish and all its young
warriors[c] will say to you, "Have you come to
seize spoil? Have you assembled your horde
to carry off plunder, to carry away silver and
gold, to take away cattle and goods, to seize a
great amount of booty?"

14 Therefore, mortal, prophesy, and say to
Gog: Thus says the Lord God: On that day
when my people Israel are living securely, you
will rouse yourself[d] 15 and come from your
place out of the remotest parts of the north,
you and many peoples with you, all of them
riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty
army; 16 you will come up against my people
Israel, like a cloud covering the earth. In the
latter days I will bring you against my land, so
that the nations may know me, when through
you, O Gog, I display my holiness before their
eyes.

17 Thus says the Lord God: Are you he of
whom I spoke in former days by my ser-
vants the prophets of Israel, who in those
days prophesied for years that I would bring
you against them? 18 On that day, when Gog

[a] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
[b] Heb *navel*
[c] Heb *young lions*
[d] Gk: Heb *will you not know?*

prophecies of restoration, which aim to reverse preceding tragedies, have not yet reversed Israel's Babylonian destruction. One role of the northern foe here is to play surrogate for Babylon, although Gog's army actually represents the transcendent power behind all principalities and blocs of evil that challenge God's sovereignty. **38.1–9: Prophecy against Gog. 2:** *Gog,* no mere cipher or code-term for a this-worldly nation, but a mythic-realistic entity: tangibly real, but of mythological proportions. He is God's archetypal enemy, arising against God's people on doomsday. The name "Gog" may come from Num 24.7, understood to actually mention him (see the Septuagint). *Magog,* a place name taken from Gen 10.2; cf. the sound of the Heb text in Num 24.7. *Meshech and Tubal,* see 27.12–15n.; Gen 10.2. **5:** *Put,* Libya; Gen 10.5. **6:** *Gomer,* the Cimmerians in Asia Minor (Gen 10.2–3), far north of Israel. *Beth-togarmah,* see 27.12–15n. **10–13:** The perspective shifts from God's sovereign, external control of history (vv. 3–9) to Gog's interior motives. **11:** *Unwalled* is rhetorical hyperbole (cf. the fortified cities of Ezek 36:35): this monster is a slayer of the defenseless. **12:** *Center,* see 5.5n.; 6.1–10n.; Zech 2.12. **13:** *Sheba, Dedan,* and *Tarshish* were all engaged in trade; see 27.12–15n., 20–22n. **14–16:** God's purpose is to display holiness and provoke the nations' recognition. **17:** Transition from prophecies of Gog's invasion to prophecies of Gog's defeat. Texts such as Jer 4.6; 6.22 assume that earth's remote north will harbor forces of chaos until God conclusively vanquishes them, but v. 17 draws more directly on texts such as Num 24:7 (LXX) and Isa 14.4b–21, 24–27. The verse presupposes that a collection of prophetic scripture exists by the late exilic era. **18–23: Expansion of the Gog oracles, radicalizing their apocalyptic and priestly fervor.** The radical mag-

comes against the land of Israel, says the Lord God, my wrath shall be aroused. 19 For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare: On that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; 20 the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and the animals of the field, and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all human beings that are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. 21 I will summon the sword against Gog[a] in[b] all my mountains, says the Lord God; the swords of all will be against their comrades. 22 With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him; and I will pour down torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur, upon him and his troops and the many peoples that are with him. 23 So I will display my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.

39 And you, mortal, prophesy against Gog, and say: Thus says the Lord God: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal! 2 I will turn you around and drive you forward, and bring you up from the remotest parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. 3 I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. 4 You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples that are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every kind and to the wild animals to be devoured. 5 You shall fall in the open field; for I have spoken, says the Lord God. 6 I will send fire on Magog and on those who live securely in the coastlands; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

7 My holy name I will make known among my people Israel; and I will not let my holy name be profaned any more; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. 8 It has come! It has happened, says the Lord God. This is the day of which I have spoken.

9 Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them—bucklers and shields, bows and arrows, handpikes and spears—and they will make fires of them for seven years. 10 They will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any trees in the forests, for they will make their fires of the weapons; they will despoil those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them, says the Lord God.

11 On that day I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers[c] east of the sea; it shall block the path of the travelers, for there Gog and all his horde will be buried; it shall be called the Valley of Hamon-gog.[d] 12 Seven months the house of Israel shall spend burying them, in order to cleanse the land. 13 All the people of the land shall bury them; and it will bring them honor on the day that I show my glory, says the Lord God. 14 They will set apart men to pass through the land regularly and bury any invaders[e] who remain on the face of the land, so as to cleanse it; for seven months they

[a] Heb *him*
[b] Heb *to* or *for*
[c] Or *of the Abarim*
[d] That is, *the Horde of Gog*
[e] Heb *travelers*

nitude of the apocalyptic threat is clear from the cosmic collapse (cf. Joel 2.10,30; Zech 14.4–5). **39.1–10: The fall of Gog.** Gog will be defeated both in the field (vv. 1–5) and back at home (v. 6). God's holy name will then be established (vv. 7–8; cf. 20.9n.; 36.22). **9–10:** Everything of the enemy's is devoted to the Lord alone. **11–16: Additional expansion of the God oracles.** See 38.18–23n. In keeping with the Ezekiel group's status as priests, increasing priestly concern accompanies the increased apocalyptic feeling; this section draws heavily on Holiness School traditions about the defiling effect of corpses (44.25–26; Lev 21.1; 22.4,7; Num 5.2–3; 9.6; 19.11 [HS]). Contact with a corpse creates a contagion that will "defile the tabernacle of the Lord" (Num 19.13 [HS]). **11:** The *travelers* seem to be the enemy departed, whose great numbers stop up passage to the underworld. Ezek 16.21; 20.26; and 23.36–42 use the same Heb verb ("travel") to describe child sacrifice in the Valley of Hinnom, a locale alluded to in the sound of the name *Valley of Hamon-gog* ("Hordes of Gog," "Gog's Mob"). Dan 11.45 will later closely follow v. 11's geographical picture of Gog's final end *east of the sea*, that is, the Mediterranean. **12:** The

shall make their search. 15 As the searchers[a] pass through the land, anyone who sees a human bone shall set up a sign by it, until the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon-gog.[b] 16 (A city Hamonah[c] is there also.) Thus they shall cleanse the land.

17 As for you, mortal, thus says the Lord God: Speak to the birds of every kind and to all the wild animals: Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. 18 You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19 You shall eat fat until you are filled, and drink blood until you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. 20 And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers,[d] with warriors and all kinds of soldiers, says the Lord God.

21 I will display my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. 22 The house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God, from that day forward. 23 And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt treacherously with me. So I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. 24 I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.

25 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name. 26 They shall forget[e] their shame, and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they live securely in their land with no one to make them afraid, 27 when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have displayed my holiness in the sight of many nations. 28 Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God because I sent them into exile among the nations, and then gathered them into their own land. I will leave none of them behind; 29 and I will never again hide my face from them, when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God.

40 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me there. 2 He brought me,

[a] Heb *travelers*
[b] That is, *the Horde of Gog*
[c] That is *The Horde*
[d] Heb *chariots*
[e] Another reading is *They shall bear*

seven months required to bury the dead underscores the magnitude of the apocalyptic threat. **16:** In 5.7; 7.12–14, *Hamonah,* "turbulent," signified Jerusalem. In Ezek 45.6–7; 48.35 a new central metropolis, located south of a new Temple, upstages the old tumultuous capital. **17–20:** Cf. 39.4b. An invitation to the animal world to attend an apocalyptic, "sacrificial" feast (cf. Isa 34.5–7; Zeph 1.7), perhaps a mock funerary banquet. **18:** Animals consume blood and fat, which in normal sacrifices are exclusively God's (44.15; Lev 3.17 [HS]). *Bashan,* in northern Transjordan, was noted for its cattle. **21–29: Secondary summary and concluding oracles. 25:** *Now I will restore,* a shift in focus to a stage before the end-times. The victory and restoration are linked here with the familiar language and narrative line of Ezekiel (5.8 [reversed]; 28.26; 34.28–30). *My holy name,* 20.9n. **29:** Cf. 36.27n.; 37.9,14; Ps 51.10–11; Zech 12.10; Joel 2.28–29.

40.1–48.35: Utopian vision of a restored Temple and land. Ezekiel details a utopian Temple that includes new ideal features that aim permanently to prevent the wrongs of the past—those that led to the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 586 BCE. New Temple fortifications and new land boundaries will demarcate the holiness of the land and people (e.g., 42.20n.) with the Temple functioning as an organizing center of this holiness (43.12). In accordance with the Holiness School, the plan provides for the settlements and entire people of Israel to be encompassed by the holiness of God, whose dwelling in their midst is now to be permanently safeguarded (43.7; 44.1–3; 48.35). This section of Ezekiel does not prophesy a literal future for the Temple; rather, it offers a Temple plan as an embodiment of the values of Ezekiel and his followers.

in visions of God, to the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south. 3 When he brought me there, a man was there, whose appearance shone like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway. 4 The man said to me, "Mortal, look closely and listen attentively, and set your mind upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you; declare all that you see to the house of Israel."

5 Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple area. The length of the measuring reed in the man's hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a handbreadth in length; so he measured the thickness of the wall, one reed; and the height, one reed. 6 Then he went into the gateway facing east, going up its steps, and measured the threshold of the gate, one reed deep.[a] There were 7 recesses, and each recess was one reed wide and one reed deep; and the space between the recesses, five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the vestibule of the gate at the inner end was one reed deep. 8 Then he measured the inner vestibule of the gateway, one cubit. 9 Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and its pilasters, two cubits; and the vestibule of the gate was at the inner end. 10 There were three recesses on either side of the east gate; the three were of the same size; and the pilasters on either side were of the same size. 11 Then he measured the width of the opening of the gateway, ten cubits; and the width of the gateway, thirteen cubits. 12 There was a barrier before the recesses, one cubit on either side; and the recesses were six cubits on either side. 13 Then he measured the gate from the back[b] of the one recess to the back[b] of the other, a width of twenty-five cubits, from wall to wall.[c] 14 He measured[d] also the vestibule, twenty cubits; and the gate next to the pilaster on every side of the court.[e] 15 From the front of the gate at the entrance to the end of the inner vestibule of the gate was fifty cubits. 16 The recesses and their pilasters had windows, with shutters[e] on the inside of the gateway all around, and the vestibules also had windows on the inside all around; and on the pilasters were palm trees.

17 Then he brought me into the outer court; there were chambers there, and a pavement, all around the court; thirty chambers fronted on the pavement. 18 The pavement ran along the side of the gates, corresponding to the length of the gates; this was the lower pavement. 19 Then he measured the distance from the inner front of[f] the lower gate to the outer front of the inner court, one hundred cubits.[g]

[a] Heb *deep, and one threshold, one reed deep*
[b] Gk: Heb *roof*
[c] Heb *opening facing opening*
[d] Heb *made*
[e] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[f] Compare Gk: Heb *from before*
[g] Heb adds *the east and the north*

40.1–42.20: The new Temple. Key modifications of the Temple, such as immense gate-towers and graded zones of holiness, secure the hierarchical world of the Holiness School. **40.1–27: The Temple area and gates: 1–5:** *Twenty-fifth year . . . beginning . . . tenth day,* April 28, 573 BCE. At the age for retirement from priestly service (Num 4.3; 8.23–25 [HS]), Ezekiel is transported in a vision (cf. 8.2–3) to the mythic cosmic mountain (*very high mountain*, v. 2); cf. 5.5; 17.22; 28.14; 38.12; Zech 14.10). **2:** *A city,* the Temple compound. **3:** *Shone like bronze,* a radiant, supernatural figure (cf. 1.7). **5:** An outer wall surrounded the entire Temple compound. The *long cubit* was about 21 in (53 cm). The *reed* was about 10.5 ft (3.2 m) long. **6–16:** The compound's outer gate-towers were massive. They consisted of an outer *threshold* (foyer area), a long hallway with *recesses* (guard alcoves), a second, inner, threshold area, and a *vestibule* room (an entry-porch or narthex) facing the inside of the Temple compound. Heavy *pilasters* (piers) with windows separated the inside guardrooms (three on each side). **6:** *East,* cf. the garden of Eden's east entrance (Gen 3.24). This gate is treated further in 43.1–5; 44.1–3. **8:** *One cubit,* rather "one reed," 10.5 ft (3.2 m) **10:** Several excavated gateways, such as those at Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo, have side rooms. **14:** The Heb text here makes the jamb-posts on the porch of colossal height, "sixty cubits": over ten stories (105 ft [32 m]). **16:** *Palm trees,* see 28.13n. In many cultures, trees are "door guardians," gateways between worlds. **17–19:** The compound's outer courtyard. The *thirty chambers* around the court's periphery were for people to meet and eat their sacrifices together (Jer 35.2; Neh 13.4–12). See also 46.21–24. **19:** *Outer front,*

20 Then he measured the gate of the outer court that faced north—its depth and width. 21 Its recesses, three on either side, and its pilasters and its vestibule were of the same size as those of the first gate; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. 22 Its windows, its vestibule, and its palm trees were of the same size as those of the gate that faced toward the east. Seven steps led up to it; and its vestibule was on the inside.[a] 23 Opposite the gate on the north, as on the east, was a gate to the inner court; he measured from gate to gate, one hundred cubits.

24 Then he led me toward the south, and there was a gate on the south; and he measured its pilasters and its vestibule; they had the same dimensions as the others. 25 There were windows all around in it and in its vestibule, like the windows of the others; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. 26 There were seven steps leading up to it; its vestibule was on the inside.[a] It had palm trees on its pilasters, one on either side. 27 There was a gate on the south of the inner court; and he measured from gate to gate toward the south, one hundred cubits.

28 Then he brought me to the inner court by the south gate, and he measured the south gate; it was of the same dimensions as the others. 29 Its recesses, its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others; and there were windows all around in it and in its vestibule; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. 30 There were vestibules all around, twenty-five cubits deep and five cubits wide. 31 Its vestibule faced the outer court, and palm trees were on its pilasters, and its stairway had eight steps.

32 Then he brought me to the inner court on the east side, and he measured the gate; it was of the same size as the others. 33 Its recesses, its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the same dimensions as the others; and there were windows all around in it and in its vestibule; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. 34 Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its pilasters, on either side; and its stairway had eight steps.

35 Then he brought me to the north gate, and he measured it; it had the same dimensions as the others. 36 Its recesses, its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others;[b] and it had windows all around. Its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. 37 Its vestibule[c] faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its pilasters, on either side; and its stairway had eight steps.

38 There was a chamber with its door in the vestibule of the gate,[d] where the burnt offering was to be washed. 39 And in the vestibule of the gate were two tables on either side, on which the burnt offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering were to be slaughtered. 40 On the outside of the vestibule[e] at the entrance of the north gate were two tables; and on the other side of the vestibule of the gate were two tables. 41 Four tables were on the inside, and four tables on the outside of the side of the gate, eight tables, on which the sacrifices were to be slaughtered. 42 There were also four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, a cubit and a half long, and one cubit and a half wide, and one cubit high, on which the instruments were to be laid with which the burnt offerings and the sac-

[a] Gk: Heb *before them*
[b] One Ms: Compare verses 29 and 33: MT lacks *were of the same size as the others*
[c] Gk Vg Compare verses 26, 31, 34: Heb *pilasters*
[d] Cn: Heb *at the pilasters of the gates*
[e] Cn: Heb *to him who goes up*

the inner courtyard's perimeter, with which the front of the inner gatehouses was flush. **20–27:** The northern and southern gate-towers of the outer courtyard were identical to the east gate-tower. Steps up to the gates (vv. 22,26) show the holiness of the elevated Temple compound. **28–46: The inner gate-towers.** Only priests could pass through the three inner gate-towers, which guarded access to the raised inner courtyard (42.14; 44.19; 46.3). **31:** *Eight steps* led to the raised courtyard, demarcating a new gradation of holiness (vv. 34,37). The foundation of the raised terrace formed a barrier, allowing the courtyard to lack a wall proper (except for the 175 ft [53.3 m] façade in 42.2). **38–43:** The vestibules (porches or narthexes) of the inner gates had associated tables and tools for the preparation of sacrifices. *Burnt, sin,* and *guilt* offerings, the "most holy" sacrifices (42.13; 44.13; see Lev 22.15, Num 5.9–10; 18.8–10, all HS), which had to be cooked or burned only on the central

rifices were slaughtered. 43 There were pegs, one handbreadth long, fastened all around the inside. And on the tables the flesh of the offering was to be laid.

44 On the outside of the inner gateway there were chambers for the singers in the inner court, one[a] at the side of the north gate facing south, the other at the side of the east gate facing north. 45 He said to me, "This chamber that faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple, 46 and the chamber that faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar; these are the descendants of Zadok, who alone among the descendants of Levi may come near to the LORD to minister to him." 47 He measured the court, one hundred cubits deep, and one hundred cubits wide, a square; and the altar was in front of the temple.

48 Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the pilasters of the vestibule, five cubits on either side; and the width of the gate was fourteen cubits; and the sidewalls of the gate were three cubits[b] on either side. 49 The depth of the vestibule was twenty cubits, and the width twelve[c] cubits; ten steps led up[d] to it; and there were pillars beside the pilasters on either side.

41 Then he brought me to the nave, and measured the pilasters; on each side six cubits was the width of the pilasters.[e] 2 The width of the entrance was ten cubits; and the sidewalls of the entrance were five cubits on either side. He measured the length of the nave, forty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits. 3 Then he went into the inner room and measured the pilasters of the entrance, two cubits; and the width of the entrance, six cubits; and the sidewalls[f] of the entrance, seven cubits. 4 He measured the depth of the room, twenty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits, beyond the nave. And he said to me, This is the most holy place.

5 Then he measured the wall of the temple, six cubits thick; and the width of the side chambers, four cubits, all around the temple. 6 The side chambers were in three stories, one over another, thirty in each story. There were offsets[g] all around the wall of the temple to serve as supports for the side chambers, so that they should not be supported by the wall of the temple. 7 The passageway[h] of the side chambers widened from story to story; for the structure was supplied with a stairway all around the temple. For this reason the structure became wider from story to story. One ascended from the bottom story to the uppermost story by way of the middle one. 8 I saw also

[a] Heb lacks *one*
[b] Gk: Heb *and the width of the gate was three cubits*
[c] Gk: Heb *eleven*
[d] Gk: Heb *and by steps that went up*
[e] Compare Gk: Heb *tent*
[f] Gk: Heb *width*
[g] Gk Compare 1 Kings 6.6: Heb *they entered*
[h] Cn: Heb *it was surrounded*

altar. **44–46:** Priests' barracks or chambers for guard duty flanked the north and south gatehouses. These are different from the sacristy chambers of 42.1–14. **44:** *Chambers for the singers,* read "two chambers." *East gate,* read "south gate" with the Septuagint. **46b:** Only Zadokite priests, such as Ezekiel and his group, may sacrifice at the altar (43.19; 44.15–31n.). Non-Zadokite sons of Aaron occupied the other, south-facing chamber. Levites are not allowed in the inner courtyard at all. Priestly altar and sanctuary duties are already distinguished in Num 18.5 (HS). **40.47–41.4: The Temple proper.** The great girth of the *pilasters* (40.48) indicates the Temple *vestibule* (entry-porch) may be of immense height, taller even than the gate-towers. The successive entrances to the Temple's three rooms become narrower, symbolizing increasing holiness (40.48; 41.2; 41.3). The porch is proportionally elongated compared with Solomon's design (40.49; 1 Kings 6.3). **40.47:** *Court,* not the entire inner courtyard, but the area around the great altar. *A square,* symbolic of what is cosmic, transcendent, and holy. **49:** *Steps* up to the Temple building, which sat on another raised platform (41.8), again indicate increasing holiness. The freestanding *pillars* perhaps symbolize bronze mountains on earth's horizon (Zech 6.1–8; 1 Kings 7.15–22), a cosmic portal to God's presence. **41.3–4**: The adytum (*inner room* or *most holy place*), too holy for Ezekiel to enter, was a perfect square of 35 ft (10.6 m) per side. The cubic space is stable, simple, and empty, casting the reader's imagination toward the uniquely substantial bodily Presence that will indwell it. **41.5–15a: Annexes and surroundings.** The three tiers of thirty small supply chambers per tier on the sides of the Temple (cf. 1 Kings 6.5–10) probably stored equipment for services and people's offerings (cf. 44.30; 1 Kings 14.26;

that the temple had a raised platform all around; the foundations of the side chambers measured a full reed of six long cubits. 9 The thickness of the outer wall of the side chambers was five cubits; and the free space between the side chambers of the temple 10 and the chambers of the court was a width of twenty cubits all around the temple on every side. 11 The side chambers opened onto the area left free, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south; and the width of the part that was left free was five cubits all around.

12 The building that was facing the temple yard on the west side was seventy cubits wide; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its depth ninety cubits.

13 Then he measured the temple, one hundred cubits deep; and the yard and the building with its walls, one hundred cubits deep; 14 also the width of the east front of the temple and the yard, one hundred cubits.

15 Then he measured the depth of the building facing the yard at the west, together with its galleries[a] on either side, one hundred cubits.

The nave of the temple and the inner room and the outer[b] vestibule 16 were paneled,[c] and, all around, all three had windows with recessed[d] frames. Facing the threshold the temple was paneled with wood all around, from the floor up to the windows (now the windows were covered), 17 to the space above the door, even to the inner room, and on the outside. And on all the walls all around in the inner room and the nave there was a pattern.[e] 18 It was formed of cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Each cherub had two faces: 19 a human face turned toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion turned toward the palm tree on the other side. They were carved on the whole temple all around; 20 from the floor to the area above the door, cherubim and palm trees were carved on the wall.[f]

21 The doorposts of the nave were square. In front of the holy place was something resembling 22 an altar of wood, three cubits high, two cubits long, and two cubits wide;[g] its corners, its base,[h] and its walls were of wood. He said to me, "This is the table that stands before the LORD." 23 The nave and the holy place had each a double door. 24 The doors had two leaves apiece, two swinging leaves for each door. 25 On the doors of the nave were carved cherubim and palm trees, such as were carved on the walls; and there was a canopy of wood in front of the vestibule outside. 26 And there were recessed windows and palm trees on either side, on the sidewalls of the vestibule.[i]

42 Then he led me out into the outer court, toward the north, and he brought me to the chambers that were opposite the temple yard and opposite the building on the north. 2 The length of the building that was on the north side[j] was[k] one hundred cubits, and the width

[a] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk: Heb *of the court*
[c] Gk: Heb *the thresholds*
[d] Cn Compare Gk 1 Kings 6.4: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Heb *measures*
[f] Cn Compare verse 25: Heb *and the wall*
[g] Gk: Heb lacks *two cubits wide*
[h] Gk: Heb *length*
[i] Cn: Heb *vestibule. And the side chambers of the temple and the canopies*
[j] Gk: Heb *door*
[k] Gk: Heb *before the length*

2 Kings 14.14). **10:** *Chambers of the court,* sacristy chambers introduced later in 42.1–14. **12:** The rear, west building may be for storage or perhaps symbolizes the stables of the divine chariot force, chariots that Zech 6.5 identifies with Ezekiel's four cosmic winds/spirits (see 37.9–10n). **15b–26: Wall decoration and interior furnishings. 18–20:** Eden, God's dwelling, had fantastic *trees* and *cherubim* (cf. 28.13n.), a feature of Solomon's Temple also (1 Kings 6.29–30). **22:** The Zadokites single out the *table* (see Lev 24.5–9 HS) as symbolic of an anthropomorphic God enjoying table fellowship with Israel.

42.1–14: The priests' chambers. Sacristy chambers, where the priests dressed and ate sacrificial meals, lay on the north and south sides of the raised inner courtyard, directly west of the north and south gate-towers. **2:** On the

fifty cubits. 3 Across the twenty cubits that belonged to the inner court, and facing the pavement that belonged to the outer court, the chambers rose[a] gallery[b] by gallery[b] in three stories. 4 In front of the chambers was a passage on the inner side, ten cubits wide and one hundred cubits deep,[c] and its[d] entrances were on the north. 5 Now the upper chambers were narrower, for the galleries[b] took more away from them than from the lower and middle chambers in the building. 6 For they were in three stories, and they had no pillars like the pillars of the outer[e] court; for this reason the upper chambers were set back from the ground more than the lower and the middle ones. 7 There was a wall outside parallel to the chambers, toward the outer court, opposite the chambers, fifty cubits long. 8 For the chambers on the outer court were fifty cubits long, while those opposite the temple were one hundred cubits long. 9 At the foot of these chambers ran a passage that one entered from the east in order to enter them from the outer court. 10 The width of the passage[f] was fixed by the wall of the court.

On the south[g] also, opposite the vacant area and opposite the building, there were chambers 11 with a passage in front of them; they were similar to the chambers on the north, of the same length and width, with the same exits[h] and arrangements and doors. 12 So the entrances of the chambers to the south were entered through the entrance at the head of the corresponding passage, from the east, along the matching wall.[b]

13 Then he said to me, "The north chambers and the south chambers opposite the vacant area are the holy chambers, where the priests who approach the LORD shall eat the most holy offerings; there they shall deposit the most holy offerings—the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering—for the place is holy. 14 When the priests enter the holy place, they shall not go out of it into the outer court without laying there the vestments in which they minister, for these are holy; they shall put on other garments before they go near to the area open to the people."

15 When he had finished measuring the interior of the temple area, he led me out by the gate that faces east, and measured the temple area all around. 16 He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. 17 Then he turned and measured[i] the north side, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. 18 Then he turned and measured[i] the south side, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. 19 Then he turned to the west side and measured, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. 20 He measured it on the four sides. It had a wall around it, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide, to make a separation between the holy and the common.

43 Then he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east. 2 And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east; the sound was like the sound of mighty

a Heb lacks *the chambers rose*
b Meaning of Heb uncertain
c Gk Syr: Heb *a way of one cubit*
d Heb *their*
e Gk: Heb lacks *outer*
f Heb lacks *of the passage*
g Gk: Heb *east*
h Heb *and all their exits*
i Gk: Heb *measuring reed all around. He measured*

size, see 40.31n. **9:** *Outer court,* not the large public courtyard but the small area up on the inner terrace between the gate-tower and the sacristies. The priests could move between sacristies and altar without leaving the inner courtyard (see v. 14). **13:** On the *offerings,* see 40.38–43n. **14:** See 44.19n. **15–20: The measuring completed.** The total Temple area is a perfect square of 875 ft (267 m) per side (see 40.47n.). The Heb idiom ("wind"; NRSV *side*) used here to express direction suggestively points to the Temple's expansive valence, its cosmic influence (cf. 37.9). **20:** Marking boundaries of holiness, distinguishing between *the holy and the common,* was a central concern of the Zadokites (22.26; 44.23; Lev 10.10–11 [HS]).

43.1–12: Return of the glory of the Lord. As God on the throne-chariot had forsaken the Temple by the east gate (10.18–19; 11.22–23), so God's glory (see 10.1–22n.) returns through the same gate (40.6–16; 44.1–3). **2:** *Sound,* see

waters; and the earth shone with his glory.
3 The[a] vision I saw was like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and[b] like the vision that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. 4 As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, 5 the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

6 While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me out of the temple. 7 He said to me: Mortal, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will reside among the people of Israel forever. The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their whoring, and by the corpses of their kings at their death.[c] 8 When they placed their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they were defiling my holy name by their abominations that they committed; therefore I have consumed them in my anger. 9 Now let them put away their idolatry and the corpses of their kings far from me, and I will reside among them forever.

10 As for you, mortal, describe the temple to the house of Israel, and let them measure the pattern; and let them be ashamed of their iniquities. 11 When they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the plan of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, and its whole form—all its ordinances and its entire plan and all its laws; and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe and follow the entire plan and all its ordinances. 12 This is the law of the temple: the whole territory on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. This is the law of the temple.

13 These are the dimensions of the altar by cubits (the cubit being one cubit and a handbreadth): its base shall be one cubit high,[d] and one cubit wide, with a rim of one span around its edge. This shall be the height of the altar: 14 From the base on the ground to the lower ledge, two cubits, with a width of one cubit; and from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge, four cubits, with a width of one cubit; 15 and the altar hearth, four cubits; and from the altar hearth projecting upward, four horns. 16 The altar hearth shall be square, twelve cubits long by twelve wide. 17 The ledge also shall be square, fourteen cubits long by fourteen wide, with a rim around it half a cubit wide, and its surrounding base, one cubit. Its steps shall face east.

18 Then he said to me: Mortal, thus says the Lord GOD: These are the ordinances for the altar: On the day when it is erected for offering burnt offerings upon it and for dashing blood against it, 19 you shall give to the levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who draw near to me to minister to me, says the Lord GOD, a bull for a sin offering. 20 And you shall take some of its blood, and put it on the four horns of the altar, and on the four corners of the ledge, and upon the rim all around; thus

[a] Gk: Heb *Like the vision*
[b] Syr: Heb *and the visions*
[c] Or *on their high places*
[d] Gk: Heb lacks *high*

1.4n. **3:** *Chebar,* 1.1–3n. *Fell,* 1.28n.; 3.23. **6–12:** God warns against any more royal encroachment on the Temple. **7:** *Mortal,* 2.1n. *Corpses,* the Heb term (also Lev 26.30 [HS]) probably refers to offerings venerating the dead and to the funeral pillars at which they occurred. Isa 56.3–5 shows a very different stance than Ezekiel. **10–12:** Instructions and statement of purpose. **10:** *Pattern,* as in 28.12, the Heb term, which resembles the term "pattern" (Ex 25.9 [HS]), indicates "perfection." **12:** *Law of the temple,* it was the priests, such as Ezekiel, who transmitted such catechetical instruction to people (44.23n.).

43.13–17: The altar of burnt offerings (40.47). The altar, the architectural center of the Temple complex, visible to all ritual participants, is shaped like the Babylonian ziggurats, meant to be cosmic centers and gateways to heaven (cf. 5.5n.; 38.12n.; Gen 11.4). *The base on the ground* (v. 14) is literally "the lap/bosom of the earth," earth's center and nexus with the heavenly realm. The *altar hearth* (v. 15) in Hebrew is spelled like "the mountain of God" (see 28.14n.). **15:** *Horns,* see 1 Kings 1.50n. **16:** *Hearth,* the altar's top layer for burning sacrifices. **17:** The height of the altar, over 17 ft (5.2 m), necessitated *steps* (contrast Ex 20.26). **43.18–27: The altar's consecration.** On the analogy of earlier rites (Ex 40.1–38 [HS]; Lev 8.14–15), the priests of Zadok (40.46n.; 44.15–31n.) must dedicate the altar upon its completion. **20:** *Atonement* is necessary not due to the

you shall purify it and make atonement for it. 21 You shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and it shall be burnt in the appointed place belonging to the temple, outside the sacred area.

22 On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering; and the altar shall be purified, as it was purified with the bull. 23 When you have finished purifying it, you shall offer a bull without blemish and a ram from the flock without blemish. 24 You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall throw salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD. 25 For seven days you shall provide daily a goat for a sin offering; also a bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be provided. 26 Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and cleanse it, and so consecrate it. 27 When these days are over, then from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer upon the altar your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being; and I will accept you, says the Lord GOD.

44 Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and it was shut. 2 The LORD said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut. 3 Only the prince, because he is a prince, may sit in it to eat food before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and shall go out by the same way.

4 Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; and I looked, and lo! the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD; and I fell upon my face. 5 The LORD said to me: Mortal, mark well, look closely, and listen attentively to all that I shall tell you concerning all the ordinances of the temple of the LORD and all its laws; and mark well those who may be admitted to[a] the temple and all those who are to be excluded from the sanctuary. 6 Say to the rebellious house,[b] to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: O house of Israel, let there be an end to all your abominations 7 in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple when you offer to me my food, the fat and the blood. You[c] have broken my covenant with all your abominations. 8 And you have not kept charge of my sacred offerings; but you have appointed foreigners[d] to act for you in keeping my charge in my sanctuary.

9 Thus says the Lord GOD: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary. 10 But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment. 11 They shall be

[a] Cn: Heb *the entrance of*
[b] Gk: Heb lacks *house*
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *They*
[d] Heb lacks *foreigners*

altar's sin or pollution, but to "wipe it of its ordinariness" (Rashi). **21:** Lev 4.11–12; 8.16–17.

44.1–3: The outer east gate. Babylon's Sacred Gate, normally closed, opened for processions of the god Marduk. In contrast, this gate-tower (40.6–14) remains closed permanently, symbolizing God's perpetual presence inside the Temple (43.7,9). Thus shut, the gate-complex becomes a ceremonial room, where the *prince* eats his part of the sacrificial meal (43.27; Lev 7.15; 22.21). The term *prince* ("ruling chieftain," 19.1n.; Num 10.4 [HS]) derives from Israel's tribal past, and Ezekiel uses it to uphold the kinship networks of the countryside and the landed patrimonies that supported them (see 45.8–9n.; 46.18n.). The Holiness School is concerned with organizing and stabilizing God's entire holy territory including the countryside, not an isolated royal capital.

44.4–31: Temple ordinances. 4–5: A renewed commission. **6–16:** Under the influence of the Holiness School, Ezekiel finds particular past wrongs needing reversal encapsulated in Num 16–18, a text about the rebellion of Levites during Israel's wilderness wanderings. **7–8:** The primary reference is to a prototypical narrative: the Levites' encroachment on priestly prerogatives in Num 16.40; 18.4,7 (HS). The Levites are *foreigners*, that is, "outsiders" with respect to the priestly obligations of the sanctuary and the altar. **9:** All non-priests, including actual foreigners, are barred from the inner courtyard/priestly platform of the *sanctuary*. Resident aliens are welcome, however, in the Temple's outer, public courtyard (cf. 47.21–23n.). **10–14:** Here, the Levites are restored to the circumscribed responsibilities in God's shrine that they received after their rebellion in the wilderness (Num 18.3–4 [HS]). **10:** *When Israel went astray,* Num 16.2,22,41. *Bear their punishment,* Num 18.23. **11:** The limitation of the slaughtering of

ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the temple, and serving in the temple; they shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall attend on them and serve them. 12 Because they ministered to them before their idols and made the house of Israel stumble into iniquity, therefore I have sworn concerning them, says the Lord God, that they shall bear their punishment. 13 They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my sacred offerings, the things that are most sacred; but they shall bear their shame, and the consequences of the abominations that they have committed. 14 Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the temple, to do all its chores, all that is to be done in it.

15 But the levitical priests, the descendants of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me; and they shall attend me to offer me the fat and the blood, says the Lord God. 16 It is they who shall enter my sanctuary, it is they who shall approach my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge. 17 When they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen vestments; they shall have nothing of wool on them, while they minister at the gates of the inner court, and within. 18 They shall have linen turbans on their heads, and linen undergarments on their loins; they shall not bind themselves with anything that causes sweat. 19 When they go out into the outer court to the people, they shall remove the vestments in which they have been ministering, and lay them in the holy chambers; and they shall put on other garments, so that they may not communicate holiness to the people with their vestments. 20 They shall not shave their heads or let their locks grow long; they shall only trim the hair of their heads. 21 No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court. 22 They shall not marry a widow, or a divorced woman, but only a virgin of the stock of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest. 23 They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean. 24 In a controversy they shall act as judges, and they shall decide it according to my judgments. They shall keep my laws and my statutes regarding all my appointed festivals, and they shall keep my sabbaths holy. 25 They shall not defile themselves by going near to a dead person; for father or mother, however, and for son or daughter, and for brother or unmarried sister they may defile themselves. 26 After he has become clean, they shall count seven days for him. 27 On the day that he goes into the holy place, into the inner court, to minister in the holy place, he shall offer his sin offering, says the Lord God.

28 This shall be their inheritance: I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no holding in Israel; I am their holding. 29 They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering; and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. 30 The first of all the first fruits of all kinds, and every offer-

sacrifices to the Levites, thus disenfranchising the general populace, is a new holiness stricture that goes beyond Lev 1.5,11. *Attend . . . and serve,* Num 16.9. **13:** Num 18.3. **14:** Num 18.4. **15–31:** The Zadokite priesthood (see 40.46b n.; 43.19; 48.11). The Zadokites, one of at least three Israelite priestly lineages, had been the central priests at Jerusalem's preexilic Temple. Their origins trace back to Solomon's elevation of *Zadok* (2 Sam 20.25; 1 Kings 1.7–8,41–45; 2.26–27). 1 Chr 6.50–53 and 24.31 trace Zadok's ancestry back to Eleazar, Aaron's son. Here, vv. 15–16 refer to how Aaron and Eleazar had been faithful during the Levites' rebellion (Num 16.11,20–22,36–40,46–50), and Ezekiel views the Zadokites as present embryonically in their actions. **15–16:** Num 18.7 (cf. Lev 16.14–15). **17–31: Priestly rules. 17:** *Linen vestments,* see 9.1–2n.; Ex 39.27–29 (HS). **19:** 42.14. *Communicate holiness,* cf. 46.20. In Zadokite theology, holiness is something quasi-physical, a sort of plasma that is both contagious in a destructive, negative sense (2 Sam 6.6–8) and communicable in a positive sense (2 Sam 6.11). See Lev 6.18; Num 17.3 (HS); cf. Ex 29.37; 30.29; Lev 6.27. **20:** The care of the hair, Lev 21.5 (HS). **21:** No *wine* before service, Lev 10.9 (HS). **22:** Proper marriage, Lev 21.7,13–15 (HS). **23:** Teaching of the people, 22.26; Lev 10.10–11 (HS); 2 Chr 17.9; Hag 2.10–13. **24:** *Judges,* 1 Chr 23.4; 2 Chr 19.11. *My sabbaths,* Ex 31.13; Lev 19.3,30; 26.2 (HS). **25:** Defilement by a corpse, see 39.11–16n.; Lev 21.1–3 (HS). **28:** No land *inheritance,* 45.1–5; 48.8–14; Num 18.20–24 (HS). **29–30:** Eating sacrifices and *first fruits,* Num 18.9–13 (HS); Lev 2.3; 6.16,26; 7.6–7. *Every devoted thing,* Num 18.14 (HS). **31:** Lev 7.24; 22.8 (HS).

ing of all kinds from all your offerings, shall belong to the priests; you shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, in order that a blessing may rest on your house. 31 The priests shall not eat of anything, whether bird or animal, that died of itself or was torn by animals.

45 When you allot the land as an inheritance, you shall set aside for the LORD a portion of the land as a holy district, twenty-five thousand cubits long and twenty[a] thousand cubits wide; it shall be holy throughout its entire extent. 2 Of this, a square plot of five hundred by five hundred cubits shall be for the sanctuary, with fifty cubits for an open space around it. 3 In the holy district you shall measure off a section twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide, in which shall be the sanctuary, the most holy place. 4 It shall be a holy portion of the land; it shall be for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and approach the LORD to minister to him; and it shall be both a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary. 5 Another section, twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand cubits wide, shall be for the Levites who minister at the temple, as their holding for cities to live in.[b]

6 Alongside the portion set apart as the holy district you shall assign as a holding for the city an area five thousand cubits wide, and twenty-five thousand cubits long; it shall belong to the whole house of Israel.

7 And to the prince shall belong the land on both sides of the holy district and the holding of the city, alongside the holy district and the holding of the city, on the west and on the east, corresponding in length to one of the tribal portions, and extending from the western to the eastern boundary 8 of the land. It is to be his property in Israel. And my princes shall no longer oppress my people; but they shall let the house of Israel have the land according to their tribes.

9 Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and do what is just and right. Cease your evictions of my people, says the Lord GOD.

10 You shall have honest balances, an honest ephah, and an honest bath.[c] 11 The ephah and the bath shall be of the same measure, the bath containing one-tenth of a homer, and the ephah one-tenth of a homer; the homer shall be the standard measure. 12 The shekel shall be twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels shall make a mina for you.

13 This is the offering that you shall make: one-sixth of an ephah from each homer of wheat, and one-sixth of an ephah from each homer of barley, 14 and as the fixed portion of oil,[d] one-tenth of a bath from each cor (the cor,[e] like the homer, contains ten baths); 15 and one sheep from every flock of two hundred, from the pastures of Israel. This is the offering for grain offerings, burnt offerings, and offerings of well-being, to

[a] Gk: Heb *ten*
[b] Gk: Heb *as their holding, twenty chambers*
[c] A Heb measure of volume
[d] Cn: Heb *oil, the bath the oil*
[e] Vg: Heb *homer*

45.1–9: The distribution of land (continued in 47.13–48.35) is idealized. A *holy district* (Heb "terumah") is to contain a section for the Levites and a section for the priests. The latter includes the square section for the Temple area (42.15–20). **6:** The *holding for the city*, now separated from the Temple and no longer called Jerusalem, lies south of the holy district (v. 6) and makes with the holy district (v. 1) a square area of ca. 8 mi (13 km) per side. The configuration contrasts sharply with Isa 12.6; Jer 3.17; Isa 60.14. **7:** *The prince* (see 44.1–3n.) is to hold the strips of land to the west and east of this square area. **8–9:** In accordance with the ideals of the Holiness School (Lev 19.35; 25.10,23–24,42), princes are denied the power to evict subjects from their family homesteads (cf. 11.15n.; 22.27; 46.18n.).

45.10–17: Weights and measures for offerings. For present-day equivalents of *ephah, bath, homer, shekel, gerah,* and *mina,* see table of Weights and Measures on pages 2316-17. **10:** The Holiness School insisted on *honest* measures (see Lev 19.35–36). **13–17:** The people will bring gifts for the regular sacrifices to the prince, who, as their representative, will present them. These offerings are additional to personal, voluntary offerings (46.12) and to the donations given to the priests of 44.30.

make atonement for them, says the Lord God.
16 All the people of the land shall join with
the prince in Israel in making this offering.
17 But this shall be the obligation of the prince
regarding the burnt offerings, grain offer-
ings, and drink offerings, at the festivals,
the new moons, and the sabbaths, all the
appointed festivals of the house of Israel: he
shall provide the sin offerings, grain offer-
ings, the burnt offerings, and the offerings of
well-being, to make atonement for the house
of Israel.

18 Thus says the Lord God: In the first
month, on the first day of the month, you
shall take a young bull without blemish, and
purify the sanctuary. 19 The priest shall take
some of the blood of the sin offering and put
it on the doorposts of the temple, the four
corners of the ledge of the altar, and the posts
of the gate of the inner court. 20 You shall do
the same on the seventh day of the month
for anyone who has sinned through error or
ignorance; so you shall make atonement for
the temple.

21 In the first month, on the fourteenth day
of the month, you shall celebrate the festival
of the passover, and for seven days unleav-
ened bread shall be eaten. 22 On that day
the prince shall provide for himself and all
the people of the land a young bull for a sin
offering. 23 And during the seven days of the
festival he shall provide as a burnt offering to
the Lord seven young bulls and seven rams
without blemish, on each of the seven days;
and a male goat daily for a sin offering. 24 He
shall provide as a grain offering an ephah for
each bull, an ephah for each ram, and a hin
of oil to each ephah. 25 In the seventh month,
on the fifteenth day of the month and for the
seven days of the festival, he shall make the
same provision for sin offerings, burnt offer-
ings, and grain offerings, and for the oil.

46 Thus says the Lord God: The gate of
the inner court that faces east shall
remain closed on the six working days; but
on the sabbath day it shall be opened and on
the day of the new moon it shall be opened.
2 The prince shall enter by the vestibule of the
gate from outside, and shall take his stand by
the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his
burnt offering and his offerings of well-being,
and he shall bow down at the threshold of
the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate
shall not be closed until evening. 3 The people
of the land shall bow down at the entrance of
that gate before the Lord on the sabbaths and
on the new moons. 4 The burnt offering that
the prince offers to the Lord on the sabbath
day shall be six lambs without blemish and a
ram without blemish; 5 and the grain offering
with the ram shall be an ephah, and the grain
offering with the lambs shall be as much as
he wishes to give, together with a hin of oil
to each ephah. 6 On the day of the new moon
he shall offer a young bull without blem-
ish, and six lambs and a ram, which shall be
without blemish; 7 as a grain offering he shall
provide an ephah with the bull and an ephah
with the ram, and with the lambs as much as
he wishes, together with a hin of oil to each
ephah. 8 When the prince enters, he shall
come in by the vestibule of the gate, and he
shall go out by the same way.

9 When the people of the land come before
the Lord at the appointed festivals, whoever
enters by the north gate to worship shall go
out by the south gate; and whoever enters by
the south gate shall go out by the north gate:

45.18–25: Festival regulations. 18–20: A new annual ritual for purifying the Temple, appropriated from the purification element of the Babylonian New Year festival. **19,22:** As in the vision of paired leaders in Zech 4.3,11–14, *the* [head] *priest* works in concert with *the prince,* who provides the festival offerings. **21–25:** Ezekiel's brief festival-calendar transforms the *passover* (Ex 12; Lev 23.4–8) and the festival of booths (the *festival* of the *seventh month* in v. 25; see Lev 23.33–36) into semiannual rites of purification. It omits the festival of weeks (Pentecost; Lev 23.15–21). **24:** *Ephah* and *hin,* see Table of Weights and Measures.

46.1–15: Gate regulations and the prince's minor offerings. 1–7: Both weekly and monthly, the *prince* (see 44.1–3n.) shall bring offerings (vv. 4–7; 45.17) up to the inner east gatehouse leading to the altar (40.32–34). Kings might have performed priestly functions in preexilic times (1 Kings 8.63; 2 Kings 16.12–13), but now the prince stands by while the priests offer the sacrifices. On Ezekiel's emphasis on *sabbaths* (Num 28.9–10), see 20.12–13n. For the *new moon* (i.e., monthly) sacrifices, see 45.17; Num 28.11–15. **2:** *Threshold,* the doorstep is a traditional liminal "thin space," of great symbolic significance. **8–10:** Exit procedures. Reverent caution requires

they shall not return by way of the gate by which they entered, but shall go out straight ahead. 10 When they come in, the prince shall come in with them; and when they go out, he shall go out.

11 At the festivals and the appointed seasons the grain offering with a young bull shall be an ephah, and with a ram an ephah, and with the lambs as much as one wishes to give, together with a hin of oil to an ephah. 12 When the prince provides a freewill offering, either a burnt offering or offerings of well-being as a freewill offering to the LORD, the gate facing east shall be opened for him; and he shall offer his burnt offering or his offerings of well-being as he does on the sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he has gone out the gate shall be closed.

13 He shall provide a lamb, a yearling, without blemish, for a burnt offering to the LORD daily; morning by morning he shall provide it. 14 And he shall provide a grain offering with it morning by morning regularly, one-sixth of an ephah, and one-third of a hin of oil to moisten the choice flour, as a grain offering to the LORD; this is the ordinance for all time. 15 Thus the lamb and the grain offering and the oil shall be provided, morning by morning, as a regular burnt offering.

16 Thus says the Lord GOD: If the prince makes a gift to any of his sons out of his inheritance,[a] it shall belong to his sons, it is their holding by inheritance. 17 But if he makes a gift out of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his to the year of liberty; then it shall revert to the prince; only his sons may keep a gift from his inheritance. 18 The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people, thrusting them out of their holding; he shall give his sons their inheritance out of his own holding, so that none of my people shall be dispossessed of their holding.

19 Then he brought me through the entrance, which was at the side of the gate, to the north row of the holy chambers for the priests; and there I saw a place at the extreme western end of them. 20 He said to me, "This is the place where the priests shall boil the guilt offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, in order not to bring them out into the outer court and so communicate holiness to the people."

21 Then he brought me out to the outer court, and led me past the four corners of the court; and in each corner of the court there was a court— 22 in the four corners of the court were small[b] courts, forty cubits long and thirty wide; the four were of the same size. 23 On the inside, around each of the four courts[c] was a row of masonry, with hearths made at the bottom of the rows all around. 24 Then he said to me, "These are the kitchens where those who serve at the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people."

47 Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from

[a] Gk: Heb *it is his inheritance*
[b] Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Heb *the four of them*

expeditious movement in a sacral precinct so tangibly close to God's indwelling presence. **11–15:** Further rules. **12:** When the prince makes a *freewill offering* (Lev 22.18–23 [HS]), the inner east gate (v. 1) may be opened. **13–15:** In both HS and Ezekiel, the daily sacrifice is the core Temple rite (cf. Dan 8.11), symbolizing how all Israelites must daily grow in holiness (Ex 29.38–46; Lev 24.3–4 [HS]).

46.16–18: The prince's land. The landed inheritance of the chieftain (45.7; 48.21–22) was to be inalienable from his lineage. When given to a nonrelative, it had to be returned on the *year of liberty, the* jubilee year (Lev 25.8–17 [HS]). **18:** See 45.8–9n. Ezekiel reverses the monarchy's radical restructuring of land ownership and tenure (see 1 Kings 21.1–16; Isa 5.8; Mic 2.2) and upholds the Zadokite ideal of permanent land tenure for each family on its ancestral homestead (Lev 19.35; 25.10,23–24,42).

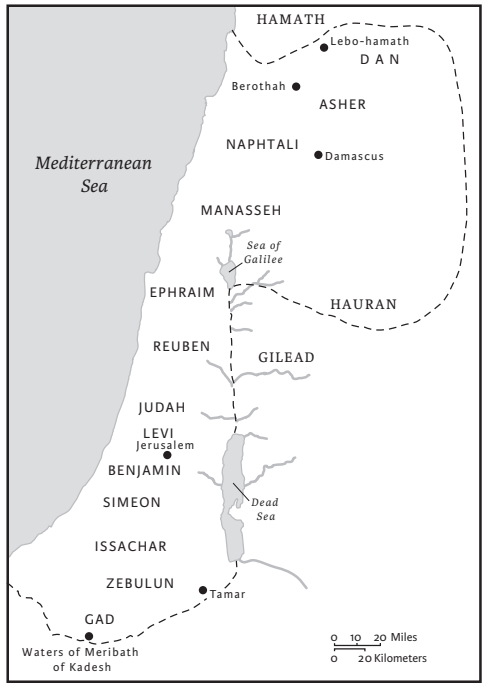
46.19–24: Sacrificial kitchens. 19–20: Behind (west of) the priest's sacristies (42.1–14) were kitchens for preparing offerings (42.13) for priestly consumption. *Communicate holiness,* see 42.14; 44.19n. **21–24:** Kitchens for the Levites to prepare sacrifices that the general populace ate were in all four corners of the outer courtyard.

47.1–12: The sacred river. This paradisiacal wonder (see 28.14n.) is also found in Joel 3.18 and Zech 14.8 (Zadokite apocalyptic prophecy). **1:** *East . . . south end,* the southeastern orientation directs the healing waters

below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. 2 Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east;[a] and the water was coming out on the south side.

3 Going on eastward with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep. 4 Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep. Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the waist. 5 Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed. 6 He said to me, "Mortal, have you seen this?"

Then he led me back along the bank of the river. 7 As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. 8 He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. 9 Wherever the river goes,[b] every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. 10 People will stand fishing beside the sea[c] from En-gedi to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. 11 But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. 12 On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing."



Chs 47–48: Tribal territories in the restored Israel

13 Thus says the Lord GOD: These are the boundaries by which you shall divide the land for inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two portions. 14 You shall divide it equally; I swore to give it to your ancestors, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance.

15 This shall be the boundary of the land: On the north side, from the Great Sea by way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, and on

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *the two rivers go*
[c] Heb *it*

specifically to the barren Judean desert region south of Jerusalem where their transformative effect will be most pronounced. **2:** *Coming out,* the Heb verb conveys the sound of water gurgling from a jug like ones emitting streams of life in ancient temple art. **7,12:** *Trees,* Mesopotamian incantations and exorcisms speak of the healing power of the waters and "kishkanu-tree" of Paradise/Eridu. **8:** *Arabah,* the Rift Valley, in which the Dead Sea (*the sea of stagnant waters*) is located. **10:** *En-gedi to En-eglaim*, two springs on either side of the Dead Sea. *The Great Sea,* the Mediterranean. **11:** *Salt* would supply Temple rituals (43.24).

47.13–48.29: A new holy land. 47.13–23: Boundary and allotment instructions. The reunited kin of Israel receive the land as twelve tribes (v. 21). Ezekiel is mostly following the highly ideal presentation of the land found in the priestly material of Num 34. **14:** *I swore,* 20.6; 36.28. **15–20:** National boundaries. Several of the

to Zedad,[a] 16 Berothah, Sibraim (which lies between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath), as far as Hazer-hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran. 17 So the boundary shall run from the sea to Hazar-enon, which is north of the border of Damascus, with the border of Hamath to the north.[b] This shall be the north side.

18 On the east side, between Hauran and Damascus; along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel; to the eastern sea and as far as Tamar.[c] This shall be the east side.

19 On the south side, it shall run from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribath-kadesh, from there along the Wadi of Egypt[d] to the Great Sea. This shall be the south side.

20 On the west side, the Great Sea shall be the boundary to a point opposite Lebo-hamath. This shall be the west side.

21 So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. 22 You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. 23 In whatever tribe aliens reside, there you shall assign them their inheritance, says the Lord God.

48 These are the names of the tribes: Beginning at the northern border, on the Hethlon road,[e] from Lebo-hamath, as far as Hazar-enon (which is on the border of Damascus, with Hamath to the north), and[f] extending from the east side to the west,[g] Dan, one portion. 2 Adjoining the territory of Dan, from the east side to the west, Asher, one portion. 3 Adjoining the territory of Asher, from the east side to the west, Naphtali, one portion. 4 Adjoining the territory of Naphtali, from the east side to the west, Manasseh, one portion. 5 Adjoining the territory of Manasseh, from the east side to the west, Ephraim, one portion. 6 Adjoining the territory of Ephraim, from the east side to the west, Reuben, one portion. 7 Adjoining the territory of Reuben, from the east side to the west, Judah, one portion.

8 Adjoining the territory of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the portion that you shall set apart, twenty-five thousand cubits in width, and in length equal to one of the tribal portions, from the east side to the west, with the sanctuary in the middle of it. 9 The portion that you shall set apart for the Lord shall be twenty-five thousand cubits in length, and twenty[h] thousand in width. 10 These shall be the allotments of the holy portion: the priests shall have an allotment measuring twenty-five thousand cubits on the northern side, ten thousand cubits in width on the western side, ten thousand in width on the eastern side, and twenty-five thousand in length on the southern side, with the sanctuary of the Lord in the middle

[a] Gk: Heb *Lebo-zedad,* [16]*Hamath*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Compare Syr: Heb *you shall measure*
[d] Heb lacks *of Egypt*
[e] Compare 47.15: Heb *by the side of the way*
[f] Cn: Heb *and they shall be his*
[g] Gk Compare verses 2-8: Heb *the east side the west*
[h] Compare 45.1: Heb *ten*

sites mentioned are unidentified. The north border (vv. 15–17) runs from the upper coast of modern Lebanon to a point about 90 mi (145 km) east. The border then drops south past the large region around Damascus. The east border (v. 18) runs down past *Hauran*, the large plateau that extends east of the Sea of Galilee and then jogs west to follow the Jordan to *Tamar,* a site south of the Dead Sea (*eastern sea*) (Num 34.10–12). Territory in the Transjordan is not included in the new land (contrast Num 34.13–15). South border (v. 19): from Tamar through Kadesh-barnea (*Meribath-kadesh* in HS tradition) to *the Wadi of Egypt* (1 Kings 8.65n.) and the Mediterranean (Num 34.3–5). West border (v. 20): the Mediterranean Sea (Num 34.6). **21–23:** Allotment. That resident *aliens* and native Israelites should be treated alike was a firm principle of the Holiness School: Num 15.29; Lev 19.33–34; 24.22. In a highly inclusive move, Ezekiel radicalizes the principle to give aliens their own allotted portions of land; see also 44.9n.

48.1–29: Tribal and holy-district allotments. All tribes receive equal allotments consisting of idealized strips of land. Ephraim and Manasseh ("Joseph," 47.13) receive a portion each, but Levi, the priestly tribe, is omitted, so that the tribal allotments number twelve in all. **1–7:** Seven tribes north of the central strip (vv. 8–22; 45.1–9). **1:** *Hethlon, Lebo-hamath,* sites on the land's northern border (47.15). **8–22:** The central strip. The description

of it. [11] This shall be for the consecrated priests, the descendants[a] of Zadok, who kept my charge, who did not go astray when the people of Israel went astray, as the Levites did. [12] It shall belong to them as a special portion from the holy portion of the land, a most holy place, adjoining the territory of the Levites. [13] Alongside the territory of the priests, the Levites shall have an allotment twenty-five thousand cubits in length and ten thousand in width. The whole length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits and the width twenty[b] thousand. [14] They shall not sell or exchange any of it; they shall not transfer this choice portion of the land, for it is holy to the LORD.

[15] The remainder, five thousand cubits in width and twenty-five thousand in length, shall be for ordinary use for the city, for dwellings and for open country. In the middle of it shall be the city; [16] and these shall be its dimensions: the north side four thousand five hundred cubits, the south side four thousand five hundred, the east side four thousand five hundred, and the west side four thousand five hundred. [17] The city shall have open land: on the north two hundred fifty cubits, on the south two hundred fifty, on the east two hundred fifty, on the west two hundred fifty. [18] The remainder of the length alongside the holy portion shall be ten thousand cubits to the east, and ten thousand to the west, and it shall be alongside the holy portion. Its produce shall be food for the workers of the city. [19] The workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it. [20] The whole portion that you shall set apart shall be twenty-five thousand cubits square, that is, the holy portion together with the property of the city.

[21] What remains on both sides of the holy portion and of the property of the city shall belong to the prince. Extending from the twenty-five thousand cubits of the holy portion to the east border, and westward from the twenty-five thousand cubits to the west border, parallel to the tribal portions, it shall belong to the prince. The holy portion with the sanctuary of the temple in the middle of it, [22] and the property of the Levites and of the city, shall be in the middle of that which belongs to the prince. The portion of the prince shall lie between the territory of Judah and the territory of Benjamin.

[23] As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west, Benjamin, one portion. [24] Adjoining the territory of Benjamin, from the east side to the west, Simeon, one portion. [25] Adjoining the territory of Simeon, from the east side to the west, Issachar, one portion. [26] Adjoining the territory of Issachar, from the east side to the west, Zebulun, one portion. [27] Adjoining the territory of Zebulun, from the east side to the west, Gad, one portion. [28] And adjoining the territory of Gad to the south, the boundary shall run from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh, from there along the Wadi of Egypt[c] to the Great Sea. [29] This is the land that you shall allot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions, says the Lord GOD.

[30] These shall be the exits of the city: On the north side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, [31] three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel. [32] On the east side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates, the gate of

[a] One Ms Gk: Heb *of the descendants*
[b] Gk: Heb *ten*
[c] Heb lacks *of Egypt*

matches and expands 45.1–9. **11–12:** See 44.6–16n.; 44.15–31n. The Heb text appears to read: "As for . . . the Zadokites . . ., they shall have [their own, individual] district (Heb "terumah") out of the [total priestly] district of the land—(a) most holy (tract)." **15:** *Ordinary* ("common" as opposed to "holy") *use,* see 22.26; 42.20n.; 44.23; Lev 10.10 (HS). **16–17:** The area of the central city formed a square (see 40.47n.), symbolizing its role as a portal to God's presence for pilgrims. **21–22:** The allotment of the prince, as described in 45.7. **23–29:** Five tribes south of the central strip. **28:** See 47.19.

48.30–35: The new city. Three gates on each of the city's four sides, each named after a tribe. **35:** The city's new name *The LORD is* just over *There* (Heb "Yahweh-shammah") designates it as a key waypoint or port of call for pilgrims planning to visit the new Temple complex to the north.

Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan. 33 On the south side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, three gates, the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun. 34 On the west side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates,[a] the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali. 35 The circumference of the city shall be eighteen thousand cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD is There.

[a] One Ms Gk Syr: MT *their gates three*

DANIEL

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

The book of Daniel is named for its main character, an exiled Judean sage who serves in the court of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. Daniel is an interpreter of divinely sent dreams and messages who later becomes the recipient of visions and dreams himself. The Daniel of this book is not the same figure mentioned in Ezekiel (14.14,20; 28.3). Ezekiel associates that character, called either Dan'el or Daniel, with Noah and Job, who lived in the distant past and were known for their exceeding wisdom and righteousness.

In the Christian canon, the book is located immediately after Ezekiel. This placement is derived from Daniel's location in the Septuagint and reflects the Christian understanding that Daniel is a prophet. Jewish tradition, however, puts Daniel in the section of the Tanakh called the Writings (Heb *Ketubim*) between the books of Esther and Ezra, perhaps because of its late date of composition. In the Jewish tradition, Daniel is highly regarded, but not typically viewed as a prophet (see *b. San.* 94a, *b. Meg.* 3a; *b. B. Bat.*14b).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT, COMPOSITION, AND CANONIC STATUS

According to ch 1, Daniel was taken to Babylon at the beginning of the Babylonian exile and was chosen to serve in the royal court. This setting, however, does not necessarily reflect the realities of the book's historical context and composition. Several major historical errors in ch 1 suggest that the author wrote long after the Babylonian conquest of Judah and very likely was not attempting to write a historical account at all, but rather a series of historical fictions set in that time period. The writers of chs 1–6 were Jewish scribes who had some knowledge of the foreign culture about which they were writing, but it is not clear that they served in the royal administration, as Daniel and his friends are depicted as doing. Though foreigners did serve in lower-ranking posts in the Babylonian and Persian courts, there is no evidence that they held senior positions. The court tales probably began as individual stories that were written during the Persian period (539–333 BCE). They were originally written in Aramaic, the common language of the Persian Empire, although ch 1 was later translated into Hebrew. Clues embedded in the stories suggest that the tales circulated independently among the Jews of Babylonia and the eastern Diaspora until they were collected and edited as a book. The stories were updated during the early Hellenistic period (333–170 BCE) and reflect the challenges of trying to maintain one's distinctive religious and ethnic identity as a minority in a foreign culture. By depicting various moments in which the characters' theological commitments and cultural distinctiveness are challenged, the stories model how to negotiate a foreign culture without fully accommodating to it or rejecting it. Although there are instances where Daniel and the other Jewish men must resist the king in order to maintain fidelity to the God of Israel, the tales are mostly optimistic about the king's ability to recognize Daniel's God as the "God of gods and Lord of kings" (2.47)

In contrast to the first half of the book, the second half has a decidedly negative view of foreign power. Chapters 7–12 contain four separate apocalypses describing the end of gentile kingdoms, with ch 7 providing the connecting link between the later apocalypses and the earlier court tales. Although it has a view of imperial power similar to that of ch 8, ch 7 contains many parallels to ch 2 and was written in Aramaic. Chapters 8–12, however, were composed in Hebrew in Judea between 167 and 164 BCE. Their intended audience was probably narrower than that of the tales and included other scribes who opposed the Greek Seleucid king who ruled over Judea, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164). The apocalypses encourage resistance toward foreign kingship rather than accommodation or negotiation. They focus on the desecration of the Temple and the king's defiance of the Jewish God. Details concerning the little horn (chs 7–8) and the king of the north (chs 10–11) refer to Antiochus IV . In 167, Antiochus IV, for reasons that are not clearly understood, outlawed the practice of Judaism in Judea and desecrated the Jerusalem Temple. This unprecedented series of events set into motion the Maccabean revolt (see 1 Macc 1–2; 2 Mac 5). The book ends without mentioning the rededication of the Temple in December 164, or Antiochus's death at about the same time.

Those responsible for the apocalypses were not associated with the Maccabees, but may have been "the wise ones" (Heb *maskilim*, 11.33). The description of the *maskilim* indicates that they were pious Jewish scribes and teachers who sought divinely revealed knowledge. They adopted the figure of Daniel as their model repre-

sentative. The apocalyptic visions retold past and present events, so that the faithful community could discern the hidden patterns by which God had shaped the history of foreign rule; by means of this understanding they could anticipate the future. In showing the limits of royal power, the apocalypses tried to make sense of the chaos caused by Antiochus IV and make visible God's power and presence.

The book's compositional history continued after it was translated into Greek. Greek Daniel includes two poetic sections inserted in ch 3 and two additional tales (Susanna; Bel and the Dragon). The additions are deuterocanonical for Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians, but are noncanonical for Jews and Protestants. The additions are located in the Old Testament Apocrypha.

INTERPRETATION

The themes of the sovereign power of God and of God's relationship to foreign kings unite the various materials found in Daniel. The Babylonian exile and the foreign rule of Judea raised questions about God's power to shape historical events. Chapters 1–7 respond to those questions by showing God delegating authority to those very powers that had conquered Judea, thus asserting the universal power of Judea's God as the force behind even these events. Chapters 8–12, however, show that gentile kings do not necessarily rule with God's approval. Even so, historical forces contain gentile power until the end time at which point God will intervene to end foreign rule completely.

Amy C. Merrill Willis

1 In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power, as well as some of the vessels of the house of God. These he brought to the land of Shinar,[a] and placed the vessels in the treasury of his gods.

3 Then the king commanded his palace master Ashpenaz to bring some of the Israelites of the royal family and of the nobility, **4** young men without physical defect and handsome, versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace; they were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans. **5** The king assigned them a daily portion of the royal rations of food and wine. They were to be educated for three years, so that at the end of that time they could be stationed in the king's court. **6** Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, from the tribe of Judah. **7** The palace master gave them other names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

[a] Gk Theodotion: Heb adds *to the house of his own gods*

1.1–21: The Babylonian exile. Chapter 1, which is in Hebrew, introduces the book's theme of divine sovereignty and its main characters, Daniel and the Jewish courtiers. **1:** *The third year . . . Jehoiakim* is 606 BCE (see 2 Chr 36.5–7), but Nebuchadnezzar ruled from 605–562 BCE (see 2 Kings 24–25; 1 Chr 6; 2 Chr 36; Jer 25.1; 27–29). He did not capture Jerusalem until 597, during the reign of Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim. The dating formula may harmonize information in 2 Chr 36 with the account in 2 Kings 24.1. **2:** The *Lord,* not Nebuchadnezzar, is the agent. *Shinar,* ancient name for Babylon (Gen 10.10; 11.2; Josh 7.21; Isa 11.11; Zech 5.11), associated with pride. *Vessels* (see ch 5; 2 Kings 24.13; 25.13–15; 2 Chr 36.7,10). *His gods*, Marduk, the Babylonian creator god, and Marduk's son Nabu (or Nebo; see Isa 46.1), whose name is used in Nebuchadnezzar's own name.

1.3–7: Jews in the court of the foreign king. Conquered peoples were often brought into the king's court and provided with training and food to promote assimilation. Many Judean exiles were noble born (see 2 Kings 24.14–16). **4:** *Without physical defect* refers to the purity laws concerning priests (Lev 21.17–23) or to good appearance (2 Sam 14.25). *Versed in . . . wisdom*, educated for royal service. *Chaldeans*, Babylonians. The *literature* of the Chaldeans is the corpus of Babylonian divination and astrology texts. **5:** *Daily portion*, kings often gave generous food rations to their courtiers in return for loyalty, a practice particularly prominent under Persian monarchs. **6–7:** The Jewish youths are given court names that may refer to other gods such as Mithra ("Meshach"), and

[8] But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself. [9] Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master. [10] The palace master said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king; he has appointed your food and your drink. If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of your own age, you would endanger my head with the king." [11] Then Daniel asked the guard whom the palace master had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: [12] "Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. [13] You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe." [14] So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days. [15] At the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations. [16] So the guard continued to withdraw their royal rations and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. [17] To these four young men God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom; Daniel also had insight into all visions and dreams.

[18] At the end of the time that the king had set for them to be brought in, the palace master brought them into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, [19] and the king spoke with them. And among them all, no one was found to compare with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they were stationed in the king's court. [20] In every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. [21] And Daniel continued there until the first year of King Cyrus.

2 In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed such dreams that his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. [2] So the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. When they came in and stood before the king, [3] he said to them, "I have had such a dream that my spirit is troubled by the desire to understand it." [4] The Chaldeans said to the king (in Aramaic),[a] "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the

[a] The text from this point to the end of chapter 7 is in Aramaic

Nebo ("nego"). Name changes and double names were part of life in a foreign court (Gen 41.45; 2 Kings 24.17; Esth 2.7), but these are probably unintentional distortions of actual Babylonian- and Persian-period names.

1.8–17: Daniel's resistance. 8: *Defile*, refers to ritual concerns. The king's food may include items prohibited by the Torah or sacrificed to idols, but the problem is not clear. Refusing gentile food is a way to resist royal authority and assert religious identity (Tob 1.10–11; Esth 14.17; 1 Macc 1.62–63; Jdt 12.1–4). **11:** *Daniel asked,* Daniel approaches the guard in private, perhaps to protect the palace master. **12:** *Test . . . ten days,* may be a standard period for testing (Rev 2.10). *Vegetables,* lit., "seeds." Daniel's diet of vegetables and water has no biblical basis, but contrasts with the royal meat and wine. **15:** Daniel's diet proves better than the king's royal rations. **17:** God's power, not Nebuchadnezzar's training, gives the men knowledge in the divinatory arts. *Dreams and visions*, Daniel's skill likens him to Joseph (Gen 39–50).

1.18–21: The Jewish courtiers are promoted. 20: *Magicians*, experts in dream interpretation (2.2; Gen 41.8,24; see also Ex 7.11,22; 8.7,8–19; 9.11). *Enchanters*, diagnosed and treated illnesses caused by evil spirits. **21:** *First year of King Cyrus*, 539 BCE (see 6.28; 10.1; 2 Chr 36.22–23; Ezra 1.1–2; 6.3; Isa 45; 1 Esd 2.1–3).

2.1–12: Nebuchadnezzar's dream. 1: *The second year*, 604 BCE (but see 1.1n). *Dreams*, a recurring motif in the book, were portents of the future (Gen 15.21; 20.3; 28.11–15; 37.5–10; 41.1–32; Judg 7.13–15; 1 Kings 3.5–15). This story may reflect a report by the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus (559–536 BCE) of a disturbing dream early in his reign. **2:** The king convenes the experts, but with disappointing results (see also 4.5–6; 5.7–8; Gen 41.8). *Magicians*, *enchanters* (see 1.20n.); *sorcerers and Chaldeans*, professional diviners (see 1.4n.) Compare with the biblical view of sorcery in Isa 47.9,12. **4:** The language switches from Hebrew to Aramaic with the greeting. It will return to Hebrew in 8.1. *O king, live forever,* a customary royal greeting (3.9; 5.10; 1 Kings 1.31; Neh 2.3). **4–5:** It was standard for the dreamer to describe the dream when seeking an interpretation (Gen 41.1–8). **5**: *Torn limb from limb,* threat of severe punishment is a folklore device that heightens drama and shows the king's volatility (3.19; 2 Macc 1.16).

dream, and we will reveal the interpretation." [5] The king answered the Chaldeans, "This is a public decree: if you do not tell me both the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. [6] But if you do tell me the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation." [7] They answered a second time, "Let the king first tell his servants the dream, then we can give its interpretation." [8] The king answered, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see I have firmly decreed: [9] if you do not tell me the dream, there is but one verdict for you. You have agreed to speak lying and misleading words to me until things take a turn. Therefore, tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation." [10] The Chaldeans answered the king, "There is no one on earth who can reveal what the king demands! In fact no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. [11] The thing that the king is asking is too difficult, and no one can reveal it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with mortals."

[12] Because of this the king flew into a violent rage and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. [13] The decree was issued, and the wise men were about to be executed; and they looked for Daniel and his companions, to execute them. [14] Then Daniel responded with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the king's chief executioner, who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon; [15] he asked Arioch, the royal official, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. [16] So Daniel went in and requested that the king give him time and he would tell the king the interpretation.

[17] Then Daniel went to his home and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, [18] and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions with the rest of the wise men of Babylon might not perish. [19] Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

[20] Daniel said:
"Blessed be the name of God from age to age,
for wisdom and power are his.
[21] He changes times and seasons,
deposes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding.
[22] He reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and light dwells with him.

2.13–23: Daniel seeks a solution. These verses are likely a later addition, as they create contradictions with other parts of the story. **13:** Daniel and his friends are among the Babylonian wise men condemned to death. **16–17:** Daniel's audience with the king conflicts with vv. 24–25, where Nebuchadnezzar does not know Daniel (cf. 1.18–20). The contradictions are likely an indication that the stories circulated independently and in different versions. **17:** The friends are listed with their Hebrew names, not their Babylonian names (see 1.6–7). **18:** *The God of heaven*, the Persians' term for the God of Israel (see Ezra 1.2; 5.11–12; 6.9–10; 7.12,21,23) and a common way of referring to the deity throughout the Persian and Hellenistic periods (2 Chr 36.23; Neh 1.4–5; 2.4,20; Ps 136.26; Jon 1.9; Tob 7.12; 8.15; Jdt 5.8; 6.19; 11.17). *Mystery*, a Persian loan word for cosmic and eschatological revelations (2.19,27–30,47; 4.9; see also Rom 11.25; 16.25; 1 Cor 2.1; 15.51). The term is frequent in the Dead Sea Scrolls. **19:** *Vision of the night,* Daniel receives a dream (v. 28; 7.2; Isa 29.7) that discloses the contents of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. **20–23:** One of four doxologies found in the book (see 4.1–2; 4.34–35; 6.26–27), highlighting the connection between power and knowledge and proclaiming the sovereignty of God. **20:** *Blessed be the name of God*, a recurring theme in Jewish prayers and hymns (see Pss 41.13; 106.48; 113.2; Job 1.21; Mt 6.9; the Kaddish). *From age to age,* or "from of old and forever"; God is an ancient deity (see 7.9,13; Ps 90.2). *Wisdom and power*, the Babylonians and the Persians each attributed these qualities to their gods, but the Jewish God is the source of what the king and the wise men desire. **21:** *Times and seasons,* God has the power to propel history, to inaugurate new eras (7.12); *deposes kings and sets up*, God established Nebuchadnezzar's authority (2.37–38). God will depose

[23] To you, O God of my ancestors,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and power,
and have now revealed to me what we
asked of you,
for you have revealed to us what the
king ordered."
[24] Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will give the king the interpretation."
[25] Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king and said to him: "I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who can tell the king the interpretation." [26] The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to tell me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" [27] Daniel answered the king, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or diviners can show to the king the mystery that the king is asking, [28] but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed were these: [29] To you, O king, as you lay in bed, came thoughts of what would be hereafter, and the revealer of mysteries disclosed to you what is to be. [30] But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me because of any wisdom that I have more than any other living being, but in order that the interpretation may be known to the king and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.
[31] "You were looking, O king, and lo! there was a great statue. This statue was huge, its brilliance extraordinary; it was standing before you, and its appearance was frightening. [32] The head of that statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, [33] its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. [34] As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. [35] Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.
[36] "This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. [37] You, O king, the king of kings—to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the might, and the glory, [38] into whose hand he has given human beings, wherever they live, the wild animals of the field, and the

Belshazzar in ch 5. **22:** *Deep and hidden things*, Job 12.22–23. **23:** *God of my ancestors*, a common epithet for God elsewhere (see Ex 3.13,15–16; Deut 1.11–21; 4.1; Josh 18.3; 2 Chr 13.12), but atypical in Daniel.

2.24–30: Daniel's audience with the king. 24–25: see vv. 2.13n., 16–17n. Apparently the king has not met Daniel before. Arioch introduces him as a Judean exile, not as one of the Babylonian wise men (cf. 1.18–20). **26:** *Belteshazzar,* see 1.7n. The name may mean "Protect the life of the king," in Babylonian "Balat-shar-utsur." **27:** *Enchanters . . . diviners*, see 1.4n.; 1.20n. **28:** *The God in heaven*, a universalizing designation for the deity that nevertheless distinguishes the Jewish God from the gods of the gentiles (see 2.11; 2.18n.). *End of days*, or "end of the era." The phrase is eschatological (10.14; Isa 2.2; Mic 4.1; Hos 3.5; Ezek 38.16; often in the Dead Sea Scrolls) and here refers to the end of foreign rule. **30:** Daniel lifts up God's power, not his own cleverness.

2.31–35: Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue. 31: Giant figures occur in ancient Near Eastern dream reports and would recall oversized statues of deities and rulers in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. **32–33:** *Gold*, *silver*, *bronze*, *iron*, and *iron* mixed with *clay*; the metals decrease in value as they move downward toward the feet. The use of different metals for successive historical periods can be traced to Persian (*Bahman Yasht*) and Greek (Hesiod, *Works and Days*) traditions. **34–35**: The *stone* contrasts with the statue made by human hands. *Not by human hands*, God's action in history. *A great mountain*, a reference either to Mount Zion (Isa 2.2; Mic 4.2), or to God (Deut 32.4; 1 Sam 2.2; 2 Sam 22.32; Ps 18.31; Isa 44.8; Hab 1.12), or to the ancestors of Israel (Isa 51.1–2).

2.36–45: Daniel's interpretation. The four metals are kingdoms. The schema was adapted from a Persian tradition to emphasize that God shapes the history of Jews and gentiles alike (see also *Sib. Or.* 4). **38:** *Head of gold*, Nebuchadnezzar and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. *Into whose hand,* God has given Nebuchadnezzar world

birds of the air, and whom he has established as ruler over them all—you are the head of gold. 39 After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over the whole earth. 40 And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron; just as iron crushes and smashes everything,[a] it shall crush and shatter all these. 41 As you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the strength of iron shall be in it, as you saw the iron mixed with the clay. 42 As the toes of the feet were part iron and part clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 As you saw the iron mixed with clay, so will they mix with one another in marriage,[b] but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever; 45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from the mountain not by hands, and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. The great God has informed the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation trustworthy."

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, worshiped Daniel, and commanded that a grain offering and incense be offered to him. 47 The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery!" 48 Then the king promoted Daniel, gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court.

3 King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue whose height was sixty cubits and whose width was six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. 2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent for the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to assemble and come to the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 3 So the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasur-

[a] Gk Theodotion Syr Vg: Aram adds *and like iron that crushes*

[b] Aram *by human seed*

dominion (see Jer 25.9; 27.5–7; 28.14). **39:** *Another kingdom*, Media, east of Mesopotamia (silver). The Medes never ruled over Judea, but were remembered as the Babylonians' successors (see 5.31; 6.1; 9.1; Jer 51.11). Cyrus the Great was king of Media and Persia when he attacked Babylon in 539 BCE. *Third kingdom of bronze*, Persia (see 6.28; 10.1). **40:** *Iron,* the Greek empire of Alexander the Great and his successors (8.20–21; 10.20). **41:** *Potter's clay and partly iron*, the divided nature of Alexander's empire after his death. Two successor groups fought each other for control of Judea: the Ptolemies in Egypt, who ruled Judea 323–198 BCE, and the Seleucids in Syria, who ruled Judea 198–163 BCE. **43:** *In marriage*, intermarriages between the warring dynasties in 252 and 194/93 BCE were unsuccessful (see also 11.6n., 11.17n.). **44:** *A kingdom that shall never be destroyed* could refer to God's direct rule or to Israel; cf. 7.27, where it is the people Israel who will possess the kingdom. **45:** *Cut from the mountain*, cf. 2.35n.

2.46–49: Conclusion. 46: Nebuchadnezzar praises God and, ironically, worships Daniel as a god or, perhaps, worships the manifestation of God in him. **47:** *Your God*, although Nebuchadnezzar recognizes the power of Daniel's God, he is not a convert. **48–49:** The courtiers are elevated over all the wise men, like Joseph in Gen 41.37–45 (see also Esth 8.1–2).

3.1–7: Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue. The story has many folkloristic qualities, but its origins may be rooted in remembrances of the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus (see 2.1n.), who commissioned a nontraditional statue of the god Marduk that the Babylonian priests refused to recognize as legitimate. **1:** The dimensions of the statue, approximately 90 ft x 9 ft (27 x 3 m), make little sense and are likely exaggerated. *Dura*, a generic term for "fortress" or "enclosure"; the exact location is unclear. **2–5:** The lengthy and repeated lists (of officials, vv. 2,3; musical instruments, vv. 5,7,10,15; and clothing, v. 21) are typical of the tales (see also 2.2; 4.7;

ers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. When they were standing before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, [4] the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, [5] that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. [6] Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire." [7] Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

[8] Accordingly, at this time certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced the Jews. [9] They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! [10] You, O king, have made a decree, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, shall fall down and worship the golden statue, [11] and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. [12] There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These pay no heed to you, O king. They do not serve your gods and they do not worship the golden statue that you have set up."

[13] Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. [14] Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? [15] Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good.[a] But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?"

[16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. [17] If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us.[b] [18] But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up."

[19] Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and

[a] Aram lacks *well and good*

[b] Or *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king.*

5.7; 6.7) and parody similar lists found in royal inscriptions. **5:** The musical instruments have Greek names. **6:** The threat of death is a folkloristic element. Prior to the reign of Antiochus IV (175–163 BCE), the death penalty was not used for acts of religious disobedience. **7:** *All the peoples, nations, and languages,* the scene dramatizes Nebuchadnezzar's power to elicit universal obedience.

3.8–12: Accusations against the Jews. 8: *Chaldeans*, see 1.4n.; 2.2n. *Chaldeans* is also an ethnic designation for Babylonians (e.g., Isa 13.19). Here it is possible that both ethnic and professional animosity is implied in their actions (see also Esth 3.8). *Denounced* (lit., "ate the pieces of"), the Chaldeans take aggressive action against the friends. As Torah-observant Jews, the friends could not obey the command. **9:** *Live forever*, see 2.4n. **10:** Repetition of the instruments brings comic relief. **12:** *Whom you have appointed*, see 2.49. *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*, see 1.6–7n. Daniel's absence from the story suggests that this was originally an independent tale.

3.13–18: Resisting the king. 13: *Rage*, the king's exaggerated anger is typical of court tales (see also 2.5n.,12–13; Esth 1.12). **15:** *Out of my hands*, a symbol for the giving and receiving of royal power (see 1.2; 2.35,38). The king has yet to fully learn that the Jewish God both gives power (2.38) and takes it away. **16:** *Defense*, the three friends resist the king by refusing to defend their action. **17–18:** The friends' fidelity to God is unconditional. Their stance becomes a model for resisting Antiochus IV (see 1 Macc 2.59).

3.19–30: The fiery furnace. 19: *Rage,* see 3.13n. The reference to *seven* is a common folkloristic element; the

Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary, 20 and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. 21 So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics,[a] their trousers,[a] their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. 22 Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, "Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." 25 He replied, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a god."[b] 26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. 27 And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics[a] were not harmed, and not even the smell of fire came from them. 28 Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that utters blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins; for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

4 [c] King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages that live throughout the earth: May you have abundant prosperity! 2 The signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me I am pleased to recount.

3 How great are his signs,
how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,

[a] Meaning of Aram word uncertain
[b] Aram *a son of the gods*
[c] Ch 3.31 in Aram

king's outrageous command would be impossible to carry out. **21:** There was no time to strip the prisoners first. **24:** In the Septuagint, followed by Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles, the "Prayer of Azariah" and the "Song of the Three Jews" begins here. *Astonished*, the story is told from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective. **25:** *Four men*, the king sees the mysterious fourth figure but cannot make sense of the scene. *Walking in the middle of the fire* but unhurt evokes the image of the burning bush (Ex 3.2). *Appearance of a god* (lit., "a son of the gods/God"). Original readers would have understood the fourth man to be an angel (v. 28; see also Gen 16.7; Ex 14.19; 1 Kings 19.5–8; 2 Macc 10.29–30), but early Christians identified the figure as Christ. **26:** Nebuchadnezzar realizes which god can deliver the men (see 3.15). *Most High God*, a universal title for the supreme god used during the Hellenistic period by Jews and gentiles (4.2; 5.18,21; Gen 14.19; Num 24.16; Isa 14.14; Ps 78.35,36; Jdt 13.18; Sir 7.9; 24.23; 41.8; Mk 5.7; Lk 8.28; Acts 16.17; Heb 7.1). **28–30:** The Jewish courtiers' disobedience is rewarded. **29:** See 2.5.

4.1–3: Nebuchadnezzar's praise. See also 2.20–23; 4.34–35; 6.26–27. The doxologies were inserted to connect the tales. Because 3.29 mentioned a decree addressed to "any people, nation, or language," some interpreters took 4.1–3 to be the text of that decree and understood it to be the conclusion of that narrative. The chapter and verse numbering in the Tanakh reflects this interpretation. **1:** *All peoples*, Nebuchadnezzar is presented as monarch of a universal, multiethnic empire (see 2.38; 3.4,7,29; 6.25). **2:** *Signs and wonders*, a phrase used also to describe God's actions with Pharaoh in the Exodus (see Ex 7.3; Deut 6.22; 7.19; 26.8; 29.2–3; 34.11; Pss 105.27; 135.9). *Most High God,* see 3.26n. **3:** *His kingship is everlasting*, similar to Daniel's statement in 2.44 (cf. 7.27; see also Ps 145.13).

and his sovereignty is from generation
to generation.
4 [a]I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living at ease
in my home and prospering in my palace.
5 I saw a dream that frightened me; my
fantasies in bed and the visions of my head
terrified me. 6 So I made a decree that all
the wise men of Babylon should be brought
before me, in order that they might tell me
the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the
magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans,
and the diviners came in, and I told them
the dream, but they could not tell me its
interpretation. 8 At last Daniel came in
before me—he who was named Belteshaz-
zar after the name of my god, and who is
endowed with a spirit of the holy gods[b]—
and I told him the dream: 9 "O Belteshazzar,
chief of the magicians, I know that you are
endowed with a spirit of the holy gods[b]
and that no mystery is too difficult for
you. Hear[c] the dream that I saw; tell me its
interpretation.
10 [d]Upon my bed this is what I saw;
there was a tree at the center of the
earth,
and its height was great.
11 The tree grew great and strong,
its top reached to heaven,
and it was visible to the ends of the
whole earth.
12 Its foliage was beautiful,
its fruit abundant,
and it provided food for all.
The animals of the field found shade
under it,
the birds of the air nested in its
branches,
and from it all living beings were fed.

13 "I continued looking, in the visions of
my head as I lay in bed, and there was a holy
watcher, coming down from heaven. 14 He
cried aloud and said:
'Cut down the tree and chop off its
branches,
strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit.
Let the animals flee from beneath it
and the birds from its branches.
15 But leave its stump and roots in the
ground,
with a band of iron and bronze,
in the tender grass of the field.
Let him be bathed with the dew of heaven,
and let his lot be with the animals of
the field
in the grass of the earth.
16 Let his mind be changed from that of a
human,
and let the mind of an animal be given
to him.
And let seven times pass over him.
17 The sentence is rendered by decree of
the watchers,
the decision is given by order of the
holy ones,

[a] Ch 4.1 in Aram
[b] Or *a holy, divine spirit*
[c] Theodotion: Aram *The visions of*
[d] Theodotion Syr Compare Gk: Aram adds *The visions of my head*

4.4–18: Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree. This story, like aspects of chs 2 and 3, originated with remembrances of Nabonidus, which were transferred to Nebuchadnezzar (see 2.1–12n.; 3.1–7n.; 5.2n.). **4:** The king narrates the dream report. The narration changes to third-person in vv. 19–33. **5:** Disturbing dreams were bad portents of the future (see 2.1n.; 2.3; 7.1,15; 8.27) and are a recurring motif in court tales (cf. Gen 40.6; 41.8). **7:** *Magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans,* see 1.20n.; 2.2n. The failure of the non-Jewish courtiers recalls 2.7. **8:** *Belteshazzar*, see 1.7n., 2.26n. The name's etymology is inaccurate; it does not refer to the god Bel (i.e., Marduk). *A spirit of the holy gods*, can also be translated "spirit of the holy God" (see Gen 41.38; Josh 24.19). *Spirit* refers to Daniel's divinely given abilities (see 2.47). **10–12:** *A tree at the center of the earth*, a widespread image in the ancient Near East; here it refers to the king's role in maintaining the divine order of the world (see Ezek 17; 31). **11:** *Reached to heaven*, evokes pridefulness (Gen 11.4; see Dan 1.2n.) although the tree is also the source of nurture for the animals (see Ezek 31.6). **13:** *A holy watcher*, an angel (4.17,23; 8.13; a common term for angels in *Jubilees*, and *1 Enoch*). **15:** *A band of iron and bronze,* may symbolize a shackle for the king. *Let him be bathed,* the imagery shifts from the king as the tree to the king as a wild beast. **16:** The king is demoted from his elevated status to being the basest of animals. *Seven times*, seven years. **17:** *He gives it to whom he will,* see Jer 27.5–6. *The holy ones*, synonymous with watchers.

in order that all who live may know
that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals;
he gives it to whom he will
and sets over it the lowliest of human beings.'

18 "This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are unable to tell me the interpretation. You are able, however, for you are endowed with a spirit of the holy gods."[a]

19 Then Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar, was severely distressed for a while. His thoughts terrified him. The king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or the interpretation terrify you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your enemies! 20 The tree that you saw, which grew great and strong, so that its top reached to heaven and was visible to the end of the whole earth, 21 whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and which provided food for all, under which animals of the field lived, and in whose branches the birds of the air had nests— 22 it is you, O king! You have grown great and strong. Your greatness has increased and reaches to heaven, and your sovereignty to the ends of the earth. 23 And whereas the king saw a holy watcher coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the ground, with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field; and let him be bathed with the dew of heaven, and let his lot be with the animals of the field, until seven times pass over him'— 24 this is the interpretation, O king, and it is a decree of the Most High that has come upon my lord the king: 25 You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the wild animals. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, you shall be bathed with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and gives it to whom he will. 26 As it was commanded to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be re-established for you from the time that you learn that Heaven is sovereign. 27 Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: atone for[b] your sins with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may be prolonged."

28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 and the king said, "Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?" 31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven: "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: The kingdom has departed from you! 32 You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to whom he will." 33 Immediately the sentence was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven away from human society, ate grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the

[a] Or *a holy, divine spirit*
[b] Aram *break off*

4.19–27: Daniel's interpretation. 19: Daniel's distress shows sympathy for the king. **22:** The king's power is all-encompassing, much as in 2.37–38. **24:** *Most High*, see 3.26n. **26:** *Heaven,* a circumlocution for God. **27:** The judgment is irrevocable, but the king's righteousness (lit., "almsgiving") will delay the sentence.

4.28–33: Nebuchadnezzar's transformation. 29: *Walking on the roof* may suggest royal arrogance (see 2 Sam 11.2). **31:** *A voice from heaven*, see v. 13. A heavenly voice becomes an increasingly common motif in Second Temple Jewish and early Christian writings (Mt 3.17; Mk 1.11; Lk 3.22; many instances in rabbinic texts). **32–33:** The king's affliction and banishment may reflect Nabonidus's experiences. In *The Prayer of Nabonidus* (4Q242) from Qumran, the king was afflicted by God for seven years and healed by an unnamed Jewish exorcist. In reality, Nabonidus departed Babylon and spent ten years in the remote town of Tema in northern Arabia. **33:** *Eagles' feathers* anticipates the description of the first beast in 7.4 and its transformation.

dew of heaven, until his hair grew as long
as eagles' feathers and his nails became like
birds' claws.

34 When that period was over, I, Nebu-
chadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my
reason returned to me.

I blessed the Most High,
and praised and honored the one who
lives forever.
For his sovereignty is an everlasting
sovereignty,
and his kingdom endures from
generation to generation.
35 All the inhabitants of the earth are
accounted as nothing,
and he does what he wills with the host
of heaven
and the inhabitants of the earth.
There is no one who can stay his hand
or say to him, "What are you doing?"

36 At that time my reason returned to me; and
my majesty and splendor were restored to
me for the glory of my kingdom. My coun-
selors and my lords sought me out, I was
re-established over my kingdom, and still
more greatness was added to me. 37 Now I,
Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor
the King of heaven,

for all his works are truth,
and his ways are justice;
and he is able to bring low
those who walk in pride.

5 King Belshazzar made a great festival
for a thousand of his lords, and he was
drinking wine in the presence of the thou-
sand.

2 Under the influence of the wine, Belshaz-
zar commanded that they bring in the vessels
of gold and silver that his father Nebuchad-
nezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusa-
lem, so that the king and his lords, his wives,
and his concubines might drink from them.
3 So they brought in the vessels of gold and
silver[a] that had been taken out of the temple,
the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king
and his lords, his wives, and his concubines
drank from them. 4 They drank the wine and
praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze,
iron, wood, and stone.

5 Immediately the fingers of a human hand
appeared and began writing on the plaster
of the wall of the royal palace, next to the
lampstand. The king was watching the hand
as it wrote. 6 Then the king's face turned pale,
and his thoughts terrified him. His limbs gave
way, and his knees knocked together. 7 The
king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters,
the Chaldeans, and the diviners; and the king
said to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever
can read this writing and tell me its interpre-
tation shall be clothed in purple, have a chain
of gold around his neck, and rank third in

[a] Theodotion Vg: Aram lacks *and silver*

4.34–37: Restoration of the king. 34: The king is restored only after the period of punishment has been fulfilled. With the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar's sanity, the first-person narration resumes. **34–35:** The language echoes and expands the opening doxology (v. 3). **36:** The king's power is connected to his knowledge of God's sovereignty. **37:** Nebuchadnezzar's final words form the climax to the cycle of stories about him. *King of Heaven*, a term found only in the Bible (see 5.23), unlike *Most High* (v. 34) which was used by Jews and gentiles alike.

5.1–4: Belshazzar's blasphemy. 1: Belshazzar ruled as an unofficial co-regent from 553 to 543 BCE while his father, Nabonidus, was away in Tema (see 4.32–33n.). *A great festival*, royal feasts were opportunities for the extravagant display of kingly power. **2–3:** *Under the influence*, Babylonian and Persian royal feasts were known for unrestrained drinking (Esth 1.8,10). *Vessels of gold and silver,* see 1.2n. Nebuchadnezzar placed the Temple vessels in the treasury, but Belshazzar debased them by using them as drinking cups. *His father Nebuchadnezzar*, Nebuchadnezzar was not Belshazzar's father. **4:** *Praised the gods of gold and silver*, a similar phrase is found in *The Prayer of Nabonidus* (4Q242). The description of the idols evokes the criticism of the prophets and other writings (Deut 4.28; Isa 44.9–20; Jer 10.3–5; Bel v. 7).

5.5–9: The mysterious handwriting on the wall. The appearance of the hand comes in response to Belshazzar's defilement of the sacred vessels. **5:** *Immediately*, judgment is swift. *Began writing*, the written word was a symbol of power in a largely illiterate world. **6:** The king's emotional response is described in physical terms. *His limbs gave way*, lit., "the knots of his loins loosened"; see also v. 12n.; Ps 69.23; Isa 21.3; Ezek 21.7; Nah 2.10. **7:** *Enchanters,* etc., see 1.4n.; 1.20n. *Read this writing,* the test is to read and interpret. *Purple*, the king promises to

the kingdom." [8] Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king the interpretation. [9] Then King Belshazzar became greatly terrified and his face turned pale, and his lords were perplexed.

[10] The queen, when she heard the discussion of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall. The queen said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts terrify you or your face grow pale. [11] There is a man in your kingdom who is endowed with a spirit of the holy gods.[a] In the days of your father he was found to have enlightenment, understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners,[b] [12] because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."

[13] Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, "So you are Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? [14] I have heard of you that a spirit of the gods[c] is in you, and that enlightenment, understanding, and excellent wisdom are found in you. [15] Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and tell me its interpretation, but they were not able to give the interpretation of the matter. [16] But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you are able to read the writing and tell me its interpretation, you shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around your neck, and rank third in the kingdom."

[17] Then Daniel answered in the presence of the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else! Nevertheless I will read the writing to the king and let him know the interpretation. [18] O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar kingship, greatness, glory, and majesty. [19] And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. He killed those he wanted to kill, kept alive those he wanted to keep alive, honored those he wanted to honor, and degraded those he wanted to degrade. [20] But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he acted proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was stripped from him. [21] He was driven from human society, and his mind was made like that of an animal. His dwelling was with the wild asses, he was fed grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and sets over it whomever he will. [22] And you, Belshazzar his son, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this! [23] You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven! The vessels of his temple have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of

[a] Or *a holy, divine spirit*
[b] Aram adds *the king your father*
[c] Or *a divine spirit*

reward the successful courtier with status symbols and power. **8:** The failure of the sages is a standard element in the court-contest tale (see 2.2n.; 4.6–7n.).

5.10–12: The queen mother intervenes. Because she has knowledge of events from the previous king's reign, *the queen* is probably Belshazzar's mother or grandmother. The only woman to speak in the MT version of Daniel, she recognizes Daniel's importance. *O king, live forever!* See 2.4n. The greeting is unintentionally ironic, since Belshazzar will die that night. **11:** *Holy gods,* see 4.8n. **12:** *Solve problems,* lit., "loosen knots," Daniel's ability to loosen knots marks a contrast to the king's knots being loosened in terror (v. 6n.).

5.13–28: Daniel before the king. 13: The king does not know Daniel. *Brought from Judah,* see 1.3–4. **14:** *Spirit of the gods*, see 4.8n. **17–23:** These verses serve to integrate ch 5 with the narratives about Nebuchadnezzar in chs 2–4, especially 4.30–37. **17:** Daniel's sharp response contrasts with his more sympathetic exchange with Nebuchadnezzar in 4.19. Daniel utters prophetic judgment (1 Kings 21.20–24). **18:** Nebuchadnezzar's power was a divine gift (cf. 2.37). **19:** *He killed . . . kept alive,* activities usually attributed to God alone; see Deut 32.9; 1 Sam 2.6–7; Job 5.11; Ps 75.7–8; Tob 4.19; Sir 7.11. **23:** *Exalted yourself,* compare the description of Belshazzar with the

bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know; but the God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honored.

24 "So from his presence the hand was sent and this writing was inscribed. 25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of [a] your kingdom and brought it to an end; 27 TEKEL, you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting; 28 PERES,[b] your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed in purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made concerning him that he should rank third in the kingdom.

30 That very night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed. 31 [c]And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

6 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred twenty satraps, stationed throughout the whole kingdom, 2 and over them three presidents, including Daniel; to these the satraps gave account, so that the king might suffer no loss. 3 Soon Daniel distinguished himself above all the other presidents and satraps because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king planned to appoint him over the whole kingdom. 4 So the presidents and the satraps tried to find grounds for complaint against Daniel in connection with the kingdom. But they could find no grounds for complaint or any corruption, because he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption could be found in him. 5 The men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

6 So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

[a] Aram lacks *the days of*
[b] The singular of *Parsin*
[c] Ch 6.1 in Aram

little horn in 8.11,25. **24–28:** *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN,* a riddle using units of money as the key: *MENE* = mina (ca. 20 oz [.5 kg]), TEKEL = shekel (one sixtieth of a mina), and PARSIN = half-minas. Daniel interprets the words according to the related verbs, as puns on the king's power: *MENE* = counted, *TEKEL* = weighed, *PARSIN* = divided or assessed.

5.29–31: The king's final acts. 29–30: The king recognizes Daniel's worth, but the lesson is learned too late. Judgment on the king is immediate. **30:** *Chaldean,* see 3.8n. *Was killed,* according to the Greek historian Xenophon, Nabonidus and those with him were killed in 539 BCE when the Persians seized Babylon. This likely included Belshazzar. **31:** No such person as *Darius the Mede* is known outside this biblical reference; later references in Jewish and Christian sources are dependent on the account in the book of Daniel. Babylon was seized by Cyrus the Persian who was also the king of Media. The king mentioned here may be a confused reference to Darius I of Persia (522–486 BCE). See also 2.39n.; 6.1n.; 7.5; 8.3–4; 9.1; 11.1.

6.1–9: The plot against Daniel. A court-conflict tale resembling ch 3 in structure and theme. **1:** *Darius*, see 5.31n. Darius I organized the Persian Empire into satrapies. The number is a folkloristic exaggeration (see Esth 1.1; 8.9; 1 Esd 3.2). **3:** Daniel's rise to power resembles Joseph's (Gen 41.40–3). **4–5:** Jealousy is the source of conflict, but Daniel's religious identity is used against him. **6:** *O king,* see 2.4n.; 5.10. **7–9:** The courtiers propose to elevate the king over all gods. In agreeing to the plan, the king shows his gullibility (see also Esth 1.19–2.1). **7:** *Den of lions*, an unknown punishment in the ancient Near East. The lion was a symbol of royal power. **8–9:** *The law . . . which cannot be revoked*, a folkloristic motif; see also Esth 1.19; 3.8–10; 8.8–10. The motif emphasizes the limits of kingly power. The gullible king is a typical character in court stories; cf. Ahasuerus in Esther and Esarhaddon in *Ahiqar*.

10 Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. 11 The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. 12 Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." 13 Then they responded to the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day."

14 When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him. 15 Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed."

16 Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!" 17 A stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. 18 Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

19 Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. 20 When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?" 21 Daniel then said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. 24 The king gave a command, and those who had accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. Before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

25 Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: "May you have abundant prosperity! 26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel:

For he is the living God,
enduring forever.
His kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion has no end.
27 He delivers and rescues,
he works signs and wonders in heaven
and on earth;

6:10–15: Daniel accused. 10: *Toward Jerusalem*, Jewish custom was to *pray* toward the Temple (1 Kings 8.30,35; 2 Chr 6.34; 1 Esd 4.58). Praying on one's *knees,* see 1 Kings 8.54. Praying *three times a day* developed in the Second Temple period (Ps 55.17; *m. Ber*. 4.5). **13:** *Exiles from Judah* suggests ethnic antagonism on the part of the conspirators (cf. 3.8,12). **14–15:** The decree that exalts the king's power has trapped the king along with Daniel.

6.16–24: The lions' den. A more developed version of this story appears in Bel vv. 33–42. **16:** *May your God*, compare to Nebuchadnezzar's words in 3.15. **17:** *The king sealed it*, compare Bel vv. 10–15. **19–23:** The focus is on the king's emotions, not Daniel's (cf. 2.1,3,12; 3.13,19,24; 4.5; 5.6,9). **22:** *Sent his angel*, see also 3.25. *I have done no wrong*, Daniel's deliverance is vindication of his status before God and king. **24**: The punishment of the families along with the courtiers may be a folkloristic exaggeration similar to 2.5,12. Elsewhere such punishment is prohibited (Deut 24.16; but see Num 16.27–33).

6.25–28 The king exalts Daniel and Daniel's God. The strongest praise of God in the tales. **25–26**: The doxology is framed as a letter to all the people; see also 4.1–3,34–37. **26:** The king's decree represents gentile recog-

for he has saved Daniel
from the power of the lions."
28 So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

7 In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream:[a] 2 I,[b] Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, 3 and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. 4 The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then, as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it. 5 Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks[c] in its mouth among its teeth and was told, "Arise, devour many bodies!" 6 After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. 8 I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots. There were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and a mouth speaking arrogantly.

9 As I watched,
thrones were set in place,

[a] Q Ms Theodotion: MT adds *the beginning of the words; he said*
[b] Theodotion: Aram *Daniel answered and said, I*
[c] Or *ribs*

nition of the Jewish God's sovereignty over all nations and peoples. **28:** *Cyrus the Persian* (ruled 559–530 BCE) released the Judean exiles from Babylon in 538 (see also 1.21n.; 2.39n.; 5.31n.; Isa 44.28; 45.1; Ezra 1.1–4).

7.1–8: First apocalypse. Daniel, not the king, is the recipient of visions; now he is not the interpreter as in chs 2 and 4, but the one needing interpretation. This vision was likely written prior to Antiochus IV's reign (175–164 BCE) and updated just before he desecrated the Temple in 167. **1:** *First year of Belshazzar*, 553 BCE (see 5.1n.). *Dream and visions:* similar to Nebuchadnezzar (2.28). *Then he wrote*, writing down the vision is part of the motif of secret and revealed knowledge that is characteristic of apocalyptic literature (see also 12.9). **2:** The narration switches to first person. *Four winds of heaven,* cosmic winds sent by the divine to act upon the waters (see Gen 1.2); the number four connotes totality. *The great sea,* chaotic waters and sea monsters that the divine warrior must vanquish (Isa 27.1; Pss 74.13–17; 89.9–10; 93.3–4). **3:** *Four great beasts*, the world kingdoms of Babylonia, Media, Persia, and Greece (see 2.36–45nn.). **4:** *First,* the Neo-Babylonian empire (2.38); *lion*, a reference to Nebuchadnezzar, who transforms into a beast and back into a human (see 4.33n.). *Eagles' wings*, a symbol of military speed and power. **5:** *A second one,* Media was mistakenly thought by the authors of Daniel to be the empire that defeated Babylon (2.39; 5.31; 8.20; 11.1; cf. Jer 51.11). *Raised up*, standing on its hind legs. *Three tusks,* this empire is predatory. **6:** *Another appeared,* Persia (2.39b; 6.28; 8.20; 10.1,20). *Like a leopard,* Hos 13.7–8 refers to the ravaging power of leopard, bear, lion, and an unnamed wild animal. *Four wings*, a reference to the speed of Persia's wide-ranging military conquests (see 2.39). **7:** *A fourth beast*, Alexander the Great's empire (2.40; 8.21). *Ten horns*, the Seleucid dynasty, which ruled Syria and Judea after Alexander. Horns are symbols of power (8.20; Ezek 29.21; Zech 1.18; Ps 132.17). *Ten* is a round number, not the actual number of monarchs. **8:** *A little horn,* Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BCE), the Seleucid usurper of the throne (8.9; 1 Macc 1.41–50). *Three . . . plucked* up, Antiochus IV was fourth in the line of succession, after his brother, Seleucus IV, and his brother's sons, Antiochus and Demetrius. Seleucus was murdered by his prime minister, Heliodorus (see 2 Macc 3), and Demetrius was exiled to Rome. Antiochus IV was directly responsible only for the death of his nephew Antiochus, but the book of Daniel apparently holds him responsible for killing or displacing all three. Human *eyes . . . and a mouth speaking arrogantly*, eyes and mouth are often associated with haughty and boastful behavior (Prov 6.17; 10.6; 21.4; Isa 2.11; 5.15).

7.9–14: The divine throne. The scene shifts from the beasts to the divine throne and the heavenly council acting as a legal court (see 1 Kings 22.19; Isa 6; *1 En.* 90.20; Rev 4). **9:** *An Ancient One,* lit., "an Ancient of Days"; see also Isa 40.28; Deut 33.27. *White as snow . . . like pure wool*, indicates righteousness (Isa 1.18) and also

and an Ancient One[a] took his throne,
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
and its wheels were burning fire.
10 A stream of fire issued
and flowed out from his presence.
A thousand thousands served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.
The court sat in judgment,
and the books were opened.
11 I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. 13 As I watched in the night visions,
I saw one like a human being[b]
coming with the clouds of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient One[c]
and was presented before him.
14 To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed.
15 As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me,[d] and the visions of my head terrified me. 16 I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: 17 "As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever."

19 Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped what was left with its feet; 20 and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and concerning the other horn, which came up and to make room for which three of them fell out—the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke arrogantly, and that seemed greater than the others. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them, 22 until the Ancient One[c] came; then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom.

[a] Aram *an Ancient of Days*
[b] Aram *one like a son of man*
[c] Aram *the Ancient of Days*
[d] Aram *troubled in its sheath*

brightness, which sets the divine apart from humans (Mk 9.2–3; Rev 3.5). *His throne . . . wheels*, see also Ezek 1.4,15–21. **10:** The deity is frequently associated with fire (Ex 3.2; 13.21–22; Ps 18.8). *A thousand thousands*, the vast angelic host that serves God (Ps 68.17; Rev 5.11). *The books*, records of human deeds recorded by the divine court (Isa 65.6; Mal 3.16; *1 En.* 90.20; Rev 20.12). **11–12:** The fourth beast is singled out for destruction; the other beasts are simply stripped of power. **13:** *One like a human being,* lit., "one like a son of man," contrasts with the beasts. The humanlike one may be the archangel Michael (10.13,21; 12.1; Rev 12), or as a corporate symbol of faithful Israelites (see vv. 18,27). In traditional Christian interpretation it is understood Jesus Christ (e.g., Mt 24.30–31). See also 8.17n. **14:** Unlike the previous kingdoms, the rule of the humanlike one will not end (see also v. 27; 2.44; 4.3,34; 6.26).

7.15–18: Interpretation. Daniel needs the help of an interpreting angel. **17:** The four kings are the kingdoms of Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece (v. 3; see 2.36–45nn.). **18:** *The holy ones*, the divine council of angels (4.13,17,23; Ps 89.5; Job 5.1; 15.15; Zech 14.5; Deut 33.2; Prov 30.3; Sir 42.17; 45.2; *Jub* 17.11; *1 En.* 12.2; 14.23).

7.19–28: The end of foreign power. 19–21: The actions of Antiochus IV against the Jewish community before the Temple was desecrated. Events on earth reflect heavenly realities. **22:** Anticipates the end of foreign rule

[23] This is what he said: "As for the fourth beast,
there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth
that shall be different from all the other kingdoms;
it shall devour the whole earth,
and trample it down, and break it to pieces.
[24] As for the ten horns,
out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise,
and another shall arise after them.
This one shall be different from the former ones,
and shall put down three kings.
[25] He shall speak words against the Most High,
shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High,
and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law;
and they shall be given into his power
for a time, two times,[a] and half a time.
[26] Then the court shall sit in judgment,
and his dominion shall be taken away,
to be consumed and totally destroyed.
[27] The kingship and dominion
and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High;
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,
and all dominions shall serve and obey them."
[28] Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly terrified me, and my face turned pale; but I kept the matter in my mind.

8 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after the one that had appeared to me at first. [2] In the vision I was looking and saw myself in Susa the capital, in the province of Elam,[b] and I was by the river Ulai.[c] [3] I looked up and saw a ram standing beside the river.[d] It had two horns. Both horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer one came up second. [4] I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. All beasts were powerless to withstand it, and no one could rescue from its power; it did as it pleased and became strong.

[5] As I was watching, a male goat appeared from the west, coming across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground. The goat had a horn[e] between its eyes. [6] It came toward the ram with the two horns that I had seen standing beside the river,[d] and it ran at it with savage force. [7] I saw it approaching the ram. It was enraged against it and struck the ram, breaking its two horns. The ram did not have power to withstand it; it threw the ram down to the ground and trampled upon it, and there was no one who could rescue the ram from its power. [8] Then the male goat grew exceedingly great; but at the height of its power, the great horn was broken, and in its place there came up four prominent horns toward the four winds of heaven.

[9] Out of one of them came another[f] horn, a little one, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and

[a] Aram *a time, times*
[b] Gk Theodotion: MT Q Ms repeat *in the vision I was looking*
[c] Or *the Ulai Gate*
[d] Or *gate*
[e] Theodotion: Gk *one horn*; Heb *a horn of vision*
[f] Cn Compare 7.8: Heb *one*

and the exaltation of the faithful community. **23–25:** see 7.7–8n. **25:** *Change the sacred seasons and the law,* Antiochus's interference with Jewish religious life and Temple practices. *Time, two times, and half a time*, three and a half years (compare 4.26). Although this was approximately the duration of Antiochus's persecution, it is more likely used because it is half of seven, the number of completion and fulfillment. **28:** Despite the interpretation, Daniel remains perplexed by the mysterious character of the dream.

8.1–14: Second apocalypse. The language shifts back to Hebrew from Aramaic (see 2.4n.). **1:** *Third year* of Belshazzar, 551 BCE (see 7.1n.). *After the one*, the vision in ch 7. **2:** *Susa,* a Persian capital (Esth 1.2). Daniel is by the River Ulai in spirit (cf. 10.4; Ezek 1.1.). **3:** *Two horns*, Media and Persia (see 7.7n.; 8.20). *One was longer*, Persia, the more dominant kingdom. **5:** *Goat*, Alexander the Great (v. 21). Goats and rams represent human leaders (Ex 15.15; 2 Kings 24.15; Ezek 31.11; Isa 14.9; Jer 50.8). **8:** A summary of Alexander's career and death. *Four prominent horns*, Alexander's successors, who divided his kingdom. **9:** *A little one*, see 7.8n.

toward the beautiful land. 10 It grew as high as the host of heaven. It threw down to the earth some of the host and some of the stars, and trampled on them. 11 Even against the prince of the host it acted arrogantly; it took the regular burnt offering away from him and overthrew the place of his sanctuary. 12 Because of wickedness, the host was given over to it together with the regular burnt offering;[a] it cast truth to the ground, and kept prospering in what it did. 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one that spoke, "For how long is this vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled?"[a] 14 And he answered him,[b] "For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."

15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I tried to understand it. Then someone appeared standing before me, having the appearance of a man, 16 and I heard a human voice by the Ulai, calling, "Gabriel, help this man understand the vision." 17 So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I became frightened and fell prostrate. But he said to me, "Understand, O mortal,[c] that the vision is for the time of the end."

18 As he was speaking to me, I fell into a trance, face to the ground; then he touched me and set me on my feet. 19 He said, "Listen, and I will tell you what will take place later in the period of wrath; for it refers to the appointed time of the end. 20 As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 The male goat[d] is the king of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is the first king. 22 As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his[e] nation, but not with his power.

23 At the end of their rule,
when the transgressions have reached
their full measure,
a king of bold countenance shall arise,
skilled in intrigue.
24 He shall grow strong in power,[f]
shall cause fearful destruction,
and shall succeed in what he does.
He shall destroy the powerful
and the people of the holy ones.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Theodotion Syr Vg: Heb *me*
[c] Heb *son of man*
[d] Or *shaggy male goat*
[e] Gk Theodotion Vg: Heb *the*
[f] Theodotion and one Gk Ms: Heb repeats (from 8.22) *but not with his power*

10–12: Antiochus's desecration of the Jerusalem Temple, 167–164 BCE. **10:** *Host*, angelic legion of warriors. *Threw down . . . stars*, another term for angelic warriors (Judg 5.20). Some of the host are defeated by opposing forces (Rev 12.4). **11:** *Prince of the host*, Michael; prince is often a term for a high-ranking angel (10.13; 10.20; 12.1; Josh 5.14). **12:** *Regular burnt offering*, Antiochus IV suspended the twice daily offerings to God and replaced them with pagan offerings (1 Macc 1.45,54,59). *Truth*, or true religion is, for Daniel, worship of the God of Israel only. **13:** *Holy one*, see 7.18n. *For how long . . . ?*, a recurring question posed to God in reference to national disaster (Isa 6.11; Jer 12.4; Zech 1.12; Pss 6.4; 79.5). *The transgression that makes desolate* is likely the structure erected on the altar of burnt offering in the Temple (1 Macc 1.54; 2 Macc 6.2); the Heb term ("pesha' shomem") is a play on the expression "Baal Shamem," or "lord of heaven," an epithet of the Canaanite and Syrian god Baal, also used for Zeus. **14:** *Two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings* are eleven hundred and fifty days, a little less than three and a half years (7.25).

8.15–27: Interpretation. 15–16: *Appearance of a man,* indicates an angel or heavenly being (Gen 1.26; Ps 8.5). *Gabriel,* lit., "man of God," a messenger (Lk 1.19,26) and an interpreting angel; the first instance of a named angel in the Bible. **17:** *Frightened . . . prostrate*, a typical response to an epiphany (10.9; Josh 5.14; Ezek 1.28; 3.23; Rev. 1.17). *Mortal,* Heb "ben ʾadam," lit., "son of man," the term used by God to address Ezekiel in his vision (e.g., Ezek 2.1; see also Ps 8.4; Job 25.6; etc.) **18:** *Trance*, a standard part of visionary experience (Gen 15.12; Rev 1.17). *Touched me*, see 10.10,16,18; Rev 1.17. *Set me on my feet*, see Ezek 2.1–2. **19:** *Period of wrath*, the gentile domination of Israel. The *time of the end* refers to the final period of tribulation that brings divine judgment, justice to the faithful, and punishments to the wicked (Hab 2.30). **23:** *Transgressions . . . full measure*, God will punish the

[25] By his cunning
he shall make deceit prosper under his hand,
and in his own mind he shall be great.
Without warning he shall destroy many
and shall even rise up against the Prince of princes.
But he shall be broken, and not by human hands.
[26] The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true. As for you, seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now."

[27] So I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I arose and went about the king's business. But I was dismayed by the vision and did not understand it.

9 In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans— [2] in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

[3] Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. [4] I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying,

"Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, keeping covenant and steadfast love with those who love you and keep your commandments, [5] we have sinned and done wrong, acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and ordinances. [6] We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

[7] "Righteousness is on your side, O Lord, but open shame, as at this day, falls on us, the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. [8] Open shame, O LORD, falls on us, our kings, our officials, and our ancestors, because we have sinned against you. [9] To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him, [10] and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by following his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

[11] "All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. So the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against you. [12] He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers, by bringing upon us a calamity so great that what has been done against Jerusalem has never before been done under the whole heaven. [13] Just as it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us. We did not entreat the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and reflecting on his[a] fidelity. [14] So the LORD kept watch

[a] Heb *your*

foreign king only after his sins can get no worse (Gen 15.16; 2 Macc 6.14). **25:** *Without warning*, a surprise attack on Jerusalem (see 9.19; 1 Macc 1.29–30); *Prince of princes*, perhaps God, or the chief angel (see v. 11n.). *Not by human hands*, 2.34,45. **26–27:** Although it supposedly refers to the distant future, the reader understands that the revelation pertains to the present and immediate future.

9.1–3: Introduction. 1: *Darius,* see 5.31n. *Ahasuerus*, or Xerxes, was the son of Darius I, not the father (Ezra 4.5–6). **2:** *LORD*, the deity's proper name, YHWH, as opposed to the universal name for the deity (see 2.18n.). YHWH is used throughout the Bible, but it is unusual in Daniel, occurring only in this ch (vv. 4,8,10,14,20). Daniel's use of the divine name aligns his piety with other biblical figures (see also Ezra 9; Neh 9; Bar 1.15–3.8). *Seventy years* refers to Jer 25.11,12; 29.10. *Devastation,* the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE **3:** Daniel *seeks* God in prayer to fulfill what is required by Jer 29.13–14. *Fasting, sackcloth, and ashes* signify repentance (Jon 3.6; Esth 4.1–4; Ezra 9.3–4). Fasting also serves as preparation for visionary experiences (Ex 34.28; 1 Kings 19.8; 2 Esd 6.35).

9.4–19: Daniel's prayer resembles other postexilic Jewish prayers (Ezra 9; Neh 1.5–11; 9; Ps 79); it begins with communal confession of guilt and repentance (cf. 1 Kings 8.46–50; 2 Chr 6.37; Ps 106.6). **4:** *Steadfast love* characterizes covenantal relationships (cf. Deut 7.9). **7:** *All Israel*, includes the northern tribes that were conquered and scattered in 722 BCE. **11:** *The curse,* see Deut 28.15–68; 29.20; Lev 26.27–45; Neh 10.29. The community's

over this calamity until he brought it upon us. Indeed, the LORD our God is right in all that he has done; for we have disobeyed his voice.

15 "And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and made your name renowned even to this day—we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16 O Lord, in view of all your righteous acts, let your anger and wrath, we pray, turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain; because of our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors, Jerusalem and your people have become a disgrace among all our neighbors. 17 Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication, and for your own sake, Lord,[a] let your face shine upon your desolated sanctuary. 18 Incline your ear, O my God, and hear. Open your eyes and look at our desolation and the city that bears your name. We do not present our supplication before you on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of your great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and act and do not delay! For your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people bear your name!"

20 While I was speaking, and was praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God on behalf of the holy mountain of my God— 21 while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen before in a vision, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. 22 He came[b] and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding. 23 At the beginning of your supplications a word went out, and I have come to declare it, for you are greatly beloved. So consider the word and understand the vision:

24 "Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.[c] 25 Know therefore and understand: from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in a troubled time. 26 After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its[d] end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. 27 He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and

[a] Theodotion Vg Compare Syr: Heb *for the Lord's sake*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *He made to understand*
[c] Or *thing* or *one*
[d] Or *His*

suffering is the result of their breach of covenant. **15:** *Now*, the prayer shifts to supplication (Ezra 9.8,10; Neh 9.32). The Exodus from Egypt is invoked (cf. Deut 6.21; 9.26). **16:** *Holy mountain*, Zion. **16:** On *Jerusalem* and the Temple, see also 8.13; 9.26–27; 11.31; 12.11. **17:** The *desolated sanctuary* connects Antiochus's desecration of the Second Temple in 167 BCE with the Babylonian destruction of Solomon's Temple. **18:** *The city,* Jerusalem.

9.20–27: Third apocalypse. 21: *Gabriel,* see 8.15–16n. *Swift flight*, first mention in the Bible of human-like angels having the ability to fly (cf. Gen 19.1; Judg 6.11; Isa 6.6; Ezek 1.5–14). *The evening sacrifice*, see also Ex 29.38–42. **23:** *A word went out*, see Isa 55.11. **24:** *Seventy weeks*, Jeremiah's prophecy is revised to seventy year-weeks, or 490 years; a sevenfold punishment, cf. Lev 26.18; Zech 1.12; 2 Chr 36.21. In Hebrew, the words for "weeks" and "seventy" have the same consonants, thus grounding Daniel's reinterpretation of Jeremiah. The numbers are symbolic approximations, not strict chronological calculations. *To finish the transgression*, the sins of the people will run their course, allowing for restoration. *Most holy place*, the Temple. **25:** *From the time the word went out* probably refers to Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 25.11; v. 2n.). Alternatively, it might refer to the edict of Cyrus, authorizing the restoration of Jerusalem, which was promulgated in 538 BCE. An *anointed prince,* the high priest Joshua (Zech 4.14; Ezra 2.2; 3.2; Hag 1.12–14). *Seven weeks* , a jubilee period (Lev 25). **26:** *An anointed one shall be cut off,* the high priest Onias III was murdered in 172 or 171 BCE (2 Macc 4.34) and shortly thereafter Jerusalem was attacked by *the prince who is to come,* Antiochus IV. **27:** *A strong covenant*, the high priest Jason and other powerful Judeans supported Antiochus IV (1 Macc 1.11). *Sacrifice*, see 8.11–12n. *Abomination,* see 11.30–31n.

offering cease; and in their place[a] shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator."

10 In the third year of King Cyrus of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. The word was true, and it concerned a great conflict. He understood the word, having received understanding in the vision.

[2] At that time I, Daniel, had been mourning for three weeks. [3] I had eaten no rich food, no meat or wine had entered my mouth, and I had not anointed myself at all, for the full three weeks. [4] On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris), [5] I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold from Uphaz around his waist. [6] His body was like beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the roar of a multitude. [7] I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; the people who were with me did not see the vision, though a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled and hid themselves. [8] So I was left alone to see this great vision. My strength left me, and my complexion grew deathly pale, and I retained no strength. [9] Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground.

[10] But then a hand touched me and roused me to my hands and knees. [11] He said to me, "Daniel, greatly beloved, pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you." So while he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. [12] He said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. [13] But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia,[b] [14] and have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days. For there is a further vision for those days."

[15] While he was speaking these words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and was speechless. [16] Then one in human form touched my lips, and I opened my mouth

[a] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Theodotion: Heb *I was left there with the kings of Persia*

10.1–9: Gabriel appears to Daniel. Chapters 10–12 comprise one extended apocalypse consisting of an epiphany of the angel Gabriel in ch 10.1–11.1; an apocalyptic revelation in 11.2–12.4; and a concluding dialogue in 12.5–13. **1:** *Third year of King Cyrus,* 536 BCE; see 1.21n. *Word* and *vision* are complementary ways of referring to a revelation (cf. Isa 1.1; Jer 1.1–2). *A great conflict*, lit., "a great struggle," either the content of the revelation or difficulty in understanding the revelation. **3:** *No rich food*, lit., "no pleasant bread," perhaps unleavened bread; see v. 4n. *No meat or wine* recalls 1.8–12. **4:** *Twenty-fourth day of the first month*, Daniel is fasting during Passover. Normally, fasting was suspended on the sabbath and during festivals (Jdt 8.6). Mourning and fasting prepare one for a revelation (2 Esd 5.13; *2 Bar* 5.6–7). *On the bank,* visions often happen by rivers (8.2; Gen 32.25–31; Ezek 1.1). *The great river* is usually the Euphrates (Gen 15.18; Josh 1.4). **5:** *Linen* is angelic attire (Ezek 9.2,3,11; 10.2,6,11). The angel is Gabriel. *Gold from Uphaz*, perhaps an error by the scribe for "and fine gold" (Heb *u-paz*) or a corruption of "gold of Ophir" (Job 28.16; Ps 45.9; Isa 13.12).**6:** *Like beryl*, cf. Ezek 1.16; 10.9. *Like lightening . . . flaming torches*, the influence of Ezekiel's vision of the divine is apparent (Ezek 1.13). *Burnished bronze*, see Ezek 1.7; Rev 1.15. The brightness of his appearance highlights Gabriel's divine authority. *Roar of a multitude*, cf. Ezek 1.24; 3.13; 10.5. **7:** *Alone*, cf. Acts 9.7. Fear is a typical response to a divine encounter (Ex 19.15–16; Josh 5.14; Judg 6.22). **8–9:** The experience is overwhelming for Daniel who has difficulty regaining his composure, cf. 8.18; Ezek 1.28b–2.2. **9:** *Trance*, see 8.18n.

10.10–11.1: Gabriel strengthens Daniel for the revelation. 10: Touched, see 8.18n. **11:** *Greatly beloved*, also 9.19; but cf. Ezek 2.3 where the prophet is simply addressed as "mortal." **12:** *Do not fear,* a common angelic assurance (Gen 15.1; 26.24; Judg 6.23). **13:** *Prince of . . . Persia*, Persia's patron angel (see also 8.20). Each nation has its own designated heavenly beings (Deut 32.8–9) and their heavenly battles mirror earthly battles (Judg 5.20; Rev 12). *Michael*, lit., "who is like God?" *Chief princes*, Michael was one of four archangels (*1 En.* 9) and Israel's guardian (10.21; 12.1). **14:** Cf. Hab 2.2–3. **16:** *Human form*, see 8.15. *Touched my lips*, preparation for a revelation (Isa 6.7;

to speak, and said to the one who stood before me, "My lord, because of the vision such pains have come upon me that I retain no strength. 17 How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For I am shaking,[a] no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me."

18 Again one in human form touched me and strengthened me. 19 He said, "Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!" When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." 20 Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Now I must return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I am through with him, the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I am to tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is no one with me who contends against these princes except Michael, your

11 prince. 1 As for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to support and strengthen him.

2 "Now I will announce the truth to you. Three more kings shall arise in Persia. The fourth shall be far richer than all of them, and when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. 3 Then a warrior king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and take action as he pleases. 4 And while still rising in power, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted and go to others besides these.

5 "Then the king of the south shall grow strong, but one of his officers shall grow stronger than he and shall rule a realm greater than his own realm. 6 After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to ratify the agreement. But she shall not retain her power, and his offspring shall not endure. She shall be given up, she and her attendants and her child and the one who supported her.

"In those times 7 a branch from her roots shall rise up in his place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall take action against them and prevail. 8 Even their gods, with their idols and with their precious vessels of silver and gold, he shall carry off to Egypt as spoils of war. For some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north; 9 then the latter shall invade the realm of the king of the south, but will return to his own land.

10 "His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall advance like a flood and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. 11 Moved with rage, the king of the south shall go out and do battle against the king of the north, who shall muster a great multitude,

[a] Gk: Heb *from now*

Jer 1.9). **16–19:** See notes on vv. 8–9,11. **20:** *Prince of Greece,* another warrior angel. **21:** *Book of truth*, contains a record of future events (*1 En.* 81.1–4; 93.2); it is distinct from the books of judgment (7.10), the book of life (12.2), and the sealed book (12.4). **11.1:** The meaning is unclear; perhaps Gabriel supported Darius the Mede, who acted favorably toward Daniel (see 5.31; 6.23–27).

11.2–12:4: The fourth apocalypse. History is framed in terms of military dominance that alternates between a figurative king of the north (kings of the Seleucid dynasty originating from Syria) and a king of the south (kings of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt). Some details cannot be reconciled with nonbiblical sources.

11.2–4: Persian and Greek succession. *Persia*, see 7.6n.; 8.3n. **2:** There were more than four *kings* of Persia, but four signals totality. *Far richer*, Persian monarchs enjoyed the reputation of being fabulously wealthy. **3:** *Warrior king*, Alexander the Great. **4:** *Broken . . . divided* refers to Alexander's death in 323 BCE and the subsequent division of his territories; see 2.41n.; 7.7–8n. *Four winds of heaven*, see 7.2n.

11.5–19: The Seleucids and the Ptolemies. 5: *The king of the south*, Ptolemy I (305–283 BCE) of Egypt; his *officer* is Seleucus I Nicanor (312–281 BCE) who ruled Syria. **6:** In 250 , Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BCE) gave his daughter, Berenice, in marriage to the *king of the north,* Antiochus II Theos (261–246 BCE). Rivals murdered Berenice and her son. **7:** *A branch*, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221 BCE), Berenice's brother, who invaded Seleucid territory. **9:** Seleucus II Callinicus (246–225 BCE) invaded Ptolemy's territory in reprisal. **10:** Seleucus II's *sons* were Seleucus III Ceraunus (225–223 BCE) and the militarily successful Antiochus III the Great (223–187 BCE). **11:** Ptolemy IV Philopator (221–204

which shall, however, be defeated by his enemy. 12 When the multitude has been carried off, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall overthrow tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. 13 For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, larger than the former, and after some years[a] he shall advance with a great army and abundant supplies.

14 "In those times many shall rise against the king of the south. The lawless among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they shall fail. 15 Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks, and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, not even his picked troops, for there shall be no strength to resist. 16 But he who comes against him shall take the actions he pleases, and no one shall withstand him. He shall take a position in the beautiful land, and all of it shall be in his power. 17 He shall set his mind to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of peace[b] and perform them. In order to destroy the kingdom,[c] he shall give him a woman in marriage; but it shall not succeed or be to his advantage. 18 Afterward he shall turn to the coastlands, and shall capture many. But a commander shall put an end to his insolence; indeed,[d] he shall turn his insolence back upon him. 19 Then he shall turn back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found.

20 "Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an official for the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he shall be broken, though not in anger or in battle. 21 In his place shall arise a contemptible person on whom royal majesty had not been conferred; he shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom through intrigue. 22 Armies shall be utterly swept away and broken before him, and the prince of the covenant as well. 23 And after an alliance is made with him, he shall act deceitfully and become strong with a small party. 24 Without warning he shall come into the richest parts[e] of the province and do what none of his predecessors had ever done, lavishing plunder, spoil, and wealth on them. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. 25 He shall stir up his power and determination against the king of the south with a great army, and the king of the south shall wage war with a much greater and stronger army. But he shall not succeed, for plots shall be devised against him 26 by those who eat of the royal rations. They shall break him, his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall slain. 27 The two kings, their minds bent on evil, shall sit at one table and exchange lies. But it shall not succeed, for there remains an end at the time appointed. 28 He shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy

[a] Heb *and at the end of the times years*
[b] Gk: Heb *kingdom, and upright ones with him*
[c] Heb *it*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Or *among the richest men*

BCE) *defeated* Antiochus III at Raphia in 217. **13:** Antiochus III had military successes in Syria and Palestine (212–205 BCE). **14:** *Many shall rise,* rebellions within Egypt against the Ptolemies. *The lawless among your own people*, the pro-Antiochus faction in Judea. **15:** After claiming Jerusalem in the battle of Panion in 200, Antiochus III claimed victory at Sidon, the *well-fortified city*. **16:** *The actions he pleases,* cf. 11.3,36. Antiochus III is at the height of his power. *The beautiful land,* Jerusalem (cf. 8.9; 11.41). **17:** Antiochus III offered his daughter Cleopatra *in marriage* to Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204–180 BCE). Cleopatra undermined her father's intention, which had been to ruin her husband. **18:** *The coastlands,* territories in Greece and Thrace, which Antiochus III tried to claim. He was defeated by the Romans at Magnesia in 189. *A commander*, Scipio. **19:** *Fall,* Antiochus III died in 187 after raiding a temple in Elemais. **20**: *Then shall arise,* Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175 BCE) who sent the *official* Heliodorus to the Jerusalem Temple for funds (2 Macc 3).

11.21–28: Antiochus IV Epiphanes. 21: *Contemptible person,* Antiochus IV (175–164 BCE) usurped the throne from his nephew and had him assassinated. **22:** *The prince of the covenant,* the High Priest Onias III; see 9.26n. **23:** Antiochus IV made *an alliance* with the king of Pergamon. **24:** Antiochus IV was *lavish* to an unprecedented degree with gifts. He then taxed Persia to refill his coffers. **25–26:** Antiochus IV is blamed for initiating war with Egypt (see also 1 Macc 1.16). *Those . . . rations*, Ptolemy's advisors, Eulaeus and Lenaeus, whose advice was catastrophic. **27:** *The two kings*, Antiochus IV and Ptolemy VI Philometor (180–145 BCE). **28**: *Against the holy covenant,* Antiochus's attack on Jerusalem and the Temple in 169 (1 Macc 1.20–21; 2 Macc 5.11–21; see also 9.26n.).

covenant. He shall work his will, and return to his own land.

29 "At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but this time it shall not be as it was before. 30 For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall lose heart and withdraw. He shall be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate. 32 He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm and take action. 33 The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder. 34 When they fall victim, they shall receive a little help, and many shall join them insincerely. 35 Some of the wise shall fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and cleansed,[a] until the time of the end, for there is still an interval until the time appointed.

36 "The king shall act as he pleases. He shall exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods. He shall prosper until the period of wrath is completed, for what is determined shall be done. 37 He shall pay no respect to the gods of his ancestors, or to the one beloved by women; he shall pay no respect to any other god, for he shall consider himself greater than all. 38 He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his ancestors did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. 39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall make more wealthy, and shall appoint them as rulers over many, and shall distribute the land for a price.

40 "At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him. But the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. He shall advance against countries and pass through like a flood. 41 He shall come into the beautiful land, and tens of thousands shall fall victim, but Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites shall escape from his power. 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the riches of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians[b] shall follow in his train. 44 But reports from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to bring ruin and complete destruction to many. 45 He shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with no one to help him.

[a] Heb *made them white*
[b] Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

11.29–39: Antiochus's attacks on the Jews. 29: *At the appointed time* introduces the climactic events of history. **30:** *Kittim*, refers generally to places in the eastern Mediterranean (Gen 10.4; 1 Macc 1.1). Here it is Rome, which stopped Antiochus when he invaded Egypt in 168. **30–31:** *Against the holy covenant*, Antiochus sent troops to Jerusalem in 167 (1 Macc 1.29–32; 2 Macc 5.24–26). *The abomination*, an altar erected to Zeus Olympios in the Temple (8.10–12n.; 1 Macc 1.54; see also Mk 13.14). **32:** *Violate the covenant*, the High Priest Menelaus and others who supported extreme Hellenization in Jerusalem. *Loyal*, factions who opposed the Hellenizing party. **33–35:** *The wise* (Heb "maskilim") who instruct others about God's hidden plans (cf. Isa 53.11–12). **34:** *A little help*, the wise lack strong support. **35:** *Fall*, some will be martyred (cf. 1 Macc 1.63; 2 Macc 7). *Refined,* death will purify the wise (Ps 17.3; Jer 6.29; 9.7; Wis 3.1–8; Sir 2.5). **36–39:** Antiochus IV blasphemes the God of Israel and other gods. **37:** *Beloved by women*, perhaps Tammuz/Adonis (Ezek 8.14), or the Greek god Dionysus. **38:** *God of fortresses*, Zeus Olympios (2 Macc 6.2). **39:** *Fortresses,* the Hebrew text of this verse is garbled and the meaning is unclear but it seems to refer to the Acra in Jerusalem, which was occupied by foreign troops.

11.40–45: The end-time. These verses anticipate a future eschatological battle using elements from Ezek 38.8–13; Zech 14.2; Pss 2; 48. **41:** *Edom . . . Moab . . . Ammonites*, ancient enemies of Israel (see 2 Sam 11–12; 2 Kings 3; Lam 4.21–22). **45:** *Come to his end*, Antiochus IV died in Persia in 164 BCE.

12 "At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. 2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth[a] shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky,[b] and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. 4 But you, Daniel, keep the words secret and the book sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be running back and forth, and evil[c] shall increase."

5 Then I, Daniel, looked, and two others appeared, one standing on this bank of the stream and one on the other. 6 One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was upstream, "How long shall it be until the end of these wonders?" 7 The man clothed in linen, who was upstream, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven. And I heard him swear by the one who lives forever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time,[d] and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be accomplished. 8 I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" 9 He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked shall continue to act wickedly. None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. 11 From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days. 12 Happy are those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred thirty-five days. 13 But you, go your way,[e] and rest; you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days."

[a] Or *the land of dust*
[b] Or *dome*
[c] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *knowledge*
[d] Heb *a time, times, and a half*
[e] Gk Theodotion: Heb adds *to the end*

12.1–4: Deliverance. **1:** *Michael*, see 10.12n. *The book* is the book of life (Ps. 69.28; Isa 4.3; Mal 3.16–18; Rev 20.12,15). **2–3:** Not all the dead will be resurrected, but only the righteous and the unrighteous who have not yet received appropriate rewards and punishments (see also Isa 26.19; 66.24; 2 Macc 7.9; 12.44; Wis 3.7). **4:** The *book* probably refers to all of Daniel's visions. They contain secret knowledge that may not be disclosed until the time of fulfillment (8.26–27n.; Isa 8.16; Rev 5.1–5).

12.5–13: Epilogue. 5–6: *Two others . . . man clothed in linen*, apparently angelic figures; cf. 8.13–16n.; 10.5n. **7:** *Time, two times, and half a time*, see 7.25n. **11–12:** Two new calculations for the arrival of the end-time, probably added when the calculation of 8.14 did not materialize. The numbers may have symbolic significance, probably relating to the *time, two times, and half a time* pattern. **13:** *Rest*, a reference to death and also reward (Isa 57.1–2).

HOSEA

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book of Hosea consists of a narrative about the prophet and sayings attributed to him. Hosea began his career in the final days of Jeroboam II (1.1), whose long reign (788–747 BCE) capped a century of political stability and economic prosperity in the Northern Kingdom of Israel under the dynasty founded by Jehu in 842. Jeroboam died in 747, two years before Tiglath-pileser III came to power in Assyria (745) and initiated a program of imperial expansion. A prolonged national crisis ensued, which ended with the demise of the Northern Kingdom. Israel floundered under the Assyrian onslaught. Of the six kings who reigned in the next two decades, four were assassinated as the nation veered between appeasement, at the cost of heavy tribute, and rebellion, seeking futile alliances with Syria and Egypt (see 2 Kings 14.23–17.41). When Hosea's prophetic career ended is uncertain, though his oracles appear to allude to events right up to the Assyrian siege of Samaria in 722 (13.10–11,16).

After the destruction of Samaria, Hosea's words were preserved and transmitted in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Some or all of the references to Judah may have been added in this era as Hosea's words were reinterpreted to address an analogous situation there (e.g., 1.7; 3.5; 11.12). It is also possible, however, that Hosea himself, though a northern prophet, addressed Judah as well.

As a prophet of the Northern Kingdom, Hosea presents a unique perspective among the prophets as an Israelite native, not a Judahite like his near contemporary Amos, who viewed the events from the south. The text gives little information about the prophet himself. Indeed, the only personal detail is the name of his father, Beeri (1.1). Chapters 1–3 narrate Hosea's marriage to the promiscuous Gomer and the birth of their three children, Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi, but it is debatable whether one can deduce actual biographical facts from this description of family life.

CANONICAL STATUS AND LOCATION IN CANON

The book of Hosea stands first in that part of the latter prophets called the Book of the Twelve, also known as the Minor Prophets because of their relative brevity in comparison with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Along with Amos, Hosea was the first of the "writing prophets," those prophets whose speeches were collected and edited as literary documents.

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

The book consists primarily of speeches critiquing the political, social, and, above all, religious life of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the final days before its conquest and destruction by the Assyrians in 722 BCE. Hosea often refers to the Northern Kingdom under the titles of "Ephraim," its largest tribe, and "Samaria," its capital (see 4.17n.). Over the course of three decades (ca. 750–720 BCE), Hosea interpreted the unfolding disaster as a divine punishment—the Assyrians were merely God's tool—for violation of the exclusive demands of the LORD. With frequent allusions to earlier Israelite traditions, Hosea portrayed Israel's entire history as a spiritual decline from an ideal time, its "youth" in the period of the Exodus from Egypt (2.15; 11.1).

During this national crisis, Hosea issued an unrelenting critique of existing political and religious institutions. Through dynastic kingship, political alliances with other nations, and, above all, illicit religious practices, Israel had violated the divine claim upon it for exclusive dependence upon and worship of the LORD. As divine punishment, Israel would be stripped of political and religious institutions too corrupt to be reformed and its land left desolate and barren. Israel would, in essence, find itself again in the wilderness. The severity of the prophetic critique is juxtaposed with language of divine longing and compassion (11.1–11; 13.4–7). In the short term, Hosea presented the annihilation of the Northern Kingdom as inevitable. Drawing, however, on a pattern discerned in Israel's sacred traditions, Hosea ultimately offered hope. In this new wilderness, as in the Sinai desert, Israel would recognize its dependence on the LORD and be restored to a harmonious state with God and with nature (2.14–23).

Hosea is best known for his metaphors, drawn from the natural world, agriculture, and kinship structures: Israel as the LORD's wife, Israel as the LORD's son. These familial metaphors are introduced in two narrative

sections about the prophet's own life at the beginning of the book (1.2–2.1; 3.1–5). The prophet's personal life is presented as a paradigm of the relationship between the LORD and Israel.

Insofar as these chapters construct a biographical story for prophetic purposes, it can be said that Hosea deals with Gomer as the LORD deals with Israel. Gomer is "a wife of whoredom" (1.2), best understood as "a promiscuous woman." She bore three children, of whom Hosea was perhaps not the father (2.4–5). After a period of marital separation, Hosea took her back (3.1–5). In a similar way, Israel, the LORD's unfaithful wife, will be separated from her husband and home but, just as Hosea bought back Gomer (3.2), the LORD will restore Israel. Hosea's image of Israel's sexual misconduct may be more than symbolic; its illicit rituals are described as having a sexual dimension (e.g., 4.13–19; 9.1).

The book has two major sections, which appear to be roughly chronological. Chapters 1–3 contain the material about Hosea's marriage and can be understood against the background of the last days of Jeroboam II, since 1.4 announces the demise of the Jehu dynasty of which Jeroboam was the final ruler. The second major section, chs 4–14, consists entirely of prophetic speeches that seem to allude to the chaotic days following the demise of the house of Jehu and the prolonged Assyrian crisis. Boundaries between individual speech units in this second section are hard to discern. It seems to fall into two parts (chs 4–11; 12–14), rhetorically couched as legal indictments of Israel for breach of covenant (4.1; 12.2), and ending with images of restoration (11.1–11; 14.1–7).

Gregory Mobley

1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel.

[2] When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." [3] So he went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

[4] And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel;[a] for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. [5] On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."

[6] She conceived again and bore a daughter. Then the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah,[b] for I will no longer have pity on

[a] That is *God sows*
[b] That is *Not pitied*

1.1: Superscription. *Word of the LORD,* the customary term for prophetic verbal revelation (Jer 18.18). For similar introductions to prophetic books, see Joel 1.1, Mic 1.1, Zeph 1.1, and Mal 1.1. *Hosea* (= Hoshea) is also the name for other persons in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Num 13.8; 2 Kings 15.3; 1 Chr 27.20; Neh 10.23) and means "salvation" or "deliverance." *Days of Kings Uzziah . . .*, these kings of Judah reigned in Jerusalem in the last half of the eighth century BCE (see 2 Kings 14.23–20.21). Uzziah was a contemporary of *Jeroboam* II, who ruled 788–747 BCE in Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and Ahaz was king in Judah when Samaria fell. Presumably Hosea prophesied late in Jeroboam's reign and after his death.

1.2–3.5: Hosea's family life as a symbolic vehicle for divine communication. The prophetic acts of Hosea, detailed in two sections (1.2–2.1; 3.1–5), exemplify God's relationship with Israel in allegorical fashion. Between the narrative sections, a prophetic speech (2.2–23) indicts Israel for unfaithfulness and offers hope for restoration after a period of punishment.

1.2–2.1: Hosea's marriage to Gomer, and the birth, naming, and renaming of their children as prophetic signs. The marital states of Jeremiah (Jer 16.1–2) and Ezekiel (Ezek 24) also took on prophetic significance; Isaiah similarly gave his children symbolic names (Isa 7.3,10,14; 8.1,3). **1.2:** *Wife of whoredom,* a promiscuous woman. *Children of whoredom,* children born of promiscuity. **4–8:** Birth of three children, each with symbolic names. **4:** *Jezreel* ("God sows"), the site where Jehu's bloody coup d'état began (2 Kings 9–10) and where Ahab conspired to murder Naboth and seize his vineyard (1 Kings 21). *House of Jehu,* the Israelite dynasty founded by Jehu in 842 BCE extended for a century, ending with Jeroboam II. **6:** *Lo-ruhamah,* "Not loved, not pitied"; cf. Ezek 16.4–5.

the house of Israel or forgive them. 7 But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen."

8 When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. 9 Then the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi,[a] for you are not my people and I am not your God."[b]

10[c] Yet the number of the people of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which can be neither measured nor numbered; and in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." 11 The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head; and they shall take possession of[d] the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

2 [e] Say to your brother,[f] Ammi,[g] and to your sister,[h] Ruhamah.[i]

2 Plead with your mother, plead—
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband—
that she put away her whoring from her face,
and her adultery from between her breasts,
3 or I will strip her naked
and expose her as in the day she was born,
and make her like a wilderness,
and turn her into a parched land,
and kill her with thirst.
4 Upon her children also I will have no pity,
because they are children of whoredom.
5 For their mother has played the whore;
she who conceived them has acted shamefully.
For she said, "I will go after my lovers;
they give me my bread and my water,
my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink."
6 Therefore I will hedge up her[j] way with thorns;
and I will build a wall against her,
so that she cannot find her paths.
7 She shall pursue her lovers,
but not overtake them;
and she shall seek them,
but shall not find them.
Then she shall say, "I will go
and return to my first husband,
for it was better with me then than now."
8 She did not know
that it was I who gave her

[a] That is *Not my people*
[b] Heb *I am not yours*
[c] Ch 2.1 in Heb
[d] Heb *rise up from*
[e] Ch 2.3 in Heb
[f] Gk: Heb *brothers*
[g] That is *My people*
[h] Gk Vg: Heb *sisters*
[i] That is *Pitied*
[j] Gk Syr: Heb *your*

7: This amendment to the doom promised in v. 6 was likely added by a later Judean editor. **8:** *Weaned* the child, probably at age three (1 Sam 1.22; 2 Chr 31.16). **9:** *Lo-ammi,* "Not my people." *You are not my people,* God rejects the language of his covenant with Israel; see Ex 6.7; Deut 29.13. *I am not your God* can also be read, "I am not I Am for you," as if God now withdraws the intimacy extended to Moses through revelation of the divine name (Ex 3.14). **1.10–2.1:** Jezreel's exaltation (1.11) and the renaming of Lo-ruhamah (2.1, *Ruhamah,* "Loved") and Lo-ammi (2.1, *Ammi,* "My people") signal restoration. **1.10:** For *the sand of the sea,* see the divine promise to Abraham (Gen 22.17) and Jacob (Gen 32.12); cf. Gen 15.5; 16.10; 1 Kings 3.8. *Children of the living God*, in contrast to "children of whoredom" (1.2). **11:** The prophet anticipates unification of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, which had been separated since the tenth century BCE. *The day of Jezreel* will be one of triumph and glory; contrast 1.4–5.

2.2–23: A prophetic speech based on the preceding sign-acts. Israel wrongly attributed its agricultural fertility to Baal, a Canaanite god. For this infidelity, the LORD first initiates divorce against Israel, the promiscuous wife, then promises a re-betrothal. The metaphor of adulterous marriage and violent punishment should be interpreted with caution. It is a literary device to be viewed within its historical context, where a culture of honor and shame was used to control women's sexuality. **2:** *Plead with,* take legal action against. **3:** Ezek 16.35–43 elaborates on these punishments. The covenant was first forged in the *wilderness* (Ex 19.1), though here *wilderness* is a symbol for barrenness and Israel's infidelity; see also v. 14n. **4:** *No pity,* a pun on Lo-ruhamah; see 1.6n. **5:** *My lovers,* other gods. *Wool and . . . flax,* pastoral and agricultural products, respectively, used for clothing. **6:** Sexual access will be prevented (see Song 8.9). **8:** The LORD, not Baal, is Israel's benefactor.

the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and who lavished upon her silver
and gold that they used for Baal.
9 Therefore I will take back
my grain in its time,
and my wine in its season;
and I will take away my wool and my flax,
which were to cover her nakedness.
10 Now I will uncover her shame
in the sight of her lovers,
and no one shall rescue her out of my
hand.
11 I will put an end to all her mirth,
her festivals, her new moons, her
sabbaths,
and all her appointed festivals.
12 I will lay waste her vines and her fig
trees,
of which she said,
"These are my pay,
which my lovers have given me."
I will make them a forest,
and the wild animals shall devour them.
13 I will punish her for the festival days of
the Baals,
when she offered incense to them
and decked herself with her ring and
jewelry,
and went after her lovers,
and forgot me, says the LORD.

14 Therefore, I will now allure her,
and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak tenderly to her.
15 From there I will give her her vineyards,
and make the Valley of Achor a door of
hope.
There she shall respond as in the days of
her youth,
as at the time when she came out of the
land of Egypt.
16 On that day, says the LORD, you will call me,
"My husband," and no longer will you call
me, "My Baal."[a] 17 For I will remove the names
of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall
be mentioned by name no more. 18 I will make
for you[b] a covenant on that day with the wild
animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping
things of the ground; and I will abolish[c] the
bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I
will make you lie down in safety. 19 And I will
take you for my wife forever; I will take you
for my wife in righteousness and in justice,
in steadfast love, and in mercy. 20 I will take
you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall
know the LORD.
21 On that day I will answer, says the LORD,
I will answer the heavens
and they shall answer the earth;
22 and the earth shall answer the grain, the
wine, and the oil,
and they shall answer Jezreel;[d]

[a] That is, *"My master"*
[b] Heb *them*
[c] Heb *break*
[d] That is *God sows*

11: *Festivals . . . new moons . . . sabbaths,* the seasonal agricultural festivals (Ex 34.21–24) and the customary occasions for worship (Num 29.6; Ex 20.8) were now diluted by elements of the worship of Baal. **13:** *Baals*, manifestations of the god Baal at various shrines. *Offered incense,* incense itself was a lawful Israelite element of worship (Ex 30.7–8) but here, unlawfully, it is offered to other gods (cf. 1 Kings 22.44; Isa 65.3). *Decked herself,* cf. Isa 3.16–22. **14:** *Allure her,* courtship language. The *wilderness* signifies Israel's early years after the Exodus, remembered here, in terms of the marital metaphor, as a honeymoon (Jer 2.2). The wilderness can also be a place of judgment (Ezek 20.33–38). In both cases, the wilderness is a place for transformation. *Speak tenderly*, see Isa 40.2. **15:** *Achor,* a site just east of the Dead Sea where Israel got into "trouble" (the meaning of "Achor") soon after leaving the wilderness (Josh 7.22–26). **16:** *My Baal,* in secular usage, "baʿal" could also mean "husband." In this wordplay, Israel is to address the LORD as "husband" (Heb "'ish"), not as "husband" (Heb "baʿal"; see also note *a*). **17:** *Baals*, see 2.13n. **18:** *Animals, birds . . ., creeping things,* the phrases recall Gen 1.27–31 and suggest a return to a state of blessing. See also Lev 26.6. **20:** *You shall know,* "knowledge" implies covenant faithfulness and, in terms of the marital metaphor employed, sexual intimacy. **21–23:** A conclusion to chs 1–2: The renaming of the children (see 1.4,6,9n.; 2.1n.) follows the re-betrothal of the LORD and Israel. Human faithfulness (or its lack) to the LORD has implications for the natural world. *Jezreel*, meaning "God sows," another symbol of restoration; see 1.4n.; 1.11n. Through a wordplay, the prophet indicates that the people will grow like plants upon their return to the land, that is,

[23] and I will sow him[a] for myself in the land.
And I will have pity on Lo-ruhamah,[b]
and I will say to Lo-ammi,[c] "You are my people";
and he shall say, "You are my God."

3 The LORD said to me again, "Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as the LORD loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." [2] So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer of barley and a measure of wine.[d] [3] And I said to her, "You must remain as mine for many days; you shall not play the whore, you shall not have intercourse with a man, nor I with you." [4] For the Israelites shall remain many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. [5] Afterward the Israelites shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; they shall come in awe to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

4 Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel;
for the LORD has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or loyalty,
and no knowledge of God in the land.
[2] Swearing, lying, and murder,
and stealing and adultery break out;
bloodshed follows bloodshed.
[3] Therefore the land mourns,
and all who live in it languish;
together with the wild animals
and the birds of the air,
even the fish of the sea are perishing.

[4] Yet let no one contend,
and let none accuse,
for with you is my contention,
O priest.[e]
[5] You shall stumble by day;

[a] Cn: Heb *her*
[b] That is *Not pitied*
[c] That is *Not my people*
[d] Gk: Heb *a homer of barley and a lethech of barley*
[e] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

they shall answer "God sows," *and I will sow him for myself in the land.* **23:** Cf. Ex 6.7; Lev 26.12.

3.1–5: The restoration of Hosea's marriage. In a like manner, the LORD's relationship to Israel will be restored. This section is in the first person while 1.2–2.1 was in the third. Gomer is not mentioned here by name, so it is possible that the wife here is a different woman. **1:** *Raisin cakes* were associated with illicit worship (Isa 16.7; Jer 7.18; 44.19). **2:** *Shekel,* ca. .4 oz (11.5 g); *homer,* about 6.5 bu (230 L). From whom Hosea *bought her* is not indicated. **3–4:** A transitional period is announced during which, on one level, the marital partners forgo relations, and on another, the covenant partners lack their customary mediators (*king, prince*) and religious mediations. *Pillar,* see 10.2n.; Gen 31.45. *Ephod,* Ex 28.6–14; 39.2–7; Judg 8.24–28; 1 Sam 2.18. *Teraphim,* Gen 31.19; probably ancestor statues. **5:** *David their king,* the only reference in Hosea to a specifically Judahite institution such as the Davidic dynasty, Jerusalem, or Zion; probably a later addition.

4.1–14.9: The prophetic speeches of Hosea indict Israel for unfaithfulness and announce the divine judgment, while offering hope of eventual restoration. The boundaries between individual speech units in the remainder of the book are unclear. This may in part reflect the style of the prophet and may in part be due to later editorial rearrangement.

4.1–12.1: The LORD has an indictment against Israel. 4.1–3: General indictment against the people. **1:** *Hear the word of the LORD,* an introduction in the prophetic style, which serves both the immediately following speech and the remainder of the book. *Israel,* the primary referent here is the Northern Kingdom (also known as Ephraim) but, like all of Hosea's prophecies, after 722 BCE the prophecy is transmitted in Judah; so the address is also to Israel in its broader sense as the people with whom God had made a covenant. *Indictment* is a legal term: On God's behalf, the prophet files suit against the people for breach of covenant. *Faithfulness, loyalty* (steadfast love), and *knowledge of God* are major theological terms in Hosea (2.19–20; 4.6; 5.4,7; 6.3,6; 10.12; 11.3–4,12b; 12.6). **2:** *Swearing . . .*, five of the Ten Commandments referred to (Ex 20.7,13–16; Deut 5.11,17–20). **3:** See 2.21–23n.

4.4–19: An indictment of corrupt religious practices. 4–8: The corruption issues from the priests, perhaps such as Amaziah, priest of Bethel, who opposed Hosea's contemporary Amos (Amos 7.10–17). **4:** Legally, there are no grounds for a counterclaim against God. *Contend, contention*, the same legal terminology translated in 4.1 as "indictment." **5–6:** The phrases *destroy your mother* and *forget your children* build on the foundation of

the prophet also shall stumble with you
by night,
and I will destroy your mother.
6 My people are destroyed for lack of
knowledge;
because you have rejected knowledge,
I reject you from being a priest to me.
And since you have forgotten the law of
your God,
I also will forget your children.

7 The more they increased,
the more they sinned against me;
they changed[a] their glory into shame.
8 They feed on the sin of my people;
they are greedy for their iniquity.
9 And it shall be like people, like priest;
I will punish them for their ways,
and repay them for their deeds.
10 They shall eat, but not be satisfied;
they shall play the whore, but not
multiply;
because they have forsaken the LORD
to devote themselves to 11 whoredom.

Wine and new wine
take away the understanding.
12 My people consult a piece of wood,
and their divining rod gives them
oracles.
For a spirit of whoredom has led them
astray,
and they have played the whore,
forsaking their God.
13 They sacrifice on the tops of the
mountains,
and make offerings upon the hills,
under oak, poplar, and terebinth,
because their shade is good.

Therefore your daughters play the whore,
and your daughters-in-law commit
adultery.
14 I will not punish your daughters when
they play the whore,
nor your daughters-in-law when they
commit adultery;
for the men themselves go aside with
whores,
and sacrifice with temple prostitutes;
thus a people without understanding
comes to ruin.

15 Though you play the whore, O Israel,
do not let Judah become guilty.
Do not enter into Gilgal,
or go up to Beth-aven,
and do not swear, "As the LORD lives."
16 Like a stubborn heifer,
Israel is stubborn;
can the LORD now feed them
like a lamb in a broad pasture?

17 Ephraim is joined to idols—
let him alone.
18 When their drinking is ended, they
indulge in sexual orgies;
they love lewdness more than their
glory.[b]

[a] Ancient Heb tradition: MT *I will change*
[b] Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

1.2–3.5. *Forgotten the law* (Heb "torah") *of your God*, the teachings of Moses; cf. 4.2. Priests were responsible for teaching the people; cf. Deut 33:10. **7:** *The more . . . the more,* for a similar formulation, see 11.2. **8:** *They feed,* the priests depend on the sacrificial system for food. Since more sins require more sacrifices, Hosea accuses the priests of a debased relationship in their role in the process of atonement. **9–14:** The corruption, detailed here in terms of drunkenness, sexual activity, and divination, spreads from priests to the rest of society. **10:** Human fertility, also part of the divine blessing (Gen 1.28), is affected by human unfaithfulness. The saying has the form of a futility curse in which actions do not produce their expected results; cf. Deut 28.38–42. **11–12:** *Whoredom*, that is, improper worship and veneration of fertility deities. **12:** *Piece of wood, divining rod,* the exact referents are unknown. Trees or wooden symbols were associated with the worship of Asherah, a Canaanite goddess. **13:** A reference to high-place sanctuaries and their sacred groves (Deut 12.2). *Their shade,* note the contrast between this shade and that of 14.7. **14:** *Temple prostitutes*, lit., "sacred women," i.e., female ritual officials, a feature of Canaanite but not orthodox Israelite practice. *Without understanding*, see 2.20n. **15–19:** An admonishment to Judah: Do not let the contamination spread to you. **15:** *Gilgal, Beth-aven* (i.e., Bethel; Am 5.5), the northern shrines closest to Judah. *Beth-aven* (lit., "house of worthlessness") is a pejorative name for Bethel ("house of God"). **16:** *Stubborn heifer,* see 10.11. **17:** *Ephraim* was the name for the region surrounding Samaria. Though often

19 A wind has wrapped them[a] in its wings,
and they shall be ashamed because of
their altars.[b]

5 Hear this, O priests!
Give heed, O house of Israel!
Listen, O house of the king!
For the judgment pertains to you;
for you have been a snare at Mizpah,
and a net spread upon Tabor,
2 and a pit dug deep in Shittim;[c]
but I will punish all of them.

3 I know Ephraim,
and Israel is not hidden from me;
for now, O Ephraim, you have played the
whore;
Israel is defiled.
4 Their deeds do not permit them
to return to their God.
For the spirit of whoredom is within
them,
and they do not know the LORD.

5 Israel's pride testifies against him;
Ephraim[d] stumbles in his guilt;
Judah also stumbles with them.
6 With their flocks and herds they shall go
to seek the LORD,
but they will not find him;
he has withdrawn from them.
7 They have dealt faithlessly with the LORD;
for they have borne illegitimate
children.
Now the new moon shall devour them
along with their fields.

8 Blow the horn in Gibeah,
the trumpet in Ramah.
Sound the alarm at Beth-aven;
look behind you, Benjamin!
9 Ephraim shall become a desolation
in the day of punishment;
among the tribes of Israel
I declare what is sure.
10 The princes of Judah have become
like those who remove the landmark;
on them I will pour out
my wrath like water.
11 Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in
judgment,
because he was determined to go after
vanity.[e]
12 Therefore I am like maggots to Ephraim,
and like rottenness to the house of
Judah.

a Heb *her*
b Gk Syr: Heb *sacrifices*
c Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
d Heb *Israel and Ephraim*
e Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

used as a general term for the Northern Kingdom, its use here and Hosea's preference for it over Israel in the rest of the book could reflect a changed political situation. Israel gradually lost its territory in Transjordan, Galilee, and Jezreel in this period; in the end Ephraim was all that remained.

5.1–6.6: The people do not know the LORD. 5.1: *The judgment,* in a legal sense. *Mizpah,* a fortress city on the border between Judah and Israel (1 Kings 15.22), probably housed a sanctuary, like many border towns. *Tabor,* a mountain in northern Israel, overlooking the Jezreel Valley (Ps 89.12); probably the site of a sanctuary (Deut 33.18–19). **2:** *Shittim,* a border town in Transjordan; the final encampment of the Israelites before they crossed the Jordan; also site of an infamy (9.10; Num 25.1–9). **3–4:** Note the wordplay with "knowledge": The LORD *knows* (is aware of) *Ephraim* ('s deeds) but *they do not know* (demonstrate loyalty toward) the LORD. See 2.20n. *Spirit of whoredom,* see 4.11–12n. **5–7:** Because of their disloyalty, the LORD will not be available to the people at festivals. **5:** *Israel's pride,* also in 7.10. **6:** *They shall go,* in pilgrimage festivals. As in 6.6; Amos 5.21–24, and Mic 6.6–8, liturgies and rites untethered from ethical behavior are ignored by God. **7:** *New moon shall devour,* meaning obscure. **8–14:** In the day of punishment the LORD will become the enemy of Israel (Am 9.2–4). This section may refer to the Syro-Ephraimite War (2 Kings 15.27–30) in 735 BCE, when Israel under Pekah formed a coalition with Syria to force Judah to join a rebellion against Assyria. **8:** *Blow the horn,* the alarm signal used by sentinels. *Gibeah, Ramah,* Benjaminite towns just north of Jerusalem, situated on the path an invading army would take approaching from the south (Isa 10.28–32); *Beth-aven,* see 4.15n. This may refer to a Judahite counterattack after the Syro-Ephraimite initiative failed. **10–14:** There is no defense against God. **10:** *Remove the landmark,* a landmark is a boundary marker, defining the extent of property; the removal of such amounted to land theft; see Deut 19.14;

13 When Ephraim saw his sickness,
and Judah his wound,
then Ephraim went to Assyria,
and sent to the great king.[a]
But he is not able to cure you
or heal your wound.
14 For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,
and like a young lion to the house of
Judah.
I myself will tear and go away;
I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.
15 I will return again to my place
until they acknowledge their guilt and
seek my face.
In their distress they will beg my favor:

6 "Come, let us return to the LORD;
for it is he who has torn, and he will
heal us;
he has struck down, and he will bind
us up.
2 After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.
3 Let us know, let us press on to know the
LORD;
his appearing is as sure as the dawn;
he will come to us like the showers,
like the spring rains that water the
earth."
4 What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
What shall I do with you, O Judah?
Your love is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
5 Therefore I have hewn them by the
prophets,
I have killed them by the words of my
mouth,
and my[b] judgment goes forth as the
light.
6 For I desire steadfast love and not
sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt
offerings.

7 But at[c] Adam they transgressed the
covenant;
there they dealt faithlessly with me.
8 Gilead is a city of evildoers,
tracked with blood.
9 As robbers lie in wait[d] for someone,
so the priests are banded together;[e]
they murder on the road to Shechem,
they commit a monstrous crime.
10 In the house of Israel I have seen a
horrible thing;
Ephraim's whoredom is there, Israel is
defiled.

11 For you also, O Judah, a harvest is
appointed.

When I would restore the fortunes of my
people,

[a] Cn: Heb *to a king who will contend*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *your*
[c] Cn: Heb *like*
[d] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Syr: Heb *are a company*

27.17; Prov 22.28; 23.10. **13:** *Went to Assyria,* Hoshea, the final king in Samaria (732–722 BCE), sought to appease Assyria in the wake of Pekah's failed rebellion (2 Kings 16.3). **14:** *Lion*, see Job 10.16; Lam 3.10.

5.15–6.6: God punishes not to annihilate but in order to inspire repentance. This section is in the form of a dialogue. **5:15:** *Seek . . . in your distress*, cf. Deut 4.29–30. **6.1:** God both punishes and *heals*; see Deut 32.39; Job 5.18. **2:** The punishment is temporary. *Two days . . . third day,* idiomatic expression for a brief period of time. **3:** *Spring rains,* the latter (March-April) rains (Deut 11.14). **4–6:** A summary of the entire speech. **4:** *What shall I do with you*, it seems as if Israel's relationship with God is irrevocably broken, but see 11.8. **6:** God desires covenant loyalty, a persistent theme of the prophets (Am 5.22–24; Mic 6.6–8). *Knowledge of God*, see 2.20n.

6.7–11a: An unholy gazetteer. 7: *At Adam,* a town in central Transjordan, close to where the Israelites crossed the Jordan (Josh 3.16). But it is also possible to read *Adam* here as personal, i.e., "to a man" they have transgressed. **8:** Men from *Gilead* participated in the assassination of King Pekahiah (2 Kings 15.25). **9:** *Shechem,* a major Ephraimite town, 7 mi (12 km) southeast of Samaria. Their *monstrous crime* is unspecified, though it may involve mistreatment of pilgrims, indecent religious acts, or brutal opposition to prophetic activity. For examples of Shechem's history of violence, see Gen 34; Judg 9. **10:** *Ephraim's whoredom*, see 4.11–12n.; 4.17.

6.11b–7.7: A corrupt people and government. The author uses the metaphor of an oven to describe the heated activity of Israel's idolaters, the fervent celebration of the enthronement ritual, the hot anger of those who

7 [1] when I would heal Israel,
the corruption of Ephraim is revealed,
and the wicked deeds of Samaria;
for they deal falsely,
the thief breaks in,
and the bandits raid outside.
[2] But they do not consider
that I remember all their wickedness.
Now their deeds surround them,
they are before my face.
[3] By their wickedness they make the king glad,
and the officials by their treachery.
[4] They are all adulterers;
they are like a heated oven,
whose baker does not need to stir the fire,
from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.
[5] On the day of our king the officials
became sick with the heat of wine;
he stretched out his hand with mockers.
[6] For they are kindled[a] like an oven, their heart burns within them;
all night their anger smolders;
in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire.
[7] All of them are hot as an oven,
and they devour their rulers.
All their kings have fallen;
none of them calls upon me.

[8] Ephraim mixes himself with the peoples;
Ephraim is a cake not turned.
[9] Foreigners devour his strength,
but he does not know it;
gray hairs are sprinkled upon him,
but he does not know it.
[10] Israel's pride testifies against[b] him;
yet they do not return to the LORD their God,
or seek him, for all this.

[11] Ephraim has become like a dove,
silly and without sense;
they call upon Egypt, they go to Assyria.
[12] As they go, I will cast my net over them;
I will bring them down like birds of the air;
I will discipline them according to the report made to their assembly.[c]
[13] Woe to them, for they have strayed from me!
Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me!
I would redeem them,
but they speak lies against me.

[14] They do not cry to me from the heart,
but they wail upon their beds;
they gash themselves for grain and wine;
they rebel against me.
[15] It was I who trained and strengthened their arms,
yet they plot evil against me.
[16] They turn to that which does not profit;[d]
they have become like a defective bow;
their officials shall fall by the sword
because of the rage of their tongue.
So much for their babbling in the land of Egypt.

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *brought near*
[b] Or *humbles*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

oppose the king, and the burning violence of assassination. **7.1:** The theme of healing again (5.13; 6.1). *Samaria,* the capital of the Northern Kingdom. **4:** The time between the kneading of the dough and its fermentation is apparently when the oven was hottest. **5:** *Day of our king,* perhaps at coronation. **6:** An *oven* was typically a cylindrical earthenware structure with an opening at the top that permitted smoke or flames to escape (cf. Gen 15.17). **7:** *Devour their rulers,* four Israelite kings were assassinated between 747 and 732 BCE.

7.8–16: Mixing, religious and political, is bad. 8–10: Ephraim is a half-baked cake. **10:** Cf. 5.5. **11:** The *dove* was considered *silly* because it was overly familiar with humans and easily captured. Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom, flits between Egypt and Assyria, seeking alliances to its detriment. *Egypt* and *Assyria* are the "foreigners" of v. 9. For the historical background, see 2 Kings 15.19–20; 17.3–4. **14:** The contrast is between acceptable forms of prayer, *cry*ing *to me from the heart,* and those which were unacceptable, such as *wail*ing *upon their beds* (Isa 57.8) and self-mutilation (*they gash themselves*) (Deut 14.1; 1 Kings 18.28). **15:** Cf. 11.3–4. **16:** *Babbling,* i.e., negotiations conducted in the Egyptian language.

8 Set the trumpet to your lips!
One like a vulture[a] is over the house of the LORD,
because they have broken my covenant,
and transgressed my law.
[2] Israel cries to me,
"My God, we—Israel—know you!"
[3] Israel has spurned the good;
the enemy shall pursue him.

[4] They made kings, but not through me;
they set up princes, but without my knowledge.
With their silver and gold they made idols
for their own destruction.
[5] Your calf is rejected, O Samaria.
My anger burns against them.
How long will they be incapable of innocence?
[6] For it is from Israel,
an artisan made it;
it is not God.
The calf of Samaria
shall be broken to pieces.[b]

[7] For they sow the wind,
and they shall reap the whirlwind.
The standing grain has no heads,
it shall yield no meal;
if it were to yield,
foreigners would devour it.
[8] Israel is swallowed up;
now they are among the nations
as a useless vessel.
[9] For they have gone up to Assyria,
a wild ass wandering alone;
Ephraim has bargained for lovers.

[10] Though they bargain with the nations,
I will now gather them up.
They shall soon writhe
under the burden of kings and princes.

[11] When Ephraim multiplied altars to expiate sin,
they became to him altars for sinning.
[12] Though I write for him the multitude of my instructions,
they are regarded as a strange thing.
[13] Though they offer choice sacrifices,[c]
though they eat flesh,
the LORD does not accept them.
Now he will remember their iniquity,
and punish their sins;
they shall return to Egypt.
[14] Israel has forgotten his Maker,
and built palaces;
and Judah has multiplied fortified cities;
but I will send a fire upon his cities,
and it shall devour his strongholds.

9 Do not rejoice, O Israel!
Do not exult[d] as other nations do;
for you have played the whore, departing from your God.
You have loved a prostitute's pay
on all threshing floors.
[2] Threshing floor and wine vat shall not feed them,
and the new wine shall fail them.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *shall go up in flames*
[c] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Gk: Heb *To exultation*

8.1–14: For the crime of assimilating foreign political models and religious practices, the punishment is foreign domination. 1–3: A military alarm signals the approach of an enemy, the Assyrians, the vehicle of divine judgment against Israel. This section is in the form of a dialogue. **1:** *Vulture,* or eagle, a symbol of the Assyrian army (Jer 49.22). **2:** *Know*, see 2.20n. **4:** *They made kings . . . without my knowledge,* without endorsement from the LORD by a prophet. **5–6:** There were calf images at the northern shrines of Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12.28); the singular *calf* here probably refers to that at Bethel (10.5), the shrine closest to the city of Samaria. *An artisan,* see Isa 40.19–20. **7–10:** As punishment for political defection, Israel will be subjugated by foreigners. *Wind*, a reference to useless vanity (see Prov 11.29; Eccl 1.14,17), here implying Israel's idol worship, will become a destructive *whirlwind.* See also 12.1. **9:** The phrase *a wild ass . . . Ephraim* plays on the Heb words for wild ass ("pere'") and Ephraim ("'eprayim"); cf. Jer 2.24. *Bargained for lovers*, had relations with Syria, Egypt, and Assyria. **11–14:** As punishment for religious defection, Israel shall return to Egypt (cf. 9.3,6; 11.5; Deut 17.16). **12:** *My instructions,* my "torahs," the legacy of Moses.

9.1–6: Israel's festivals are condemned. 1: *Prostitute's pay,* Gen 38.17; Deut 23.17; Mic 1.7. *Threshing floors*, harvest festivals were an occasion for communal worship; in this case, illicit worship. They were also the site of

3 They shall not remain in the land of the
LORD;
but Ephraim shall return to Egypt,
and in Assyria they shall eat unclean food.

4 They shall not pour drink offerings of
wine to the LORD,
and their sacrifices shall not please him.
Such sacrifices shall be like mourners'
bread;
all who eat of it shall be defiled;
for their bread shall be for their hunger
only;
it shall not come to the house of the
LORD.

5 What will you do on the day of appointed
festival,
and on the day of the festival of the
LORD?
6 For even if they escape destruction,
Egypt shall gather them,
Memphis shall bury them.
Nettles shall possess their precious things
of silver;[a]
thorns shall be in their tents.

7 The days of punishment have come,
the days of recompense have come;
Israel cries,[b]
"The prophet is a fool,
the man of the spirit is mad!"
Because of your great iniquity,
your hostility is great.

8 The prophet is a sentinel for my God over
Ephraim,
yet a fowler's snare is on all his ways,
and hostility in the house of his God.
9 They have deeply corrupted
themselves
as in the days of Gibeah;
he will remember their iniquity,
he will punish their sins.

10 Like grapes in the wilderness,
I found Israel.
Like the first fruit on the fig tree,
in its first season,
I saw your ancestors.
But they came to Baal-peor,
and consecrated themselves to a thing
of shame,
and became detestable like the thing
they loved.
11 Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a
bird—
no birth, no pregnancy, no conception!
12 Even if they bring up children,
I will bereave them until no one is left.
Woe to them indeed
when I depart from them!
13 Once I saw Ephraim as a young palm
planted in a lovely meadow,[a]
but now Ephraim must lead out his
children for slaughter.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *shall know*

sexual overtures (Ruth 3). **3:** See 8.11–14n.; Am 7.17. **4:** *Drink offerings* were not, in themselves, forbidden; cf. Gen 35.14. *Mourners' bread* was unclean because of association with the dead. **6:** *Memphis* was the capital of Lower (northern) Egypt. *Tents* here probably refers to festival structures.

9.7–9: A response to the prophet's critics. 7: *Man of the spirit,* that is, the prophet (see Isa 11.2; 61.1; Ezek 2.2; Mic 3.8). **8:** For the prophet as *sentinel* who sees at a distance and announces the divine approach, see Isa 21.6; Jer 6.17; Ezek 3.16–21; 33.6–8. *House of his God*, either the region as a whole or a former sanctuary where the prophet is no longer welcome (see 9.4). **9:** *Gibeah,* the infamous episode there and its aftermath are detailed in Judg 19–21.

9.10–11.11: Before and after. This section consists of a series of four metaphors (Israel as grapes in the wilderness, a luxuriant vine, a heifer trained, a beloved child) used to characterize the people's former fidelity and health, and contrasted with their present corrupt state brought about by religious, social, and political misdeeds. As the first three metaphors unfold, the cumulative message appears to be that the covenant is irrevocably broken and Israel is to be abandoned (9.17; 10.10; 10.15). The fourth part, the culmination of the series and, for many scholars, the culmination of the prophecies of Hosea, initially continues in this vein (11.1–7), but then dramatically shifts from an angry to a compassionate tone (11.8–11).

9.10–17: Israel, grapes in the wilderness found by God (v. 10), is now desiccated (v. 16). 10: *First fruit*, a reference to Israel's divine election in the wilderness (see Deut 32.10; Jer 2.2–3). *Baal-peor,* the site of grave

14 Give them, O LORD—
what will you give?
Give them a miscarrying womb
and dry breasts.

15 Every evil of theirs began at Gilgal;
there I came to hate them.
Because of the wickedness of their deeds
I will drive them out of my house.
I will love them no more;
all their officials are rebels.

16 Ephraim is stricken,
their root is dried up,
they shall bear no fruit.
Even though they give birth,
I will kill the cherished offspring of their womb.
17 Because they have not listened to him,
my God will reject them;
they shall become wanderers among the nations.

10 Israel is a luxuriant vine
that yields its fruit.
The more his fruit increased
the more altars he built;
as his country improved,
he improved his pillars.
2 Their heart is false;
now they must bear their guilt.
The LORD[a] will break down their altars,
and destroy their pillars.

3 For now they will say:
"We have no king,
for we do not fear the LORD,
and a king—what could he do for us?"
4 They utter mere words;
with empty oaths they make covenants;
so litigation springs up like poisonous weeds
in the furrows of the field.
5 The inhabitants of Samaria tremble
for the calf[b] of Beth-aven.
Its people shall mourn for it,
and its idolatrous priests shall wail[c] over it,
over its glory that has departed from it.
6 The thing itself shall be carried to Assyria
as tribute to the great king.[d]
Ephraim shall be put to shame,
and Israel shall be ashamed of his idol.[e]

7 Samaria's king shall perish
like a chip on the face of the waters.
8 The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel,
shall be destroyed.
Thorn and thistle shall grow up
on their altars.
They shall say to the mountains, Cover us,
and to the hills, Fall on us.

9 Since the days of Gibeah you have sinned,
O Israel;
there they have continued.
Shall not war overtake them in Gibeah?
10 I will come[f] against the wayward people
to punish them;
and nations shall be gathered against them
when they are punished[g] for their double iniquity.

a Heb *he*
b Gk Syr: Heb *calves*
c Cn: Heb *exult*
d Cn: Heb *to a king who will contend*
e Cn: Heb *counsel*
f Cn Compare Gk: Heb *In my desire*
g Gk: Heb *bound*

disloyalty during the wilderness period (see Num 25.1–18). *Thing of shame*, a pejorative epithet for Baal. **15:** *Gilgal,* a venerable Israelite shrine near Jericho (e.g., Josh 4.20; 10.43; 1 Sam 7.16); condemned here as the site of illicit worship (4.15; 12.11; Am 4.4; 5.5). Also, at Gilgal the LORD reluctantly acceded to the people's request for a king (1 Sam 10.14–11.25).

10.1–10: Israel, a luxuriant vine (v. 1), is now weedy (v. 4) and overrun with thorns (v. 8). 1–2: In Canaan Israel increased in sin (here adopting illicit religious practices) as it increased in prosperity; cf. Deut 6.10–15. **2:** *Pillars,* standing stones, condemned in Ex 23.24; see 3.4. **4:** *Empty oaths,* Ex 20.7. **5:** *Calf,* 8.5n. *Beth-aven,* see 4.15n. **8:** *Aven,* 10.5n. *Mountains, Cover us . . .*, this phrase will be reused in New Testament depictions of divine judgment (Lk 23.30; Rev 6.16). **9:** *Gibeah,* 9.9n. **10:** God is a commander of the nations who will direct them against Israel. *Double iniquity*, Gibeah's former sin (see 9.9n.) and present guilt.

11 Ephraim was a trained heifer
that loved to thresh,
and I spared her fair neck;
but I will make Ephraim break the ground;
Judah must plow;
Jacob must harrow for himself.
12 Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
break up your fallow ground;
for it is time to seek the LORD,
that he may come and rain
righteousness upon you.

13 You have plowed wickedness,
you have reaped injustice,
you have eaten the fruit of lies.
Because you have trusted in your power
and in the multitude of your warriors,
14 therefore the tumult of war shall rise
against your people,
and all your fortresses shall be
destroyed,
as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the
day of battle
when mothers were dashed in pieces
with their children.
15 Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel,
because of your great wickedness.
At dawn the king of Israel
shall be utterly cut off.

11 When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
2 The more I[a] called them,
the more they went from me;[b]
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.

3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my[c] arms;
but they did not know that I healed
them.
4 I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.
I was to them like those
who lift infants to their cheeks.[d]
I bent down to them and fed them.

5 They shall return to the land of Egypt,
and Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to
me.
6 The sword rages in their cities,
it consumes their oracle-priests,
and devours because of their schemes.
7 My people are bent on turning away from
me.
To the Most High they call,
but he does not raise them up at all.[e]

8 How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and
tender.
9 I will not execute my fierce anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and no mortal,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath.[e]

[a] Gk: Heb *they*
[b] Gk: Heb *them*
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *his*
[d] Or *who ease the yoke on their jaws*
[e] Meaning of Heb uncertain

10.11–15: Heifer Israel now plows wickedness. 11: *Trained heifer,* compare with 4.16. *Spared her . . . neck,* i.e., she was unyoked. **12:** *Break up your fallow ground,* Jer 4.3. *Rain* is a frequent prophetic symbol of divine restoration and blessing (Isa 44.3; 45.8; 55.10). **13:** Contrast Ps 20.7, 44.6, Isa 31.1. **14:** *Shalman . . . Beth-arbel,* the allusion is unknown, but perhaps refers to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V (see 2 Kings 17.3) or the Moabite king Salamanu. **15:** *Bethel*, see 8.5–6n.

11.1–11: A divine soliloquy: Israel as God's wayward child. This speech employs the culminating, and most intimate, metaphor in the series: Israel as the LORD's child. It also ends this long section, which began in 4.1, on a hopeful note. Here, the divine mood shifts from anger to compassion. **1:** Cf. Ex 4.22. **2:** *Baals*, see 2.13n. **3:** Cf. 7.15. **5:** *Return to . . . Egypt,* 8.13; 9.3. **8–9:** At the pivotal point of this soliloquy, divine compassion overcomes divine anger. This is perhaps the Bible's strongest affirmation of divine mercy since it occurs without prophetic intercession or despite the people's refusal *to return* (v. 5), that is, repent. *Admah, Zeboiim,* cities destroyed

10 They shall go after the LORD,
who roars like a lion;
when he roars,
his children shall come trembling from the west.
11 They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt,
and like doves from the land of Assyria;
and I will return them to their homes,
says the LORD.

12 [a]Ephraim has surrounded me with lies,
and the house of Israel with deceit;
but Judah still walks[b] with God,
and is faithful to the Holy One.

12 Ephraim herds the wind,
and pursues the east wind all day long;
they multiply falsehood and violence;
they make a treaty with Assyria,
and oil is carried to Egypt.

2 The LORD has an indictment against Judah,
and will punish Jacob according to his ways,
and repay him according to his deeds.
3 In the womb he tried to supplant his brother,
and in his manhood he strove with God.
4 He strove with the angel and prevailed,
he wept and sought his favor;
he met him at Bethel,
and there he spoke with him.[c]
5 The LORD the God of hosts,
the LORD is his name!
6 But as for you, return to your God,
hold fast to love and justice,
and wait continually for your God.

7 A trader, in whose hands are false balances,
he loves to oppress.
8 Ephraim has said, "Ah, I am rich,
I have gained wealth for myself;
in all of my gain
no offense has been found in me
that would be sin."[d]
9 I am the LORD your God
from the land of Egypt;
I will make you live in tents again,
as in the days of the appointed festival.

10 I spoke to the prophets;
it was I who multiplied visions,
and through the prophets I will bring destruction.
11 In Gilead[e] there is iniquity,
they shall surely come to nothing.
In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls,
so their altars shall be like stone heaps
on the furrows of the field.
12 Jacob fled to the land of Aram,
there Israel served for a wife,
and for a wife he guarded sheep.[f]
13 By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt,

a Ch 12.1 in Heb
b Heb *roams* or *rules*
c Gk Syr: Heb *us*
d Meaning of Heb uncertain
e Compare Syr: Heb *Gilead*
f Heb lacks *sheep*

along with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19; Deut 29.23). **10:** In contrast with 5.14, this lion's *roar* is not aggressive but is a summons to its mate or cubs. **11:** *Doves,* contrast 7.11. These doves exhibit a homing instinct. *Egypt* and *Assyria,* contrast 9.3.

11.12–12.1: The futility of foreign alliances. 11.12: *But Judah still . . .*, perhaps a later addition. **12.1:** Cf. 8.7. *Treaty with Assyria,* see 2 Kings 15.19–20; 17.3. *Oil . . . to Egypt,* Samaria was renowned for its olive oil, used here as a commodity of tribute to Egypt, which produced little.

12.2–14.9: Rebellion and restoration. Another major division in the book (like 4.1–12.1), which begins with the announcement of an indictment and ends with an oracle of hope.

12.2–13.16: A divine lawsuit against Israel, which mixes historical retrospection with contemporary critique. For a historical summary with a similar tone, see Ps 106. **12.2:** *The LORD has an indictment,* cf. 4.1. **3:** Gen 25.26; 32.22–30. **4–5:** Gen 28.11–17; 35.5–8. **7:** See Am 8.5. *Trader*, the Hebrew word can also mean "Canaanite," thus a doubly condemnatory pun. **8:** As if prosperity were proof of virtue. **9:** *I am the LORD your God,* see Ex 20.2; Deut 5.6; Ps 81.10; Isa 43.3. *Tents,* a customary feature of seasonal rites (Lev 23.34–43; Deut 16.13) and symbolic of the wilderness period, will be all that remains for Israel following the divine punishment. **11:** *Gilead*, see 6.8n.; *Gilgal*, see 9.15n. **12–13:** *Jacob . . . guarded sheep*, Gen 29.1–30. **13:** *By a prophet,* the first reference is clearly to

and by a prophet he was guarded.
14 Ephraim has given bitter offense,
so his Lord will bring his crimes down on him
and pay him back for his insults.

13 When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling;
he was exalted in Israel;
but he incurred guilt through Baal and died.
2 And now they keep on sinning
and make a cast image for themselves,
idols of silver made according to their understanding,
all of them the work of artisans.
"Sacrifice to these," they say.[a]
People are kissing calves!
3 Therefore they shall be like the morning mist
or like the dew that goes away early,
like chaff that swirls from the threshing floor
or like smoke from a window.

4 Yet I have been the LORD your God
ever since the land of Egypt;
you know no God but me,
and besides me there is no savior.
5 It was I who fed[b] you in the wilderness,
in the land of drought.
6 When I fed[c] them, they were satisfied;
they were satisfied, and their heart was proud;
therefore they forgot me.
7 So I will become like a lion to them,
like a leopard I will lurk beside the way.
8 I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs,
and will tear open the covering of their heart;
there I will devour them like a lion,
as a wild animal would mangle them.

9 I will destroy you, O Israel;
who can help you?[d]
10 Where now is[e] your king, that he may save you?
Where in all your cities are your rulers,
of whom you said,
"Give me a king and rulers"?
11 I gave you a king in my anger,
and I took him away in my wrath.

12 Ephraim's iniquity is bound up;
his sin is kept in store.
13 The pangs of childbirth come for him,
but he is an unwise son;
for at the proper time he does not present himself
at the mouth of the womb.

14 Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol?
Shall I redeem them from Death?
O Death, where are[f] your plagues?
O Sheol, where is[f] your destruction?
Compassion is hidden from my eyes.

15 Although he may flourish among rushes,[g]
the east wind shall come, a blast from the LORD,

[a] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *To these they say sacrifices of people*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *knew*
[c] Cn: Heb *according to their pasture*
[d] Gk Syr: Heb *for in me is your help*
[e] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *I will be*
[f] Gk Syr: Heb *I will be*
[g] Or *among brothers*

Moses; the second may be Moses as well, or Samuel (1 Sam 3.20) or Elijah (1 Kings 18.22). **13.1:** An allusion to Ephraim's relative prosperity during much of the Divided Monarchy. **2:** *Kissing calves,* see 8.5–6n.; 1 Kings 19.18. **3:** *Morning mist,* cf. 6.4. **4:** See 12.9n. **5:** Cf. 11.4. **8:** *A bear robbed of her cubs,* a popular image for ferocity (2 Sam 17.8; Prov 17.12). *Lion,* see 5.14; 11.10. **9–11:** This may refer to the deposing of Hoshea by the Assyrians in 723 BCE (2 Kings 17.4). **10:** *King . . . may save,* read this in light of 13.4: the LORD alone is Israel's savior. *Give me a king,* Israel requested human leadership; see 1 Sam 8.6,19; 12.13,17. **11:** *I gave . . . a king in my anger,* cf. 1 Sam 12. **13:** The pain of divine judgment is designed not to kill but to induce new life, yet Israel, *unwise,* refuses to budge. **14:** *Sheol,* the abode of all the dead, both righteous and unrighteous. *Death* (Mot), the Canaanite deity of the underworld, is probably referred to here; cf. Job 18.13; Ps 49.14; Isa 28.15; Hab 2.5. In this judgment speech, *compassion is hidden,* unlike 11.8. **15:** *Flourish among rushes,* alludes to political reliance on Egypt, which will be blown away by the

rising from the wilderness;
and his fountain shall dry up,
his spring shall be parched.
It shall strip his treasury
of every precious thing.
16 [a]Samaria shall bear her guilt,
because she has rebelled against her God;
they shall fall by the sword,
their little ones shall be dashed in pieces,
and their pregnant women ripped open.

14 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.
2 Take words with you
and return to the LORD;
say to him,
"Take away all guilt;
accept that which is good,
and we will offer
the fruit[b] of our lips.
3 Assyria shall not save us;
we will not ride upon horses;
we will say no more, 'Our God,'
to the work of our hands.
In you the orphan finds mercy."

4 I will heal their disloyalty;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned from them.
5 I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily,
he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon.[c]
6 His shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive tree,
and his fragrance like that of Lebanon.
7 They shall again live beneath my[d] shadow,
they shall flourish as a garden;[e]
they shall blossom like the vine,
their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

8 O Ephraim, what have I[f] to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.[g]
I am like an evergreen cypress;
your faithfulness[h] comes from me.
9 Those who are wise understand these things;
those who are discerning know them.
For the ways of the LORD are right,
and the upright walk in them,
but transgressors stumble in them.

a Ch 14.1 in Heb
b Gk Syr: Heb *bulls*
c Cn: Heb *like Lebanon*
d Heb *his*
e Cn: Heb *they shall grow grain*
f Or *What more has Ephraim*
g Heb *him*
h Heb *your fruit*

"east wind," Assyria. *The east wind . . . a blast from the LORD,* contrasts the east wind, which was the vehicle of the LORD's deliverance of Israel at the Reed Sea (Ex 14.21; 15.8). **16:** The ravages of conquering armies; cf. 10.14; 2 Kings 8.12; Ps 137.9; Am 1.13.

14.1–8: A final plea for repentance and a vision of restoration. 2–3: *Take words,* i.e., take these words: The prophet coaches Israel in repentance. **3:** *Horses,* cf. Ps 20.7. *The work of our hands*, see 8.6. *Mercy* or "pity," the same root as in Lo-ruhamah/Ruhamah (1.6; 2.1). **5:** *Dew* is a life-sustaining necessity in the dry land of Israel (Ps 133.3); contrast the image in 6.4; 13.3. **6:** This *fragrance* is of the aromatic Lebanese cedar forest; in the next verse, of Lebanese scented wine. **7–8:** *My shadow,* more common is the poetic image of the "shade" under God's wings (Ps 17.8; 36.8); uniquely here, God's shade is that of a great tree. In contrast to the trees used in Canaanite worship (see 4.12n.), God's presence is everlasting, like the abundant foliage of an *evergreen*.

14.9: A postscript in the style of wisdom literature. For the first half of the verse, cf. Ps 107.43; Jer 9.12; for the second, Prov 10.29.

JOEL

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND DATE OF COMPOSITION

The book begins with a brief superscription stating that the word of the LORD came to Joel the son of Bethuel. No chronological formula is given to indicate the book's date, unlike the surrounding books of Hosea and Amos, which are both dated to the eighth century BCE. There is good reason to think that the book of Joel derives from a much later period, probably the Persian era (539–333 BCE), because it refers to the Greeks (3.6); it includes imagery attested elsewhere in late prophetic literature; it alludes to other biblical texts, some of which were written in the late monarchic period (Obadiah) or the Persian period (Malachi); and the name "Joel," which means "Yahweh is God," is prominent in Persian-period biblical literature. Of the prophet himself nothing is known except his father's name.

LOCATION IN CANON

In the Masoretic Text (and in English translations that follow its order) Joel comes between two books attributed to much earlier prophets, Hosea and Amos. That may be due to two similar verses, Joel 3.16a and Am 1.2a. In the Septuagint, however, Joel is the fourth book of the Minor Prophets, after Hosea, Amos, and Micah.

STRUCTURE, CONTENTS, AND INTERPRETATION

The book of Joel describes a crisis in harrowing terms. The crisis and its resolution are reported in 1.1–2.27. Scholars, however, often attribute 2.28–3.21 to another author or authors. In this section, described as late prophetic or early apocalyptic literature, the world of ritual disappears and is replaced by the return of prophecy, cosmic symbolism, conflict with foreign nations, and images of fertility. These later verses also include more allusions to other biblical texts than 1.1–2.27.

The book offers multiple images of agricultural ruin and its impact on life in Judah. The prophet speaks of drought in the land (e.g., 1.10,12,17,20), and envisions a locust plague in the language of military attack. Locusts were known for their destructive potential to strip all vegetation from the countryside (see Ex 10.15; Amos 7:1–2) and are compared with military forces in other ancient Near Eastern literature.

Although the book's rhetoric of destruction is comparable to that found in other prophetic books, the message is quite different. Rather than offering a critique of Israel's behavior, Joel summons the people to respond to the crisis by performing rituals. Plural imperative verbs—fast, lament, wail, blow (the trumpet), put on sackcloth—are a hallmark of this summons.

The book has a distinctive theological position. Though Joel clearly thinks that God was the ultimate cause of the disaster (2.19), the prophet offers no reason for the deity's action. Hence, it is not clear that the crisis should be conceived as judgment for the people's prior misdeeds. Nonetheless, the book affirms that Israel's God is sovereign.

David L. Petersen

1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel
son of Pethuel:

[2] Hear this, O elders,
give ear, all inhabitants of the land!
Has such a thing happened in your days,
or in the days of your ancestors?
[3] Tell your children of it,
and let your children tell their children,
and their children another generation.

[4] What the cutting locust left,
the swarming locust has eaten.
What the swarming locust left,
the hopping locust has eaten,
and what the hopping locust left,
the destroying locust has eaten.

[5] Wake up, you drunkards, and weep;
and wail, all you wine-drinkers,
over the sweet wine,
for it is cut off from your mouth.
[6] For a nation has invaded my land,
powerful and innumerable;
its teeth are lions' teeth,
and it has the fangs of a lioness.
[7] It has laid waste my vines,
and splintered my fig trees;
it has stripped off their bark and thrown
it down;
their branches have turned white.

[8] Lament like a virgin dressed in sackcloth
for the husband of her youth.
[9] The grain offering and the drink offering
are cut off
from the house of the LORD.
The priests mourn,
the ministers of the LORD.
[10] The fields are devastated,
the ground mourns;
for the grain is destroyed,
the wine dries up,
the oil fails.

[11] Be dismayed, you farmers,
wail, you vinedressers,
over the wheat and the barley;
for the crops of the field are ruined.
[12] The vine withers,
the fig tree droops.
Pomegranate, palm, and apple—
all the trees of the field are dried up;
surely, joy withers away
among the people.

[13] Put on sackcloth and lament, you priests;
wail, you ministers of the altar.
Come, pass the night in sackcloth,
you ministers of my God!
Grain offering and drink offering
are withheld from the house of your
God.

1.1: Superscription. Unlike Hos 1.1 and Am 1.1, there is no reference to a king during whose reign Joel prophesied. This probably suggests a date when Israel was no longer a monarchy.

1.2–2.17: Crisis and call to action. A series of staccato-like poems, some of which depict the crisis (e.g., 1.17–18), more of which call people to act (e.g., 1.14). **1.2–20:** Different groups are commanded to undertake various rituals of lament and petition to the LORD. **2–3:** The prophet strikes an intergenerational note, which involves both hearing and telling. *Elders*, probably village or regional officials (cf. Ezra 5.9; 6.8,14; 10.8,14), stand in parallel with the hyperbolic *all inhabitants of the land*. *Ancestors*, lit., "fathers." The rhetorical question, which has an obvious negative answer, does not reveal the nature of *such a thing.* **4:** Rather than different species, these nouns probably refer to the developmental stages of the *locust*. For Joel, the four forms represent four attacks on the vegetation (cf. Am 4.9). For other references to *locust* plagues see Ex 10.12; Pss 78.46; 105.34–35. **5–7:** *Drunkards* may be too negative a translation. In these speeches Joel does not regularly indict Israelites, so here he may simply be referring to those who enjoy wine. Joel 3.18 promises the return of *sweet wine.* The admonition to *wail* may involve ritual lament as in Jer 4.8, not simply crying. **6–7:** The reference to *my land* (cf. 2.18; Lev 25.23) suggests that God is speaking. The poem offers the reason for the commands: *a nation* of vast numbers is ferocious; it is destroying Israel's *vines* (note the earlier reference to wine) and *fig trees*, both of which must grow for a long time before they bear fruit. **8–10:** *Virgin* may mean a young woman who is grief-stricken at the death of her husband. Again, the reason for the command follows the command itself. Rituals at the Temple—*grain offering, drink offering*—could not take place because *wine, grain,* and *oil* (cf. 2.19, which promises their return) were no longer available. **11–12:** Now farmers must lament the demise of eight different harvests, divided into *crops* and *trees*. **11:** *Vinedresser*, a person who prunes grape vines. **13–14:** *Priests* (cf. 1.9–11) are now commanded

14 Sanctify a fast,
call a solemn assembly.
Gather the elders
and all the inhabitants of the land
to the house of the LORD your God,
and cry out to the LORD.

15 Alas for the day!
For the day of the LORD is near,
and as destruction from the Almighty[a]
it comes.
16 Is not the food cut off
before our eyes,
joy and gladness
from the house of our God?

17 The seed shrivels under the clods,[b]
the storehouses are desolate;
the granaries are ruined
because the grain has failed.
18 How the animals groan!
The herds of cattle wander about
because there is no pasture for them;
even the flocks of sheep are dazed.[c]

19 To you, O LORD, I cry.
For fire has devoured
the pastures of the wilderness,
and flames have burned
all the trees of the field.
20 Even the wild animals cry to you
because the watercourses are dried up,
and fire has devoured
the pastures of the wilderness.

2 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD is coming, it is
near—
2 a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread upon the mountains
a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
nor will be again after them
in ages to come.

3 Fire devours in front of them,
and behind them a flame burns.
Before them the land is like the garden of
Eden,
but after them a desolate wilderness,
and nothing escapes them.

4 They have the appearance of horses,
and like war-horses they charge.
5 As with the rumbling of chariots,
they leap on the tops of the mountains,
like the crackling of a flame of fire
devouring the stubble,
like a powerful army
drawn up for battle.

6 Before them peoples are in anguish,
all faces grow pale.[b]
7 Like warriors they charge,
like soldiers they scale the wall.
Each keeps to its own course,
they do not swerve from[d] their paths.
8 They do not jostle one another,

[a] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[d] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they do not take a pledge along*

to lament and put on *sackcloth*, which was worn during mourning rites (e.g., Am 8.10) and other difficult times (e.g., Ps 35.13); see 2 Sam 12.16 for passing the night in a comparable ritual. *A fast* could be a public event (cf. Zech 7.3–5; 8.18–19; Ezra 8.21–23; Neh 1.4–11). For a different perspective on *a solemn assembly,* see Am 5.21; Isa 1:13. *Elders* and *all the inhabitants of the land* echo 1.2. **15–20:** These verses may be a single lament, spoken by the prophet, the people, or their priests. *The day of the LORD* (see also 2.1,11,31; 3.14) symbolizes God's theophanic and judging presence (cf. Am 5.18; Ob 15; Zeph 1.7,14–15; Isa 13.6; Ezek 13.5). **16:** A rhetorical question, with an obvious affirmative response. **18:** Domestic animals also suffer. **20:** *Even the wild animals* completes the picture of all life—plant and animal—suffering through the attack, fire, and drought.

2.1–17: Though similar to ch 1, these poems focus more on describing the calamity than commanding a response. **1–2:** *The day of the LORD . . . is near* (see 1.15n.), even though catastrophe has already struck. *Darkness* is an anticipated feature of the *day* (see also Am 5.18; Zeph 1.15), highlighted in the advent of a *great and powerful army*. **3–4:** The scene *before* the onslaught (2.3,6,10), *like the garden of Eden* (see Gen 2.8–9; 13.10; Isa 51.3), stands in contrast with the devastation afterward, *a desolate wilderness*. **5–7:** The similes *like a powerful*

each keeps to its own track;
they burst through the weapons
and are not halted.
9 They leap upon the city,
they run upon the walls;
they climb up into the houses,
they enter through the windows like a thief.

10 The earth quakes before them,
the heavens tremble.
The sun and the moon are darkened,
and the stars withdraw their shining.
11 The LORD utters his voice
at the head of his army;
how vast is his host!
Numberless are those who obey his command.
Truly the day of the LORD is great;
terrible indeed—who can endure it?

12 Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
13 rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.
14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the LORD, your God?

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
16 gather the people.
Sanctify the congregation;
assemble the aged;
gather the children,
even infants at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her canopy.

17 Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.
Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD,
and do not make your heritage a mockery,
a byword among the nations.
Why should it be said among the peoples,
'Where is their God?' "

18 Then the LORD became jealous for his land,
and had pity on his people.
19 In response to his people the LORD said:
I am sending you
grain, wine, and oil,
and you will be satisfied;
and I will no more make you
a mockery among the nations.

20 I will remove the northern army far from you,
and drive it into a parched and desolate land,
its front into the eastern sea,

army and *like warriors* make it clear that locusts, not an army with chariots, are meant. **10–11:** *The earth quakes* is typical of a theophany (e.g., Ps 77.18), as is the darkening of astral objects (cf. Isa 13.10). God is the general of *his army*, which may describe the locusts, and thus explains why the locusts are related to *the day of the LORD*. **12–13:** Language from ch 1 reappears, calling for a ritual response. The reference to *heart* reflects Deuteronomic idioms (Deut 10.16; 30.2). The characterization of the LORD in v. 13b appears elsewhere, though Joel omits mention of God's judgment (see, e.g., Ex 34.6–7; Num 14.18). **14:** *Who knows . . . ,* cf. Jon 3.9. *The LORD* may leave an offering for himself. **15–16:** Cf. 1.14. **17:** *Vestibule* refers to the entry hall of the Temple (see 1 Kings 6.3). The *altar* was in the Temple courtyard. The priests, stationed between the altar and the vestibule, are to utter the prayer given to them by Joel. Cf. Ex 32.12; Deut 9.26–28 for similar logic.

2.18–27: The LORD responds. Since the deity responds, one may infer that the people, especially the priests, complied with Joel's commands, though the book does not report the people's actual response to Joel's admonitions. **18–19:** *Jealous,* better "zealous"; cf. Zech 1.14; Isa 9.7. God's first concern, even before the people, was *his land* (see 1.6–7n.). *Grain, wine, and oil,* mentioned as absent in 1.10. The reference to *mockery among the nations* suggests that God responded directly to the prayer in 2.17. **20:** *Northern army* is probably an allusion to the mythic enemy from the north (cf. Jer 1.13–15; 4.6; 6.1). *Eastern sea*, the Dead Sea; *western sea*, the Mediterranean.

and its rear into the western sea;
its stench and foul smell will rise up.
Surely he has done great things!

21 Do not fear, O soil;
be glad and rejoice,
for the LORD has done great things!
22 Do not fear, you animals of the field,
for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
the tree bears its fruit,
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

23 O children of Zion, be glad
and rejoice in the LORD your God;
for he has given the early rain[a] for your vindication,
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the later rain, as before.
24 The threshing floors shall be full of grain,
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

25 I will repay you for the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army, which I sent against you.

26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the LORD your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.
27 You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.

28[b] Then afterward
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
29 Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

30 I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. 32 Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

3 [c] For then, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will gather all the

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Ch 3.1 in Heb
[c] Ch 4.1 in Heb

Stench and foul smell may reflect the plague traditions, cf. Ex 7.18; 8.14. **21:** The land is now personified as *soil*. **22:** The imagery represents a reversal of the earlier situation. *Animals of the field* will have pastureland (cf. 1.18), and *fig tree* and *vine* will bear fruit (cf. 1.12). **23:** *Abundant rain* replaces the earlier drought (1.20). *Children of Zion*, cf. Ps 149.2. Human life focuses on Jerusalem. *Early* rain, in late fall; *later rain,* in early spring. **25:** *Repay* often has legal connotations; cf. Ex 21.34. *Years* is much longer than the attack earlier described. The four forms of locust appear here in a different order from that in 1.4. **26–27:** The promise of restoration is confirmed by allusion to the covenantal relationship with the only true God; cf. Isa 45.5,6,18.

2.28–3.21. A future of well-being for Israel. Poetic and prose oracles focusing on Israel and their human enemies. God will again bring victory that will result in marvelous fertility. **2.28–29:** *Pour out my spirit* here implies enabling various forms of prophetic revelation (cf. Ezek 39.29). What had been limited to the house of David (Zech 12.10) or the prophets is now available to all Israel. Cf. Acts 2.16–21. **30–32:** These verses are probably poetic. *Portents* are cosmic events. On the sky darkening, cf. Isa 13.10; 34.4; Jer 4.23; Ezek 32.7–8; Am 8.9. In Joel 2.10, the locusts had darkened the sky; now God is the cause. *Calls on the name of the LORD,* i.e., worships the LORD. *Those who escape* and *survivors* probably refer to those not killed in an eschatological battle; cf. Zech 14.16, which includes non-Israelites. **3.1–3:** These verses are probably poetic. They depict an eschatological tradition that the LORD will judge *the nations*. **2:** *Valley of Jehoshaphat*, probably not the Kidron Valley in Jerusalem, but a

nations and bring them down to the valley of
Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment
with them there, on account of my people
and my heritage Israel, because they have
scattered them among the nations. They have
divided my land, [3] and cast lots for my people,
and traded boys for prostitutes, and sold girls
for wine, and drunk it down.

[4] What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon,
and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying
me back for something? If you are paying me
back, I will turn your deeds back upon your
own heads swiftly and speedily. [5] For you have
taken my silver and my gold, and have carried
my rich treasures into your temples.[a] [6] You
have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem
to the Greeks, removing them far from their
own border. [7] But now I will rouse them to
leave the places to which you have sold them,
and I will turn your deeds back upon your
own heads. [8] I will sell your sons and your
daughters into the hand of the people of Ju-
dah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to
a nation far away; for the LORD has spoken.

[9] Proclaim this among the nations:
Prepare war,[b]
stir up the warriors.
Let all the soldiers draw near,
let them come up.
[10] Beat your plowshares into swords,
and your pruning hooks into spears;
let the weakling say, "I am a warrior."

[11] Come quickly,[c]
all you nations all around,
gather yourselves there.
Bring down your warriors, O LORD.
[12] Let the nations rouse themselves,
and come up to the valley of
Jehoshaphat;
for there I will sit to judge
all the neighboring nations.

[13] Put in the sickle,
for the harvest is ripe.
Go in, tread,
for the wine press is full.
The vats overflow,
for their wickedness is great.

[14] Multitudes, multitudes,
in the valley of decision!
For the day of the LORD is near
in the valley of decision.
[15] The sun and the moon are darkened,
and the stars withdraw their
shining.

[16] The LORD roars from Zion,
and utters his voice from Jerusalem,
and the heavens and the earth
shake.
But the LORD is a refuge for his people,
a stronghold for the people of Israel.

[a] Or *palaces*
[b] Heb *sanctify war*
[c] Meaning of Heb uncertain

symbolic place, a plain broad enough for *the nations* to be gathered and defeated, but cf. 2 Chr 20.20–26. **3:** On charges of enslavement, cf. Am 2.6; 8.6. On foreign nations that *cast lots,* see Ob 11; Nah 3.10.

3.4–21: Punishment of foreign nations and weal for Judah: In the tradition of oracles against foreign nations, coastal territories are initially indicted. Verses 4–8, which may be intrusive, may refer to events dating to the mid-fourth century BCE, a time when these regions could have worked in concert. **5:** According to 2 Kings 25.13–17, the Babylonians removed the gold from Jerusalem's Temple. **6:** On sale of children to Greece, cf. Ezek 27.13 ("Javan" = Ionia). **7–8:** The LORD will requite the coastal regions by selling their children to Judah. *Sabeans*, or the land of Sheba, in the southern Arabian peninsula. **9–13:** The oracle begun in vv. 1–3 resumes. Plural imperative verbs predominate in vv. 9–11, though speakers and audiences are ambiguous. The nations, or perhaps the divine council, are commanded to prepare for war. Verse 11b is directed to the LORD whereas in v. 12 the deity is speaking. Verse 13 is addressed either to the divine council or to Israel. **10: A** reversal of the imagery in Isa 2.4 and Mic 4.3. **12:** *Jehoshaphat* is a wordplay on *judge* (Heb "shaphat"). **13:** Images of fertility, as in ch 2, reappear. **14–21:** A series of poetic fragments (vv. 14–15,16,17,18,19–21) now ensues. **14–15:** The motif of darkening before the day of the LORD echoes 2.30–31; cf. 2.1–2n. The motif of *valley* (see 3.2,12) may explain why this oracle appears here. **16a:** This part of the verse is identical with Am 1.2 and may be why these two books are situated next

17 So you shall know that I, the LORD your God,
dwell in Zion, my holy mountain.
And Jerusalem shall be holy,
and strangers shall never again pass through it.

18 In that day
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
the hills shall flow with milk,
and all the stream beds of Judah
shall flow with water;
a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD
and water the Wadi Shittim.

19 Egypt shall become a desolation
and Edom a desolate wilderness,
because of the violence done to the people of Judah,
in whose land they have shed innocent blood.
20 But Judah shall be inhabited forever,
and Jerusalem to all generations.
21 I will avenge their blood, and I will not clear the guilty,[a]
for the LORD dwells in Zion.

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *I will hold innocent their blood that I have not held innocent*

to each other; see the Introduction. **17:** *You shall know*, cf. 2.27. **18:** The first part of this verse is almost identical with the last part of Am 9:13. For such preternatural fertility, cf. Isa 65.17–25; Zech 14.6–11. On a *fountain* and river flowing from the Temple, see Ezek 47.1–12; Zech 14.8. *Wadi Shittim*, literally "Wadi of Acacias"; as with the valley of Jehoshaphat (v. 12), the location is unknown. It may symbolize fertility. **19–21:** A final punitive oracle against Egypt and Edom (cf. Ob; Ps 137; Mal 1.3–4; Sir 50.26), an unusual combination of an empire and a small state. That the LORD dwells in or is located at Zion is an important motif near the end of the book (vv. 16,17,18,21).

AMOS

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book of Amos is a compilation of sayings attributed to the prophet Amos, who was active in the first half of the eighth century BCE, during the long and peaceful reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel (788–747 BCE; Am 1.1) and Uzziah of Judah (785–733 BCE). In this period, Israel attained a height of territorial expansion and national prosperity never again reached. At the same time, this prosperity led to gross inequities between urban elite and the poor. Through manipulation of debt and credit, wealthy landowners amassed capital and estates at the expense of small farmers. The smallest debt served as the thin edge of a wedge that lenders could use to separate farmers from their patrimonial lands and to deprive them of personal liberty.

Into this scene stepped Amos, himself a farmer and herder from Tekoa, a small village in Judah, who was probably active as a prophet during the decade 760–750 BCE. Amos denounced the society of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, in vivid language, bitterly describing the decadent opulence, immorality, and smug piety of the elite who "trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth" (2.7). Amos's program, in contrast, called for "justice" and "righteousness" (5.7,24; 6.12), terms that connote social equality and concern for the disadvantaged (Isa 5.7; Mic 6.8). Amos also condemned impure religion, which for him and the other prophets meant worship of deities other than the LORD, the use of images (5.26) to represent God, and worship at illicit shrines (3.14; 4.4).

The narrative about Amos's encounter with Amaziah (7.1–7) and the superscription (1.1) yield the only portrait of the prophet. A native of the Southern Kingdom of Judah who raised livestock and tended fruit trees, Amos prophesied to and in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. At the royal sanctuary of Bethel (7.13), his bitter invective, voiced as a divine word ("I hate, I despise your festivals," 5.21) no doubt scandalized pilgrims from Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom. His confrontation with the priest Amaziah remains one of the unforgettable scenes in biblical prophecy. Expelled from Bethel and commanded not to prophesy there again, Amos perhaps returned to Judah where he, or like-minded scribes, wrote down the essence of his public preaching in substantially its present form.

Although the reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah were relatively peaceful and prosperous in Israel and Judah, the region experienced calamitous upheaval shortly thereafter when Tiglath-pileser III assumed the throne in Assyria (745–727 BCE). He began the period of Assyria's greatest expansion in the west, including conquering the smaller kingdoms of Syria-Palestine. His successors, Shalmaneser V (727–722) and Sargon II (722–705), invaded the Northern Kingdom and conquered Samaria in 722. Within a few decades of Amos's prophetic activity, the Northern Kingdom saw devastation and destruction which made his foreboding words all the more sobering.

LOCATION IN CANON

Amos's prophetic career was roughly contemporaneous with that of Hosea, though Amos probably preceded him. Chronologically, then, Amos inaugurated the era of classical prophecy. In the Septuagint the book of Amos directly follows Hosea. The traditional arrangement of the Book of the Twelve (see p. 971) in the Masoretic Text and in English translations, however, is based not solely on chronology but often on specific verbal similarities or catchwords that link the end of one book to the beginning of the next. Amos is linked to the preceding book of Joel by identical phrases (see Joel 3.16a and Am 1.2a) and to the following book of Obadiah by a similar subject (Edom in Am 9.12 and in Ob 1).

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The book of Amos has three major parts: chs 1–2 are presented as a single speech, an ethical tour of the region from the divine perspective, which climaxes in judgment on Israel itself; chs 3–6 are the least unified section, a collection of short prophetic sayings indicting Israel for sin and injustice; chs 7–9 contain the visions of Amos, as well as the Amaziah narrative (7.10–17), and a final speech of comfort (9.11–15) addressed not to Israel but to Judah. The best approach for readers is to follow the sequence of the book itself. The book contains a variety of material. Some of Amos's sayings are presented as messenger speeches ("Thus says the LORD"), others as visions ("This is what the LORD showed me"), especially in chs 7–9. Amos, in a legal style of indictment followed by punishment ("therefore . . .") announced judgments (e.g., 1.3–2.16), delivered funeral orations (e.g., 5.1–2) to lament the fate of Israel, and gave exhortations (e.g., 5.6). He rarely encouraged (but see 9.11–15 and the notes

there). In addition to the preceding types of prophetic sayings, the book contains three hymnic fragments (4.13; 5.8–9; 9.5–6) and one narrative (7.10–17).

INTERPRETATION

Against the background of Israelite tradition about "the day of the LORD," occasions celebrated from the past and eagerly anticipated in the future when the LORD dramatically intervenes in human affairs, Amos announced that such a day was imminent. This time, however, the fortified palaces and temples of Israel would be leveled along with those of Israel's rival nations (1.3–2.3) when God executed the divine version of "justice and righteousness." Israel's covenant with God (3.2) did not absolve it from this ethical standard, which Amos universalized (9.7–8). Though Amos affirmed the special quality of God's relationship with Israel, he stressed that it entailed a special ethical responsibility (3.1–2). Historically, the agent of this divine punishment would be the Assyrian army (not mentioned in Amos, but see Isa 10.5–11). The frequent references to exile in Amos (e.g., 3.11; 6.7; 7.17) reflect a grim threat: the Assyrian imperial practice of deporting and transplanting conquered peoples.

Amos described himself as "a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees" (7.14). The latter tree is not the same as a North American "sycamore" (*Platanus occidentalis*), but a type of wild fig tree (*Ficus sycomorus*). These wild figs were gathered by poor people. The small fruit of this tree was inferior to that from the domesticated fig tree (*Ficus carica*). By "dressing" or gashing the small fruit of this tree, Amos and his cohorts hastened their ripening. This single, vivid detail about Amos's background in 7.14 speaks volumes about the prophet's ethics and harsh tone. It explains his solidarity with the poor (2.6–7; 5.11; 8.4) who literally "scratched out" a living in rural Judah and Ephraim, desperate for any harvest, however sparse and bitter. As noted, Amos rebuked far more often than he comforted. This arborist with his knife understood that pruning was required for revitalization and new growth. Amos lashed out at the elite's prosperity gained at the expense of the poor, upsetting their "baskets of summer fruit" (8.1–2).

The book of Amos begins and ends with references to an earthquake (1.1 and the images of shaking in 9.1–9). The exact year is unknown (760 has been proposed), but some archaeological evidence of a catastrophe exists. Did this earthquake, so severe that it was recalled centuries later (Zech 14.5), offer cosmic validation of Amos's preaching? One cannot know. Still, even today one can feel the aftershocks of Amos, the first in a brilliant succession of biblical prophets whose words, now preserved in written form, have left their indelible stamp on later thought about God and human history.

Gregory Mobley

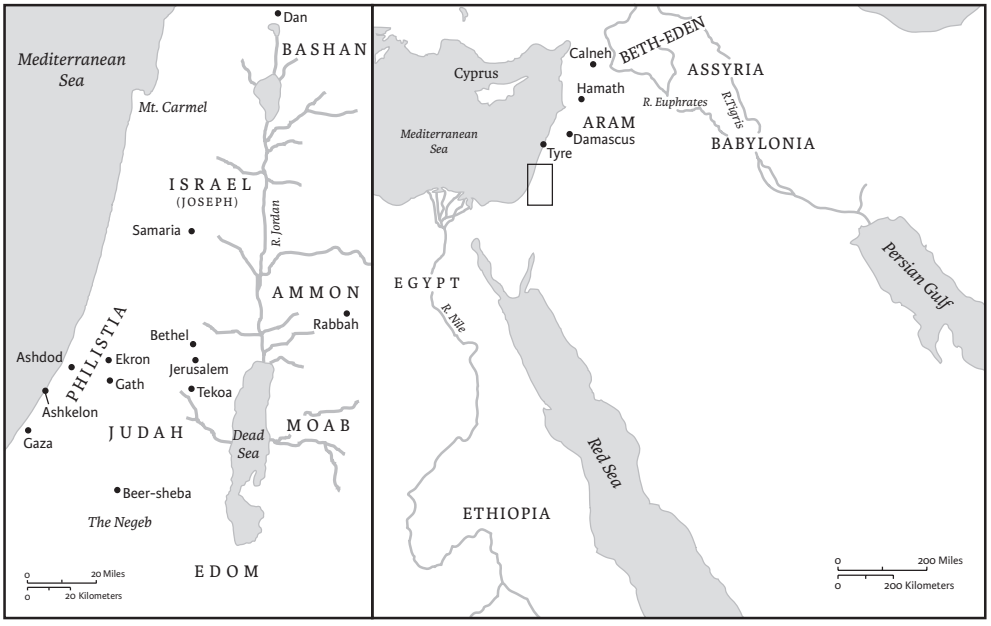
1 The words of Amos, who was among
the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw
concerning Israel in the days of King Uzziah
of Judah and in the days of King Jeroboam
son of Joash of Israel, two years[a] before the
earthquake. [2] And he said:
The LORD roars from Zion,
and utters his voice from Jerusalem;
the pastures of the shepherds wither,
and the top of Carmel dries up.

[3] Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of
Damascus,

[a] Or *during two years*

1.1: Superscription. *Amos* means "one supported" (by the LORD); for a longer form of the same name, see "Amasiah" ("Yah[weh] supports"; 2 Chr 17.16). *Among the shepherds,* the word translated "shepherds" probably denotes a herder or owner of large flocks rather than a hired worker; the same word is translated "sheep breeder" in 2 Kings 3.4, its only other occurrence in the Bible. See also 7.14–15. *Tekoa* was a town in Judah, ca. 10 mi (16 km) south of Jerusalem, and the home of an anonymous "wise woman" in 2 Sam 14.2. *He saw,* see Isa 2.1; Mic 1.1; Nah 1.1; visions were common among prophets from Judah (e.g., Isaiah and Ezekiel). For Amos's visions, see chs 7–9. *Uzziah* reigned over the Southern Kingdom 785–733 BCE. *Jeroboam* II reigned over the Northern Kingdom 788–747, suggesting a maximum span of forty years for Amos's career. On *the earthquake,* see Introduction.

1.2–2.16: A speech against the nations. A common feature of Israelite prophecy was the indictment of foreign nations, which implied the LORD's universal sovereignty. In general, Amos indicts the neighboring peoples



Chs 1–2: Places mentioned in the oracles against foreign nations.

and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;[a]
because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.
[4] So I will send a fire on the house of Hazael,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-hadad.
[5] I will break the gate bars of Damascus,
and cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven,
and the one who holds the scepter from Beth-eden;

[a] Heb *cause it to return*

for ethical transgressions on the order of war crimes. The prophet condemns their actions not only against Israel and Judah but also against other neighboring peoples. Thus, the scope of God's concern spans the larger international community. All the nations mentioned were either subject to or allies of the Davidic and Solomonic monarchy, and therefore bound by treaties to which the LORD would have been a witness and for which he was now acting as an enforcer. Near the end of this section, when Amos addresses Judah and Israel, the ethical standard is more exacting. **1.2:** This introductory verse occurs in similar form in Joel 3.16 (cf. Jer 25.30). *The LORD roars,* Amos uses the image of God as lion again in 3.4,8. *From Zion*, Ps 50.1–2. The sequence *from Jerusalem* … (to) *Carmel* traces the trajectory of the book as Amos, a southerner from the vicinity of Jerusalem, addresses the Northern Kingdom, whose northwest boundary was Mt. Carmel (see 9.3n.). **3,6,8, etc.:** *Thus says the LORD* and the conclusion *says the LORD* are standard formulas identifying prophetic oracles. The idiom *for three … and for four* indicates "more than enough" (Prov 30.18; Job 33.14).

1.3–5: Against Damascus (cf. Isa 17.1–3; Jer 49.23–27; Zech 9.1–4). *Damascus* was the capital of Syria (Aram). *They have threshed Gilead,* Gilead was Israelite territory in northern Transjordan, particularly vulnerable to Syrian aggression (2 Kings 10.32–33); threshing was often used to symbolize martial brutality (Isa 41.15; Mic 4.13); for an example of terroristic "threshing," see Judg 8.7,16. *Hazael* and *Ben-hadad* II were Syrian rulers (2 Kings 13.3). *The Valley of Aven* probably refers to the Beqa region between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges; *Beth-eden,* known in Assyrian records as Bit Adini, was a city-state on the Euphrates. The Hebrew names of both places, "Valley of Sin" and "House of Pleasure," respectively, have symbolic overtones. *Kir* is the place of Syrian origins (9.7) and exile (2 Kings 16.9); its precise location is unknown.

and the people of Aram shall go into
exile to Kir,
says the LORD.

6 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Gaza,
and for four, I will not revoke the
punishment;[a]
because they carried into exile entire
communities,
to hand them over to Edom.
7 So I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza,
fire that shall devour its strongholds.
8 I will cut off the inhabitants from
Ashdod,
and the one who holds the scepter from
Ashkelon;
I will turn my hand against Ekron,
and the remnant of the Philistines shall
perish,
says the Lord GOD.

9 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Tyre,
and for four, I will not revoke the
punishment;[a]
because they delivered entire communities
over to Edom,
and did not remember the covenant of
kinship.
10 So I will send a fire on the wall of Tyre,
fire that shall devour its strongholds.

11 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Edom,
and for four, I will not revoke the
punishment;[a]
because he pursued his brother with the
sword
and cast off all pity;
he maintained his anger perpetually,[b]
and kept his wrath[c] forever.
12 So I will send a fire on Teman,
and it shall devour the strongholds of
Bozrah.

13 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of the
Ammonites,
and for four, I will not revoke the
punishment;[a]
because they have ripped open pregnant
women in Gilead
in order to enlarge their territory.
14 So I will kindle a fire against the wall of
Rabbah,
fire that shall devour its strongholds,
with shouting on the day of battle,
with a storm on the day of the
whirlwind;
15 then their king shall go into exile,
he and his officials together,
says the LORD.

2 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Moab,
and for four, I will not revoke the
punishment;[a]
because he burned to lime
the bones of the king of Edom.

[a] Heb *cause it to return*
[b] Syr Vg: Heb *and his anger tore perpetually*
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *and his wrath kept*

1.6–8: Against Philistia. Four cities of the Philistine pentapolis (1 Sam 6.17) on the southeast coast of the Mediterranean are condemned for their slave traffic with Edom (2 Chr 21.16–17; Joel 3.4–8; Zeph 2.4–7).

1.9–10: Against Tyre (see Joel 3.4–8). Tyre was a Phoenician seaport north of Israel. *Covenant of kinship* (lit., "covenant of brothers"), cf. 1 Kings 5.12; 9.13.

1.11–12: Against Edom (Isa 34; Joel 3.19; Ezek 25.12). *Edom,* located south and east of the Dead Sea, was a perennial rival of neighboring Judah, especially in the exilic and postexilic era (Ps 137.7; Ob). The term *his brother,* i.e., Judah (Mal 1.2), draws on the ancient tradition of kinship between Jacob and Esau (Esau was "the father of Edom," Gen 36.43) and also connotes a treaty relationship (see vv. 9–10n.). *Teman,* a synonym for Edom. *Bozrah,* modern Buseirah, 40 km (25 mi) south of the Dead Sea.

1.13–15: Against Ammon (Zeph 2.8–11), which is condemned for atrocities against Israelites to its immediate north, in *Gilead. Rabbah,* the Ammonite capital (modern Amman).

2.1–3: Against Moab, Israel's neighbor and rival southeast of the Jordan (Isa 15.1–16.14). *Burned to lime,* for the practice of desecrating a corpse through disinterment and incineration, see 2 Kings 23.16–20; Isa 33.12. *Kerioth,* location uncertain; see Jer 48.24,41.

2 So I will send a fire on Moab,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Kerioth,
and Moab shall die amid uproar,
amid shouting and the sound of the trumpet;
3 I will cut off the ruler from its midst,
and will kill all its officials with him,
says the LORD.

4 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Judah,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;[a]
because they have rejected the law of the LORD,
and have not kept his statutes,
but they have been led astray by the same lies
after which their ancestors walked.
5 So I will send a fire on Judah,
and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.

6 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;[a]
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—
7 they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,
and push the afflicted out of the way;
father and son go in to the same girl,
so that my holy name is profaned;
8 they lay themselves down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge;
and in the house of their God they drink
wine bought with fines they imposed.

9 Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them,
whose height was like the height of cedars,
and who was as strong as oaks;
I destroyed his fruit above,
and his roots beneath.
10 Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt,
and led you forty years in the wilderness,
to possess the land of the Amorite.
11 And I raised up some of your children to be prophets
and some of your youths to be nazirites.[b]
Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?
says the LORD.

12 But you made the nazirites[b] drink wine,
and commanded the prophets,
saying, "You shall not prophesy."

[a] Heb *cause it to return*
[b] That is, *those separated* or *those consecrated*

2.4–5: Against Judah. Because of similarities between its language and that of the Deuteronomistic Reform (e.g., 2 Kings 17.15) in the late seventh century BCE, many scholars consider this oracle a later addition, but it is consistent with Amos's view that all nations stand accountable before God. Unlike in the previous indictments of foreign nations for crimes against humanity, Judah is held responsible for crimes against God.

2.6–16: Against Israel. Amos's ethical tour finally reaches home, where it surely shocked its audience. Israel can refer both to the Northern Kingdom, as the counterpart of Judah (2.4), and to the entire people that God brought out of Egypt (see 2.10; 3.1). Using the same literary form, Amos shows that Israel stands under divine judgment too, for oppression of the poor and for immorality. **6:** *They sell the righteous . . . and the needy* into debt slavery. **7:** *Same girl* probably does not refer to ritual prostitutes but to young unmarried women who, like the "needy" and the *poor,* were being exploited. **8:** *Garments taken in pledge,* see the prohibitions in Ex 22.25; Deut 24.17. The exploitation of the poor is especially odious when commodities gained unjustly, the above *garments* and *wine,* were paraded before the deity at the *altar* of *the house of their God.* **9:** *The Amorite . . . whose height,* pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan such as the Amorites (see Ezek 16.3) were often depicted as gigantic (Num 13.32–33; Deut 1.28). **10:** Deut 1.19–21. In contrast to the preceding indictments, the prophet invokes God's history with Israel as grounds for impending punishment. **11–12:** *Nazirites,* consecrated individuals who undertook

13 So, I will press you down in your place,
just as a cart presses down
when it is full of sheaves.[a]
14 Flight shall perish from the swift,
and the strong shall not retain their
strength,
nor shall the mighty save their lives;
15 those who handle the bow shall not stand,
and those who are swift of foot shall
not save themselves,
nor shall those who ride horses save
their lives;
16 and those who are stout of heart among
the mighty
shall flee away naked in that day,
says the LORD.

3 Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:

2 You only have I known
of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities.

3 Do two walk together
unless they have made an appointment?
4 Does a lion roar in the forest,
when it has no prey?
Does a young lion cry out from its den,
if it has caught nothing?
5 Does a bird fall into a snare on the earth,
when there is no trap for it?
Does a snare spring up from the ground,
when it has taken nothing?
6 Is a trumpet blown in a city,
and the people are not afraid?
Does disaster befall a city,
unless the LORD has done it?
7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing,
without revealing his secret
to his servants the prophets.
8 The lion has roared;
who will not fear?
The Lord GOD has spoken;
who can but prophesy?

9 Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod,
and to the strongholds in the land of
Egypt,
and say, "Assemble yourselves on Mount[b]
Samaria,
and see what great tumults are within it,
and what oppressions are in its midst."
10 They do not know how to do right, says
the LORD,
those who store up violence and
robbery in their strongholds.
11 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
An adversary shall surround the land,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *the mountains of*

vows, including abstinence from wine; Num 6.2; Judg 13.5. **13–16:** The effects of the earthquake (1.1; 9.1). **16:** *Naked,* unarmed and exposed; cf. Isa 20.1–6.

3.1–6.14: Judgment speeches against Israel come in three sections, each with the same opening (3.1; 4.1; 5.1).

3.1–2: A chosen people are held to a higher standard. 2: *You only have I known,* knowledge here refers to a relationship through covenant. The phrase *all the families of the earth* recalls traditions about divine promises to Abram (Gen 12.3) and Moses (Ex 19.4–6; Deut 7.6).

3.3–8: A series of rhetorical questions, which permit only a single response, build to an inescapable conclusion in v. 8b: The call to prophecy, unsolicited, cannot be resisted (7.14–15). Furthermore, the self-evident truths of vv. 1–8a render the audience susceptible to a truth in 8b it would naturally resist: Amos speaks on behalf of the LORD. **4:** *A lion roar,* see 1.2. **6:** *Trumpet,* the shofar, the ram's horn. **7:** *His secret to his servants the prophets,* for positive and negative illustrations of this principle, see, respectively, Gen 18.17–19 and 2 Kings 4.27. Because the phrase "his servants the prophets" is Deuteronomistic (see 2 Kings 21.10), and because the verse is in a different form, some scholars consider it a later addition (see 2.3–4n.). **8:** *Who can but prophesy?* Just as in chs 1–2, seven indictments against other peoples (1.3–2.5) rhetorically set a trap, sprung in the eighth against Israel itself, in this chapter seven questions (3.3–6) build to a crescendo; cf. 7.14–15 for Amos's reluctance to accept the call to prophecy.

3.9–15: Neighboring nations are invited to witness the LORD's complaint against the elite of Israelite society, who dwelt in *strongholds,* massive fortified palaces. **9:** *Ashdod,* a Philistine city on the Mediterranean coast; see 1.6–8. *Samaria,* capital of the Northern Kingdom. **11:** God addresses Samaria directly and promises the com-

and strip you of your defense;
and your strongholds shall be plundered.

12 Thus says the LORD: As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who live in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part[a] of a bed.

13 Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob,
says the Lord GOD, the God of hosts:
14 On the day I punish Israel for its transgressions,
I will punish the altars of Bethel,
and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground.
15 I will tear down the winter house as well as the summer house;
and the houses of ivory shall perish,
and the great houses[b] shall come to an end,
says the LORD.

4 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria,
who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,
who say to their husbands, "Bring something to drink!"
2 The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness:
The time is surely coming upon you,
when they shall take you away with hooks,
even the last of you with fishhooks.
3 Through breaches in the wall you shall leave,
each one straight ahead;
and you shall be flung out into Harmon,[a]
says the LORD.
4 Come to Bethel—and transgress;
to Gilgal—and multiply transgression;
bring your sacrifices every morning,
your tithes every three days;
5 bring a thank offering of leavened bread,
and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them;
for so you love to do, O people of Israel!
says the Lord GOD.

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *many houses*

ing of an *adversary*, though whether the figure is a divine or human agent of God's judgment is difficult to say (cf. Isa 10.5; Jer 25.8; Lam 2.5). **12:** As Amos, a pastoralist himself (7.14) knew, a *shepherd* was absolved of blame for loss of livestock if there were even small remains, *legs, or a piece of an ear,* of a predator's attack. With sarcasm, Amos suggests that after the divine punishment, announced by the roar of a lion (1.2; 3.8), only scraps would remain from the palaces of Samaria. Thus, Israel's remains do not signify the survival of a righteous remnant, but rather they justify God's judgment, just as the remains of an animal's carcass vindicate the shepherd (Ex 22.13). **13:** *House of Jacob*, the Northern Kingdom of Israel; cf. 9.8. **14:** *Bethel* was near the southern border of the Northern Kingdom, ca. 18 km (11 mi) north of Jerusalem. For Bethel as a shrine of the Northern Kingdom, see 1 Kings 12.25–30; for Amos and *Bethel,* see 4.4; 5.5–6; 7.10–13. Grasping *the horns of the altar,* the projections at the corners of an altar, brought asylum (Ex 21.14; 1 Kings 2.28–34). **15:** The LORD will raze the tokens of conspicuous Israelite consumption: *the winter house, the summer house,* and the *houses* decorated with carved *ivory* inlay (see 6.4), such as the royal palace in Samaria built by Ahab (1 Kings 22.39) and whose *winter house* is mentioned in 1 Kings 21.1.

4.1–3: Israel's luxurious excesses. Wealthy and greedy women of Samaria would be punished along with their husbands. **1:** *Bashan,* a fertile region in the northern Transjordan renowned for its cattle (Ps 22.12). Jeremiah (31.18) and Hosea (4.16) also compared Israel—its menfolk too—to *cows*. **2:** *Hooks … fishhooks,* the terms are obscure but perhaps refer to the practice of leading away prisoners with hooks through their noses, as depicted in ancient Near Eastern art (cf. Isa 37.29). **3:** *Straight ahead,* with the city walls in ruins, the captives will be easily taken away.

4.4–5: Israel's piety is satirized. **4:** *Bethel,* see 3.14n. *Gilgal,* a venerable Israelite shrine near Jericho (e.g., Josh 4.20; 10.43; 1 Sam 7.16), condemned by Amos (5.5) and his contemporary Hosea (Hos 4.15; 9.15; 12.11). The ritual practices listed here are prescribed elsewhere; for the morning sacrifice, see Ex 29.29; *tithes,* see Lev 27.30–32; Deut 14.28–29; *thank offering of leavened bread,* see Lev 7.13; *freewill offerings*, see Num 15.3. Note the association of tithes with Bethel in Gen 28.22.

6 I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
and lack of bread in all your places,
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

7 And I also withheld the rain from you
when there were still three months to the harvest;
I would send rain on one city,
and send no rain on another city;
one field would be rained upon,
and the field on which it did not rain withered;
8 so two or three towns wandered to one town
to drink water, and were not satisfied;
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

9 I struck you with blight and mildew;
I laid waste[a] your gardens and your vineyards;
the locust devoured your fig trees and your olive trees;
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

10 I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt;
I killed your young men with the sword;
I carried away your horses;[b]
and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils;
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

11 I overthrew some of you,
as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
and you were like a brand snatched from the fire;
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

12 Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel;
because I will do this to you,
prepare to meet your God, O Israel!

13 For lo, the one who forms the mountains, creates the wind,
reveals his thoughts to mortals,
makes the morning darkness,
and treads on the heights of the earth—
the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!

5 Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel:
2 Fallen, no more to rise,
is maiden Israel;
forsaken on her land,
with no one to raise her up.

3 For thus says the Lord GOD:
The city that marched out a thousand
shall have a hundred left,
and that which marched out a hundred
shall have ten left.[c]

4 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel:
Seek me and live;

[a] Cn: Heb *the multitude of*
[b] Heb *with the captivity of your horses*
[c] Heb adds *to the house of Israel*

4.6–13: Israel has ignored the divine warnings issued through plagues. These plagues typify the curses a treaty partner brought on itself through disobedience. Israel's covenantal documents contained such curses (Lev 26.14–39; Deut 28.15–68). **6:** *Cleanness of teeth* (i.e., famine). **10:** *A pestilence after the manner of Egypt,* Ex 9.3–7,15. *The stench* of unburied corpses, as in Isa 34.3. **11:** The verb *overthrew* here could refer to an earthquake, as it seems to in Gen 19.25,29, where the destruction of *Sodom and Gomorrah* is described. **13:** The first of three doxologies interspersed throughout Amos (5.8–9; 9.5–6). These hymnlike sections emphasize that the God Israel encounters in judgment is the creator.

5.1–3: Lament for Israel. Among the forms of prophetic speech was the lament; hearing one's own funeral speech delivered by a prophet must have had a sobering effect (cf. Jer 9.17–22).

5.4–7: A plea for repentance. Though the lament form was meant to convey a sense of inevitable judgment, there is yet time to *seek the LORD and live* (v. 6), an exhortation to turn to God or abide by God's precepts (Ps

5 but do not seek Bethel,
and do not enter into Gilgal
or cross over to Beer-sheba;
for Gilgal shall surely go into exile,
and Bethel shall come to nothing.

6 Seek the LORD and live,
or he will break out against the house of
Joseph like fire,
and it will devour Bethel, with no one to
quench it.
7 Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood,
and bring righteousness to the ground!

8 The one who made the Pleiades and
Orion,
and turns deep darkness into the
morning,
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the waters of the sea,
and pours them out on the surface of
the earth,
the LORD is his name,
9 who makes destruction flash out against
the strong,
so that destruction comes upon the
fortress.

10 They hate the one who reproves in the
gate,
and they abhor the one who speaks the
truth.
11 Therefore because you trample on the
poor
and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine.
12 For I know how many are your
transgressions,
and how great are your sins—
you who afflict the righteous, who take a
bribe,
and push aside the needy in the gate.
13 Therefore the prudent will keep silent in
such a time;
for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good and not evil,
that you may live;
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be
with you,
just as you have said.
15 Hate evil and love good,
and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant of
Joseph.

16 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of
hosts, the Lord:
In all the squares there shall be wailing;
and in all the streets they shall say,
"Alas! alas!"
They shall call the farmers to mourning,
and those skilled in lamentation, to
wailing;
17 in all the vineyards there shall be
wailing,
for I will pass through the midst of you,
says the LORD.

24.6; Prov 28.5; Isa 55.6). The prophet enjoins Israel to *seek* the LORD, not the sanctuaries of the LORD. **5:** For *Bethel* and *Gilgal,* see 3.14n.; 4.4n. *Beer-sheba,* though in the Negeb to the far south, was a shrine associated with Israel's ancestors (Gen 21.25–31; 26.23; 46.1–4) and would have attracted pilgrims from the north. **6:** *House of Joseph,* (i.e., the Northern Kingdom). Its two main parts were Ephraim and Manasseh, named for the sons of Joseph (Gen 41.50–52; 48). **7:** The dried leaves of *wormwood* were aromatic and bitter; here, injustice leads to bitterness (see 6.12).

5.8–9: The second doxology (see 4.13n.). **8:** *Pleiades* and *Orion* also occur together in Job 9.9; 38.31. Though astral bodies could inspire illicit worship (e.g., 2 Kings 23.5), to the faithful they testified to God's power (e.g., Ps 8.3).

5.10–17: Amos condemns a corrupt legal system. 10–13: At the very site of legal proceedings, the city *gate,* the truth is rejected, the poor are plundered, and witnesses are bribed. **11:** A futility curse, in which the connections between actions and their expected effects are broken; cf. Deut 28.30–31,38–46; Mic 6.14–15; Zeph 1.13. **12:** Cf. 2.6–7. **14–15:** Another plea for repentance; see vv. 4–7; *Joseph,* see 5.6n. **16–17:** Staying with the images of village life and returning to the motif of lament (5.1–3), Amos depicts the divine punishment for injustice. **16:** *Skilled in lamentation,* professional mourners; see Jer 9.17–21; Ezek 32.16; Eccl 12.5; 2 Chr 35.25.

18 Alas for you who desire the day of the
LORD!
Why do you want the day of the
LORD?
It is darkness, not light;
19 as if someone fled from a lion,
and was met by a bear;
or went into the house and rested a hand
against the wall,
and was bitten by a snake.
20 Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not
light,
and gloom with no brightness in it?

21 I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn
assemblies.
22 Even though you offer me your burnt
offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the offerings of well-being of your
fatted animals
I will not look upon.
23 Take away from me the noise of your
songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your
harps.
24 But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing
stream.

25 Did you bring to me sacrifices and
offerings the forty years in the wilderness,
O house of Israel? 26 You shall take up Sak-
kuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god,
your images,[a] which you made for yourselves;
27 therefore I will take you into exile beyond
Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is the
God of hosts.

6 Alas for those who are at ease in Zion,
and for those who feel secure on Mount
Samaria,
the notables of the first of the nations,
to whom the house of Israel resorts!
2 Cross over to Calneh, and see;
from there go to Hamath the great;
then go down to Gath of the Philistines.
Are you better[b] than these kingdoms?
Or is your[c] territory greater than their[d]
territory,
3 O you that put far away the evil day,
and bring near a reign of violence?

4 Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory,
and lounge on their couches,

[a] Heb *your images, your star-god*
[b] Or *Are they better*
[c] Heb *their*
[d] Heb *your*

5.18–6.14: A series of "woe" sayings (5.18–25; 6.1–3; 6.4–14) complete the section of judgment speeches.

5.18–20: The day of the LORD, in which Israelites expected to be vindicated against their enemies, will be, as depicted already in 1.1–2.16, a day when Israel too receives its judgment. See also Isa 13.6,9; Jer 46.10; Joel 2.1–2; Mal 4.5.

5.21–27: The LORD delights not in abundance of festivals and sacrifices but in justice and righteousness. See also Isa 1.10–17; Mic 6.6–8; Ps 50. **21–23:** The language is harsh. *Festivals* refers to the three pilgrimage feasts (Ex 23.14–17; 34.18,22–23; Deut 16.16), as does *solemn assemblies* (Lev 23.36; Deut 16.8). The sacrifices in v. 22 were prescribed; see, e.g., Lev 7.8–14. *Songs* is often used of hymns (see 8.3), such as the psalms (e.g., see title of Ps 120). For a similar view, see Isa 1.11–17. **24:** *Justice* and *righteousness*, care for the poor. An *ever-flowing stream* is a riverbed that never fails, as opposed to a wadi, common in Israel's landscape, which had runoff water only in the rainy season. **25:** As in Jeremiah (2.2–3) and Hosea (2.14–20; 9.10), the period in the wilderness after the Exodus is recalled as an ideal. Like Jer 7.21–23, the rhetorical question presumes that sacrifice was not a component of Israel's religious system immediately after the Exodus. This is inconsistent with other biblical traditions (contrast Ex 20–Num 10). **26:** *Sakkuth* and *Kaiwan* (Saturn) designate known Assyrian deities. *Sakkuth* may be the same as the "Succoth" whose cult the Babylonians established in Samaria after its fall (2 Kings 17.30). **27:** *Damascus,* 1.3–5n.

6.1–7: An indictment of conspicuous consumption. 1: Amos targets the elite of the capitals of both Judah (*Zion,* i.e., Jerusalem) and Israel (*Mount Samaria*). **2:** Cf. Isa 10.9–11. *Calneh* and *Hamath* were prosperous cities of Syria, conquered by the Assyrians in 738 BCE; the allusion to *Gath,* the only Philistine city unmentioned in 1.6–8, could refer to its defeat at the hands of Syria (2 Kings 12.18) or Judah (2 Chr 26.6), or its conquest by the Assyrians in 711. **4:** *Beds of ivory,* see 3.15n. Hundreds of ivory fragments have been excavated from the site of

and eat lambs from the flock,
and calves from the stall;
5 who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,
and like David improvise on instruments of music;
6 who drink wine from bowls,
and anoint themselves with the finest oils,
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!
7 Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile,
and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

8 The Lord God has sworn by himself
(says the Lord, the God of hosts):
I abhor the pride of Jacob
and hate his strongholds;
and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.

9 If ten people remain in one house, they shall die. 10 And if a relative, one who burns the dead,[a] shall take up the body to bring it out of the house, and shall say to someone in the innermost parts of the house, "Is anyone else with you?" the answer will come, "No." Then the relative[b] shall say, "Hush! We must not mention the name of the Lord."

11 See, the Lord commands,
and the great house shall be shattered to bits,
and the little house to pieces.
12 Do horses run on rocks?
Does one plow the sea with oxen?[c]
But you have turned justice into poison
and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood—
13 you who rejoice in Lo-debar,[d]
who say, "Have we not by our own strength
taken Karnaim[e] for ourselves?"
14 Indeed, I am raising up against you a nation,
O house of Israel, says the Lord, the God of hosts,
and they shall oppress you from Lebo-hamath
to the Wadi Arabah.

7 This is what the Lord God showed me: he was forming locusts at the time the latter growth began to sprout (it was the latter growth after the king's mowings). 2 When

[a] Or *who makes a burning for him*
[b] Heb *he*
[c] Or *Does one plow them with oxen*
[d] Or *in a thing of nothingness*
[e] Or *horns*

Samaria. **5:** *David,* 1 Sam 16.23; 1 Chr 23.5; Neh 12.36. **6–7:** *Joseph,* see 5.6n. The elite of Samaria, accustomed to the choicest products, will be the first chosen for deportation by the Assyrians. **7:** The *revelry* (Heb "marzeah") was a social and funerary ritual banquet of Canaanite origin; cf. Jer 16.5.

6.8–14: Judgment on Israel. *Jacob*, here referring to the Northern Kingdom. The house of Israel, both as a sociopolitical body and as representative of its palatial *strongholds,* is doomed. **9–10:** *Burns the dead* probably refers to practices to stop the spread of infection. In this extremity, the few survivors dare not *mention the name of the Lord,* out of fear of inviting their own destruction from a deity still intent on destruction. **12:** Israel's legal and moral machinations are a perversion bordering on the absurd. *Wormwood,* see 5.7n. **13:** *Lo-debar* and *Karnaim* are two cities east of the Jordan recovered for Israel by Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14.25). The verse puns on the names of the cities, which mean "No-thing" and "Horns (i.e., strength)," respectively. **14:** An unnamed nation will be the instrument of God's judgment. *From Lebo-hamath to the Wadi Arabah,* the farthest limits of Israelite territory (see 2 Kings 14.25), from the Orontes Valley in Lebanon to the north to the Rift Valley in the southeast.

7.1–9.15: The visions of Amos. The final section of the book consists of accounts and interpretations of five visions which become increasingly severe (7.1–3,4–6,7–9; 8.1–3; 9.1–6), a biographical account about the prophet (7.10–17), and prophetic oracles (8.4–14; 9.5–15).

7.1–9: The first three of five visions and Amos's intercession. Amos acts as an intercessor on behalf of Israel (see Gen 18.17; Ex 32.7–14). Yet prophetic intercession, while effective in the short term, will ultimately not deter God from punishing sinful Israel.

7.1–3: Judgment by locusts (cf. Joel 1.2–7). **1:** A locust plague at the time of *the latter growth* endangered the spring planting, just sprouting, after the harvest of the winter crops. **2:** The prophet appeals to God's sense of proportion:

they had finished eating the grass of the land,
I said,
"O Lord God, forgive, I beg you!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!"
3 The Lord relented concerning this;
"It shall not be," said the Lord.

4 This is what the Lord God showed me:
the Lord God was calling for a shower of fire,[a]
and it devoured the great deep and was eating
up the land. 5 Then I said,
"O Lord God, cease, I beg you!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!"
6 The Lord relented concerning this;
"This also shall not be," said the Lord
God.

7 This is what he showed me: the Lord was
standing beside a wall built with a plumb
line, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the
Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?"
And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord
said,
"See, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass them by;
9 the high places of Isaac shall be made
desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be
laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of
Jeroboam with the sword."

10 Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent
to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos
has conspired against you in the very center
of the house of Israel; the land is not able to
bear all his words. 11 For thus Amos has said,
'Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.' "
12 And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee
away to the land of Judah, earn your bread
there, and prophesy there; 13 but never again
prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctu-
ary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."
14 Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am[b]
no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am[b] a
herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees,
15 and the Lord took me from following the
flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy
to my people Israel.'
16 "Now therefore hear the word of the Lord.
You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel,
and do not preach against the house of
Isaac.'
17 Therefore thus says the Lord:
'Your wife shall become a prostitute in the
city,

[a] Or *for a judgment by fire*
[b] Or *was*

Israel (*Jacob*) is *so small* and, by implication, God is so big (cf. Job 7.20). **3:** *The Lord relented,* God's mind changed concerning the punishment, although forgiveness is not offered, as Amos requested (see also Ex 32.14; Joel 2.13; Jon 4.2).

7.4–6: Judgment by fire. 4: *The great deep,* the cosmic waters under the earth and over the heavens (see Gen 1.2).

7.7–9: Israel falls short. The *plumb line* (2 Kings 21.13–15), a device for determining the true vertical line of a structure, reveals that Israel's religious and political institutions do not measure up and will be destroyed; here the prophet offers no intercessory protest or plea, though he does maintain a dialogue with God. *High places* were open-air *sanctuaries.* Though acceptable in earlier eras, Amos and Hosea (10.8) condemned them as places of illicit worship. *Isaac,* a rare designation for the Northern Kingdom (see v. 16). *House of Jeroboam,* the royal dynasty of Jeroboam II (788–747 BCE).

7.10–17: Amos and Amaziah. This episode, a narrative illustration of 2.12 in the form of a dramatic encounter between the royal priest and the prophet, the classic outsider, is here perhaps because the reference to *King Jeroboam* (v. 10) picks up the phrase "house of Jeroboam" (v. 9). Amaziah was the official priest of the royal shrine at Bethel (see 3.14n.). **10:** Whether or not the charge against Amos is accurate, prophets such as Elisha did engage in political upheavals (2 Kings 9.1–10). **11:** *For thus Amos has said,* Amaziah does not attribute the prophet's words to God. The first utterance Amaziah cites (*Jeroboam shall die . . .*) is the rough but not exact equivalent of 7.9; the second phrase (*Israel must go . . .*) is similar to 4.2–3; 5.5,26–27; 6.7; 9.4. **12:** *Earn your bread,* lit., "eat bread." **14:** Amos asserts that he is neither a professional prophet (1 Sam 9.6–10; Mic 3.5–8,11) nor a member of a prophetic guild (2 Kings 2.3; 1 Sam 10.5; 1 Kings 22.6), but a *herdsman* of cattle (cf. 1.1n.) and seasonally a *dresser of sycamore trees* (see Introduction). **15:** Cf. 2 Sam 7.8. **17:** A dreadful string of curses: May *your wife . . . become*

and your sons and your daughters shall
fall by the sword,
and your land shall be parceled out by
line;
you yourself shall die in an unclean land,
and Israel shall surely go into exile away
from its land.' "

8 This is what the Lord GOD showed me—a basket of summer fruit.[a] [2] He said, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit."[a] Then the LORD said to me,

"The end[b] has come upon my people
Israel;
I will never again pass them by.
[3] The songs of the temple[c] shall become
wailings in that day,"
says the Lord GOD;
"the dead bodies shall be many,
cast out in every place. Be silent!"

[4] Hear this, you that trample on the
needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,
[5] saying, "When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat for sale?
We will make the ephah small and the
shekel great,
and practice deceit with false balances,
[6] buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
and selling the sweepings of the wheat."

[7] The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
Surely I will never forget any of their
deeds.
[8] Shall not the land tremble on this
account,
and everyone mourn who lives in it,
and all of it rise like the Nile,
and be tossed about and sink again, like
the Nile of Egypt?

[9] On that day, says the Lord GOD,
I will make the sun go down at noon,
and darken the earth in broad daylight.
[10] I will turn your feasts into mourning,
and all your songs into lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on all loins,
and baldness on every head;

[a] Heb *qayits*
[b] Heb *qets*
[c] Or *palace*

a prostitute; may others acquire title to your land (i.e., *parcel* it *out* with a measuring *line*). *Israel shall surely go,* Amos closes his response to Amaziah by repeating the latter's words from v. 11.

8.1–9.15: Further visions and oracles. The final two chapters of Amos have a similar outline: Both begin with visions (8.1–3; 9.1–6), followed by oracles with many literary connections (cf. 8.8 with 9.5; 8.9 with 9.11; 8.11 with 9.13).

8.1–3: Fourth vision. A *basket* of ripe *summer fruit* symbolizes the immediacy of Israel's end. Note the pun in Hebrew between *summer fruit*, "qayits," and end, "qets." **2:** *I will never again pass them by*, God will no longer mitigate Israel's punishment, see 7.8. Contrast 5.17, where God's presence brings destruction. **3:** *Songs of the temple*, see 5.21–23n. *Wailings*, see 5.16. *Be silent,* after the conclusion of the fourth and before the fifth and final vision (9.1–4) the prophet who had interceded and maintained dialogue with God through the previous visions is rendered speechless.

8.4–14: Judgment speeches against Israel; cf. 3.1–6.14. **4–6:** Rapacious and fraudulent business practices victimize the poor; cf. 2.6–7. **5:** The merchants are impatient for the holy days to pass so they can resume their fraudulent business (Lev 19.35–36; Deut 25.13–16). *The new moon,* see Num 29.6. *Ephah small,* sell less than the apparent volume; an *ephah* was ca. .66 bu (23 l). *Shekel great,* overcharge; a *shekel* weighed ca. .4 oz (11.5 gr). *False balances,* scales rigged in the merchant's favor. **6:** *Buying the poor* probably refers to outright slavery, as opposed to *selling the righteous* (2.6) into debt slavery. *Sweepings of the wheat,* they sell the chaff as wheat. **7:** *Pride of Jacob*, may be an epithet for God (cf. 1 Sam 15.29) or for Israel (see Ps 47.4). Here the term is ironic, for it is the sinful pride of Israel that prompts God's reproach (see 6.8; Jer 13.9; Hos 7.10). That God does not *forget* is often a comfort (see Deut 4.31; Ps 9.12; Isa 49.15), but here it brings judgment. **8:** *Tremble,* perhaps another reference to an earthquake (see Introduction). *Like the Nile … tossed about and sink,* the annual inundation of the Nile (9.5; Jer 46.7–8). **9–10:** A solar eclipse portends divine punishment and elicits mourning rituals. *Sackcloth* and *baldness* were customary expressions of mourning associated with national disaster (e.g., Isa 22.12). *An only*

I will make it like the mourning for an only
son,
and the end of it like a bitter day.

11 The time is surely coming, says the Lord
GOD,
when I will send a famine on the land;
not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of the LORD.
12 They shall wander from sea to sea,
and from north to east;
they shall run to and fro, seeking the word
of the LORD,
but they shall not find it.

13 In that day the beautiful young women
and the young men
shall faint for thirst.
14 Those who swear by Ashimah of
Samaria,
and say, "As your god lives, O Dan,"
and, "As the way of Beer-sheba lives"—
they shall fall, and never rise again.

9 I saw the LORD standing beside[a] the altar,
and he said:
Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake,
and shatter them on the heads of all the
people;[b]
and those who are left I will kill with the
sword;
not one of them shall flee away,
not one of them shall escape.

2 Though they dig into Sheol,
from there shall my hand take them;
though they climb up to heaven,
from there I will bring them down.
3 Though they hide themselves on the top
of Carmel,
from there I will search out and take
them;
and though they hide from my sight at the
bottom of the sea,
there I will command the sea-serpent,
and it shall bite them.
4 And though they go into captivity in
front of their enemies,
there I will command the sword, and it
shall kill them;
and I will fix my eyes on them
for harm and not for good.

5 The Lord, GOD of hosts,
he who touches the earth and it melts,
and all who live in it mourn,
and all of it rises like the Nile,
and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt;
6 who builds his upper chambers in the
heavens,
and founds his vault upon the earth;
who calls for the waters of the sea,
and pours them out upon the surface of
the earth—
the LORD is his name.

[a] Or *on*
[b] Heb *all of them*

son, Jer 6.26; Zech 12.10. **11–12:** No longer will God's judgment come as a famine or drought (contrast 4.6), but rather as an absence of prophecy, thus extinguishing the intercessory role of prophets in times of turmoil. **14:** *Ashimah* (or "guilt") *of Samaria* could be a Syrian deity (2 Kings 17.30) or a disparaging reference ("the guilt") to the practice of treating the cosmic LORD merely as the patron of a local shrine, whether in the center of Israel (*Samaria*), the farthest north (*Dan*), or the farthest south (*Beer-sheba*).

9.1–6: Fifth vision. For other appearances of the LORD at shrines, see 1 Sam 3.1–18; Isa 6.1–13. **1:** Probably *the altar* at Bethel (3.14; 7.10) is intended. *Capital*, the top of a pillar. *Threshold*, the foundational slab of the doorposts. The entire structure, from ceiling to foundation, will *shake*; see Isa 6.4. **2:** *Sheol,* the place of the dead (Job 10.19–22; Isa 14.11,15), which, Amos asserts, is within God's purview (Ps 139.7–12), though many feared it was not (e.g., Ps 6.6; 88.3–5). **3:** Mount *Carmel,* which juts into the Mediterranean at the northwestern border of Israel, reaches a summit of ca. 550 m (1,800 ft) above sea level and also boasts caves and forests for those who wish to *hide. Sea-serpent,* sea monsters, personifications of chaos, are at times cast as opponents of God (Ps 72.13); at other times, as here, as God's servants (Ps 104.25–26; Job 41). **5–6:** The third hymnlike passage (4.13; 5.8–9). **5:** See 8.8n. **6:** *Upper chambers,* Ps 104.3. The vault is another name for the celestial barrier thought to separate the earth from the cosmic waters (Gen 1.6–8; Prov 8.27).

[7] Are you not like the Ethiopians[a] to me,
O people of Israel? says the LORD.
Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt,
and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?
[8] The eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom,
and I will destroy it from the face of the earth
—except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,
says the LORD.

[9] For lo, I will command,
and shake the house of Israel among all the nations
as one shakes with a sieve,
but no pebble shall fall to the ground.
[10] All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword,
who say, "Evil shall not overtake or meet us."

[11] On that day I will raise up
the booth of David that is fallen,
and repair its[b] breaches,
and raise up its[c] ruins,
and rebuild it as in the days of old;
[12] in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom
and all the nations who are called by my name,
says the LORD who does this.

[13] The time is surely coming, says the LORD,
when the one who plows shall overtake the one who reaps,
and the treader of grapes the one who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.
[14] I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
[15] I will plant them upon their land,
and they shall never again be plucked up
out of the land that I have given them,
says the LORD your God.

[a] Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*
[b] Gk: Heb *their*
[c] Gk: Heb *his*

9.7–10: Israel has no claim to special privilege. Amos refutes the idea that Israel's relationship with God implies its superiority. This oracle suggests, positively, that God has enacted other exoduses at other times and places and, negatively, that Israel stands in judgment alongside the nations; see 3.2. **7:** *Like the Ethiopians,* even distant Nubia is within God's purview. *Philistines from Caphtor* (probably Crete) (Jer 47.4). *Kir,* see 1.5n. **8:** Though the political entity of the Northern Kingdom will be destroyed, the people of Israel, here the *House of Jacob*, will not. **9:** *Sieve*, used to separate grain from stones picked up on the threshing room floor.

9.11–15: An oracle of restoration. Prophetic collections often end on a similar, hopeful note; many, as above, refer to *that day* (Hos 14.1–7; Joel 3.18–21; Mic 7.11–20; Zeph 3.14–20; Hag 2.20; Zech 14.6,20; Mal 14.1–5). **11:** *Booth of David,* elsewhere in Amos, the fate of the Davidic dynasty, depicted here as in *ruins,* had not been a concern. This verse, at least, sounds like it stems from a later time, after the dynasty had *fallen.* The phrase "booth of David" suggests a more fragile structure than the more frequent "house of David" (cf. 2 Sam 7.11; Isa 1.8). **12:** *Edom* was a traditional rival of Judah, not Israel, so this is further evidence that part or all of this final oracle was added after the fall of Samaria in 722 BCE, at a time when the book was reinterpreted for Judahites. **13:** See Joel 3.18–21. *Shall overtake,* see Lev 26.5.

OBADIAH

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND CANONICAL STATUS

The name Obadiah means "servant of Yah[weh]." Other persons with the same name occur in the books of Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, though none of them seems related. Because no information about the prophet is found in the book, this oracle is functionally anonymous.

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Hebrew Bible, containing only verse numbers. Although some ancient manuscripts place it between Joel and Jonah, its placement in the Masoretic Text between Amos and Jonah (reflected in the NRSV) is seen by some scholars as reflection of the editors' attempt to create a theologically unified Book of the Twelve. The similarity between Amos's final statements on Edom (Am 9.11–12) and Obadiah's critique of Edom lends credence to this view.

CONTENTS AND DATE OF COMPOSITION

Obadiah makes three interlocking claims: Edom, a nation east of Judah, is currently in distress; this distress is just recompense for its treatment of Judah, its brother; and in a future reversal of fortunes Judah's exiles will possess the land of Edom. The accusations leveled against Edom in vv. 10–14, that Edom stood aside while strangers attacked Jerusalem and even aided in the invasion of the city, are usually understood to refer to Edomite action during the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

Other biblical books share Obadiah's anger against Edom. Anti-Edomite oracles appear in Isa 34.5–8; 63.1–4; Ezek 25.12–13; 35.5–6,15; 36.5; Joel 3.19; and Jer 49.7–22; the language of the latter closely parallels Obadiah. Psalm 137.7 calls for revenge against Edom, and Ezek 36.5 and 1 Esd 4.50 join Obadiah in charging that Edomites/Idumeans confiscated Judah's land. Obadiah sees Edom's activities as especially heinous due to the brotherhood of the two nations; the tradition that Edom and Judah descend from the brothers Esau and Jacob is found in Gen 25; Deut 2.5; and Mal 1.2–5.

Archaeologists and historians confirm the instability of this area during the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, fomented by a series of Babylonian invasions. Ostraca from Arad suggest that after the Babylonian invasion of Judah in 597 Edom gained control of Judean territory in the Negeb; after the second Babylonian invasion of Judah in 586, Edomite control may have reached farther north into the Shephelah.

In 552 BCE, the Babylonian king Nabonidus invaded Edom, attacked the city of Sela, and integrated the Edomite kingdom into the province of Arabia. Edomite territory later became part of the Arab kingdom of Qedar and then the Persian province of Idumea. The closing verses of Obadiah may reflect Judean glee in these territorial losses, as well as the hope that Judah would reclaim the Negeb and extend its borders in every direction. Hence, while many date Obadiah close to the traumatic events of 586, it instead may have been written in a later generation, as its author sought to establish Judah's land claims by recalling Edom's past crimes and appealing to the rhetoric of brotherhood. Perhaps already in the book of Obadiah, but certainly in the following centuries, "Edom" was used symbolically to describe nations who oppose God.

Julia M. O'Brien

[1] The vision of Obadiah.

Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom:
We have heard a report from the Lord,
and a messenger has been sent among
the nations:
"Rise up! Let us rise against it for battle!"
[2] I will surely make you least among the
nations;
you shall be utterly despised.
[3] Your proud heart has deceived you,
you that live in the clefts of the rock,[a]
whose dwelling is in the heights.
You say in your heart,
"Who will bring me down to the ground?"
[4] Though you soar aloft like the eagle,
though your nest is set among the stars,
from there I will bring you down,
says the Lord.

[5] If thieves came to you,
if plunderers by night
—how you have been destroyed!—
would they not steal only what they
wanted?
If grape-gatherers came to you,
would they not leave gleanings?
[6] How Esau has been pillaged,
his treasures searched out!
[7] All your allies have deceived you,
they have driven you to the border;
your confederates have prevailed against
you;
those who ate[b] your bread have set a
trap for you—
there is no understanding of it.
[8] On that day, says the Lord,
I will destroy the wise out of Edom,
and understanding out of Mount Esau.
[9] Your warriors shall be shattered,
O Teman,
so that everyone from Mount Esau will
be cut off.
[10] For the slaughter and violence done to
your brother Jacob,
shame shall cover you,
and you shall be cut off forever.

[a] Or *clefts of Sela*
[b] Cn: Heb lacks *those who ate*

1a: Superscription. A distinctively prophetic term, *vision* also occurs in Isa 1.1 and Nah 1.1.

1b–4: Edom's pending destruction. These verses closely parallel Jer 49.12–16, although in Jeremiah feminine forms are used to describe Edom. The theme of reversal runs throughout the book: Edom's fortunes have changed. **1b–2:** *"Thus says the Lord"* is the classic form of "prophetic messenger speech," marking the words as those of the deity. Both other nations and God are described as rising up against Edom. **3:** Prophetic books frequently condemn the *proud*, especially among the nations (Isa 10.12; 13.11,19; 16.6; Jer 48.29; Zeph 2.10; 9.6; Zech 10.11). **3–4:** *Clefts of the rock*: the same Heb word means "rock" (see Ps 137.9) and "Sela," an Edomite city captured by the Babylonian armies in 552 BCE and linked with the later city of Petra. Repeated pairs of opposites (proud/despised; heights/ground; soar aloft/bring down) underscore the reversal of Edom's fate.

5–7: Edom at the hand of the nations. These verses imply that Edom's former allies have begun its devastation, as in Jer 49.9–10. **5:** A difficult verse, suggesting that Edom's loss is beyond that caused by simple thieves. *Leave gleanings*, see Deut 24.21. **6:** *Esau* is described as Jacob's brother and the ancestor of the Edomites in Gen 25. **7:** Edom's former *allies* and *confederates* are not named. The Hebrew of this verse is difficult.

8–9: Edom at the hand of God. God will complete Edom's devastation *on that day*, a common prophetic term for "the day of the Lord" (see v. 15), when God defeats Israel's enemies. Phrases are shared with Jer 49.7, 22. Only Obadiah uses the phrase *Mount Esau*; Deut 2.2 speaks instead of "Mount Seir," the mountainous region on the boundary between Edom and Judah. **9:** *Teman* refers either to the northern region of Edom (as in Am 1.12) or to Edom as a whole.

10–14: Edom as treacherous brother. Edom's actions are especially treacherous because Esau/Edom was the brother of Jacob/Judah (Gen 25.7). *On the day* appears nine times in this unit, apparently referring to the traumatic day of Jerusalem's fall. The accusations against Edom build—that Edom *stood aside*, *gloated*, *boasted*, *looted*, and finally committed physical acts against fleeing Judeans. Although the NRSV translates 12–14 as *you should not have*, the forms are Heb jussives; see textual note *a*, on the next page. While Ps 137.7 also blames Edomites, claiming they *rejoiced* in Jerusalem's destruction, 2 Kings 24.2 blames bands of Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites for coming up against Jerusalem, with no mention of Edomites. Jeremiah 40.11 indicates that Judeans fleeing the Babylonians had escaped to Moab, Ammon, Edom and elsewhere. **11:** *Cast lots*, see Joel 3.3.

11 On the day that you stood aside,
on the day that strangers carried off his wealth,
and foreigners entered his gates
and cast lots for Jerusalem,
you too were like one of them.
12 But you should not have gloated[a] over[b] your brother
on the day of his misfortune;
you should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah
on the day of their ruin;
you should not have boasted
on the day of distress.
13 You should not have entered the gate of my people
on the day of their calamity;
you should not have joined in the gloating over Judah's[c] disaster
on the day of his calamity;
you should not have looted his goods
on the day of his calamity.
14 You should not have stood at the crossings
to cut off his fugitives;
you should not have handed over his survivors
on the day of distress.

15 For the day of the LORD is near against all the nations.
As you have done, it shall be done to you;
your deeds shall return on your own head.
16 For as you have drunk on my holy mountain,
all the nations around you shall drink;
they shall drink and gulp down,[d]
and shall be as though they had never been.
17 But on Mount Zion there shall be those that escape,
and it shall be holy;
and the house of Jacob shall take possession of those who dispossessed them.
18 The house of Jacob shall be a fire,
the house of Joseph a flame,
and the house of Esau stubble;
they shall burn them and consume them,
and there shall be no survivor of the house of Esau;
for the LORD has spoken.
19 Those of the Negeb shall possess Mount Esau,
and those of the Shephelah the land of the Philistines;
they shall possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria,
and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.
20 The exiles of the Israelites who are in Halah[e]

[a] Heb *But do not gloat* (and similarly through verse 14)
[b] Heb *on the day of*
[c] Heb *his*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Cn: Heb *in this army*

15–18: **The day of the LORD.** Edom's fate will be shared by all hostile nations, as they suffer a reversal of fates on the *day* that God acts to (re)establish justice. **16:** As in other prophetic books, retribution is depicted as drinking a cup of wrath (Isa 51.17,22; Jer 25.17; Hab 2.16; Zech 12.2). **17–18:** The reversal of fates will benefit Judah, whose devastation will turn to preeminence. **17:** *Mount Zion,* a synonym for Jerusalem, is contrasted with *Mount Esau* in v. 8. The *house of Jacob*, here southern Israel (i.e., Judah). **18:** The *house of Joseph* is Israel, the Northern Kingdom destroyed in 722 BCE. As in Mal 4.1, the day of the LORD will *burn* the unrighteous like *stubble*.

19–21: Reclamation and expansion of territory. 19: Judeans in the *Negeb* will expand eastward to take Edom. Those in the *Shephelah*, the western foothills of Judah, will seize territory from the neighboring *Philistines* and then advance northward, first into the tribal territory of *Ephraim* and then farther northward to *Samaria*. The southern Judean tribe of *Benjamin* will expand eastward across the Jordan River to take the land of *Gilead*. **20:** Survivors of both the Assyrian destruction of the Northern Kingdom in the eighth century BCE and the Babylonian destruction of the Southern Kingdom in the sixth century BCE will return to aid in Judah's territorial expansion. Those exiled to the Assyrian territory of *Halah* (2 Kings 17.6) will take *Zarephath* in Phoenicia, territory never previously possessed by Israel. Those exiled by the Babylonians will return from *Sepharad*, location unknown, and possess the *Negeb*, mentioned at the beginning of the unit. **21:** The concluding verse justifies *Mount Zion*'s control of *Mount Esau* (see 17n.), under the auspices of Judah's God.

shall possess[a] Phoenicia as far as
Zarephath;
and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in
Sepharad
shall possess the towns of the Negeb.
21 Those who have been saved[b] shall go up
to Mount Zion
to rule Mount Esau;
and the kingdom shall be the
LORD's.

[a] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Or *Saviors*

JONAH

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

The book of Jonah is a story about a prophet rather than a collection of his prophecies, as we find in the other prophetical books. It is the fifth of the Minor Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, where its placement between Obadiah and Micah reflects midrashic traditions concerning the dating of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah. The Septuagint places Jonah as the sixth of the twelve Minor Prophets and Nahum as the seventh, an arrangement also reflected in 2 Esd 1.38–40.

Jonah son of Amittai is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible only in 2 Kings 14.25 as a prophet who prophesied in the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the days of King Jeroboam II in the mid-eighth century BCE. The author of the book likely chose Jonah as his protagonist since attributing the events to a prophet mentioned in Israel's history granted his work authenticity, and because the event described in Kings deals with God's compassion and mercy, the central theme of the book of Jonah: in Kings the Northern Kingdom is spared, while in Jonah, the Assyrian Empire, its enemy, is forgiven.

STRUCTURE

The book is in two parts, each with three scenes:

Chs 1–2	God's first call to Jonah
1.1–3	Jonah's commission and attempt to flee
1.4–16	The moral: one cannot flee from God
2.1–11	Jonah, in the fish, prays and is saved
Chs 3–4	God's second call to Jonah
3.1–4	Jonah's mission and its completion
3.5–10	The repentance of Nineveh and God's forgiveness
4.1–11	Jonah's prayer-complaint, and the moral he learns from God

The two parts are symmetrical: the opening command assigning both missions is almost identical; the formulation of Jonah's flight and that of the fulfillment of the second mission open with the same words, "Jonah set out" (1.3; 3.3); both second scenes feature foreigners who are depicted favorably in contrast to Jonah; similar phrasing is used when the ship captain and the king of Nineveh express their belief in God when they are in danger, though unsure that their belief will save them (1.6; 3.6–9); Jonah prays to God in both final scenes: in 2.2 in order to save himself, and in 4.2–3 to express frustration over God's saving the people of Nineveh.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The author of the book of Jonah is unknown. Its language places it in the Second Temple period, its vocabulary and syntax corresponding with those of the Bible's later books, Aramaic sources, and rabbinic literature. The book was apparently written after the destruction of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612 BCE, since it refers to that city in the past tense (3.3), and the king is not called the "king of Assyria" but the "king of Nineveh" (3.6), an inappropriate title. The book should be dated no later than the third century BCE.

A late date is also suggested by Jonah's use of earlier biblical texts. For example, in the story of the flood, the earth is described as being "filled with violence" (Gen 6.11,13), while in Jonah, the king of Nineveh expresses the hope that repentance will cause the people to "turn from . . . the violence that is in their hands" (3.8). In the flood story, God's regret over creating humankind causes God to want now to destroy it (Gen 6.6), while in Jonah, God regrets the impulse to destroy the Ninevites (Jon 3.10). Similarly, the evil of the Ninevites and their punishment is like that of the inhabitants of Sodom (1.2; cf. Gen 18.20), while Jonah appears as Abraham's opposite. In the story of Sodom, Abraham pleads with God to save the city for the sake of the few righteous people without expecting the city's repentance (Gen 18.22–33). Jonah, in contrast, flees, refusing to warn the Ninevites lest they repent and be saved. Jonah is also depicted as the opposite of Abraham's nephew Lot, who warned his sons-in-law of imminent destruction until being taken from Sodom

by angels; Jonah's proclamation, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (3.4) is recited unwillingly, and then he even leaves the city to watch events unfold with complete lack of interest (4.5). Jonah is also contrasted with Moses, who was willing to die if God did not forgive the Israelites after they made the golden calf (Ex 32). Jonah's actions are also patterned after those of Elijah, who fled from Jezebel and his mission and asked to die (1 Kings 19). Jonah 4.2 appears to quote God's attributes (Ex 34.6–7) as they are presented in Joel 2.13. Jeremiah's prophecies (Jer 26.3; 36.7) echo in the words of the king of Nineveh who, with Jonah behaving as an anti-prophet, himself assumes the role of prophet and rouses his people to repent (3.8). He also used Ps 107.23–32 to shape ch 1.

INTERPRETATION

Jonah is not a historical book in the sense of recalling events that actually occurred; its characters and setting provide the means for the writer to convey his message. Part of that message concerns the power of repentance. Repentance, however, is not the book's central theme: if it were, the first three chapters would suffice, and Jonah's flight would be irrelevant. Instead, the book of Jonah concerns the essence of prophecy. Jonah knows God's attributes, that he is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing" (4.2). He knows that God will relent from destroying Nineveh and thus he flees, certain that his prophecy of destruction will be proven false. Jonah represents the concept, expressed explicitly in Deut 18.21–22, that the single proof for a prophecy's truth is its realization. God seeks to teach Jonah values more lofty than a prophecy's realization or a prophet's reliability—the saving of God's creation when found worthy. The book therefore illustrates the position—voiced openly in Jer 28.9—that although a prophecy of peace must be fulfilled in order to prove that its deliverer is a true prophet, a prophecy of destruction is meant, from the outset, to educate and bring repentance. This holds true even for foreign nations: the prophecy of doom is a conditional prophecy that will come true only in the absence of repentance (Jer 18.7–8).

The book of Jonah, unlike other prophetic writings, uses humor or irony to make its point. Exaggerated behavior (running away from God, 1.3); inappropriate actions (sleeping through a violent storm, 1.5); outlandish situations (offering a prayer of thanksgiving from inside a fish's belly, 2.1); ludicrous commands (animals must fast and wear sackcloth, 3.7–8); and emotions either contrary to expectation (anger at mercy, 4.1–2) or out of proportion (being angry enough to die because a plant has withered, 4.9) appear throughout the story.

The book has a role disproportionate to its size within religious tradition. Judaism, picking up on its theme of repentance, reads it liturgically on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It is cited several times in the New Testament, where Jonah prefigures Jesus who spent "three days and three nights … in the heart of the earth" (Mt 12.40).

Yair Zakovitch

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah
son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Go at once to
Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against
it; for their wickedness has come up before
me." 3 But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish
from the presence of the LORD. He went down
to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish;
so he paid his fare and went on board, to go
with them to Tarshish, away from the pres-
ence of the LORD.

4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon
the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon
the sea that the ship threatened to break up.
5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each
cried to his god. They threw the cargo that
was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for
them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down
into the hold of the ship and had lain down,
and was fast asleep. 6 The captain came and
said to him, "What are you doing sound
asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the
god will spare us a thought so that we do not
perish."

7 The sailors[a] said to one another, "Come,
let us cast lots, so that we may know on
whose account this calamity has come upon
us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on
Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us why
this calamity has come upon us. What is
your occupation? Where do you come from?
What is your country? And of what people
are you?" 9 "I am a Hebrew," he replied. "I
worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who
made the sea and the dry land." 10 Then
the men were even more afraid, and said to
him, "What is this that you have done!" For
the men knew that he was fleeing from the
presence of the LORD, because he had told
them so.

11 Then they said to him, "What shall we
do to you, that the sea may quiet down for
us?" For the sea was growing more and more
tempestuous. 12 He said to them, "Pick me up
and throw me into the sea; then the sea will
quiet down for you; for I know it is because
of me that this great storm has come upon
you." 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to
bring the ship back to land, but they could
not, for the sea grew more and more stormy
against them. 14 Then they cried out to the
LORD, "Please, O LORD, we pray, do not let us
perish on account of this man's life. Do not
make us guilty of innocent blood; for you,
O LORD, have done as it pleased you." 15 So
they picked Jonah up and threw him into
the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.
16 Then the men feared the LORD even more,
and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and
made vows.

17 [b]But the LORD provided a large fish to
swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly
of the fish three days and three nights.

[a] Heb *They*
[b] Ch 2.1 in Heb

1–2: God's first call to Jonah. 1.1–3: Jonah's commission and attempt to flee. Neither what Jonah was commanded to say nor the reason for his flight is given. Jonah's full name, which means "dove, the son of truth," may be symbolic. *Joppa,* modern Jaffa, is on the Mediterranean coast near Tel Aviv. *Tarshish* (Isa 23.1; Ezek 27.22,25) is probably Tartessus in southwestern Spain, which was the farthest point in the west to which Phoenician sailors had reached in their Mediterranean voyages. **4–16: The moral: one cannot flee from God.** Jonah realizes the impossibility of flight—God, ruler of the seas, causes a great storm. The sailors call to their gods for help, before turning to the practical matter of tossing the ship's cargo into the sea, whereas Jonah continues to flee, this time escaping into sleep. Ironically the prophet takes no part in the attempted rescue, and the ship's captain must rouse Jonah to call out to his God. **7:** Using *lots,* a standard form of divination in the ancient Near East, the sailors discover who is responsible; curious, they ask Jonah a series of questions. **9:** Jonah's answer reveals another irony: although he knew that God *made the sea,* Jonah fled to the sea to escape him. Jonah identifies himself as a *Hebrew*, a term typically used of Israelites among non-Israelites. *The LORD, the God of heaven* is a title found only in Second Temple period biblical texts. **16:** The section ends with the report of the sailors' awe (*feared*; cf. vv. 5,10) of the LORD; their *sacrifice* and *vows* show their belief in him. **17:** *Provided*, the verb appears three more times (4.6,7,8), always indicating a divine act that immediately affects Jonah's situation. The fish carries out God's will in order to teach the prophet a lesson, like the she-ass whose mouth is opened by God to mock the prophet Balaam (Num 22.28–30) and the ravens that feed Elijah (1 Kings 17.6) in order to teach Elijah that God is merciful.

2 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God
from the belly of the fish, [2] saying,
"I called to the LORD out of my
distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.
[3] You cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.
[4] Then I said, 'I am driven away
from your sight;
how[a] shall I look again
upon your holy temple?'
[5] The waters closed in over me;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped around my head
[6] at the roots of the mountains.
I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever;
yet you brought up my life from the Pit,
O LORD my God.
[7] As my life was ebbing away,
I remembered the LORD;
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.
[8] Those who worship vain idols
forsake their true loyalty.
[9] But I with the voice of
thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Deliverance belongs to the LORD!"
[10] Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it
spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.

3 The word of the LORD came to Jonah a
second time, saying, [2] "Get up, go to Nin-
eveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the
message that I tell you." [3] So Jonah set out and
went to Nineveh, according to the word of the
LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large
city, a three days' walk across. [4] Jonah began
to go into the city, going a day's walk. And
he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh
shall be overthrown!" [5] And the people of
Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a
fast, and everyone, great and small, put on
sackcloth.

[6] When the news reached the king of Nin-
eveh, he rose from his throne, removed his
robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat
in ashes. [7] Then he had a proclamation made
in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and
his nobles: No human being or animal, no
herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall
not feed, nor shall they drink water. [8] Human
beings and animals shall be covered with
sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God.
All shall turn from their evil ways and from

[a] Theodotion: Heb *surely*

2.10–11: Jonah, in the fish, prays and is saved. Jonah had avoided turning to God on the ship, but now he has no other choice. The psalm (like those in 1 Sam 2.1–10 and Isa 38.9–20) was incorporated into the story at a secondary stage. It is a psalm of thanksgiving and not a prayer for salvation, and does not correspond to the context, although it has loose connections with Jonah's situation. The image of drowning, expressing suffering in Psalms (e.g., Ps 69.2–3,15–16), reflects an ancient concept that the netherworld is found in the *deep*, at the *roots of the mountains*; its doors are bolted (v. 6) and none who enter will return. Despite the poet's being in *Sheol*, God, in his *holy temple*, nevertheless hears his prayer (v. 7). **2:** *Sheol,* the underworld, the abode of the dead. **4:** The wish to visit the *temple,* God's home, is common in Psalms (e.g., 5.7). **9:** Cf. 1.16. **10:** God who made the sea and the dry land (1.9) returns Jonah from the sea to the dry land. God speaks to the fish, not yet to Jonah directly. The term "spew" (literally, "vomit") mocks Jonah.

3–4: God's second call to Jonah. 3.1–10: Jonah's mission and its completion. This time Jonah obeys. Before we hear of Jonah entering Nineveh, the storyteller dwells on Nineveh's size, a significant detail in that all its inhabitants may perish. **3:** *A three days' walk across*, excavations have revealed a city ca. 2.5 mi (4.2 km) long and 1.25 mi (2.5 km) wide; thus the description of its size is an exaggeration. Jonah's proclamation, after walking only a third of the way in, is cursory, even omitting the preliminary "Thus said the Lord," proof of his insincerity and his disinterest in the Ninevites' repentance. **4:** *Forty days* is frequently a stereotypical period of time in the Bible (e.g., Gen 8.6; Ex 24.18). **5–10: The Ninevites repent and God forgives.** Despite Jonah's brevity, the Ninevites believe in God and perform customs of mourning and repentance (cf. 2 Sam 3.31; Job 2.12; Dan 9.3);

the violence that is in their hands. [9] Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish."

[10] When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

4 But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. [2] He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. [3] And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." [4] And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" [5] Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

[6] The LORD God appointed a bush,[a] and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. [7] But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. [8] When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

[9] But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." [10] Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. [11] And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

[a] Heb *qiqayon*, possibly *the castor bean plant*

even the animals repent. **9:** Cf. 1.6. These foreigners understand that supplications before God *may* awaken his mercy, a notion tightly linked with the lesson the author wishes to impart.

4.1–11: Jonah's prayer-complaint, and the moral he learns from God. 2–3: Jonah's second prayer to God is ironic: previously he asked for mercy for himself (2.2), now he resents the mercy shown toward the Ninevites. The prayer is in two parts: in v. 2 he provides his reasoning, in v. 3 he makes his request. **2:** Jonah describes God's character with words taken from God's self-definition in Ex 34.6–7. It is similar to other biblical texts (Pss 86.15; 103.8; 145.8; Neh 9.31; 2 Chr 30.9; Joel 2.13) that quote only the part about God's mercy (and not his severity—see Ex 34.7b). Jonah objects to God's compassion, turning praise for God into condemnation. **3:** An ironic reversal of 1 Kings 19.4, where Elijah offers legitimate reasons to die. **11:** The size of the city is again exaggerated. The book concludes with a question, which Jonah does not answer, suggesting that he is not the focus of this story. Instead it is didactic, suggesting that the reader must carefully ponder the nature of God.

MICAH

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book of Micah gives us little information about the prophet himself, for whom the book is named. According to 1.1, Micah prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah whose reigns spanned 759–687 BCE. Possible allusions to the fall of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, in 722 (1.6), and to the campaign of Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, in 701 (1.10–16), place the prophet in the final quarter of the eighth century. As such he was a younger contemporary of Isaiah of Jerusalem. Like Hosea, Amos, and especially Isaiah, Micah lived in a tumultuous era, the events of which are recounted in 2 Kings 16–20.

LOCATION IN CANON

The prophet Micah was among the earliest of the Minor Prophets. In the organization of the Book of the Twelve in the Masoretic Text (MT), Micah follows Jonah, an arrangement apparently based on chronology since, according to 2 Kings 14.25, Jonah also lived in the eighth century. Micah is loosely connected to the following book of Nahum by catchwords; compare the final section of Micah (7.18–19) with the initial unit of Nahum (1.1–3).

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The book may be divided into three sections: chs 1–3; 4–5; 6–7. Some scholars think that chs 1–3 form the oldest core of the book; it is characterized by the judgmental tone for which Micah was most famous (Jer 26.18). Chs 1–3 consist mainly of oracles of judgment; chs 4–5 of oracles of hope. The final section, chs 6–7, begins with judgment and moves to hope. This alternation between judgment and hope may conform to some pattern in Micah's preaching or it may be an organizing device of later editors. The book of Micah may also have material from subsequent periods (e.g., 4.10 speaks of the Babylonian exile; 7.11 seems to reflect the postexilic period). Further evidence of editorial activity is the close correspondence between Micah 4.1–5 and Isaiah 2.2–5.

INTERPRETATION

Micah offered a theological interpretation of the dizzying events near the end of the eighth century: the fall of Samaria, the expansion of Jerusalem fueled by emigrants from the north, and the international situation made unstable by an aggressive superpower, Assyria. Micah, from a small town southwest of Jerusalem, Moresheth-gath, had a populist message. He expressed disdain for the corruptions and pretensions of Jerusalem and its leaders. He recalled the traditions of early Israel (3.9–10; 6.3–5), and condemned religious practice unaccompanied by ethical performance (6.6–8).

While Amos and Hosea condemned the high places, provincial shrines where the proper worship of the LORD was diluted by illicit elements, Micah called Jerusalem itself a high place (1.5) and announced its destruction, for which he was long remembered; a century after Micah, in a rare direct quotation of one prophet by another, Jeremiah (26.18) quotes Micah (3.12). At the same time, Micah never lost faith in the future. The middle section of the book, chs 4–5, contains images of a restored and glorious Zion to which the nations make pilgrimage, and of an ideal king (5.2–5).

It is instructive to see how Micah's rural background shaped his populist vision of the ideal king, or "messiah." Isaiah, Micah's contemporary, used the birth of a royal child (Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, was probably intended) in the Judahite capital of Jerusalem as a symbol of hope (Isa 7.10–14). Micah affirmed the Davidic lineage of the ideal king by tracing his roots to Bethlehem (5.2), David's home village (1 Sam 17:12), but also reminded his audience that their greatest king once did and will again emerge from "one of the little clans of Judah" (5.2).

Gregory Mobley

1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah
of Moresheth in the days of Kings Jotham,
Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, which he saw
concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

[2] Hear, you peoples, all of you;
listen, O earth, and all that is in it;
and let the Lord GOD be a witness against
you,
the Lord from his holy temple.
[3] For lo, the LORD is coming out of his
place,
and will come down and tread upon the
high places of the earth.
[4] Then the mountains will melt under him
and the valleys will burst open,
like wax near the fire,
like waters poured down a steep place.
[5] All this is for the transgression of Jacob
and for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the transgression of Jacob?
Is it not Samaria?
And what is the high place[a] of Judah?
Is it not Jerusalem?
[6] Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in
the open country,
a place for planting vineyards.
I will pour down her stones into the valley,
and uncover her foundations.
[7] All her images shall be beaten to pieces,
all her wages shall be burned with fire,
and all her idols I will lay waste;
for as the wages of a prostitute she
gathered them,
and as the wages of a prostitute they
shall again be used.

[8] For this I will lament and wail;
I will go barefoot and naked;
I will make lamentation like the jackals,
and mourning like the ostriches.
[9] For her wound[b] is incurable.
It has come to Judah;
it has reached to the gate of my people,
to Jerusalem.

[10] Tell it not in Gath,
weep not at all;
in Beth-leaphrah

[a] Heb *what are the high places*
[b] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *wounds*

1.1: Superscription. Among the Minor Prophets, this superscription is closest in form to those for Hosea (1.1), Amos (1.1), and Zephaniah (1.1). *Micah* is a short form of the name Micaiah (1 Kings 22), which means, "Who is like Yahweh?" *Moresheth,* a small town in southwest Judah (cf. 1.14), probably Tell el-Judeideh, 23 mi (37 km) southwest of Jerusalem. *Jotham* reigned from ca. 759 to 743 BCE; *Ahaz* from 743/735 to 727/715; *Hezekiah* from 727/715 to 698/687 (the data are inconsistent for the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah). *Which he saw,* Judean prophecy often had a visionary quality (e.g., Isa 1.1; Ezek 1.1.; Am 1.1; Ob 1; Nah 1.1; Hab 1.1).

1.2–3.12: Speeches condemning Judean society and its leaders. This collection of speeches begins with an indictment of Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom, and ends with an indictment of Jerusalem, capital of the Southern Kingdom. This first major section of Micah is dominated by judgment speeches.

1.2–7: The coming of the LORD. In grand style, the LORD descends from heaven to punish Samaria. This oracle is probably to be dated before 722 BCE, when Samaria fell to the Assyrians. **2:** *Hear, you peoples*, 1 Kings 22.28. *Listen, O earth*, Isa 1:2. *Lord GOD,* Heb "Adonai YHWH." *His holy temple*, his heavenly abode; see Ps 11.4; Hab 2:20. **3–4:** Judg 5.4; Pss 68.8; 97.1–5; Isa 26.21. **3:** *High places*, in general, hills and mountains (cf. Am 4.13), here perhaps with the specific connotation of illicit rural shrines. **5:** *Jacob,* poetic synonym for Israel; cf. Gen 32.28. *High place* usually designates an open-air shrine but seems to refer here to the Solomonic Temple. The linked condemnation of Samaria and Jerusalem is also found in Am 6.1. **7:** This destruction of images is consistent with Deuteronomic law (Deut 7.25; 12.3). The phrase *wages of a prostitute* recalls the imagery of Hos 2.2–13; cf. Deut 23.18; Ezek 16.31.

1.8–16: A lament for Samaria, and Jerusalem too. 8: *Barefoot . . . naked,* conventional mourning behavior (2 Sam 15.30; Ezek 24.17,23), employed for effect by Micah's contemporary Isaiah (Isa 20.2). *Jackals* and *ostriches,* associated with desolation because they frequented ruins and produced eerie howls or cries; see also Job 30.29; Isa 34.13.

1.10–16: These towns in southwestern Judah lay along the path of the Assyrian king Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE (2 Kings 18–19; Isa 36–37), although the specific locations of several are unknown. There is a pun in virtually every verse of this section, lost in translation. To capture the wordplay in English one might translate v.

roll yourselves in the dust.
[11] Pass on your way,
inhabitants of Shaphir,
in nakedness and shame;
the inhabitants of Zaanan
do not come forth;
Beth-ezel is wailing
and shall remove its support from you.
[12] For the inhabitants of Maroth
wait anxiously for good,
yet disaster has come down from the LORD
to the gate of Jerusalem.
[13] Harness the steeds to the chariots,
inhabitants of Lachish;
it was the beginning of sin
to daughter Zion,
for in you were found
the transgressions of Israel.
[14] Therefore you shall give parting gifts
to Moresheth-gath;
the houses of Achzib shall be a deception
to the kings of Israel.
[15] I will again bring a conqueror upon you,
inhabitants of Mareshah;
the glory of Israel
shall come to Adullam.
[16] Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair
for your pampered children;
make yourselves as bald as the eagle,
for they have gone from you into exile.

2 Alas for those who devise wickedness
and evil deeds[a] on their beds!
When the morning dawns, they perform it,
because it is in their power.
[2] They covet fields, and seize them;
houses, and take them away;
they oppress householder and house,
people and their inheritance.
[3] Therefore thus says the LORD:
Now, I am devising against this family an evil
from which you cannot remove your necks;
and you shall not walk haughtily,
for it will be an evil time.
[4] On that day they shall take up a taunt song against you,
and wail with bitter lamentation,
and say, "We are utterly ruined;
the LORD[b] alters the inheritance of my people;
how he removes it from me!
Among our captors[c] he parcels out our fields."
[5] Therefore you will have no one to cast the line by lot
in the assembly of the LORD.

[6] "Do not preach"—thus they preach—
"one should not preach of such things;
disgrace will not overtake us."
[7] Should this be said, O house of Jacob?
Is the LORD's patience exhausted?
Are these his doings?
Do not my words do good
to one who walks uprightly?
[8] But you rise up against my people[d] as an enemy;

[a] Cn: Heb *work evil*
[b] Heb *he*
[c] Cn: Heb *the rebellious*
[d] Cn: Heb *But yesterday my people rose*

12: "the inhabitants of Bitterness wait . . . for something sweet." **10:** *Gath,* one of the five Philistine cities on the coast; 2 Sam 1.20b. **13:** Sennacherib's siege of *Lachish,* an important city 28 mi (45 km) southwest of Jerusalem, is depicted in Assyrian records. **14:** *Moresheth-gath,* see 1.1n. **15:** *Mareshah,* later known as Marisa, is modern Tell Sandahanna, 3 mi (5 km) northeast of Lachish. **16:** *Make yourselves bald,* an extreme form of mourning behavior (e.g., Isa 15.2; Jer 7.29; 16.6; Am 8.10). *Pampered children* (better, "children of your delight") is not pejorative. It depicts the grief of parents bereft of exiled children. The *eagle,* more exactly, the griffon vulture.

2.1–5: The LORD will punish the land barons. 1–2: Ps 36.4; Isa 5.8–12; 32.7. Micah condemns the injustice and inhumanity of creditors who, through manipulation of credit and courts, foreclose on family farms. **2:** *Covet*, Ex 20:17. **3:** The *evil* will be like a yoke on their *necks.* **4:** *Taunt song,* cf. Num 21.27–30; Isa 23.15–16; Hab 2.6. **5:** *Cast the line by lot,* on a piece of land, thus acquiring title to it (Josh 18.6–10; Ps 16.6). For another prophetic vision of a future redistribution of the land, see Ezek 48.

2.6–11: The prophet responds to criticism. Micah, like other prophets (Isa 30.10; Jer 5.31; Am 2.12), realizes his uncompromising message is not one his audience wants to hear. **8:** *Strip the robe*, cf. Am 2:8.

you strip the robe from the peaceful,[a]
from those who pass by trustingly
with no thought of war.
9 The women of my people you drive out
from their pleasant houses;
from their young children you take away
my glory forever.
10 Arise and go;
for this is no place to rest,
because of uncleanness that destroys
with a grievous destruction.[b]
11 If someone were to go about uttering
empty falsehoods,
saying, "I will preach to you of wine and
strong drink,"
such a one would be the preacher for
this people!

12 I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob,
I will gather the survivors of Israel;
I will set them together
like sheep in a fold,
like a flock in its pasture;
it will resound with people.
13 The one who breaks out will go up before
them;
they will break through and pass the
gate,
going out by it.
Their king will pass on before them,
the LORD at their head.

3 And I said:
Listen, you heads of Jacob
and rulers of the house of Israel!
Should you not know justice?—
2 you who hate the good and love the
evil,
who tear the skin off my people,[c]
and the flesh off their bones;
3 who eat the flesh of my people,
flay their skin off them,
break their bones in pieces,
and chop them up like meat[d] in a kettle,
like flesh in a caldron.

4 Then they will cry to the LORD,
but he will not answer them;
he will hide his face from them at that
time,
because they have acted wickedly.

5 Thus says the LORD concerning the
prophets
who lead my people astray,
who cry "Peace"
when they have something to eat,
but declare war against those
who put nothing into their mouths.
6 Therefore it shall be night to you, without
vision,
and darkness to you, without
revelation.
The sun shall go down upon the prophets,
and the day shall be black over them;
7 the seers shall be disgraced,
and the diviners put to shame;
they shall all cover their lips,
for there is no answer from God.
8 But as for me, I am filled with power,
with the spirit of the LORD,
and with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his transgression
and to Israel his sin.

[a] Cn: Heb *from before a garment*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Heb *from them*
[d] Gk: Heb *as*

2.12–13: A shift to an oracle of encouragement. Against the background of exile, whether in 722 or 587 BCE, this oracle counters despair with images of the LORD as shepherd (v. 12) and victorious king (v. 13); cf. Isa 40.10–11. **13:** *The one who breaks out* (i.e., the LORD); see Ex 19.22; 2 Sam 5.20; 6.8.

3.1–4: The LORD will punish the judicial leaders. Corrupt judges are described as cannibals; Ezekiel also used this image (Ezek 11.5–12; 24.1–14). **1:** *Listen,* lit., "Hear," as in 1.1; 3.9; 6.1; 6.9b, a common introduction to Micah's oracles. **2:** For comparison, Isa 5.20; for contrast, Am 5.15. **4:** Futile *cry to the LORD* (i.e., prayer), cf. Isa 1.15.

3.5–8: The LORD will punish the religious leaders. Micah's rival prophets are crowd pleasers (see also 2.11), inspired on commission (v. 5; cf. v. 11); by contrast, see Micah's source of inspiration in v. 8. **6:** A time *without vision,* 1 Sam 3.1. **7:** *Seers,* see 1 Sam 9.9. *Diviners,* see Deut 13.1. *Cover their lips,* a sign of mourning (Lev 13.45; Ezek 24.17,22). **8:** *Filled . . . with the spirit,* Isa 11.2; 61.1–3; Ezek 2.2.

9 Hear this, you rulers of the house of
Jacob
and chiefs of the house of Israel,
who abhor justice
and pervert all equity,
10 who build Zion with blood
and Jerusalem with wrong!
11 Its rulers give judgment for a bribe,
its priests teach for a price,
its prophets give oracles for money;
yet they lean upon the LORD and say,
"Surely the LORD is with us!
No harm shall come upon us."
12 Therefore because of you
Zion shall be plowed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the mountain of the house a
wooded height.

4 In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains,
and shall be raised up above the hills.
Peoples shall stream to it,
2 and many nations shall come and
say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the
LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth
instruction,
and the word of the LORD from
Jerusalem.
3 He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong
nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into
plowshares,
and their spears into pruning
hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against
nation,
neither shall they learn war any
more;
4 but they shall all sit under their own
vines and under their own fig
trees,
and no one shall make them
afraid;
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has
spoken.

5 For all the peoples walk,
each in the name of its god,
but we will walk in the name of the LORD
our God
forever and ever.

3.9–12: Summary: Its leadership corrupt, Jerusalem is doomed. The first section ends with Micah's bold assertion that Jerusalem and the Temple itself shall be destroyed because of the corruption of its leaders. **10:** *Who build Zion,* following the collapse of the Northern Kingdom, Jerusalem expanded as it absorbed refugees; Hab 2.12. **11–12:** Prophecy is inseparable from context: Here, hopes in Zion's inviolability are dashed; contrast Ps 46, where they are confirmed. *Heap of ruins,* Jerusalem's fate shall be similar to that of Samaria (1.6). This parallel reveals a key strategy of the preexilic Judean prophets: The fall of Samaria served as an example to Judah. **12:** This prophecy was quoted at the trial of Jeremiah (Jer 26.18). *Mountain of the house,* see 4.1.

4.1–5.15: Speeches promising divine restoration and exaltation of the people Israel and the city Jerusalem. A series of poems depicts an ideal age ("that day") when God reigns, Israel triumphs, and the nations are judged. Some scholars date this section to the exilic or postexilic period (see 4.10n.). Alternately, possible allusions to the Babylonian exile (e.g., 4.6,10) could stem from editors who recast Micah's oracles for a later audience.

4.1–8: The ideal age is depicted in three poems, the first of which (vv. 1–4) is nearly identical to Isaiah 2.2–4. **1–2:** There is a universal pilgrimage to Mount Zion, to which cosmic significance is ascribed here as *the mountain of the LORD's house.* **1:** *Highest of the mountains,* claims for Mount Zion's height (Ps 48.3; Ezek 40.2) were symbolic, not topographic. **2:** *Instruction,* Heb "torah." **3–4:** A classic articulation of the Israelite prophetic ideal: peace and a social equality rooted in family ownership of land. **3:** *Swords into plowshares* (or "plowpoints," a stick with a small metal point), i.e., the transition from war to peace, as the militia citizens convert to farmers. For the opposite movement, see Joel 3.10. **4:** Zech 3.10; 1 Kings 4.25; 2 Kings 18.31 = Isa 36.16. **5:** Like its similarly worded parallel in Isa 2.5, this verse may have been read antiphonally, as an "Amen" to the visionary speech of

6 In that day, says the LORD,
I will assemble the lame
and gather those who have been driven
away,
and those whom I have afflicted.
7 The lame I will make the remnant,
and those who were cast off, a strong
nation;
and the LORD will reign over them in
Mount Zion
now and forevermore.

8 And you, O tower of the flock,
hill of daughter Zion,
to you it shall come,
the former dominion shall come,
the sovereignty of daughter
Jerusalem.

9 Now why do you cry aloud?
Is there no king in you?
Has your counselor perished,
that pangs have seized you like a
woman in labor?
10 Writhe and groan,[a] O daughter Zion,
like a woman in labor;
for now you shall go forth from the city
and camp in the open country;
you shall go to Babylon.
There you shall be rescued,
there the LORD will redeem you
from the hands of your enemies.

11 Now many nations
are assembled against you,
saying, "Let her be profaned,
and let our eyes gaze upon Zion."
12 But they do not know
the thoughts of the LORD;
they do not understand his plan,
that he has gathered them as sheaves to
the threshing floor.
13 Arise and thresh,
O daughter Zion,
for I will make your horn iron
and your hoofs bronze;
you shall beat in pieces many peoples,
and shall[b] devote their gain to the LORD,
their wealth to the Lord of the whole
earth.

5[c] Now you are walled around with a wall;[d]
siege is laid against us;
with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel
upon the cheek.

2 [e]But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
3 Therefore he shall give them up until the
time

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Gk Syr Tg: Heb *and I will*
[c] Ch 4.14 in Heb
[d] Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Ch 5.1 in Heb

4.1–4 (= Isa 2.2–4). **6–7:** Cf. Zeph 3.19–20. **8:** *Tower of the flock,* an old epithet for Jerusalem (see "tower of Eder" in Gen 35.21; "Eder" means "flock"). *Daughter Zion,* a metaphorical term for Jerusalem; cf. 2 Kings 19.21; Lam 1.6. Cities were frequently represented as female in the ancient Near East.

4.9–10: The LORD will rescue the exiles. This speech, which describes the exiles' march to Babylon and promises their redemption, addresses the situation of the sixth century BCE, not the eighth. *Like a woman in labor,* Isa 13.8; 26.17; Jer 4.31.

4.11–13: Israel will crush its enemies. The LORD has planned a stunning reversal. At the very place outside Jerusalem where hostile nations assemble, the city gate (also the site of threshing floors), Israel shall trample them like an ox's hooves smash husks of grain; cf. Isa 41.14–16. *Assembled against* you; cf. Pss 1.2; 48.4; Ezek 38.7–9. **13:** For Israel as bovine, see Hos 10.11. *Devote their gain,* Deut 20.16; Josh 6.18–19.

5.1: *Strike . . . the cheek,* a gesture of insult; see 1 Kings 22.24; Job 16.10; Ps 3.7; Lam 3.30.

5.2–5a: A messianic poem. A new David shall arise, not from Jerusalem but from Bethlehem, David's place of birth, to rule in this ideal age. The New Testament interprets this poem as referring to the birth of Jesus (Mt 2.6; cf. Jn 7.40–43). **2:** *Bethlehem,* located 6 mi (10 km) south of Jerusalem; Gen 35.19; Ruth 4.11; 1 Sam 17.12. *Ephrathah,* the name of a Judahite clan and region; the latter includes the village of Bethlehem. The prophet Amos (9.11) also uses the phrase *of old* in reference to David. **3:** Isaiah of Jerusalem, a contemporary of Micah, also described

when she who is in labor has brought
forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in
the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD
his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall
be great
to the ends of the earth;
5 and he shall be the one of peace.

If the Assyrians come into our land
and tread upon our soil,[a]
we will raise against them seven
shepherds
and eight installed as rulers.
6 They shall rule the land of Assyria with
the sword,
and the land of Nimrod with the drawn
sword;[b]
they[c] shall rescue us from the
Assyrians
if they come into our land
or tread within our border.

7 Then the remnant of Jacob,
surrounded by many peoples,
shall be like dew from the LORD,
like showers on the grass,
which do not depend upon people
or wait for any mortal.
8 And among the nations the remnant of
Jacob,
surrounded by many peoples,
shall be like a lion among the animals of
the forest,
like a young lion among the flocks of
sheep,
which, when it goes through, treads
down
and tears in pieces, with no one to
deliver.
9 Your hand shall be lifted up over your
adversaries,
and all your enemies shall be cut off.

10 In that day, says the LORD,
I will cut off your horses from among
you
and will destroy your chariots;
11 and I will cut off the cities of your land
and throw down all your
strongholds;
12 and I will cut off sorceries from your
hand,
and you shall have no more
soothsayers;
13 and I will cut off your images
and your pillars from among you,
and you shall bow down no more
to the work of your hands;
14 and I will uproot your sacred poles[d] from
among you
and destroy your towns.
15 And in anger and wrath I will execute
vengeance
on the nations that did not obey.

[a] Gk: Heb *in our palaces*
[b] Cn: Heb *in its entrances*
[c] Heb *he*
[d] Heb *Asherim*

the birth of an ideal king (7.14; 9.6). *She who is in labor,* either the actual mother of the future ruler or perhaps symbolically Zion (see 4.10). **4:** *His flock,* cf. 2.12–13.

5.5b–6: Assyria will be defeated. In the new age, Israel will not lack for leaders (contrast chs 2–3). **5:** *Seven . . . eight,* a sufficient number (see Am 1.3n). **6:** *Land of Nimrod,* Assyria; Gen 10.8–11 identifies Nimrod as a legendary warrior and king of Assyria.

5.7–9: Israel gains the upper hand. 7: *Dew,* Israel's continued existence, like the dew each morning, is guaranteed by God; cf. 2 Sam 17.12.

5.10–15: But before reconstruction, demolition. The repetition of first-person verbs at the beginning of each line (*I will cut off,* four times; *I will uproot; I will execute vengeance*) sets the tone. **10:** *Cut off your horses . . . and . . . chariots,* Israel must rely on the LORD, not military force (Pss 20.17; 33.13–17; Zech 9.10). **11:** Jer 5.17; Hos 10.12–14. **12:** The precise forms these means of divination took are unknown; for the biblical prohibition, see Deut 18.10–11. **13–14:** *Pillars* and *sacred poles,* Canaanite ritual objects, banned for Israel (Ex 34.13). According to 2 Kings 18.4, King Hezekiah did *cut off* and *uproot* these sites of illicit worship.

6 Hear what the LORD says:
Rise, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice.
2 Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,
and you enduring foundations of the earth;
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,
and he will contend with Israel.

3 "O my people, what have I done to you?
In what have I wearied you? Answer me!
4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;
and I sent before you Moses,
Aaron, and Miriam.
5 O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD."

6 "With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"
8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

9 The voice of the LORD cries to the city
(it is sound wisdom to fear your name):
Hear, O tribe and assembly of the city![a]
10 Can I forget[b] the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked,
and the scant measure that is accursed?
11 Can I tolerate wicked scales
and a bag of dishonest weights?

[a] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *tribe, and who has appointed it yet?*
[b] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

6.1–7.20: A prophetic sampler moves from legal indictment of Israel's guilt to liturgical affirmation of God's mercy. The final section of Micah consists of four units, of different genres, which extend the themes of the first section (1.2–3.12).

6.1–8: A divine lawsuit for violation of covenant. There are frequent shifts of speakers here, from the LORD (v. 1) to the prophet (v. 2) and back to the LORD (vv. 3–5), to a spokesperson for the community (vv. 6–7) and back to the prophet (v. 8), who delivers the punchline, the epitome of the entire Israelite prophetic tradition. **1–2:** The audience, in the style of ancient treaty witnesses, is the heavenly court whose members (*mountains*, *hills*, *foundations of the earth*) are not deified as in Israel's neighboring religions but personified for dramatic effect; cf. Isa 1.2; Deut 32.1. *Controversy,* lawsuit. **4–5:** A summary of what the LORD had done for Israel, bringing it out of Egypt to the Promised Land, under the leadership of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Cf. Ex 20.2; Hos 12.13. **4:** Note the prominence of *Miriam* (Ex 15.20–21). **5:** *Balak, Balaam,* Num 22–24. **5:** *From Shittim* (Josh 3.1) *to Gilgal* (Josh 4.19) refers to the crossing of the Jordan. **6–7:** For similar attitudes toward animal sacrifices, see Isa 1.11; Pss 50.13; 51.16–17. **6:** Cf. Pss 15.1; 24.3. *Burnt offerings* were sacrifices wholly dedicated to God with no share for participants in the ritual. *Calves a year old*, Lev 9:3. **7**: *My firstborn*, though human sacrifice was occasionally practiced in the Iron Age, the exaggerated terms elsewhere ("thousands of rams," "ten thousands of rivers of oil") suggest that Micah is being rhetorical. **8:** In this single sentence the prophet sums up a century of brilliant prophecy; see Am 5.21–24; Hos 6.6; Isa 1.11–17. *Kindness,* Heb "ḥesed," covenant loyalty. *Walk humbly* means "live ever mindful of," "in communion with"; cf. Gen 5:24.

6.9–16: Jerusalem, the corrupt city, is cursed. Jerusalem, as wicked as Samaria (see v. 16), must be destroyed. This speech can be read as a separate oracle or as the judicial sentence following the indictment in 6.1–8. **10:** *Treasures of wickedness*, that is, wealth gained through wrongdoing. **11:** *Wicked scales*, Lev 19:36; Deut 25:13–15;

12 Your[a] wealthy are full of violence;
your[b] inhabitants speak lies,
with tongues of deceit in their mouths.
13 Therefore I have begun[c] to strike you down,
making you desolate because of your sins.
14 You shall eat, but not be satisfied,
and there shall be a gnawing hunger within you;
you shall put away, but not save,
and what you save, I will hand over to the sword.
15 You shall sow, but not reap;
you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil;
you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine.
16 For you have kept the statutes of Omri[d]
and all the works of the house of Ahab,
and you have followed their counsels.
Therefore I will make you a desolation,
and your[e] inhabitants an object of hissing;
so you shall bear the scorn of my people.

7 Woe is me! For I have become like one who,
after the summer fruit has been gathered,
after the vintage has been gleaned,
finds no cluster to eat;
there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger.
2 The faithful have disappeared from the land,
and there is no one left who is upright;
they all lie in wait for blood,
and they hunt each other with nets.
3 Their hands are skilled to do evil;
the official and the judge ask for a bribe,
and the powerful dictate what they desire;
thus they pervert justice.[f]
4 The best of them is like a brier,
the most upright of them a thorn hedge.
The day of their[g] sentinels, of their[g] punishment, has come;
now their confusion is at hand.
5 Put no trust in a friend,
have no confidence in a loved one;
guard the doors of your mouth
from her who lies in your embrace;
6 for the son treats the father with contempt,
the daughter rises up against her mother,
the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
your enemies are members of your own household.
7 But as for me, I will look to the LORD,
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
my God will hear me.

8 Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy;
when I fall, I shall rise;
when I sit in darkness,
the LORD will be a light to me.

[a] Heb *Whose*
[b] Heb *whose*
[c] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *have made sick*
[d] Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *the statutes of Omri are kept*
[e] Heb *its*
[f] Cn: Heb *they weave it*
[g] Heb *your*

cf. Am 8.5; Ezek 45:10. **14–16:** For other "futility curses" in which actions fail to produce normal and expected results, see Deut 28.30–31,38–46. **16:** *Omri, Ahab,* rulers of the Northern Kingdom in the ninth century BCE; see 1 Kings 16.25–34. *Object of hissing,* Zeph 2.15.

7.1–7: A lament for a desperate society. 1: *Gleaned,* Lev 19.9–10; 23.22; Deut 24.19–21; Ruth 2–3. The *first-ripe fig* was the most delicious. **2:** Abraham (Gen 18.23–33), Jeremiah (Jer 5.1), and Ezekiel (Ezek 22.30) also searched for an honest person. **3:** The perversion of *justice* by officials is frequently condemned by the prophets; cf. Hos 7.3; Amos 5.12; Zeph 3.1–5. **5:** Cf. Jer 9.4. **6:** *Son treats the father with contempt, daughter. . . against mother*, cf. Matt 10:35–36; Lk 12:53; contrast with Mal 4.6.

7.8–20: A final liturgy. This final unit contains shifts in content, if not speakers, and may have been designed for worship. It begins with lament (vv. 8–10), followed by an oracle of encouragement (vv. 11–13) and prayer (vv. 14–17), before closing with hopeful affirmation of God's great mercy. **8–10:** The prophet speaks as Israel.

9 I must bear the indignation of the LORD,
because I have sinned against him,
until he takes my side
and executes judgment for me.
He will bring me out to the light;
I shall see his vindication.
10 Then my enemy will see,
and shame will cover her who said to me,
"Where is the LORD your God?"
My eyes will see her downfall;[a]
now she will be trodden down
like the mire of the streets.

11 A day for the building of your walls!
In that day the boundary shall be far extended.
12 In that day they will come to you
from Assyria to[b] Egypt,
and from Egypt to the River,
from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.
13 But the earth will be desolate
because of its inhabitants,
for the fruit of their doings.

14 Shepherd your people with your staff,
the flock that belongs to you,
which lives alone in a forest
in the midst of a garden land;
let them feed in Bashan and Gilead
as in the days of old.
15 As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt,
show us[c] marvelous things.
16 The nations shall see and be ashamed
of all their might;
they shall lay their hands on their mouths;
their ears shall be deaf;
17 they shall lick dust like a snake,
like the crawling things of the earth;
they shall come trembling out of their fortresses;
they shall turn in dread to the LORD our God,
and they shall stand in fear of you.

18 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over the transgression
of the remnant of your[d] possession?
He does not retain his anger forever,
because he delights in showing clemency.
19 He will again have compassion upon us;
he will tread our iniquities under foot.
You will cast all our[e] sins
into the depths of the sea.
20 You will show faithfulness to Jacob
and unswerving loyalty to Abraham,
as you have sworn to our ancestors
from the days of old.

[a] Heb lacks *downfall*
[b] One Ms: MT *Assyria and cities of*
[c] Cn: Heb *I will show him*
[d] Heb *his*
[e] Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *their*

9: Jer 10.19. **10:** *Shame will cover her,* Ob 10. *Mire of the streets,* Isa 10.6. **11–13:** The references to the (re)*building of your walls* (Neh 2.17) and the restoration of former boundaries (Isa 54.2–3) suggest that this oracle was probably written in the early postexilic period. **12:** Cf. 4.1–2; Isa 19.23–25. *The River,* the Euphrates. **14:** *Shepherd,* see 2.12–13. *Bashan* and *Gilead* in northern Transjordan were known for their fertility. **18–19:** Cf. Ex 34.6–7; Ps 103.8–10; contrast Nah 1.2–3. **18:** The sentence *Who is a God like you* is reminiscent of the prophet's name (1.1n.). **20:** Gen 12.1–3; 17.6–8.

NAHUM

NAME AND CONTENTS

Nahum, the name of the prophet and the book that contains his words, derives from the Hebrew word for "comfort." It may be a shortened form of Nehemiah—"the LORD has comforted."

The book is dominated by the genre of the "oracle against the nations," which pronounces God's judgment on those other than Israel or Judah. While Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and other books contain such oracles against multiple nations, Nahum focuses on only one: Assyria. Throughout Nahum, God is cast as a mighty warrior whose armies violently defeat the foe. After an opening depiction of God as a cosmic power in ch 1, the book turns in chs 2 and 3 to vivid images of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, in the midst of siege and defeat. The images of warfare are stark and disturbing: captive slave women beat their breasts (2.7), dead bodies fill Nineveh's streets (3.3), and Nineveh itself is portrayed as a woman who is sexually assaulted by God (3.5–7). The author shows no pity for Nineveh or its inhabitants, instead delighting in its overthrow and claiming that all nations do the same (3.19).

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Nahum was written sometime after the fall of the Egyptian city of Thebes (mentioned in Nah 3.8) in 663 BCE. Because the book looks forward to the fall of Nineveh, accomplished by a coalition of Babylonians and Medes in 612 BCE, it is often dated to just before that major event. Recent interpretation of the prophetic books, however, suggests that the oracles provide retrospective interpretations of Israel's history, so the book could date after 612 BCE. To readers aware that Nineveh had indeed fallen, Nahum would reveal not only God's powerful hand in international affairs but also the role of prophets in preparing each generation for events to come.

LOCATION IN CANON

The book is the seventh of the twelve Minor Prophets (see the Introduction to the Prophetic Books). The books of Hosea, Amos, and Micah devote much attention to explaining that Israel and Judah fell because of the people's sin. The next three books of the Twelve, begun by Nahum, explain God's sovereignty over the nations through which God carried out that punishment. Nahum envisions God punishing Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire in the eighth century BCE. The Assyrians are infamous to the biblical writers for their destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE; even after Assyria passed from world dominance, it remained a symbol for brutal imperial control, as seen in works of the Hellenistic period such as the books of Judith and Tobit. Following Nahum, Habakkuk pointedly calls for God's action against the Babylonians, and Zephaniah joins oracles against Judah with oracles against the nations and offers a glimmer of hope for both.

Many readers contrast Nahum negatively with the book of Jonah, which describes the Assyrians as repenting and insists that God cares about the Ninevites. The difference between the books, however, may be due less to different ancient assessments of the Assyrians than to the different messages and rhetorical strategies of the books. While Jonah demonstrates the depths of divine mercy by showing stereotypically evil Ninevites in the act of repentance, Nahum establishes the sovereignty of God over all tyrants by showing powerful Nineveh in defeat. Within the book of Nahum, the power of God is good news for Judah, as seen especially in ch 1, where God's anger is presented as an act of care for Judah: God will serve as a stronghold to those who seek divine refuge (1.7), caring enough about their affliction to become angry on their behalf.

STRUCTURE

The book can be outlined as follows:

1.1: Superscription
1.2–8: God as divine warrior
1.9–15: Announcement of punishment against Nineveh and salvation for Judah
2.1–13: The siege of Nineveh
3.1–19: Further taunts against Nineveh and the Assyrian king

INTERPRETATION

Over the history of the book's interpretation, Nahum's celebration of Nineveh's violent overthrow has been variously assessed. In commentaries from Qumran (4QpNah) and early church fathers (such as Tertullian and Cyril of Alexandria), Nineveh becomes the symbol for the authors' own enemies, and the awesome power of God is celebrated. Many modern interpreters, however, underscore the dangerous ideologies of the book, in which the oppressed imitates the oppressor, and evil is symbolized as a woman.

Julia M. O'Brien

1 An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book
of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

2 A jealous and avenging God is the
LORD,
the LORD is avenging and wrathful;
the LORD takes vengeance on his
adversaries
and rages against his enemies.
3 The LORD is slow to anger but great in
power,
and the LORD will by no means clear the
guilty.

His way is in whirlwind and storm,
and the clouds are the dust of his
feet.
4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry,
and he dries up all the rivers;
Bashan and Carmel wither,
and the bloom of Lebanon fades.
5 The mountains quake before him,
and the hills melt;
the earth heaves before him,
the world and all who live in it.

6 Who can stand before his indignation?
Who can endure the heat of his
anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire,
and by him the rocks are broken in
pieces.
7 The LORD is good,
a stronghold in a day of trouble;
he protects those who take refuge in him,
8 even in a rushing flood.
He will make a full end of his adversaries,[a]
and will pursue his enemies into
darkness.

[a] Gk: Heb *of her place*

1.1: Superscription. Like other prophetic books, Nahum begins with a description of its contents. *Oracle* also begins prophetic collections in Isa 13; Hab 1; Zech 9; 12; and Mal 1. Although other prophetic books mention the writing of prophecy, Nahum is the only one explicitly called a *book*; the Heb term ("seper") refers to anything that is written regardless of length or the nature of its composition. *Vision* in the Hebrew Bible refers almost exclusively to prophecy. It includes not only specifically visual phenomena but other forms of perception as well. Words related to seeing are linked with the reception of prophecy in the superscriptions of Amos, Micah, Obadiah, and Habakkuk. The location of *Elkosh* is unknown.

1.2–8: God as divine warrior. Before addressing the specific issue of Nineveh, the book seeks to establish God's power and might. These verses form a partial acrostic; that is, most lines in vv. 2–8 begin with successive letters of the first half of Hebrew alphabet. **2–3a:** First, God's attributes are named and God's character established: God is *jealous* for God's people and does not ignore wrongdoing. This version of Israel's confession of faith (see Ex 34.6; Jon 4.2; Ps 86.15) highlights *vengeance*, the deity's willingness and power to right wrongs. **3b–5:** God's appearance on earth, the divine theophany, is as an angry, cosmic warrior; cf. 2 Sam 22.8–16 = Ps 18.7–15; Ps 29; Hab 3.3–12. **4:** The language may allude to ancient Near Eastern cosmologies, in which the deities "River" and "Sea" were defeated by a more powerful storm god; see also Isa 51.9–10; Hab 3; Pss 74.13; 89.12. *Bashan* in northern Transjordan, *Carmel* on Israel's northern Mediterranean coast, and *Lebanon* are areas known for agricultural fertility; God is powerful enough to dry them up. **5:** God's appearance shakes *mountains* (Judg 5.5; Ps 18.7; Isa 64.1). **6–8:** As expressed in the first of several rhetorical questions in the book, no one who opposes this God can stand, while no one who seeks divine *refuge* will suffer. In Hebrew as in English, *anger* is associated with *heat* (e.g., Ex 32:22; Judg 6:39; Jer 7:20; 17:4).

9 Why do you plot against the LORD?
He will make an end;
no adversary will rise up twice.
10 Like thorns they are entangled,
like drunkards they are drunk;
they are consumed like dry straw.
11 From you one has gone out
who plots evil against the LORD,
one who counsels wickedness.

12 Thus says the LORD,
"Though they are at full strength and many,[a]
they will be cut off and pass away.
Though I have afflicted you,
I will afflict you no more.
13 And now I will break off his yoke from you
and snap the bonds that bind you."

14 The LORD has commanded concerning you:
"Your name shall be perpetuated no longer;
from the house of your gods I will cut off
the carved image and the cast image.
I will make your grave, for you are worthless."

15 [b]Look! On the mountains the feet of one
who brings good tidings,
who proclaims peace!
Celebrate your festivals, O Judah,
fulfill your vows,
for never again shall the wicked invade you;
they are utterly cut off.

2 A shatterer[c] has come up against you.
Guard the ramparts;
watch the road;
gird your loins;
collect all your strength.

2 (For the LORD is restoring the majesty of Jacob,
as well as the majesty of Israel,
though ravagers have ravaged them
and ruined their branches.)

3 The shields of his warriors are red;
his soldiers are clothed in crimson.
The metal on the chariots flashes
on the day when he musters them;
the chargers[d] prance.
4 The chariots race madly through the streets,
they rush to and fro through the squares;
their appearance is like torches,
they dart like lightning.
5 He calls his officers;
they stumble as they come forward;
they hasten to the wall,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Ch 2.1 in Heb
[c] Cn: Heb *scatterer*
[d] Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *cypresses*

1.9–15: Announcement of punishment against Nineveh and salvation for Judah. The shift in addressee to "you" marks a move from the general description of divine power to its specific application. The gender and identity of "you," however, change in the course of the unit: the masculine plural "you" of v. 9 is unidentified, the feminine singular "you" in vv. 11–13, 15 likely refers to Judah, and the masculine singular "you" in v. 14 likely is the king of Assyria. Many of the references in these verses, such as to "the one who plots evil" (v. 11), are unclear. **12:** While acknowledging a role in Judah's oppression, God promises that its salvation has begun. **13:** *His yoke*, the political oppression of the king of Assyria. **14:** Threats against the king of Assyria include loss of reputation, religious practice, and life itself. The king is *worthless* or, in Hebrew, a "trifling." **15:** A messenger brings the good news of the imminent death of the enemy to Judah, who can now celebrate its own religious traditions. *One who brings good tidings*, see 2 Sam 18.27, 31; Isa 40.9; 41.27; 52.7. *Fulfill your vows*, presumably vows made to God during the oppression in hope of deliverance.

2.1–13: The siege of Nineveh. A vivid description of the divine warrior's battle against the city of Nineveh. **1:** *You* is a feminine form, likely Nineveh. Here, as later in the book, the call for Nineveh to protect itself is sarcastic. *Shatterer*, lit., "scatterer" (see textual note *c*), may be God, who leads warriors against Nineveh (vv. 3–6). A form of this word is used for the divine warrior's activity in Hab 3.14 and Isa 24.1. **2:** Parenthetical reminder that Nineveh's downfall avenges the devastation of the Northern Kingdom of *Israel* (722 BCE), whose ancestor is *Jacob*. **3–6:** Descriptive language and active verbs create arresting images of God's invading army. **5:** *He* likely is

and the mantelet[a] is set up.
6 The river gates are opened,
the palace trembles.
7 It is decreed[a] that the city[b] be exiled,
its slave women led away,
moaning like doves
and beating their breasts.
8 Nineveh is like a pool
whose waters[c] run away.
"Halt! Halt!"—
but no one turns back.
9 "Plunder the silver,
plunder the gold!
There is no end of treasure!
An abundance of every precious thing!"

10 Devastation, desolation, and
destruction!
Hearts faint and knees tremble,
all loins quake,
all faces grow pale!
11 What became of the lions' den,
the cave[d] of the young lions,
where the lion goes,
and the lion's cubs, with no one to
disturb them?
12 The lion has torn enough for his
whelps
and strangled prey for his lionesses;
he has filled his caves with prey
and his dens with torn flesh.

13 See, I am against you, says the LORD
of hosts, and I will burn your[e] chariots in
smoke, and the sword shall devour your
young lions; I will cut off your prey from the
earth, and the voice of your messengers shall
be heard no more.

3 Ah! City of bloodshed,
utterly deceitful, full of booty—
no end to the plunder!
2 The crack of whip and rumble of wheel,
galloping horse and bounding chariot!
3 Horsemen charging,
flashing sword and glittering spear,
piles of dead,
heaps of corpses,
dead bodies without end—
they stumble over the bodies!
4 Because of the countless debaucheries of
the prostitute,
gracefully alluring, mistress of sorcery,
who enslaves[f] nations through her
debaucheries,
and peoples through her sorcery,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Heb *it*
[c] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *a pool, from the days that she has become, and they*
[d] Cn: Heb *pasture*
[e] Heb *her*
[f] Heb *sells*

the king of Assyria, who tries in vain to defend the city by bolstering its walls. **6–8a:** The actual fall of the city is depicted with water imagery, conventional imagery found in other ancient Near Eastern documents and in Jer 51.42. **6:** *The river gates*: Nineveh was situated on the east bank of the Tigris River, whose tributary, the Khosr, flowed through the city, so it is possible that actual flooding occurred during the attack; see v. 8. **7:** The description of the mourning of the *slave women* adds poignancy to the scene; in Hebrew the sound of the words mimics mourning. *Moaning like doves*, cf. Isa 38.14; 59.11. **8b–10:** The NRSV has added quotation marks to highlight the writer's attempt to reproduce the shouts of the warriors. Incomplete sentences give a breathless feeling to the chaotic scene. **10a:** The first three words begin with the same letter in English, as the NRSV attempts to mirror the alliteration found in the Hebrew version of the phrase. **11–13:** The author begins a taunt of the Assyrian king by comparing him to a lion, an animal frequently associated with the Assyrian empire in its own art. Although the king (*lion*) has provided much wealth (*prey*) for his citizens (his *whelps*), God will cut off both. The *you* of v. 13 is feminine, turning the taunt to Nineveh herself. The verse ties together previous parts of Nahum: the description of *chariots* in 2.4, the analogy of the den of the *lion* in 2.11–12, and the reference to a *messenger* in 1.15: while a messenger brought good news to Judah, now the *messengers* of the Assyrians are cut off.

3.1–19: Further taunts against Nineveh and the Assyrian king. Nahum's personification of Nineveh as a woman, begun in the previous chapter, turns derogatory, as the city is envisioned as a prostitute who is taunted as well as assaulted. **1–3:** The absence of verbs creates a montage of horrific images of the city's destruction. **1:** *Ah* (Heb "hoy") is an exclamation calling attention to Nineveh. *City of bloodshed:* similar language is used for Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem in Ezek 7.23; 9.9; and for Babylon in Hab 2.12. **4–7:** The punishment of the prostitute Nineveh begins. **4:** While the Heb term for *prostitute* can refer to one who receives money for sex acts, it also is

[5] I am against you,
says the LORD of hosts,
and will lift up your skirts over your face;
and I will let nations look on your nakedness
and kingdoms on your shame.
[6] I will throw filth at you
and treat you with contempt,
and make you a spectacle.
[7] Then all who see you will shrink from you and say,
"Nineveh is devastated; who will bemoan her?"
Where shall I seek comforters for you?

[8] Are you better than Thebes[a]
that sat by the Nile,
with water around her,
her rampart a sea,
water her wall?
[9] Ethiopia[b] was her strength,
Egypt too, and that without limit;
Put and the Libyans were her[c] helpers.

[10] Yet she became an exile,
she went into captivity;
even her infants were dashed in pieces
at the head of every street;
lots were cast for her nobles,
all her dignitaries were bound in fetters.
[11] You also will be drunken,
you will go into hiding;[d]
you will seek
a refuge from the enemy.
[12] All your fortresses are like fig trees
with first-ripe figs—
if shaken they fall
into the mouth of the eater.
[13] Look at your troops:
they are women in your midst.
The gates of your land
are wide open to your foes;
fire has devoured the bars of your gates.

[14] Draw water for the siege,
strengthen your forts;
trample the clay,
tread the mortar,
take hold of the brick mold!
[15] There the fire will devour you,
the sword will cut you off.
It will devour you like the locust.

Multiply yourselves like the locust,
multiply like the grasshopper!
[16] You increased your merchants
more than the stars of the heavens.
The locust sheds its skin and flies away.

[a] Heb *No-amon*
[b] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
[c] Gk: Heb *your*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain

used in the Bible to refer to promiscuity and unfaithfulness (Deut 22.21; 31.16; Ezek 23.3; Hos 4.13–14). Here the term may function as a slur against the city rather than a description of its activities. Nineveh's control over and appeal to other nations is attributed to *sorcery* and seduction. **5:** God will personally take action against Nineveh. The uncovering of *nakedness* is a matter of *shame* (Gen 9.22–23; Lev 18–20; Isa 47.3; Lam 1.8; Hab 2.15) and is often a prelude to sexual violation (Jer 13.22). **6:** Nineveh's nakedness will be made into a *spectacle*, as is the punished woman in Hos 2.10. **7:** The absence of *comforters* for Nineveh is ironic, given that the name *Nahum* derives from the word for "comfort." The image of Nineveh as a devastated woman finds a parallel in the depiction of Jerusalem in the book of Lamentations. **8–13:** Nineveh is threatened with the same fate that befell *Thebes*, the most important city in southern Egypt, which was conquered by the Assyrians in 664 BCE. **8:** The threat starts in the form of a rhetorical question, one of many in the book. **9–10:** Thebes' sea defenses and her allies *Ethiopia*, *Put*, and the *Libyans* could not protect her. Just as she went into exile and her *infants were dashed in pieces* (see Isa 13.16; Ps 137.9), so Nineveh will suffer. The geographical identity of *Put* is disputed. **11:** Military defeat is often described as stumbling as though drunken (Isa 51.22; Jer 25.16,27; 51.3). **13:** Nineveh's *troops* are taunted as being as weak as *women*, language also used in Assyrian documents to describe defeated soldiers. *Gates* may be an allusion to female genitals (as also perhaps in Isa 3.26): Nineveh is open to violation. **14–17:** The call for Nineveh to fortify itself for battle is sarcastic, as in 2.1: the city's fate is sealed. Locust imagery is used in several ways in these verses: Nineveh will be devoured as by *the locust* (v. 15a), even should its warriors multiply like *locusts* (v. 15b), and those charged with protecting the city are as undependable as *swarms of locusts* (v. 17). **16–17:** *Merchants* may allude to Assyria's economic power in the ancient world. *Merchants*, *guards*, and *scribes*,

17 Your guards are like grasshoppers,
your scribes like swarms[a] of locusts
settling on the fences
on a cold day—
when the sun rises, they fly away;
no one knows where they have gone.

18 Your shepherds are asleep,
O king of Assyria;
your nobles slumber.
Your people are scattered on the mountains
with no one to gather them.
19 There is no assuaging your hurt,
your wound is mortal.
All who hear the news about you
clap their hands over you.
For who has ever escaped
your endless cruelty?

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain

each part of a thriving society, all abandon Nineveh. **18–19:** Shepherd imagery dominates the final taunt against the king of Assyria. The one who was once called the *lion* (2.11–12) is here described as having incompetent *shepherds*, a common designation for leaders or *nobles* (Jer 3.15; 10.21; 25.35; Ezek 34:2–12). **19**: All nations are described as celebrating the Assyrian king's defeat because of Nineveh's *endless cruelty*. A final rhetorical question ends the book, a feature shared with the book of Jonah, also concerned with Nineveh.

HABAKKUK

AUTHORSHIP AND LITERARY HISTORY

Despite the book's first-person style, we know nothing about Habakkuk as a person. His name, similar to an Akkadian word for a certain type of plant, does not appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Both of the book's superscriptions (1.1 and 3.1) explicitly identify him as a prophet.

Habakkuk appears as a character in later Jewish and Christian literature. In the Addition to Daniel known as Bel and the Dragon, he is transported by an angel to feed Daniel in the lions' den (Bel 33–39). A commentary on Habakkuk from Qumran, called a "pesher" for its style of applying the biblical text directly to events of the writer's own day, provides not only an early copy of the text itself but also a glimpse of how Habakkuk's words resonated with a later generation.

CONTENT AND LITERARY STYLE

Habakkuk complains about the violence of the Babylonians, called the Chaldeans in 1.6. Their empire came to power in the seventh century BCE after defeating the Assyrians. As described in 1 Kings 23–25, Babylonia soon dominated Judah's political life and in 586 BCE destroyed its independent existence as a state: Babylonian armies burned the Temple in Jerusalem and exiled many of the population.

Other prophetic collections such as Isa 14.3–23 and Jer 50–51 pronounce God's judgment on Babylon for its cruelty. While Habakkuk's anti-Babylonian rhetoric is similar, even sharing some vocabulary with Jeremiah, its literary style is different. The core of the book takes the form of alternating speeches of the prophet and God (1.2–17 and 2.1–20). In each case, the prophet voices the community's complaint in the first person, granting it immediacy and poignancy. God's ensuing speech does not directly answer the prophet but rather raises new issues for consideration. The book ends with the speech of the prophet, cast as a prayer for God to act as a warrior on behalf of the people.

DATE OF COMPOSITION AND LOCATION IN THE CANON

Because of its anti-Babylonian theme, Habakkuk is often dated to the late seventh century BCE, the height of Babylonian power. Its frequent use of liturgical forms and vocabulary, however, has been seen as evidence that the book in its final form dates to the Persian period. The closing prayer closely mirrors psalms of petition (complete with the refrain of *Selah*), and while the "watchpost" of 2.1 may be read as a military metaphor, the same word is used to describe the stations of priests and Levites during the Second Temple period (e.g., 2 Chr 7.6; Neh 12.9).

Habakkuk is the eighth of the twelve Minor Prophets (see Introduction to the Prophetic Books [p. 971–75]). Its placement between Nahum and Zephaniah advances the chronological arc of the Book of the Twelve from the defeat of the Assyrians (Nahum) to the rise of the Babylonians (Habakkuk), followed by an imperative for repentance lest the nation fall (Zephaniah). Nahum and Habakkuk explain that a righteous deity may use an unrighteous nation to punish Israel and Judah but that the unrighteous nation will itself be punished. Zephaniah reiterates those themes and offers hope to Judah and a glimmer of hope for the nations.

INTERPRETATION

A classic question in monotheistic traditions is why, if God is just and caring, do believers suffer? While the traditions preserved in Deuteronomy–Kings insist on the justice of God, the book of Habakkuk complains about the suffering of the community at the hand of tyrants. Nowhere does Habakkuk attempt to solve the problem of God's apparent injustice. Instead, it models the legitimacy of human protest as well as the power of trusting in God's power even when it is not apparent.

Julia M. O'Brien

1 The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw.

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?
Or cry to you "Violence!"
and you will not save?
3 Why do you make me see wrongdoing
and look at trouble?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.
4 So the law becomes slack
and justice never prevails.
The wicked surround the righteous—
therefore judgment comes forth
perverted.

5 Look at the nations, and see!
Be astonished! Be astounded!
For a work is being done in your days
that you would not believe if you were
told.
6 For I am rousing the Chaldeans,
that fierce and impetuous nation,
who march through the breadth of the earth
to seize dwellings not their own.
7 Dread and fearsome are they;
their justice and dignity proceed from
themselves.
8 Their horses are swifter than leopards,
more menacing than wolves at dusk;
their horses charge.
Their horsemen come from far away;
they fly like an eagle swift to devour.
9 They all come for violence,
with faces pressing[a] forward;
they gather captives like sand.
10 At kings they scoff,
and of rulers they make sport.
They laugh at every fortress,
and heap up earth to take it.
11 Then they sweep by like the wind;
they transgress and become guilty;
their own might is their god!

12 Are you not from of old,
O LORD my God, my Holy One?
You[b] shall not die.
O LORD, you have marked them for
judgment;
and you, O Rock, have established them
for punishment.
13 Your eyes are too pure to behold evil,
and you cannot look on wrongdoing;
why do you look on the treacherous,

[a] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[b] Ancient Heb tradition: MT *We*

1.1: Superscription. Like Nahum, which precedes it, the book of Habakkuk is called an *oracle*; Nahum is also called a vision, deriving from the same Hebrew verbal root as *saw* (cf. also Isa 1.1; Am 1.1). The superscription explicitly labels Habakkuk a *prophet* (Hab 1.1; 3.1; see Hag 1.1 and Zech 1.1).

1.2–17: First interaction between the prophet and God. 2–4: The prophet speaks. While it is common for prophetic books to begin with the prophet speaking for God, Habakkuk pointedly begins with the prophet speaking to God, complaining about injustice. As in psalms of petition, "how long" introduces complaint and petition (Pss 6.3; 13.1; 35.17; 74.10; 79.5). Although he speaks in the first person, the prophet seems to speak for the community. **4:** *The law becomes slack*: This could refer to the reign of Jehoiakim (608–598 BCE), when the reforms of his father Josiah languished (2 Kings 23.35–37; cf. Jer 2.8). The *law* (Heb "torah") formed the basis of Josiah's reforms. The complaint that the *wicked surround the righteous* will be repeated in v. 13. **5–11: God speaks.** Rather than directly answering the prophet's questions, God addresses the community as a whole (*you* is plural), explaining that God is *rousing the Chaldeans* (the Neo-Babylonian Empire, ca. 612–539 BCE); although they are fierce, they are being sent by God. The NRSV refers throughout this unit to *they*, but the Hebrew alternates between singular and plural references to the enemy. In response to the prophet's complaint of *violence* in v. 2, God explains that the Babylonians *come for violence* (v. 9), and the complaint about the lack of *justice* in v. 4 is countered with the acknowledgment that the Babylonians make their own *justice* (v. 7). God's words intensify rather than satisfy the prophet's claims by stressing that the Babylonians are marching at God's command. **12–17: The prophet speaks.** Having received no answer to his complaints, the prophet again appeals to God to save. **12–13:** As in numerous psalms, the prophet appeals to God's goodness and constancy as the basis for his request: why, if God is good, does God not act? **12:** *From of old*, Ps 74.12. As textual note *b* explains, the MT changed the original reading of *You* to *We* in order to avoid the possibility of suggesting that God could die; this change is one of the medieval "tiqqune sopherim" ("restorations of the scribes"). **13:** The claim that the *wicked*

and are silent when the wicked swallow
those more righteous than they?
14 You have made people like the fish of the sea,
like crawling things that have no ruler.

15 The enemy[a] brings all of them up with a hook;
he drags them out with his net,
he gathers them in his seine;
so he rejoices and exults.
16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net
and makes offerings to his seine;
for by them his portion is lavish,
and his food is rich.
17 Is he then to keep on emptying his net,
and destroying nations without mercy?

2 I will stand at my watchpost,
and station myself on the rampart;
I will keep watch to see what he will say to me,
and what he[b] will answer concerning my complaint.
2 Then the LORD answered me and said:
Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.
3 For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.
4 Look at the proud!
Their spirit is not right in them,
but the righteous live by their faith.[c]
5 Moreover, wealth[d] is treacherous;
the arrogant do not endure.
They open their throats wide as Sheol;
like Death they never have enough.
They gather all nations for themselves,
and collect all peoples as their own.

6 Shall not everyone taunt such people
and, with mocking riddles, say about them,
"Alas for you who heap up what is not your own!"
How long will you load yourselves with goods taken in pledge?
7 Will not your own creditors suddenly rise,
and those who make you tremble wake up?
Then you will be booty for them.
8 Because you have plundered many nations,
all that survive of the peoples shall plunder you—

a Heb *He*
b Syr: Heb *I*
c Or *faithfulness*
d Other Heb Mss read *wine*

oppress the *righteous* repeats the prophet's initial complaint in 1.4. **14–17:** *People*, Heb "'adam," the word used in Gen 1 to describe all humanity. In the Priestly account of creation, humanity was given dominion over the *fish of the sea* and *crawling things* (Gen 1.26,28); now the people have become *fish* in the *net* of the enemy. **16:** The enemy even treats his power, his *net*, as his god.

2.1–20: Second interaction between the prophet and God. 1: The prophet may be imaged as a sentinel posted on the city walls (see Isa 21.6–12; 62.7; Ezek 3.17; 33.7; Hos 9.8) or as a priest serving at his post (see 2 Chr 7.6; Neh 12.9). **2:** God's reply will be a *vision*, from the same Hebrew word as "saw" in the book's superscription (1.1). It will be made plain to all, written largely enough that a *runner* (running messenger) can read it. **3–5:** All three verses constitute God's reply: the prophet is told to trust that an answer will come, despite its apparent *delay*. **4:** Although Rom 1.17; Gal 3.11; and Heb 10.38–39 draw heavily on this verse to prioritize *faith* over works, the Heb word is better understood as "faithfulness." Like the previous verse and 3.16, it stresses that the one who patiently awaits God's response will be rewarded. **5:** The *proud* of v. 4 are here linked with *wealth* and the *arrogant*. *Sheol,* the abode of the dead. In ancient Canaanite and Israelite literature, death and the underworld are often depicted as having an open mouth with an insatiable appetite; see Isa 5.14; Prov 30.15–16. **6–20: God's extended response, in five taunts.** Continuing the condemnation of pride and wealth are five taunts (6b–8; 9–11; 12–14; 15–17; 18–19); the first four begin with "alas" (Heb "hoy"), a term often used in funeral laments (1 Kings 13.30; Jer 22.18), while "alas" appears within the body of the fifth. The condemnation of rapaciousness, arrogance, and violence matches the description of Babylon in 1.6–11. **6–8:** The first taunt condemns the voracious appetite of the Babylonians. Common to prophetic literature is the affirmation that the evil will suffer the same pains they inflicted on others (Ob 15). **6b:** *Alas*, a term often used in funeral

because of human bloodshed, and
violence to the earth,
to cities and all who live in them.

9 "Alas for you who get evil gain for your
house,
setting your nest on high
to be safe from the reach of harm!"
10 You have devised shame for your house
by cutting off many peoples;
you have forfeited your life.
11 The very stones will cry out from the
wall,
and the plaster[a] will respond from the
woodwork.

12 "Alas for you who build a town by
bloodshed,
and found a city on iniquity!"
13 Is it not from the LORD of hosts
that peoples labor only to feed the
flames,
and nations weary themselves for
nothing?
14 But the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of the glory of the
LORD,
as the waters cover the sea.

15 "Alas for you who make your neighbors
drink,
pouring out your wrath[b] until they are
drunk,
in order to gaze on their nakedness!"
16 You will be sated with contempt instead
of glory.
Drink, you yourself, and stagger![c]
The cup in the LORD's right hand
will come around to you,
and shame will come upon your glory!
17 For the violence done to Lebanon will
overwhelm you;
the destruction of the animals will
terrify you—[d]
because of human bloodshed and violence
to the earth,
to cities and all who live in them.

18 What use is an idol
once its maker has shaped it—
a cast image, a teacher of lies?
For its maker trusts in what has been
made,
though the product is only an idol that
cannot speak!
19 Alas for you who say to the wood, "Wake
up!"
to silent stone, "Rouse yourself!"
Can it teach?
See, it is gold and silver plated,
and there is no breath in it at all.

20 But the LORD is in his holy temple;
let all the earth keep silence before him!

3 A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk according to Shigionoth.

[a] Or *beam*
[b] Or *poison*
[c] Q Ms Gk: MT *be uncircumcised*
[d] Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

laments (1 Kings 13.30; Jer 22.18). **9–11:** Like Ob 3–4, the second taunt chastises the arrogance of the proud in setting their *nest* high; their very houses will rise up against them. **12–14:** The third taunt contrasts the aspirations of the peoples and the power of God. **14:** Isa 11.9. **15–17:** The fourth taunt insists that Babylon's fortunes will be reversed, using the imagery of drinking: she who made others *drink* of her *wrath* will herself drink God's cup of punishment (Jer 25.15–27; 51.7). Throughout the prophetic books, the punished suffer *nakedness* and *shame* (Jer 13.26; Ezek 7.18; Nah 3.5; Ob 10). **17:** Isa 14.8; 37.24 suggest that both Assyrian and Babylonian kings cut down the famous cedars of *Lebanon*; this verse suggests that the *animals* themselves will take revenge. *Bloodshed* and *violence,* mentioned earlier in 2.8. **18–20:** The fifth taunt differs from the others: "alas" does not begin the unit, and the theme of idolatry is introduced for the first time since 1.16. Isaiah 40.18–20; 44.9–20 also lampoon the making of an *idol*.

3.1–19: The prayer of the prophet. The prophet, unsatisfied with God's previous responses, turns from complaint to petition. He invokes the biblical memory that God once marched as a divine warrior to vindicate the people (Nah 1; Ex 15; Deut 33; Isa 13) as the basis for his request that God march again to establish justice. **1:** The book's second superscription (see also 1.1) not only marks this chapter as a *prayer* but also provides instruction for its musical performance. The singular form of *Shigionoth* appears in the superscription to Ps 7; its meaning

[2] O LORD, I have heard of your renown,
and I stand in awe, O LORD, of your work.
In our own time revive it;
in our own time make it known;
in wrath may you remember mercy.
[3] God came from Teman,
the Holy One from Mount Paran. *Selah*
His glory covered the heavens,
and the earth was full of his praise.
[4] The brightness was like the sun;
rays came forth from his hand,
where his power lay hidden.
[5] Before him went pestilence,
and plague followed close behind.
[6] He stopped and shook the earth;
he looked and made the nations tremble.
The eternal mountains were shattered;
along his ancient pathways
the everlasting hills sank low.
[7] I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction;
the tent-curtains of the land of Midian trembled.
[8] Was your wrath against the rivers,[a] O LORD?
Or your anger against the rivers,[a]
or your rage against the sea,[b]
when you drove your horses,
your chariots to victory?
[9] You brandished your naked bow,
sated[c] were the arrows at your command.[d] *Selah*
You split the earth with rivers.
[10] The mountains saw you, and writhed;
a torrent of water swept by;
the deep gave forth its voice.
The sun[e] raised high its hands;
[11] the moon[f] stood still in its exalted place,
at the light of your arrows speeding by,
at the gleam of your flashing spear.
[12] In fury you trod the earth,
in anger you trampled nations.
[13] You came forth to save your people,
to save your anointed.
You crushed the head of the wicked house,
laying it bare from foundation to roof.[d] *Selah*
[14] You pierced with their[g] own arrows the head[h] of his warriors,[i]
who came like a whirlwind to scatter us,[j]
gloating as if ready to devour the poor who were in hiding.
[15] You trampled the sea with your horses,
churning the mighty waters.

[a] Or *against River*
[b] Or *against Sea*
[c] Cn: Heb *oaths*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Heb *It*
[f] Heb *sun, moon*
[g] Heb *his*
[h] Or *leader*
[i] Vg Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[j] Heb *me*

is unknown. Other musical notations end vv. 3,9,13, and the book as a whole. They may indicate that, like the Psalms, Hab 3 had its origins in Temple liturgy. **2:** The prophet makes his opening petition for God to *revive* God's saving work in *our own time* and show *mercy*. **3–15:** A vision of the divine warrior. Although in Hebrew the verb tenses are ambiguous, the NRSV has rendered them in the past tense to underscore that the vision is a memory of how God acted in the past, particularly in delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. **3:** As in Deut 33.2 and Judg 5.4, the divine warrior began his march from *Teman* (synonymous with Edom, as in Ob 9) and *Paran*, areas in Transjordan associated with God's dramatic deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. *Selah*, as in vv. 9 and 13, is a notation common to Psalms; its meaning is unclear, although it may indicate a musical pause. **4–11:** The description of God's dominance over *mountains*, *rivers*, etc., has strong mythical connotations and may allude to the cosmologies of other ancient Near Eastern cultures, in which *River* and *Sea* were deities defeated by a more powerful god (see translation notes *a* and *b*). Parallels are found in Pss 74.12–15; 89.9–10. Throughout these verses, the divine warrior's scope is cosmic, as God brandishes *chariots*, *bow, arrows* and *spear* while subduing all the earth. **5:** *Pestilence* and *plague* are pictured as divine attendants; cf. Ps 79.49. *Plague* (Heb "Resheph") is a well-attested deity in nonbiblical sources. **7:** Although the location of *Cushan* is unknown, it is here linked with *Midian*, another area connected with the Transjordanian wanderings of the Israelites. **10–11:** These and other verses are difficult to translate. *Mountains … writhed*, a common image in depictions of theophanies (divine appearances); cf. Pss 29.5–8; 114.3–7. **12:** As in Nah 1, God's *anger* is understood to be a positive force for action against injustice. **15:** Further echoes of God's deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea (see Ex 15).

16 I hear, and I tremble within;
my lips quiver at the sound.
Rottenness enters into my bones,
and my steps tremble[a] beneath me.
I wait quietly for the day of calamity
to come upon the people who attack us.

17 Though the fig tree does not blossom,
and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails,
and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from the fold,
and there is no herd in the stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will exult in the God of my salvation.
19 GOD, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
and makes me tread upon the heights.[b]

To the leader: with stringed[c] instruments.

a Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
b Heb *my heights*
c Heb *my stringed*

16–19a: The prophet's response to the vision. **16:** Having heard a recital of the divine warrior's power in vv. 3–15, the prophet now is awestruck and is able to trust that God will indeed act again. He has received the vision promised by God in 2.3 and can *wait quietly* (2.20; see also 2.4n) for the *day of calamity* for his enemies. Since the liturgy to which the prophet is portrayed as responding is likely postexilic, the chapter as a whole and perhaps the book itself may date to the postexilic period. **17–19:** Although God's saving acts are not yet evident and the people and its land continue to suffer, the vision has allowed the prophet to trust in God's saving power. **19:** The book closes with a psalmlike affirmation that God is the prophet's *strength* (Ps 118.14) and makes his feet *like the feet of a deer* (Ps 18.33 = 2 Sam 22.34). The concluding instruction to the music *leader* to accompany the text with *stringed instruments* (see Pss 4; 6; 45; 54; 55; etc.) reinforces the psalmlike style of the chapter.

ZEPHANIAH

NAME, CANONICAL LOCATION, AND DATE OF COMPOSITION

Zephaniah is the ninth of the twelve Minor Prophets in both the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX). Its superscription provides more detailed information than do those of Nahum and Habakkuk, the two books that precede it in the canon.

The superscription's four-generation genealogy links the prophet (whose name means "the LORD has hidden" or "the LORD has stored up") with the reign of the Judean king Josiah (640–609 BCE). Second Kings 22–23 lauds Josiah as one of Judah's great religious reformers; before his death in 609 BCE, he removed foreign images from the Temple in Jerusalem, centralized worship practices, and established for Judah a degree of political independence from the Assyrian Empire. Resonating strongly with this narrative, Zephaniah blames Judeans for mixing worship of the LORD with the worship of other deities (1.4–5) and accuses the royal court of dressing in foreign attire (1.8–9).

While the literary setting of the book in the seventh century BCE is obvious, the book may actually have been composed or at least substantially edited at a later date. The concluding promise of salvation for "daughter Jerusalem" (3.14–20), for example, reflects an exilic or postexilic perspective in its concern with the return of exiles to the city.

CONTENTS AND INTERPRETATION

Much of Zephaniah mirrors other prophetic books. It opens with a dramatic announcement of "the day of the LORD," a time in which God will act decisively to (re-)establish justice (Joel 1.15; 3.14; Am 5.18; Ob 15; Zech 12.4). It pairs oracles against foreign nations (cf. Isa 13–23; Jer 46–51; Ezek 25–32; Am 1.3–2.3) with oracles against Judah (cf. Isa 3; 5; Jer 1; 3; Am 2; Mic 2), accusing Judah of idolatry and injustice (cf. Isa 5.7; Jer 2.28; 11.13) and the nations of arrogance (cf. Isa 16.6; Jer 48.29; Zech 10.11). Zephaniah also ends with an announcement of salvation to "daughter Jerusalem," similar to those found in other prophetic books (e.g., Mic 4; Zech 2; 9). Its opening chapter, however, is distinctive for its comprehensive and harrowing depiction of the devastation of the earth and its inhabitants. Through insistent repetition and allusions to the creation narratives, it delivers an all-encompassing litany of doom that remains one of the most enduring images of judgment from the Hebrew Bible.

The book's powerful language for divine judgment captivated the imagination of later interpreters. The *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, a Jewish document usually dated between 100 BCE and 70 CE, describes the prophet's tour of hell as well as his brief visit to heaven. The *Dies irae* ("day of wrath"), a thirteenth-century Christian sequence long included in the Mass for the Dead, quotes the Latin translation of Zephaniah 1.15. "Shoah," the Hebrew word for *ruin* in 1.15, is now a designation for the devastation of European Jewry known as the Holocaust.

Julia M. O'Brien

1 The word of the LORD that came to Zephaniah son of Cushi son of Gedaliah son of Amariah son of Hezekiah, in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah.

2 I will utterly sweep away everything
from the face of the earth, says the LORD.
3 I will sweep away humans and animals;
I will sweep away the birds of the air
and the fish of the sea.
I will make the wicked stumble.[a]
I will cut off humanity
from the face of the earth, says the LORD.
4 I will stretch out my hand against Judah,
and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;
and I will cut off from this place every remnant of Baal
and the name of the idolatrous priests;[b]
5 those who bow down on the roofs
to the host of the heavens;
those who bow down and swear to the LORD,
but also swear by Milcom;[c]
6 those who have turned back from following the LORD,
who have not sought the LORD or inquired of him.

7 Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of the LORD is at hand;
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,
he has consecrated his guests.
8 And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice
I will punish the officials and the king's sons
and all who dress themselves in foreign attire.
9 On that day I will punish
all who leap over the threshold,
who fill their master's house
with violence and fraud.

10 On that day, says the LORD,
a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate,
a wail from the Second Quarter,
a loud crash from the hills.
11 The inhabitants of the Mortar wail,
for all the traders have perished;
all who weigh out silver are cut off.
12 At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the people

[a] Cn: Heb *sea, and those who cause the wicked to stumble*
[b] Compare Gk: Heb *the idolatrous priests with the priests*
[c] Gk Mss Syr Vg: Heb *Malcam* (or, *their king)*

1.1: Superscription. *Cushi* may be either a name or an ethnic designation, "Ethiopian" (see 2.12 and 3.10). If *Hezekiah* is the eighth-century reformer King Hezekiah (727/715–698/687 BCE; 2 Kings 18–20), then Zephaniah was a member of the royal family, which may be indicated by the unusually long genealogy. *Josiah* (640–609 BCE) was also a reformer (2 Kings 22–23), although his father *Amon* had sacrificed to carved images (2 Chr 33.22).

1.2–18: The coming day of the LORD. 2–3: Punishment is announced against *everything* on *the face of the earth*. The language echoes that used in the creation and flood narratives (Gen 1; 6.7; 7.4 and 8.8): *everything* (lit., "all"); humans (Heb "'adam"); *face of the earth* (Heb "'adamah"). God's announcement returns the earth to the destruction announced in Gen 6–7 and overturns the divine promise in Gen 8–9 never again to destroy the earth. **4–5:** The language of *cut off* continues, as God charges Judah's inhabitants with combining worship of the LORD with worship of other deities such as the Canaanite god *Baal,* the astral deities known as *the host of the heavens,* and the Ammonite god *Milcom.* These charges, as well as the term for *idolatrous priests*, fit well with the accounts of Manasseh's idolatry in 2 Kings 21 and Josiah's reforms in 2 Kings 23; see also Jer 19.13; 32.29. **5:** Repetition within v. 5 underscores the duplicity of the people: they *bow down* and *swear* both to the host of heaven and to Yahweh. **7–18:** *The day of the LORD* (Joel 1.15; 3.14; Am 5.18; Ob 15; Zech 12.4). Verse 7 introduces vocabulary that will dominate this unit: *day* appears thirteen times through the end of the chapter. **7–13:** The implications of the *day* for Judah. **7:** *Be silent*, cf. Hab 2.20. Though court officials might be expected to be the *guests* at the LORD's sacrificial banquet, in an ironic turn they are described as the *sacrifice* itself. **8–13:** A listing of Judah's crimes. **8–9:** The linkage between those who adopt *foreign attire* with those who *leap over the threshold*, likely a non-Judean religious custom (cf. 1 Sam 5.5), connects assimilation with idolatry. **10–11:** *The Fish Gate* (Neh 3.3; 12.39), *the Second Quarter* (2 Kings 22.14), and *the Mortar* (unidentified) likely all refer to wealthy districts in Jerusalem, where *traders* work. **12–13:** Like the fourth-century BCE Greek philosopher Diogenes who roamed Athens with a lamp seeking

who rest complacently[a] on their dregs,
those who say in their hearts,
"The LORD will not do good,
nor will he do harm."
13 Their wealth shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine from them.

14 The great day of the LORD is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the LORD is
bitter,
the warrior cries aloud there.
15 That day will be a day of wrath,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
16 a day of trumpet blast and
battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.

17 I will bring such distress upon people
that they shall walk like the blind;
because they have sinned against the
LORD,
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.
18 Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the LORD's wrath;
in the fire of his passion
the whole earth shall be consumed;
for a full, a terrible end
he will make of all the inhabitants of
the earth.

2 Gather together, gather,
O shameless nation,
2 before you are driven away
like the drifting chaff,[b]
before there comes upon you
the fierce anger of the LORD,
before there comes upon you
the day of the LORD's wrath.
3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the
land,
who do his commands;
seek righteousness, seek humility;
perhaps you may be hidden
on the day of the LORD's wrath.
4 For Gaza shall be deserted,
and Ashkelon shall become a
desolation;
Ashdod's people shall be driven out at
noon,
and Ekron shall be uprooted.

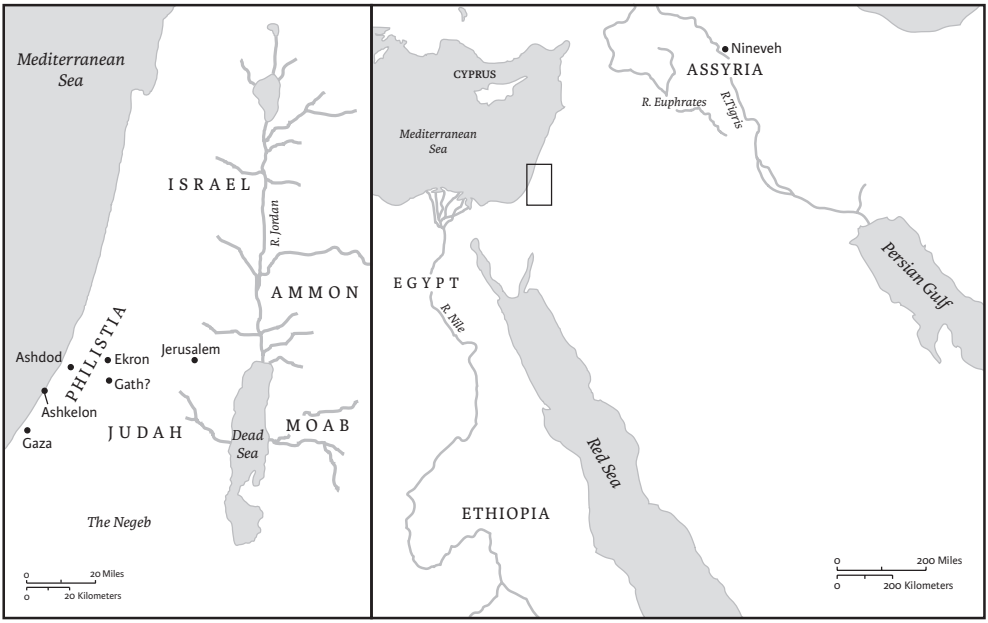
5 Ah, inhabitants of the seacoast,
you nation of the Cherethites!
The word of the LORD is against you,
O Canaan, land of the Philistines;
and I will destroy you until no
inhabitant is left.
6 And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures,
meadows for shepherds
and folds for flocks.

[a] Heb *who thicken*
[b] Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *before a decree is born; like chaff a day has passed away*

an honest man, the LORD will search Jerusalem with lamps to find the guilty. Because they doubt God's oversight of the world (see also Mal 2.17), their labor will not be successful (see Deut 28.30–31 and cf. Isa 65.21). **14–18:** The chapter ends as it began, with attention on *all the inhabitants of the earth* (v. 18). As elsewhere in the prophets, the *day* is one of divine *wrath* (Isa 13.9) from which *silver* and *gold* provide no protection (Ezek 7.19). The sins of Judah lead to the destruction of all creation. **15:** The term *day* appears six times in this verse; "Dies irae," the Vulgate translation of *day of wrath,* is the title of the well-known medieval sequence for the dead; *ruin* translates Heb "sho'ah," a term today used for the Holocaust. Compare Am 5.18–20.

2.1–3: Call to repentance. Although the *day of the LORD* is imminent, Judah's repentance may yet stave off destruction. **1:** The *shameless nation* likely is Judah. **3:** As in Joel 2.14 and Jon 3.8–9, Zephaniah underscores that some could *perhaps* survive if they *seek righteousness* (Isa 51.1).

2.4–15: Judgment on the nations. The call for Judah to repent shifts to the announcement that Judah's enemies will be destroyed. **4:** *Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod*, and *Ekron* are four of the five major cities of the Philistines (Josh 13.3). Missing from the traditional list is Gath, destroyed by the Assyrians ca. 712 BCE. **5:** The *Cherethites*



Ch 2.4-15: Places mentioned in the oracles against foreign nations.

7 The seacoast shall become the possession
of the remnant of the house of Judah,
on which they shall pasture,
and in the houses of Ashkelon
they shall lie down at evening.
For the LORD their God will be mindful of them
and restore their fortunes.

8 I have heard the taunts of Moab
and the revilings of the Ammonites,
how they have taunted my people
and made boasts against their territory.
9 Therefore, as I live, says the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel,
Moab shall become like Sodom
and the Ammonites like Gomorrah,
a land possessed by nettles and salt pits,
and a waste forever.
The remnant of my people shall plunder them,
and the survivors of my nation shall possess them.
10 This shall be their lot in return for their pride,
because they scoffed and boasted
against the people of the LORD of hosts.
11 The LORD will be terrible against them;
he will shrivel all the gods of the earth,
and to him shall bow down,
each in its place,
all the coasts and islands of the nations.

12 You also, O Ethiopians,[a]
shall be killed by my sword.

13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north,
and destroy Assyria;
and he will make Nineveh a desolation,
a dry waste like the desert.

[a] Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

may be synonymous with *Philistines* (Ezek 25.16; 2 Sam 8.18n.), who ruled the area along the Mediterranean *seacoast*. **7:** *Remnant* and *restore their fortunes* may reflect the situation of the Babylonian exile; see also v. 9; 3.18–20n. **8–11:** Threats against *Moab* and the *Ammonites*, two of Judah's eastern neighbors, are common in prophetic literature (Jer 48–49; Ezek 25; Am 1–2), as is the use of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* to connote total annihilation (Gen 19; Isa 1.9; 13.19; Jer 23.14; 50.4). **9:** See v. 7n. **12:** The brief mention of the *Ethiopians* (Heb "Cush," see 1.1n) seems out of place. **13–15:** *Assyria*, with its capital *Nineveh*, receives the greatest condemnation, in keeping with

14 Herds shall lie down in it,
every wild animal;[a]
the desert owl[b] and the screech owl[b]
shall lodge on its capitals;
the owl[c] shall hoot at the window,
the raven[d] croak on the threshold;
for its cedar work will be laid bare.
15 Is this the exultant city
that lived secure,
that said to itself,
"I am, and there is no one else"?
What a desolation it has become,
a lair for wild animals!
Everyone who passes by it
hisses and shakes the fist.

3 Ah, soiled, defiled,
oppressing city!
2 It has listened to no voice;
it has accepted no correction.
It has not trusted in the LORD;
it has not drawn near to its God.

3 The officials within it
are roaring lions;
its judges are evening wolves
that leave nothing until the morning.
4 Its prophets are reckless,
faithless persons;
its priests have profaned what is sacred,
they have done violence to the law.
5 The LORD within it is righteous;
he does no wrong.
Every morning he renders his judgment,
each dawn without fail;
but the unjust knows no shame.

6 I have cut off nations;
their battlements are in ruins;
I have laid waste their streets
so that no one walks in them;
their cities have been made desolate,
without people, without inhabitants.
7 I said, "Surely the city[e] will fear me,
it will accept correction;
it will not lose sight[f]
of all that I have brought upon it."
But they were the more eager
to make all their deeds corrupt.

8 Therefore wait for me, says the LORD,
for the day when I arise as a witness.
For my decision is to gather nations,
to assemble kingdoms,
to pour out upon them my indignation,
all the heat of my anger;
for in the fire of my passion
all the earth shall be consumed.

9 At that time I will change the speech of
the peoples
to a pure speech,
that all of them may call on the name of
the LORD
and serve him with one accord.
10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia[g]
my suppliants, my scattered ones,
shall bring my offering.

a Tg Compare Gk: Heb *nation*
b Meaning of Heb uncertain
c Cn: Heb *a voice*
d Gk Vg: Heb *desolation*
e Heb *it*
f Gk Syr: Heb *its dwelling will not be cut off*
g Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

the book's Assyrian setting outlined in 1.1. While the translation of the animal vocabulary is difficult, the threat that a city could become the *lair for wild animals* was common in the ancient world (Isa 13.19–22; 24.11–15). *Hisses* and *shakes the fist*, ancient gestures of cursing (Jer 19.8; 49.17; Lam 2.15).

3.1–7: Judgment against Jerusalem. The *city* Jerusalem is no better than the nations previously judged. *Officials, judges, prophets*, and *priests* encompass the entire leadership of the city (Jer 6.13; 14.18). Their deceit sets in contrast the *righteousness* and just *judgments* of God. **6–7:** God's punishment of *the nations* should have served as a warning for Judah to fear God and repent (cf. Am 4).

3.8–10: Judgment and salvation of the nations. 8: The day of the LORD, which dominated ch 1, returns; it is here described as a *day* of God's *decision* to act against the *nations* (Joel 3.14). **9:** A more universal hope follows, in which all *peoples* will *call on* Judah's God (Isa 2; Mal 1.11; Ps 68.31). The punishment of those who built the tower of Babel (Gen 11.9) is reversed. **10:** *Scattered ones*, Judeans who have been exiled to places such as *Ethiopia* (Heb "Cush"; see 1.1n., 2.12), will join in this worldwide worship of God.

11 On that day you shall not be put to
shame
because of all the deeds by which you
have rebelled against me;
for then I will remove from your midst
your proudly exultant ones,
and you shall no longer be haughty
in my holy mountain.
12 For I will leave in the midst of you
a people humble and lowly.
They shall seek refuge in the name of the
LORD—
13 the remnant of Israel;
they shall do no wrong
and utter no lies,
nor shall a deceitful tongue
be found in their mouths.
Then they will pasture and lie down,
and no one shall make them afraid.

14 Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
15 The LORD has taken away the judgments
against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your
midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.
16 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.
17 The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you[a] in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
18 as on a day of festival.[b]
I will remove disaster from you,[c]
so that you will not bear reproach for it.
19 I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
20 At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

[a] Gk Syr: Heb *he will be silent*
[b] Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Cn: Heb *I will remove from you; they were*

3.11–13: Salvation in Jerusalem. Focus returns to Jerusalem, for which feminine Heb forms are used. **11:** At the time of salvation, God will remove the city's *shame* (3.19; Joel 2.26–27) and those who are *haughty* (Isa 2.11,12,17), highly negative terms in prophetic books. *My holy mountain*, Mount Zion, site of the Temple. **12–13:** As in 2.7,9, this verse envisions salvation not for all of Judah but only for a *remnant*. The *humble*, those urged in 2.3 to *seek righteousness*, will survive. Their peaceful state will be like that of guarded sheep.

3.14–20: Salvation of daughter Jerusalem. The feminine characterization of *Jerusalem* expands to its depiction as a *daughter*, a designation of the city used throughout the prophets to underscore its vulnerability and utter dependency on God. **15–17:** The presence of God as strong *king* and *warrior* means that daughter Jerusalem does not need to *fear* or *grow weak* (Zech 2.10–11; 9.9–1). **17–18:** The Heb is obscure; see textual notes. **17:** God the *warrior* will *sing* and *rejoice*, just as Jerusalem was called to do in 3.14. **3.18–20:** *I will remove disaster from you*, contrasting with the beginning of the book, 1.2–3. *Restore your fortunes,* see 2.7. The deep concern for the ingathering of exiles likely reflects postexilic sentiments, indicating either that these verses were later added to a late-Assyrian-period book or that the book itself was written in the postexilic period as a retrospective look at the time of King Josiah. The language is highly reminiscent of the promises made to Jerusalem in Zech 1–2, as well those made to daughter Zion in Mic 4.6–7, which also envisions the return of the *lame* and *outcast* (the same Heb word is translated as "those who were cast off" in Mic 4.7).

HAGGAI

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND CANONICAL STATUS

The book offers no biographical information about Haggai, the prophet for whom the book is named. The name Haggai is related to the Hebrew word for festival (*ḥag*), perhaps indicating that he was born on a feast day. The book reports Haggai's prophetic activity during a brief period of less than four months in 520 BCE; see also Ezra 5.1. For Haggai as one of the twelve Minor Prophets, see the Introduction to the Prophetic Books (p. 971–75).

DATE AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The chronological formula with which the book begins (and which then reappears in 1.15b–2.1) is similar in style to those found in other books, e.g., 2 Kings 3.1; Hos 1.1; Am 1.1. The book of Haggai, however, records events after the destruction of the kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE and so has no native king to whom to refer (cf. Esth 3.7; Dan 7.1; 8.1; 9.1; 10.1; 11.1). Instead, Haggai is dated to the reign of a Persian ruler, Darius I. Darius was the king during whose reign (522–486 BCE) the Temple in Jerusalem was dedicated (515). The temple of Solomon had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 (see 2 Kings 26.8–21). The rebuilding inaugurates what scholars refer to as the Second Temple period. Early in Darius's reign, several Persian colonies revolted, most notably Egypt, in response to which the empire launched both military and administrative campaigns to restore regional security. It was therefore in his interest to have a politically stable Syria-Palestine from which to move toward Egypt.

Because the book does not mention the completion of the Temple in 515 BCE, it was probably written before that event.

STRUCTURE, CONTENTS, AND INTERPRETATION

Though many English translations construe the book as prose, substantial portions may be poetic, e.g., 1.4–9. The book presents a brief apologetic, historical narrative, focused on the rebuilding of the Temple, and, in four dated oracles, on Haggai's role in persuading the community to complete that project. Haggai interpreted the plight of those in Yehud (the name given to the territory around Jerusalem by the Persians). Although 2 Chr 36.22–23 highlights the role of Cyrus in the rebuilding of the Temple, the book of Haggai emphasizes that local leaders should receive the credit. The book's final oracle broaches another issue, the royal prerogatives of Zerubbabel, heir to the Davidic throne, and the glory that would ensue with a king enthroned.

David L. Petersen

1 In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest: [2] Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD's house. [3] Then the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying: [4] Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? [5] Now therefore thus says the

1.1–11: Haggai indicts the people. 1: *The second year,* 520 BCE. *The sixth month,* Elul (August-September). *The first day of the month* was a time for special rituals; the date is ironic, since the place where such rituals took place is in ruins. *Zerubbabel* (1 Chr 3.19; Ezra 2.2; 3.2,8; 5.2; Neh 12.1; Zech 4.6–10), the grandson of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24.8–17; 1 Chr 3.16–19), and thus a descendant of David. *Joshua,* Zech 3.1–10; 6.11 (= Jeshua in Ezra 2–5). Addressing the two together suggests that Yehud was led by both political and religious leaders, cf. Zech 4.10b–14. **2:** For reasons unknown, the community has resisted rebuilding the Temple. **3–5:** Even though Zerubbabel and Joshua had been addressed previously, Haggai appears to speak directly to the community. **4:** Haggai charges the people not only with not building the Temple but also with living in lavish, i.e., *paneled*, houses. (Solomon's palace was paneled with cedar, 1 Kings 7.7.) The issue of *time* (vv. 2,4) is important. Haggai's rhetorical question receives no direct answer, but the answer is obviously "no." **5:** *Consider,* lit., "set to your hearts,"

LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared. 6 You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes.

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared. 8 Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD. 9 You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while all of you hurry off to your own houses. 10 Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. 11 And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the soil produces, on human beings and animals, and on all their labors.

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of the prophet Haggai, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the LORD. 13 Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, saying, I am with you, says the LORD. 14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month. In the second year of King Darius,

2 1 in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying: 2 Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, and say, 3 Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? 4 Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the LORD; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts, 5 according to

a recurring phrase (1.7; 2.15,18). **6:** Haggai analyzes the status quo, using imagery drawn from futility curses; cf. Deut 28.38; Hos 4.10. Such misfortune stands in marked contrast with the luxurious houses in which the people live. **7–11: A call to action. 8:** Haggai's central admonition: build the Temple. **9–11:** These verses are built around a wordplay: as long as the Temple is in *ruins* (Heb "ḥareb"), the people will suffer drought ("ḥoreb"). **9:** The prophet returns to the language of futility curses, though now explicitly identifying the LORD as the one who has caused such futility.

1.12–15a: The people respond. Unlike many earlier prophets, Haggai is successful in his admonitions. **12:** *All the remnant of the people* suggests that Zerubbabel and Joshua had moved the people to obey. *Remnant* is ambiguous, perhaps referring to a group smaller than the preexilic population, or perhaps specifying those who had returned from exile. **13:** *The messenger of the LORD,* a logical though unusual label for a prophet; cf. 2 Chr 35.15–16. *I am with you* often occurs in oracles of salvation (e.g., Isa 41.10; 43.5). **14: A** new perspective on the people's obedience (v. 12), which is due to the LORD's stirring up *the spirit* of both the leaders and the people; cf. 2 Chr 36.22. **15:** *The sixth month,* see v. 1; the date seems out of place, since such dates elsewhere in the book occur at the beginning of an oracle.

1.15b–2.9: The Temple will be filled with splendor. Contrary to current experience, the LORD promises that this Temple will be even more glorious than the earlier one. **1.15b–2.1:** *The seventh month,* Tishri (September-October); *the twenty-first day,* when the community would have been celebrating the feast of booths (Lev 23.33–36,39–42). **2.3:** As in v. 4, Haggai poses questions, the last two of which are rhetorical. The first question indicates that at least some of those present had seen the First Temple before it was destroyed in 586 BCE (cf. Ezra 3.12–13). They would have been more than seventy years old to remember the First Temple. **4:** *Take courage,* cf. Zech 8.9,13,22–23, where the same Hebrew word occurs. In 1 Chr 28.10,20, David delivers a similar exhortation to Solomon, builder of the First Temple. *People of the land* probably refers to the same group known earlier as *the remnant of the people*, although some scholars have suggested that the former phrase refers to a rural

the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear. [6] For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; [7] and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the LORD of hosts. [8] The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts. [9] The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the LORD of hosts.

[10] On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying: [11] Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests for a ruling: [12] If one carries consecrated meat in the fold of one's garment, and with the fold touches bread, or stew, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, does it become holy? The priests answered, "No." [13] Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered, "Yes, it becomes unclean." [14] Haggai then said, So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, says the LORD; and so with every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean. [15] But now, consider what will come to pass from this day on. Before a stone was placed upon a stone in the LORD's temple, [16] how did you fare?[a] When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. [17] I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and mildew and hail; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD. [18] Consider from this day on, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider: [19] Is there any seed left in the barn?

[a] Gk: Heb *since they were*

population that did not go into exile. *I am with you,* see 1.13n. **5:** The Hebrew is difficult, reading literally, "The matter that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt." Haggai is clearly alluding to the Exodus and Sinai experiences, and claiming that God's covenant is still in force. The notion of God's *spirit* residing among the people is unusual. However, God could not be present as before, since the Temple had not yet been rebuilt.

2.6–9: An oracle announcing theophanic splendor. 6: God will now act on behalf of the Temple. *Once again, in a little while* is difficult in Hebrew, literally, "yet one, and it is only a little one." References to such shaking of the cosmos often occur in eschatological literature (e.g., v. 21; Isa 13.13; Joel 3.16; Heb 12.26). Here the very fabric of the universe quakes, not just mountains. This description of the universe—*heavens, earth, sea, dry land*—echoes that in Gen 1. **7:** *Splendor* refers to precious objects (see Hos 13.15; 2 Chr 32.27), which means that Haggai anticipates new ritual vessels will be provided for the Temple, the old ones having been plundered by the Neo-Babylonians (cf. 2 Kings 24.13). **8:** On silver and gold, cf. Zech 6.9–15, where they are products of fund-raising. **9:** *Prosperity,* Heb "shalom." The rebuilt Temple will engender well-being in Yehud, reversing the conditions described in 1.6,9.

2.10–14: The community is unclean. 10: December 18, 520 BCE, two months since the oracle promising *splendor*. *The word of the LORD* comes literally "to" Haggai, not "by" as was the case in 1.3 and 2.1; i.e., this is a private oracle. **11:** *Ruling,* Heb "torah." Priests were responsible for determining whether something or someone was holy or common, clean or unclean (Lev 10.10–11; Deut 33.10). Unlike the priests indicted in Ezek 22.26, those whom Haggai consults give proper responses. **12–13:** Two cases, one involving something holy, another involving something unclean, demonstrate the supremely contagious quality of the latter. Corpse uncleanness is especially difficult to remove (Num 19). **14:** Haggai focuses on *what they offer there* as *unclean.* Sacrifices presented at the altar and the Temple, which was under construction, are unclean, presumably because the Temple itself has not yet been rededicated. The unclean Temple is analogous to a corpse in its ability to defile.

2.15–19: The Temple is rededicated. Since 2:20 refers to a second *word of the* LORD on the twenty-fourth day, 2.15–19 are part of the first word, which begins at 2.10. **15–17:** The repetition of *consider* in this oracle mirrors the twofold use in 1.5,7. Haggai appeals to past agricultural disaster, comparable to that depicted in 1.6,10–11. **18:** *This day* almost certainly refers to the day on which the Temple's foundation stone was relaid (cf. Zech 4.9; Ezra 3.10–11). Even though the Temple will not be completed and rededicated until 515 BCE, the Temple has now been purified. **19:** Haggai's questions (cf. 1.4; 2.3,16) affirm that seeds will be planted and that vines and trees

Do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing? From this day on I will bless you.

[20] The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month: [21] Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, [22] and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders; and the horses and their riders shall fall, every one by the sword of a comrade. [23] On that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, son of Shealtiel, says the LORD, and make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you, says the LORD of hosts.

will yield fruit. Prior agricultural disaster will give way to fertility. The final words are literally "I will bless," the implication being that the "shalom" foreseen in 2.9 will include both the people and the land.

2.20–23: Zerubbabel, my servant and signet ring. On that same *twenty-fourth day*, a second oracle focuses on Zerubbabel. **21:** The diction of "shaking" the nations resumes that in 2.6. **22:** God will destroy unnamed nations. The language is allusive, e.g., *chariots and their riders* echoes Jer 51.21, *overthrow* Gen 19.25, *sword of a comrade* Judg 7.22. **23:** *On that day,* a phrase routinely used to depict the eschatological "day of the LORD." *Son of Shealtiel* means that Zerubbabel stands in the Davidic line, the grandson of Jehoiachin, Judah's last reigning king. The diction of *choosing* (God "chose" David, Ps 78.70), *servant* (the Davidic king can be so labeled, 2 Sam 7.5), and *signet ring* (Jer 22.24 likens a king to a signet ring) all suggest that Haggai thinks Zerubbabel will achieve royal status. Zerubbabel's actual fate, however, is unknown.

ZECHARIAH

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND CANONICAL STATUS

The book is named for the prophet Zechariah, a contemporary of the prophet Haggai. Both prophesied in the early days of the restoration, when returning exiles and those who had never left joined together to rebuild Judahite society. Although the book provides no biographical information apart from his apparent priestly lineage (1.1), Zechariah is mentioned, along with Haggai, in Ezra 5.1 and 6.14. The book of Zechariah, however, is made up of diverse literature, deriving from different historical periods. Only the material in chs 1–8 pertains to the historical Zechariah.

DATE AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Chapters 1–8, often known as First Zechariah, include three chronological formulae (1.1,7; 7.1), which report that Zechariah was active in October-November 520 BCE and December 518 BCE. As with Haggai, Zechariah's work is dated early in the reign of the Persian emperor Darius I (522–486 BCE) and before the rededication of the Temple in 515. Though Haggai interacted with individuals also mentioned by Zechariah and both were active during 520 BCE, neither prophet refers to the other, although "the prophets" to whom Zechariah refers in 8.9 may include Haggai. Ezra 5.1 speaks of them as active together. Chapters 9–14, sometimes referred to as Second or Deutero-Zechariah, stem from a later time, which is difficult to determine for at least two reasons. First, there are no explicit chronological formulas nor direct references to named individuals or recognizable historical events. Second, chs 9–14 are themselves heterogeneous. Zechariah 9:1 and 12:1 introduce two collections with comparable formulas: "The word of the LORD." The collections differ so much that it is unlikely they derive from the same time. Reference to Greece (9.13) may suggest that this section dates to the Hellenistic period, when Greece ruled Syria-Palestine.

STRUCTURE, CONTENTS, AND INTERPRETATION

The book's first oracle (1.1–7) is dated to the month just before Haggai reported that the Temple foundation stone had been laid (Hag 2.10). Unlike Haggai, Zechariah is not overtly concerned with the rebuilding of the Temple, though he does refer to the Temple foundation stone ceremony (8.9). His message is broader, including both moral discourse and visionary rhetoric. As a result, Zechariah 1–8 is more literarily diverse than Haggai, including both oracles and vision reports; Haggai has none of the latter. The oracles are themselves diverse. Some recapitulate rhetoric known from earlier prophets to whom he refers in general terms (1.5–6; 7.12); some encourage the people to return to the land (2.6–13); others offer ethical admonition (e.g., 7.8–10); still others announce a glorious future for Zion (8.1–7).

The eight vision reports in chs 1–6 are truly distinctive. Other prophetic books include vision reports (e.g., Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), but none includes such a high proportion of them. In earlier visions, prophets apparently understood what they perceived. This changes with Zechariah. As prophet, he receives the visions, but he understands them only when they are interpreted by "the angel of the LORD" (e.g., Zech 1.9–10, lit., "the LORD's messenger"). This situation will recur in apocalyptic visions (e.g., Dan 7). Further, as was the case with Amos, the vision reports in Zech 1–6 constitute a carefully structured series. The first and last visions offer scenes populated by multicolored horses, whereas the central visions in chs 4 and 5 highlight figures important to Yehud's polity: the high priest Joshua and the governor Zerubbabel. Zechariah's visions move beyond ordinary reality, e.g., a flying scroll (5.1–4). Moreover, they span "the whole earth" (1.11). These visions explain the ways in which God is working providentially on behalf of the newly restored community.

The latter part of the book (Zech 9–14) has a less carefully worked-out structure. Two collections of prophetic sayings (chs 9–11 and 12–14) are introduced by the heading "An Oracle. The word of the LORD," as is the collection represented by Malachi, which follows. Chapters 9–11 are largely concerned with the victories of the LORD as divine warrior. The collection in chs 12–14 has a related focus on the imminent "day of the LORD" and is characterized by the repeated phrase "on that day."

David L. Petersen

1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo, saying: [2] The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. [3] Therefore say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. [4] Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds." But they did not hear or heed me, says the LORD. [5] Your ancestors, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? [6] But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your ancestors? So they repented and said, "The LORD of hosts has dealt with us according to our ways and deeds, just as he planned to do."

[7] On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo; and Zechariah[a] said, [8] In the night I saw a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen; and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. [9] Then I said, "What are these, my lord?" The angel who talked with me said to me, "I will show you what they are." [10] So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, "They are those whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth." [11] Then they spoke to the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, "We have patrolled the earth, and lo, the whole earth remains at peace." [12] Then the angel of the LORD said, "O LORD of hosts, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which you have been angry these seventy years?" [13] Then the LORD replied with gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. [14] So the angel who talked with me said to me, Proclaim this message: Thus says the LORD of hosts; I am very jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. [15] And I am extremely angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they made the disaster worse. [16] Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with compassion; my house shall be built in it, says the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. [17] Proclaim further: Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity; the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.

[18b] And I looked up and saw four horns. [19] I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these?" And he answered me, "These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel,

[a] Heb *and he*
[b] Ch 2.1 in Heb

1.1–8.23: Oracles and visions attributed to Zechariah. This first major division of the book has three parts, each introduced by a date formula (1.1; 1.7; 7.1).

1.1–6: Prologue. 1: *The eighth month, in the second year,* Marheshvan (October–November), 520 BCE. *Darius* I, king of Persia, 522–486 BCE. A *Zechariah son of Iddo*, mentioned in Neh 12.16, belongs to a priestly lineage. *Zechariah* means "God remembered," which symbolizes God's remembering of the people, an important theme of the book. **2–6:** An unusual oracle, which reflects on past prophetic admonitions and the *ancestors'* responses. Heb "shub," translated both *return* and *repent,* occurs four times. For earlier prophetic calls to *return,* see, e.g., Joel 2.12; Jer 18.11; Ezek 33.11. **3:** On mutual return, cf. Joel 2.12–14; Mal 3.7. **6:** Though the *ancestors* did not initially *return,* they finally *repented*, which sets the stage for a glorious future.

1.7–17: The first vision: divine horsemen patrol the earth. 7: *The eleventh month . . . Shebat,* January–February; the year is 519 BCE. **8:** *Glen,* or "cosmic deep"; cf. Mic 7.19. **9–12:** A quiet scene in which horses graze, symbolizing peace over all the earth, elicits a protest by the angel. **10:** *Patrol the earth,* cf. Job 1.7; 2.2. **12:** *How long* frequently occurs in laments, e.g., Pss 6.4; 79.5. *Seventy years* also appears in Zech 7.4. The phrase is used in both biblical (e.g., Jer 25.11; Isa 23.15) and other ancient texts to refer to an unfortunate period of time. **13–17:** The LORD expresses anger at the nations and promises that both the Temple and cities will be rebuilt. **16:** *The measuring line*, indicating new construction (see 2.1–5; Jer 31.38–39; cf. Mic 2.4–5; Am 7.17).

1.18–21: The second vision: four horns and four smiths. 18: The *four horns* are ambiguous. They may refer to two pairs of animal horns, to horned helmets, or, most likely, to the four corners of a stone altar (cf. Ex 27.2; 38.2;

and Jerusalem." [20] Then the LORD showed me four blacksmiths. [21] And I asked, "What are they coming to do?" He answered, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no head could be raised; but these have come to terrify them, to strike down the horns of the nations that lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people."[a]

2[b] I looked up and saw a man with a measuring line in his hand. [2] Then I asked, "Where are you going?" He answered me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length." [3] Then the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him, [4] and said to him, "Run, say to that young man: Jerusalem shall be inhabited like villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and animals in it. [5] For I will be a wall of fire all around it, says the LORD, and I will be the glory within it."

[6] Up, up! Flee from the land of the north, says the LORD; for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven, says the LORD. [7] Up! Escape to Zion, you that live with daughter Babylon. [8] For thus said the LORD of hosts (after his glory[c] sent me) regarding the nations that plundered you: Truly, one who touches you touches the apple of my eye.[d] [9] See now, I am going to raise[e] my hand against them, and they shall become plunder for their own slaves. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me. [10] Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the LORD. [11] Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD on that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. [12] The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

[13] Be silent, all people, before the LORD; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

3 Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan[f] standing at his right hand

[a] Heb *it*
[b] Ch 2.5 in Heb
[c] Cn: Heb *after glory he*
[d] Heb *his eye*
[e] Or *wave*
[f] Or *the Accuser*; Heb *the Adversary*

Ezek 43.15). They are then interpreted as representing the totality of nations that destroyed Israel. **19:** *Horns* elsewhere can symbolize nations (e.g., Deut 33.17; Jer 48.25; Dan 8.8). **20:** *Blacksmiths,* the Heb word can refer to an artisan who works with wood, stone, or metal. **21:** *These have come* probably refers to the artisans who will destroy *the horns of the nations*. Such artisans are elsewhere depicted as punitive agents (Ezek 21.31, "those skillful to destroy"). The world at peace in the first vision will now be disrupted.

2.1–5: The third vision: a surveyor measures Jerusalem. 1: A *measuring line,* see 1.16n. Such a line was used to determine divisions within a particular territory as in Ezek 40.3, a text that also foresees the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, using the categories of *width* and *length*. **2:** Zechariah's questions presume that, in this vision, he understands what he sees. **4:** Restoration focuses on *Jerusalem*, not the Temple, as was the case in Ezekiel. Here the absence of walls stands in stark contrast with the walls described in Ezek 40. Jerusalem's walls were eventually rebuilt (Neh 2.17–6.15). **5:** *Wall of fire*, the Persian capital Pasargadae stood without walls and was surrounded by fire altars. God as *glory* will be located within the fiery circumference; cf. Ezek 43.2,4.

2.6–13: Admonitions and promises. 6–7: *Up, Up,* Heb "hoy" is elsewhere often translated as "Woe," though here it simply calls attention to what is being said; cf. Isa 1.24; Jer 27.6. *The land of the north*, the place where Israelites are in exile and from which they will return, so Jer 3.18; 16.15; 23.8; 31.8. *Daughter Babylon,* cf. Jer 50.42; 51.33; Ps 137.8. **8a:** Lit., "after glory sent me to the nations." Cf. vv. 9,11, which also report that the LORD *sent me.* **8b:** *Apple of my eye,* the pupil. **9:** *My hand,* another bodily metaphor of the deity. Only when the nations are plundered will Israelites know that the LORD sent Zechariah. **10:** *Sing and rejoice,* cf. Isa 12.6; Zeph 3.14–15. In all three texts, the command to sing accompanies the presence of the God *in your midst*. **11:** *Join themselves to the LORD,* cf. 8.20–23; Isa 56.6–7. **12:** *Holy land* does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, but see Wis 12.3; 2 Macc 1.7. Zechariah emphasizes the sacred character of the land of Israel. **13:** *Be silent,* cf. Hab 2.20; Zeph 1.7. Sacrifices at the Temple were conducted in silence. *All people* is consistent with v. 11. *Holy dwelling* can refer to either the earthly temple (Ps 26.8) or the heavenly abode (Deut 26.15).

3.1–10: The fourth vision: Joshua and the satan. This vision differs from the prior three: Zechariah is shown something—he does not just see it; the usual question is missing; and no clarification is offered. **1:** The *angel*

to accuse him. 2 And the LORD said to Satan,[a]
"The LORD rebuke you, O Satan![a] The LORD
who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is
not this man a brand plucked from the fire?"
3 Now Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes
as he stood before the angel. 4 The angel
said to those who were standing before him,
"Take off his filthy clothes." And to him he
said, "See, I have taken your guilt away from
you, and I will clothe you with festal apparel."
5 And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on
his head." So they put a clean turban on his
head and clothed him with the apparel; and
the angel of the LORD was standing by.

6 Then the angel of the LORD assured
Joshua, saying 7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts:
If you will walk in my ways and keep my
requirements, then you shall rule my house
and have charge of my courts, and I will give
you the right of access among those who
are standing here. 8 Now listen, Joshua, high
priest, you and your colleagues who sit before
you! For they are an omen of things to come:
I am going to bring my servant the Branch.
9 For on the stone that I have set before
Joshua, on a single stone with seven facets, I
will engrave its inscription, says the LORD of
hosts, and I will remove the guilt of this land
in a single day. 10 On that day, says the LORD
of hosts, you shall invite each other to come
under your vine and fig tree."

4 The angel who talked with me came
again, and wakened me, as one is wak-
ened from sleep. 2 He said to me, "What do
you see?" And I said, "I see a lampstand all
of gold, with a bowl on the top of it; there are
seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of
the lamps that are on the top of it. 3 And by
it there are two olive trees, one on the right
of the bowl and the other on its left." 4 I said
to the angel who talked with me, "What are
these, my lord?" 5 Then the angel who talked
with me answered me, "Do you not know
what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." 6 He
said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to
Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but
by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts. 7 What
are you, O great mountain? Before Zerub-
babel you shall become a plain; and he shall
bring out the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace,
grace to it!' "

8 Moreover the word of the LORD came to
me, saying, 9 "The hands of Zerubbabel have
laid the foundation of this house; his hands
shall also complete it. Then you will know
that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.
10 For whoever has despised the day of small
things shall rejoice, and shall see the plum-
met in the hand of Zerubbabel.

[a] Or *the Accuser*; Heb *the Adversary*

of the LORD is not an interpreter but a character in the vision, along with *Joshua*, the high priest (cf. Hag 1.1; 2.2); also called "Jeshua" (e.g., Ezra 2.2) and "the *satan*" (see textual note *a)*. This figure functions as the prosecuting attorney in the divine council; cf. Ps 109.6; 1 Chr 21.1 (only in this text does Heb "*Satan*" appear without the definite article, perhaps as a name); Job 1–2. **2:** The accuser is rebuked, apparently for having charged Joshua improperly. **3:** The high priest is ritually unclean. **4:** *Festal apparel* (cf. Isa 3.22) symbolizes the cleansing of the high priest. **5:** *And I said* should read with LXX (Septuagint), "and he said." Zechariah is not an actor in the vision. *Turban,* the headgear of the high priest, although not the same Heb word as in Lev 8.9. **6–7:** Admonitions, both general and specific; *keep my requirements* refers to priestly responsibilities (Num 3; Ezek 44). *Those standing here* belong to the divine council, to which Joshua is promised access. **8–10:** *The Branch* (cf. Isa 11.1; Jer 23.5; 33.15) refers to a member of the royal family of David, probably Zerubbabel, the governor (Hag 1.1; 2.20–23). *Stone . . . with . . . facets,* probably the engraved gold plaque on the high priest's headdress (Ex 28.36–38); it signifies the ability of the high priest to remove guilt. **10:** *Under your vine and fig tree,* see 1 Kings 4.25; Mic 4.4.

4.1–14: The fifth vision: a lampstand and two olive trees. 1–6a: This vision builds on the previous one, since it alludes to Joshua. **2:** *Lampstand* (Heb "menorah") has a round *bowl* at the top with seven indentations for wicks; see Ex 25.31–40. **3:** *Olive trees* provide the oil that fueled the lamp. **6b–10a:** A distinct oracle. **6b–7:** An unnamed person is addressed as *O great mountain* and compared to Zerubbabel, probably the recently purified Joshua. Zerubbabel will achieve high status as the one who lays the foundation stone—*the top stone*—of the Temple. The ritual of Temple rededication involved reusing a stone from the previous temple. **8–10a:** A second oracle, referring to the previous ritual, again highlights the role Zerubbabel will have in the reconstruction of the Temple. Kings were known as temple builders. **10a:** *The day of small things*, cf. Ezra 3.11. *Plummet* emphasizes

"These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth." 11 Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" 12 And a second time I said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which pour out the oil[a] through the two golden pipes?" 13 He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." 14 Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

5 Again I looked up and saw a flying scroll. 2 And he said to me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits." 3 Then he said to me, "This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land; for everyone who steals shall be cut off according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears falsely[b] shall be cut off according to the writing on the other side. 4 I have sent it out, says the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of anyone who swears falsely by my name; and it shall abide in that house and consume it, both timber and stones."

5 Then the angel who talked with me came forward and said to me, "Look up and see what this is that is coming out." 6 I said, "What is it?" He said, "This is a basket[c] coming out." And he said, "This is their iniquity[d] in all the land." 7 Then a leaden cover was lifted, and there was a woman sitting in the basket![c] 8 And he said, "This is Wickedness." So he thrust her back into the basket,[c] and pressed the leaden weight down on its mouth. 9 Then I looked up and saw two women coming forward. The wind was in their wings; they had wings like the wings of a

[a] Cn: Heb *gold*
[b] The word *falsely* added from verse 4
[c] Heb *ephah*
[d] Gk Compare Syr: Heb *their eye*

Zerubbabel's role as builder. **10b–14:** The vision and its interpretation resume. **10b:** *Eyes of the LORD*, cf. 2 Chr 16.9, where the eyes represent divine benevolence. **11–14:** The *two olive trees* symbolize *the two anointed ones*, lit., "the two sons of the oil." The word "anoint" is not present in Hebrew, nor is the typical word for olive oil that is used in anointing. This *oil* was used both for food and for fueling such lamps. These two "sons" almost certainly refer to Joshua and Zerubbabel, who now stand in close relationship to the LORD, symbolized by the lamp. Zechariah envisions a government in which power is shared between the high priest and the descendant of David.

5.1–4: The sixth vision: a flying scroll. 1–2: The scroll is apparently unrolled, rather like a flying carpet, and long, almost 30 ft (9 m). This scroll has a proportion of 2.1, more like a carpet than a document; the Qumran Isaiaha scroll is about 24 ft (7.3 m) long and 11 in (30 cm) wide, a proportion of 24:1. **3:** *The curse* probably refers to the curses found in God's covenant with Israel (cf. Deut 29.11,13,18), written down on a scroll (cf. 2 Chr 34.24; Dan 9.11). *The whole land,* a phrase used through Zech 1–8 (1.11; 4.10b; 5.6; 6.5). *Steals … swears falsely* echoes, although does not quote exactly, the Decalogue (Ex 20.7,15,16). Scrolls were rarely written on both sides. **4:** Destruction of houses is a typical punishment (Hab 3.13b; Dan 2.5; 3.29; Ezra 6.11). Oddly, the perpetrators are not punished. The flying scroll symbolizes the administration of the LORD's covenant-based justice throughout the world.

5.5–11: The seventh vision: a woman in a basket. 5–6: This vision is so bizarre that, unlike the other visions, Zechariah cannot name or describe what he sees; only the angel can do so. **6:** *Basket,* Heb "ephah," a unit of measure, ca. two-thirds of a bushel (23 L). Such an amount of grain or flour might have been held in a container made of textile, ceramic, or metal. The referent of *their* is unclear, though it may refer to Judeans, whose iniquity or guilt (see 3.4) is being removed. **7–8:** An incongruous image, particularly since an "ephah" could not hold a human. This "ephah" was made of a hard substance due to its lead lid. **9–11:** Gender continues to play a prominent role in this vision. *Two women* with wings, not cherubim, which were male. *Stork*, an unclean bird (Lev 11.19), and hence, in this simile, well suited to remove iniquity/wickedness. *The land of Shinar,* Babylon (Gen 10.10; 11.2; Dan 1.2; Josh 7.21). Isaiah 11.11 understands *Shinar* to be a place for exile and a place from which those exiled will return. Judeans are coming from Babylon; *Wickedness* is going to Babylon. *Build a house … its base,* the Babylonians, who will build a shrine for and permanently install *Wickedness*, will be polluted by the gesture that purifies Judah.

stork, and they lifted up the basket[a] between earth and sky. 10 Then I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they taking the basket?"[a] 11 He said to me, "To the land of Shinar, to build a house for it; and when this is prepared, they will set the basket[a] down there on its base."

6 And again I looked up and saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains—mountains of bronze. 2 The first chariot had red horses, the second chariot black horses, 3 the third chariot white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled gray[b] horses. 4 Then I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" 5 The angel answered me, "These are the four winds[c] of heaven going out, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. 6 The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go toward the west country,[d] and the dappled ones go toward the south country." 7 When the steeds came out, they were impatient to get off and patrol the earth. And he said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth. 8 Then he cried out to me, "Lo, those who go toward the north country have set my spirit at rest in the north country."

9 The word of the LORD came to me: 10 Collect silver and gold[e] from the exiles—from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah—who have arrived from Babylon; and go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. 11 Take the silver and gold and make a crown,[f] and set it on the head of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak; 12 say to him: Thus says the LORD of hosts: Here is a man whose name is Branch: for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. 13 It is he that shall build the temple of the LORD; he shall bear royal honor, and shall sit upon his throne and rule. There shall be a priest by his throne, with peaceful understanding between the two of them. 14 And the crown[g] shall be in the care of Heldai,[h] Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Josiah[i] son of Zephaniah, as a memorial in the temple of the LORD.

15 Those who are far off shall come and help to build the temple of the LORD; and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.

[a] Heb *ephah*
[b] Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Or *spirits*
[d] Cn: Heb *go after them*
[e] Cn Compare verse 11: Heb lacks *silver and gold*
[f] Gk Mss Syr Tg: Heb *crowns*
[g] Gk Syr: Heb *crowns*
[h] Syr Compare verse 10: Heb *Helem*
[i] Syr Compare verse 10: Heb *Hen*

6.1–8: The eighth vision: four chariots. 1–3: The final vision, like the first one, includes horses of many colors. The geographic setting is similar to that of the Mesopotamian sun god's appearance between two mountains. Here, chariots, rather than the sun, *come out* (lit., "go out," a verb elsewhere used of the sun; see v. 8n.), with no explicit reference to charioteers. *Chariots* represent military might and dominion (cf. Hag 2.22), and could symbolize God's martial presence (Isa 66.15–16; Ps 68.17). **5–6:** That they go out in four directions (cf. Jer 49.36; Ezek 37.9; Dan 11.4) means that the LORD's military might will be present everywhere with the winds as the deity's agents; cf. Ps 104.4. *Four winds* are present in Zech 2.6. *Presented themselves,* cf. Job 1.6; 2.1. **7:** *Patrol,* see 1.7n. **8:** *The north country,* the land to which Judeans had been exiled; cf. 2.6. *My spirit*, the same Heb word as "wind" in v. 5. The Heb verb "go out" appears seven times in this vision report (vv. 1,5,6 [three times],7,8). The vision concludes with the deity having fulfilled the threats of the first and second visions (1.15,21).

6.9–15: Wealth and coronation. Two oracles, one embedded in another, 6.9–11,14 and 6.12–13. **9–10:** *The exiles* (i.e., those who have returned from Mesopotamia). The three individuals are otherwise unknown. *Zephaniah*, father of *Josiah,* may be the priest of 2 Kings 25.18, who was taken into exile. **11:** Lit., "crowns," one of which was intended for *Joshua.* **12–13:** *Branch* in 3.8 and here refers to David's descendant Zerubbabel as is clear from his role as builder of the *Temple.* The oracle alludes to the diarchy envisioned in 4.1–14, though here the *Branch* appears to have a higher status than the priest. **14:** *Memorial in the temple* may mean that the three donors are remembered for their gift at the Temple. **15:** A general comment about the help that those who return from exile would offer. *You shall know . . .*, cf. 2.9.

7 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev. 2 Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men, to entreat the favor of the LORD, 3 and to ask the priests of the house of the LORD of hosts and the prophets, "Should I mourn and practice abstinence in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?" 4 Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me: 5 Say to all the people of the land and the priests: When you fasted and lamented in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? 6 And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink only for yourselves? 7 Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, along with the towns around it, and when the Negeb and the Shephelah were inhabited?

8 The word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying: 9 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; 10 do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. 11 But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear. 12 They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. 13 Just as, when I[a] called, they would not hear, so, when they called, I would not hear, says the LORD of hosts, 14 and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and a pleasant land was made desolate.

8 The word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying: 2 Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. 3 Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts shall be called the holy mountain. 4 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. 5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. 6 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me,

[a] Heb *he*

7.1–8.23: Oracles. 7.1–7: A question answered by questions. **1:** December 7, 518 BCE, a date that introduces a miscellany of oracles. Two years after reporting visions (1.1), Zechariah now offers oracles. **2:** A delegation from *Bethel* travels the ca. 11 mi (17 km) south to Jerusalem. *Entreat the favor of the LORD* means to seek help in a time of difficulty (so Ex 32.11; 1 Kings 13.6; 2 Kings 13.4; Jer 26.19; Ps 119.58). **3:** The question reflects a ritual commemorating the destruction of the Temple, which occurred *in the fifth month*. Gedeliah the governor was murdered in *the seventh* (2 Kings 25.8–9,25). The rest of the oracles in chs 7–8 may be a response to this question; a definitive answer is given in 8.19. **4–6: Addressing both** the delegation and the priests they have come to consult, Zechariah again alludes to the words of *former prophets* (cf. 1.4,6) and poses three questions. He suggests that the rite has been *only for yourselves*. On inappropriate and appropriate fasting, see Isa 58.4b–5; Joel 2.12–13. Zechariah charges the people both with ineffectual fasting and with feasting. **7:** *The Negeb and the Shephelah*, the southern and western regions of Judah.

7:8–14: Oracle and historical reprise. 9–10: Having referred to *former prophets* in v. 7, Zechariah now quotes what they said. For comparable admonitions and prohibitions, see Jer 7.5–6; 22.3; Mic 6.8. **11–12:** Language about *adamant hearts* was also used about Pharaoh (Ex 7.14). **13–14:** To *not hear* was reciprocal (cf. Ezek 8.18b; Jer 11.11b). The *whirlwind,* often a punitive agent, e.g., Jer 23.19).

8.1–23: Ten oracles of restoration (vv. 1–2; 3; 4–5; 6; 7–8; 9–13; 14–17; 18–19; 20–22; 23). **1–2:** Language of *jealousy* reprises 1.14; cf. Ezek 36.6b. **3:** This oracle echoes 1.14, with *dwell* referring to the Temple. *The faithful city,* a new name for Jerusalem; cf. Isa 62.4; Jer 33.16; Ezek 48.35. *Holy mountain,* see Joel 3.17; Isa 52.1. **4–5:** This oracle continues to portray prosperity in an urban setting, including multiple generations of both genders, on which see Jer 30.18–21. **6:** This oracle highlights the key word "impossibility" (cf. Ps 139.4), just as v. 2 focused

says the LORD of hosts? 7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; 8 and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.

9 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Let your hands be strong—you that have recently been hearing these words from the mouths of the prophets who were present when the foundation was laid for the rebuilding of the temple, the house of the LORD of hosts. 10 For before those days there were no wages for people or for animals, nor was there any safety from the foe for those who went out or came in, and I set them all against one another. 11 But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as in the former days, says the LORD of hosts. 12 For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. 13 Just as you have been a cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you and you shall be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.

14 For thus says the LORD of hosts: Just as I purposed to bring disaster upon you, when your ancestors provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the LORD of hosts, 15 so again I have purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; do not be afraid. 16 These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace, 17 do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, says the LORD.

18 The word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying: 19 Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be seasons of joy and gladness, and cheerful festivals for the house of Judah: therefore love truth and peace.

20 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; 21 the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Come, let us go to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going." 22 Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the LORD. 23 Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

9

An Oracle.

The word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach
and will rest upon Damascus.
For to the LORD belongs the capital[a] of Aram,[b]
as do all the tribes of Israel;

[a] Heb *eye*
[b] Cn: Heb *of Adam* (or *of humankind*)

on "jealousy." **7–8:** *Saving from,* see Jer 30.10–11; Isa 43.5–6. The covenantal relationship is reaffirmed (cf. Ex 6.7). **9–13:** This oracle begins with an admonition, not just a promise. **9:** An allusion to the ceremony reflected in 4.9; Hag 2.15,18. **10:** A lamentable state portrayed similarly in Hag 1.6. **11–13:** *Remnant,* see 8.6; Hag 1.12,14. *Peace,* Heb "shalom," which is described using fertility imagery; cf. Hag 1.10; Joel 3.18. *Cursing/blessing* draws on covenantal traditions (e.g., Deut 28). **14–17:** The LORD promises a time of benevolence, then turns to admonitions comparable to those in 7.9–10. Legal proceedings were conducted in city *gates* (Deut 21.19; Ruth 4.1). **18–19: A response** to the question posed in 7.3: all prior rituals of fasting are to become occasions for feasting. *The fourth* month was when the Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem, and *the tenth* when they began their siege (2 Kings 25.1–4; Jer 39.2; 52.4–7). For *the fifth* and *seventh* months, see 7.3n. Again, a promise is juxtaposed with an admonition. **20–22:** A pilgrimage of foreign nations to Jerusalem; cf. 14.16; Isa 2.2–4; 60.1–3; 66.18–21.

9.1–11.17: The first "Oracle." "*An oracle. The word of the LORD*" also appears in Zech 12.1; and Mal 1.1., suggesting that three "oracles" have been appended to Zechariah 1–8. **9.1–8: An oracle of woe against foreign nations and of protection for the Temple.** The places named are all within Syria-Palestine. The initial sites are in the north; they subsequently move to the west and then south. **1:** *Hadrach,* Hatarikka in Neo-Assyrian texts, was

[2] Hamath also, which borders on it,
Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.
[3] Tyre has built itself a rampart,
and heaped up silver like dust,
and gold like the dirt of the streets.
[4] But now, the Lord will strip it of its possessions
and hurl its wealth into the sea,
and it shall be devoured by fire.

[5] Ashkelon shall see it and be afraid;
Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish;
Ekron also, because its hopes are withered.
The king shall perish from Gaza;
Ashkelon shall be uninhabited;
[6] a mongrel people shall settle in Ashdod,
and I will make an end of the pride of Philistia.
[7] I will take away its blood from its mouth,
and its abominations from between its teeth;
it too shall be a remnant for our God;
it shall be like a clan in Judah,
and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites.
[8] Then I will encamp at my house as a guard,
so that no one shall march to and fro;
no oppressor shall again overrun them,
for now I have seen with my own eyes.

[9] Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
[10] He[a] will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war-horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

[11] As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.
[12] Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.
[13] For I have bent Judah as my bow;
I have made Ephraim its arrow.
I will arouse your sons, O Zion,
against your sons, O Greece,
and wield you like a warrior's sword.

[14] Then the LORD will appear over them,
and his arrow go forth like lightning;
the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet
and march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.

[a] Gk: Heb *I*

south of Aleppo. As in many prophetic texts, the LORD controls land beyond the boundaries of Israel. **2:** *Tyre and Sidon*, Phoenician port cities, the subject of earlier oracles against the nations (e.g., Isa 23; Ezek 26–28) and also important mercantile centers in the Persian period (Ezra 3.7; Neh 13.16). **5–6:** The sites are sometimes personified—*see, afraid, writhe.* Verses 5–7 highlight Philistine cities. **7–8:** God now speaks in the first person, promising to remove *abominations* (cf. Lev 7.21; 11.10–12) from Philistia's mouth, so that the Philistines will observe Jewish dietary laws (cf. Gen 9.4; Lev 11.2–47; Deut 14.3–21). *Jebusites*, pre-Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem; see Josh 15.63; 2 Sam 5.6–9; 1 Chr 11.4–9. **8:** *Encamp*, an unusual word to depict God's presence at the Temple. It continues the military tone of the poem, with the LORD as *guard* (lit., "as a garrison").

9.9–17: God's sovereign rule. A series of poetic vignettes about a future king and God's victory. **9–10:** The king welcomed. **9:** *Daughter Zion/Jerusalem,* see Lam 1.6; Zeph 3.14–15; Zech 2.13. *On a donkey, on a colt* (i.e., on one animal described in two parallel poetic lines); cf. Mt 21.2–7, which understands there are to be two animals. *The River,* probably the Euphrates. The demilitarized dominion described here is similar to Mic 4.3; Isa 2.4. **11–13:** Oracle advocating return and preparation for battle. **11:** *You* is feminine singular, referring still to *daughter Zion. Blood of my covenant* echoes Ex 24.8, the Sinai covenant. **13:** Martial imagery returns, with *Judah* and *Ephraim*, the preexilic Southern and Northern Kingdoms, as weapons. *Greece,* along with Joel 3.6, the earliest reference in the Bible to this enemy of Persia. **14–15:** The battle and its aftermath are described. **14:** A military theophany.

15 The Lord of hosts will protect them,
and they shall devour and tread down
the slingers;[a]
they shall drink their blood[b] like wine,
and be full like a bowl,
drenched like the corners of the altar.

16 On that day the Lord their God will save
them
for they are the flock of his people;
for like the jewels of a crown
they shall shine on his land.
17 For what goodness and beauty are his!
Grain shall make the young men
flourish,
and new wine the young women.

10 Ask rain from the Lord
in the season of the spring rain,
from the Lord who makes the storm
clouds,
who gives showers of rain to you,[c]
the vegetation in the field to
everyone.
2 For the teraphim[d] utter nonsense,
and the diviners see lies;
the dreamers tell false dreams,
and give empty consolation.
Therefore the people wander like sheep;
they suffer for lack of a shepherd.

3 My anger is hot against the shepherds,
and I will punish the leaders;[e]
for the Lord of hosts cares for his flock,
the house of Judah,
and will make them like his proud war-
horse.
4 Out of them shall come the
cornerstone,
out of them the tent peg,
out of them the battle bow,
out of them every commander.
5 Together they shall be like warriors in
battle,
trampling the foe in the mud of the
streets;
they shall fight, for the Lord is with
them,
and they shall put to shame the riders
on horses.

6 I will strengthen the house of Judah,
and I will save the house of Joseph.
I will bring them back because I have
compassion on them,
and they shall be as though I had not
rejected them;
for I am the Lord their God and I will
answer them.
7 Then the people of Ephraim shall become
like warriors,
and their hearts shall be glad as with
wine.
Their children shall see it and rejoice,
their hearts shall exult in the Lord.

8 I will signal for them and gather
them in,
for I have redeemed them,
and they shall be as numerous as they
were before.
9 Though I scattered them among the
nations,
yet in far countries they shall remember
me,
and they shall rear their children and
return.

[a] Cn: Heb *the slingstones*
[b] Gk: Heb *shall drink*
[c] Heb *them*
[d] Or *household gods*
[e] Or *male goats*

March from the south, cf. Judg 5.4. **15:** Typical of holy war, the divine warrior will fight and Israel will reap the benefits of victory, here described in graphic imagery, which also alludes to the Temple—*bowl* (Ex 27.3), *altar* (Ex 27.2). **16–17:** The Lord as royal shepherd, using the metaphor of a flock and a simile of jewelry. *Grain/new wine* symbolize fertility; cf. Hag 2.19.

10.1–12: The Lord, the militant shepherd. A poem of both critique and solace. **2:** Three forms of divination are condemned. *Teraphim,* divinatory figurines (e.g., Ezek 21.21). **3:** *Shepherds* (i.e., rulers). *Leaders,* see textual note *e*; Isa 14.9. **6:** God speaks, reiterating the diction of *save* (9.16) and return (*bring back*; 9.12). Cf. Isa 54.8. The Northern Kingdom of Israel, *the house of Joseph* (called "Ephraim" in v. 7), will be saved along with Judah; cf. 9.13; Ezek 37.15–28. **7:** *Wine* making the *heart glad* symbolizes a good future; cf. Eccl 9.7; Ps 104.15. **8–12:** An oracle

10 I will bring them home from the land of
Egypt,
and gather them from Assyria;
I will bring them to the land of Gilead and
to Lebanon,
until there is no room for them.
11 They[a] shall pass through the sea of
distress,
and the waves of the sea shall be struck
down,
and all the depths of the Nile dried up.
The pride of Assyria shall be laid low,
and the scepter of Egypt shall depart.
12 I will make them strong in the LORD,
and they shall walk in his name,
says the LORD.

11 Open your doors, O Lebanon,
so that fire may devour your cedars!
2 Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen,
for the glorious trees are ruined!
Wail, oaks of Bashan,
for the thick forest has been felled!
3 Listen, the wail of the shepherds,
for their glory is despoiled!
Listen, the roar of the lions,
for the thickets of the Jordan are
destroyed!

4 Thus said the LORD my God: Be a shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. 5 Those who buy them kill them and go unpunished; and those who sell them say, "Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich"; and their own shepherds have no pity on them. 6 For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the earth, says the LORD. I will cause them, every one, to fall each into the hand of a neighbor, and each into the hand of the king; and they shall devastate the earth, and I will deliver no one from their hand.

7 So, on behalf of the sheep merchants, I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. I took two staffs; one I named Favor, the other I named Unity, and I tended the sheep. 8 In one month I disposed of the three shepherds, for I had become impatient with them, and they also detested me. 9 So I said, "I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die; what is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed; and let those that are left devour the flesh of one another!" 10 I took my staff Favor and broke it, annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples. 11 So it was annulled on that day, and the sheep merchants, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. 12 I then said to them, "If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." So they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver. 13 Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it into the treasury"[b]—this lordly price at which I was valued by them. So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them into the treasury[b] in the house of the LORD. 14 Then I broke my second staff Unity, annulling the family ties between Judah and Israel.

15 Then the LORD said to me: Take once more the implements of a worthless shepherd. 16 For I am now raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for the

[a] Gk: Heb *He*
[b] Syr: Heb *it to the potter*

focusing on gathering and return from exile; cf. Isa 43.1–7,14–21; Jer 23.3. **10–11:** On the flight to Egypt, see Jer 43. With part of Israel in Egypt, a new Exodus can take place. **10:** *Gilead*, northern Transjordan. *Lebanon*, the mountainous region north of Israel, famous for its forests (see 11.1).

11.1–3: Taunt against Israel's northern neighbors. In this ironic taunt, Lebanon and Bashan, in northern Transjordan, are personified and characterized by three trees, two of which are fabled—cedars (Ezek 31.3) and oaks (Ezek 27.6). Shepherds and lions probably symbolize communal leaders. The destruction will affect foliage as far away as the Jordan Valley.

11.4–17: Shepherding a flock. Diverse oracles and reports, all using the metaphor of a shepherd for the community's leader; cf. 13.7–9. **4–6:** An unnamed person, perhaps the prophet Zechariah, is charged to lead the community, which is doomed. **7–14:** The symbolic action is reported by the individual who wields and then destroys two shepherd's staffs, symbolizing the end of a covenantal relationship. **12–13:** *Thirty shekels of silver*: Ex 21.32 stipulates this amount as restitution for a slave gored by an ox. Other ancient texts understand this to be a trifling amount of money; cf. Mt 26.15; 27.3–10. *Lordly price* is ironic. **15–16:** The deity

perishing, or seek the wandering,[a] or heal the maimed, or nourish the healthy,[b] but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs.

17 Oh, my worthless shepherd,
who deserts the flock!
May the sword strike his arm
and his right eye!
Let his arm be completely withered,
his right eye utterly blinded!

12 An Oracle.

The word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus says the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the human spirit within: 2 See, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of reeling for all the surrounding peoples; it will be against Judah also in the siege against Jerusalem. 3 On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it shall grievously hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth shall come together against it. 4 On that day, says the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But on the house of Judah I will keep a watchful eye, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. 5 Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God."

6 On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot on a pile of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves; and they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem.

7 And the LORD will give victory to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be exalted over that of Judah. 8 On that day the LORD will shield the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, at their head. 9 And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

10 And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one[c] whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. 11 On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12 The land shall mourn, each family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; 13 the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; 14 and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.

[a] Syr Compare Gk Vg: Heb *the youth*
[b] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[c] Heb *on me*

commands a second symbolic action, again involving a shepherd's implements. **17:** Woe oracle against the community's leader.

12.1–14.21: The second "Oracle." See 9.1–11.17n. Divine oracles and prophetic sayings about the imminent day of the LORD, referred to as "that day." **12.1–9:** Through a *word … concerning Israel,* vv. 2–9 highlight the destruction of foreign nations, as did 9.1–8. The God who creates (v. 1; cf. Job 9.8; Isa 42.5; Jer 10,12) can also destroy. There will be conflict between Israel and the nations and even within Judah (v. 2). **2:** *Cup of reeling,* cf. Ps 75.8; Isa 51.17–23; Jer 25.15–18. **4:** *Madness* and *blindness*, curses in Deut 28.28–29. **7–8:** David's lineage continues to be a source of hope. **10–14:** The tone shifts to that of lamentation. **10:** *The one … pierced,* cf. 13.3. The referent is unclear but the Hebrew suggests it is the LORD; cf. Jn 19.37, which identifies it with Jesus. **11:** *Hadad-rimmon,* according to 2 Chr 35.20–25, the site for mourning over Josiah's death. It is also the name of a Syrian storm god, also known as Baal, whose seasonal disappearance was mourned in the agriculturally fertile area around Megiddo; see 2 Kings 5.18.

12–14: *Their wives,* on women's lamentation, see 2 Chr 35.25; Jer 9.17,20. The lamentation will involve *the land* and *all the families*, not just the families named. The families are those of *the house of David* (*Nathan* was a son of

13 On that day a fountain shall be opened
for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

2 On that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit. 3 And if any prophets appear again, their fathers and mothers who bore them will say to them, "You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD"; and their fathers and their mothers who bore them shall pierce them through when they prophesy. 4 On that day the prophets will be ashamed, every one, of their visions when they prophesy; they will not put on a hairy mantle in order to deceive, 5 but each of them will say, "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil; for the land has been my possession[a] since my youth." 6 And if anyone asks them, "What are these wounds on your chest?"[b] the answer will be "The wounds I received in the house of my friends."

7 "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,
against the man who is my associate,"
says the LORD of hosts.
Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered;
I will turn my hand against the little ones.
8 In the whole land, says the LORD,
two-thirds shall be cut off and perish,
and one-third shall be left alive.
9 And I will put this third into the fire,
refine them as one refines silver,
and test them as gold is tested.
They will call on my name,
and I will answer them.
I will say, "They are my people";
and they will say, "The LORD is our God."

14 See, a day is coming for the LORD,
when the plunder taken from you will be divided in your midst. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses looted and the women raped; half the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. 4 On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that one half of the Mount shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward. 5 And you shall flee by the valley of the LORD's mountain,[c] for the valley between the mountains shall reach to Azal;[d] and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

6 On that day there shall not be[e] either cold or frost.[f] 7 And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the LORD), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light.

[a] Cn: Heb *for humankind has caused me to possess*
[b] Heb *wounds between your hands*
[c] Heb *my mountains*
[d] Meaning of Heb uncertain
[e] Cn: Heb *there shall not be light*
[f] Compare Gk Syr Vg Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

David, 1 Chr 14.4) and *the house of Levi* (*Shimei* was a grandson of Levi, 1 Chr 6.16–17). **13.1:** Those who might have incurred corpse defilement during mourning will be cleansed by water from *a fountain*. On purification from such uncleanness, see Num 19. The *fountain* may be related to the motif of a river flowing from the Temple; cf. Zech 14.8; Ps 46.4 Ezek 47.1–12; Joel 3.18. **2–6:** Prophecy is viewed as negatively as idolatry, subject to punishment by death. Unlike the rebellious son, whom parents are to bring before the legal assembly (Deut 21.18–21), parents here can kill their prophetic offspring immediately. **4–6:** *Hairy mantle,* a garment, as in Gen 25.25, that symbolizes deception. *I am no prophet* quotes Am 7.14. Prophetic *wounds,* cf. 1 Kings 18.28.

13.7–9: A personified sword. A poem using imagery similar to 11.17. The fractional destruction is similar to that in Ezek 5.1–12. **8:** On imagery of refining, see Isa 1.25–26; Mal 3.2–4. **9:** *My people . . . our God* expresses the covenantal relationship (cf. Ex 6.7; Hos 2.23).

14.1–21: An eschatological depiction of the day of the Lord. 4: A theophany, in which the mountains are *split* (cf. Mic 1.4; Hab 3.6). The new landscape allows Jerusalemites to flee from destruction. **5:** *Earthquake,* see Am

8 On that day living waters shall flow out
from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern
sea and half of them to the western sea; it
shall continue in summer as in winter.
9 And the LORD will become king over all
the earth; on that day the LORD will be one
and his name one.
10 The whole land shall be turned into a
plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusa-
lem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its
site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place
of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and
from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine
presses. 11 And it shall be inhabited, for never
again shall it be doomed to destruction; Jeru-
salem shall abide in security.
12 This shall be the plague with which the
LORD will strike all the peoples that wage war
against Jerusalem: their flesh shall rot while
they are still on their feet; their eyes shall rot
in their sockets, and their tongues shall rot
in their mouths. 13 On that day a great panic
from the LORD shall fall on them, so that
each will seize the hand of a neighbor, and
the hand of the one will be raised against the
hand of the other; 14 even Judah will fight at
Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the sur-
rounding nations shall be collected—gold,
silver, and garments in great abundance.
15 And a plague like this plague shall fall on
the horses, the mules, the camels, the don-
keys, and whatever animals may be in those
camps.
16 Then all who survive of the nations that
have come against Jerusalem shall go up year
after year to worship the King, the LORD of
hosts, and to keep the festival of booths.[a] 17 If
any of the families of the earth do not go up
to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of
hosts, there will be no rain upon them. 18 And
if the family of Egypt do not go up and present
themselves, then on them shall[b] come the
plague that the LORD inflicts on the nations
that do not go up to keep the festival of booths.[a]
19 Such shall be the punishment of Egypt and
the punishment of all the nations that do not go
up to keep the festival of booths.[a]
20 On that day there shall be inscribed on
the bells of the horses, "Holy to the LORD."
And the cooking pots in the house of the
LORD shall be as holy as[c] the bowls in front of
the altar; 21 and every cooking pot in Jerusa-
lem and Judah shall be sacred to the LORD of
hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and
use them to boil the flesh of the sacrifice. And
there shall no longer be traders[d] in the house
of the LORD of hosts on that day.

[a] Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*
[b] Gk Syr: Heb *shall not*
[c] Heb *shall be like*
[d] Or *Canaanites*

1.1n. *The holy ones,* members of the divine council; cf. Deut 33.2; Ps 89.5,7). **7:** The LORD's *day* will no longer be a day of darkness; cf. Am 5.18; Zeph 1.15. **8:** *Living waters*, see 13.1n. *Eastern sea*, the Dead Sea; *western sea*, the Mediterranean. **9:** *The LORD* as monarch juxtaposed with an allusion to the "Shema" (Deut 6.4). **10–11:** Consistent with the Zion tradition (Ps 48.2; Isa 2.2; Mic 4.1), Jerusalem will be elevated and secure. The area *from Geba to Rimmon*, from ca. 6 mi (10 km) north-northeast to 37 mi (60 km) *southeast* of Jerusalem, represents the geographic limits of the old kingdom of Judah. **12–15:** The plague tradition (Ex 7–12; Pss 78; 105) is linked with holy war *panic* (cf. Deut 7.23; 1 Sam 5.9). **14:** Despoliation of the nations (cf. Isa 61.6; Hag 2.7). **16–19:** The tradition of a pilgrimage of nations (cf. 8.20–23; Isa 2.1–4; Mic 4.1–4) is related to *the festival of booths*, Sukkoth (Lev 23.33–36; Neh 8.13–18). Egypt is singled out, perhaps because of the allusion to *plague* in v. 12. **20–21:** Imagery of radical holiness throughout Jerusalem, not just at the Temple. **20:** The book concludes as it began, with reference to horses. **21:** *Traders*, see textual note *d*, lit., "Canaanites."

MALACHI

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND CANONICAL STATUS

Unlike the other compositions in the Book of the Twelve (the "Minor Prophets"), Malachi may not be named for a prophet. Malachi means "my messenger," and there is good reason not to construe the word in 1.1 as a proper name, especially since the name does not appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint does not translate it as a name, and in fact the same word appears in Mal 3.1, where it is translated as "my messenger."

The book begins in similar fashion to Zech 9.1 and 12.1, suggesting that three collections (Zech 9–12; 12–14; and Malachi) were appended to Zech 1–8. An interest in creating a collection of twelve prophetic books may have resulted in the identification of Malachi as a separate book.

DATE OF COMPOSITION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Scholars generally agree that the book of Malachi dates to the period after the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 515 BCE. Reference to a governor (1.8), and not a king, clearly points to the Persian era. The book may have been composed in Judah prior to the time that Ezra and Nehemiah were active, i.e., in the early decades of the fifth century BCE. Problems that Malachi addresses, such as tithing, are also attested in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah (Neh 13.5,12), suggesting that these books date to roughly the same period. The book uses earlier biblical traditions, particularly Deuteronomy and ritual texts.

STRUCTURE, CONTENTS, AND INTERPRETATION

Malachi includes a distinctive form of literature, often characterized as a disputation. This genre has striking similarities to Greek diatribes. There are six such rhetorical units (1.2–5; 1.6–2.9; 2.10–16; 2.17–3.5; 3.6–12; 3.13–4.3). In all of them, two parties—God and some group—engage in a stylized dialogue. All six units include questions, posed sometimes by the deity, other times by the people. Moreover, each disputation quotes the LORD's opponents. What the people say often seems outlandish, e.g., "All who do evil are good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them" (2.17) or "It is vain to serve God" (3.14).

The book addresses several topics: the permanence of the LORD's care for Israel, the need to venerate the LORD alone, the importance of tithing and justice, and hope for those who fear the LORD. Two topics are particularly prominent—the international scope of God's reign and the ritual world of the Temple.

In the Hebrew Bible, Malachi ends the Book of the Twelve and the entire division of the canon called the Prophets. In Christian Bibles, it concludes the Old Testament. The book's final words about the prophet Elijah are interpreted in the Gospels as referring to John the Baptist.

David L. Petersen

1 An oracle. The word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.[a]

[2] I have loved you, says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" Is not Esau Jacob's brother? says the LORD. Yet I have loved Jacob [3] but I have hated Esau; I have made his hill country a desolation and his heritage a desert for jackals. [4] If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says: They may build, but I will tear down, until they are called the wicked country, the people with whom the LORD is angry forever. [5] Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the LORD beyond the borders of Israel!"

[6] A son honors his father, and servants their master. If then I am a father, where is the honor due me? And if I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. You say, "How have we despised your name?" [7] By offering polluted food on my altar. And you say, "How have we polluted it?"[b] By thinking that the LORD's table may be despised. [8] When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not wrong? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not wrong? Try presenting that to your governor; will he be pleased with you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. [9] And now implore the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. The fault is yours. Will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. [10] Oh, that someone among you would shut the temple[c] doors, so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hands. [11] For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. [12] But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and the food for it[d] may be despised. [13] "What a weariness this is," you say, and you sniff at me,[e] says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. [14] Cursed be the cheat who has a male in the flock

[a] Or *by my messenger*
[b] Gk: Heb *you*
[c] Heb lacks *temple*
[d] Compare Syr Tg: Heb *its fruit, its food*
[e] Another reading is *at it*

1.1: Superscription. This verse begins in the same way as Zech 9.1 and Zech 12.1. Here the *oracle* (lit., "burden") is directed *to* Israel. *Malachi,* literally, "my messenger."

1.2–5: The God who loves and hates. God demonstrates love for Israel (Jacob) by hating Edom (Esau; see Gen 25.19–24; 36.1). Enmity toward Edom runs deep in the Hebrew Bible; see especially Obadiah (cf. Isa 34.5–17; Isa 63.1; Jer 49.7–22; Ezek 25.12–14; 35.1–15; Ps 137.7). Still, Israel's God was remembered as having given Edom its land (see Deut 2.4–5). **3:** Such destruction may be related to Nabonidus's campaign against Edom in 552 BCE. **5:** *Great is the LORD,* similar claims are made about God in Pss 35.27; 40.16; 70.4; 96.4, which emphasize the power of the divine king. The international significance of Israel's God is reiterated in 1.11,14.

1.6–2.9: Concerning priests and Levites. The longest of the disputations deals with the priesthood. **6:** The notion of honoring a parent is embedded in the Decalogue (Ex 20.12) and in proverbial literature (Prov 13.1; 19.26). To *despise my name* strikes at the heart of Israel's religious life since the Temple is "the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name" (Deut 12.11). **7:** *Polluted food,* an unusual phrase to describe unacceptable offerings. The word for "pollute" or "defile" is used in Ezra 2 of unacceptable priests (Ezra 2.62). **8:** *Blind, lame,* and *sick* animals were not acceptable as sacrifices (Deut 15.19–23; Lev 22.18–25). The prophet offers an ironic admonition, *try presenting that to your governor*, an official of the Persian Empire. **9:** *And now implore the favor of God,* an ironic call to worship placed in the mouths of the priests, which may echo the priestly blessing of Num 6.24–26. **10:** *Doors,* see textual note *c*. On the doors of the Temple, see 1 Kings 6.31; Ps 100.4; the Levites were doorkeepers at the Temple (Ezra 2.42; Neh 11.19). It is unclear whether *altar* refers to the altar of burnt offering or the incense altar. **11:** Using solar imagery (cf. 4.2), the prophet testifies to the vast territory in which the LORD is worshiped. Whether or not appropriate ritual is taking place at the Jerusalem Temple, the LORD's name is being venerated appropriately *among the nations*, including Jews in the Diaspora. **14:** Cursing

and vows to give it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished; for I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name is reverenced among the nations.

2 And now, O priests, this command is for you. [2] If you will not listen, if you will not lay it to heart to give glory to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse on you and I will curse your blessings; indeed I have already cursed them,[a] because you do not lay it to heart. [3] I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and I will put you out of my presence.[b]

[4] Know, then, that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may hold, says the LORD of hosts. [5] My covenant with him was a covenant of life and well-being, which I gave him; this called for reverence, and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. [6] True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in integrity and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. [7] For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. [8] But you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, [9] and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you have not kept my ways but have shown partiality in your instruction.

[10] Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors? [11] Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. [12] May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob anyone who does this—any to witness[c] or answer, or to bring an offering to the LORD of hosts.

[a] Heb *it*
[b] Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *and he shall bear you to it*
[c] Cn Compare Gk: Heb *arouse*

replaces the earlier interrogation and indictment (cf. the curses in Deut 27.15–16). On pledging something good to sacrifice and then replacing it with something inferior, see Lev 27.9–11. It appears that both worshiper and priest would suffer a curse. On the LORD as *great King*, see Pss 96.10; 97.1; 99.1. **2.1–3:** Admonition and threat to the priests. **1:** *This command* echoes language found in Deuteronomy (e.g., 27.1; 30.11). **2:** Veneration of the LORD's *name* is also at issue in Mal 1.6,11,14; 2.5. The diction of cursing continues that of 1.14. *Your blessings* probably refers to the blessings that priests give (Num 6.23–27). **3:** *Offspring* implies the priestly lineage of Aaron, who were promised a covenant of peace (Num 25.12–13). *Dung*, either excrement or intestinal contents normally burned outside the Temple compound (Ex 29.14; Lev 4.11; 8.17; 16.27; Num 19.5). Smearing *dung* on the face of a priest would require the removal of that unclean priest from the Temple. **4–9:** The language of covenant and commandment continues, though now focusing on the Levites, whose status was below that of the priests who traced their ancestry back to Aaron. **4–5:** *Levi*, the third son of Jacob and ancestor of all priests (Gen 29.34). Jer 33.21 refers to a *covenant with Levi*; Deut 33.9 affirms the covenantal fidelity of the Levites. *Well-being* or "peace" (Heb "shalom"), is associated with the covenant with Phinehas in Num 25.12. **6:** *Instruction*, Heb "torah." Deut 33.10 characterizes Levites as responsible for teaching God's torah. To "walk" describes a proper covenantal relationship in Deuteronomy (10.12; 13.5). **7:** The language becomes prescriptive, though continuing to emphasize instruction. *The messenger of the LORD,* a phrase used of Haggai (Hag 1.13; see also Gen 19.1; 21.17). **8:** *You* probably refers to the priests, indicted earlier in this disputation. The metaphor of walking (v. 6) continues, though now in negative fashion: turning *aside from the way*. **9:** The punishment is consistent with 2.2–3. Neh 13.29–30 may provide a context for understanding these charges.

2.10–16: Religious fidelity. Focus on covenant continues, but now between God and all Israel. Familial imagery remains important. **10:** For a similar question, see Deut 32.6. On God as *one,* see Deut 6.4. *Covenant of our ancestors,* cf. Deut 4.3–31; 29.24–25; Jer 34.13–14, all referring to the Sinai covenant. **11:** *Abomination,* a religious sin. *The sanctuary of the LORD*, literally, "the holiness of Yahweh," which may refer to the Temple (Pss 63.2; 68.22). *Daughter of a foreign god* may refer to veneration of a goddess such as Asherah or marriage to a non-Israelite woman, a major issue in the Persian period (see Ezra 9–10; Neh 13). **12:** The punishing curse. To

13 And this you do as well: You cover the
LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and
groaning because he no longer regards
the offering or accepts it with favor at
your hand. 14 You ask, "Why does he not?"
Because the LORD was a witness between
you and the wife of your youth, to whom
you have been faithless, though she is your
companion and your wife by covenant. 15 Did
not one God make her?[a] Both flesh and spirit
are his.[b] And what does the one God[c] desire?
Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and
do not let anyone be faithless to the wife
of his youth. 16 For I hate[d] divorce, says the
LORD, the God of Israel, and covering one's
garment with violence, says the LORD of
hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not
be faithless.

17 You have wearied the LORD with your
words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied
him?" By saying, "All who do evil are good
in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in
them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of
justice?"

3 See, I am sending my messenger to
prepare the way before me, and the Lord
whom you seek will suddenly come to his
temple. The messenger of the covenant in
whom you delight—indeed, he is coming,
says the LORD of hosts. 2 But who can endure
the day of his coming, and who can stand
when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like
fullers' soap; 3 he will sit as a refiner and
purifier of silver, and he will purify the
descendants of Levi and refine them like
gold and silver, until they present offer-
ings to the LORD in righteousness.[e] 4 Then
the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be
pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old
and as in former years.

5 Then I will draw near to you for judg-
ment; I will be swift to bear witness against
the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against
those who swear falsely, against those who
oppress the hired workers in their wages, the
widow and the orphan, against those who
thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me,
says the LORD of hosts.

6 For I the LORD do not change; therefore
you, O children of Jacob, have not perished.
7 Ever since the days of your ancestors you
have turned aside from my statutes and have
not kept them. Return to me, and I will return

[a] Or *Has he not made one?*
[b] Cn: Heb *and a remnant of spirit was his*
[c] Heb *he*
[d] Cn: Heb *he hates*
[e] Or *right offerings to the* LORD

cut off as a punishment, see Pss 12.3; 109.15. *Tents of Jacob,* see Jer 30.18. **13:** *Weeping* at the Temple may refer to foreign rituals similar to those described in Ezek 8.14. **14:** The identity of the characters is ambiguous. If *you* is Judah, then the *wife by covenant* would be the LORD. On marriage as a covenant, see also Ezek 16.8; Prov 2.17. **15:** Familial symbolism continues with reference to *offspring*. **15b–16:** These verses, perhaps by another author, probably refer to human divorce; the issue is now marriage within the community, not idolatry as in vv. 10–14. Although Deut 24.1–4 permits *divorce,* it is here likened to *violence* that the LORD hates.

2.17–3.5: Theodicy and theophany. The prospect of judgment brought by both a messenger and the LORD. **17:** The people are quoted three times. The second quotation reverses the usual biblical view about God and evildoers (cf. Deut 18.12; 25.16). *Where is the God of justice?* echoes language in psalms of lament, e.g., Pss 22.1; 89.49. **3.1–5:** These verses focus on an expected *messenger* and what he will do. **1:** *My messenger*, see Introduction. This verse echoes Ex 23.20; cf. also Isa 40.3. The messenger is apparently a forerunner of the LORD. *The messenger of the covenant* may be the same individual as *my messenger.* The epilogue (4.5–6) identifies the messenger as the prophet Elijah (see 2 Kings 2.1–12). In the New Testament, the messenger is identified as John the Baptist (Mt 11.10; Mk 1.2; Lk 1.17; 7.27). **2–3:** Metallurgy and the manufacture of textiles provide metaphors for purification. *Fullers' soap,* whitening and cleansing agent used in the processing of textiles. *The descendants of Levi (*see 2.4) become important again, though here as officiating priests, not teachers. **5:** All the infractions also appear in Deuteronomy, especially 24.14–17, which refers to the wage earner, sojourner, widow, and orphan (cf. Zech 7.9–10).

3.6–12: Tithes, curses, and blessings. A disputation that addresses the responsibility of the entire community to bring tithes. **6:** *Children of Jacob* symbolize the unchanging commitment of the deity to Israel, as it has existed since the time of its ancient ancestor. **7:** This verse picks up the theme of return found in Zech

to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, "How shall we return?"

8 Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, "How are we robbing you?" In your tithes and offerings! 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. 11 I will rebuke the locust[a] for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the LORD of hosts. 12 Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts.

13 You have spoken harsh words against me, says the LORD. Yet you say, "How have we spoken against you?" 14 You have said, "It is vain to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about as mourners before the LORD of hosts? 15 Now we count the arrogant happy; evildoers not only prosper, but when they put God to the test they escape."

16 Then those who revered the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the LORD and thought on his name. 17 They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them. 18 Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

4[b] See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.

[a] Heb *devourer*

[b] Ch 4.1-6 are Ch 3.19-24 in Heb

1.2–6. **8–10:** The deity responds to the people's question "How shall we return?" (v. 7) by mandating proper *tithes and offerings*. **10:** On *the full tithe*, see Lev 27.30,32. Num 18.21–32 allocates the tithe to the Levites (cf. Deut 14.22–29). The tithe was a matter of concern during the Persian period, see Neh 10.35,37–40 (cf. 12.44; 13.5). The people's testing of the LORD is attested elsewhere only in 3.15 and Ps 95.9, where it is an accusation. Here it is a challenge, and the LORD promises to pass the test by providing rain, which will create agricultural bounty. **11–12:** *Locust*, lit., "devourer," which could refer to flies (Ps 78.45) or worms (Deut 28.39) as well as locusts (Joel 1.4). Deut 28.10–12 reflects a similar notion of rain, abundant harvest, and recognition by other peoples.

3.13–4.3: Those who fear the LORD's name. This diatribe differs strikingly from the preceding ones by introducing a distinct group, "those who revered the LORD" (v. 16). **13:** The LORD's charge could now refer to everything that the people have been quoted as saying throughout the book. **14–15:** The people raise the issue of theodicy. Unlike those who venerate God, *evildoers . . . prosper*, even after they *put God to the test* (cf. 2.17; 3.10). The LORD offers no response to this charge; dialogue ceases. **16:** On such God-fearers, see Pss 15.4; 22.23. Some psalms associate God-fearers with priestly houses; Ps 135.20 identifies them as the house of Levi, which has been prominent in Malachi. *Book of remembrance* (cf. Ps 139.16; Dan.10.21; Rev 13.8). In Ex 19.5, all Israel is God's *special possession;* here only a portion of Israel, the God-fearers, receives that honor. **17–18:** God will spare those who serve him, those who are righteous; *the wicked* will not be spared. The language of *parents* and *children* recurs in the book's final verse. **4.1**: *The day* is the day of the LORD. Unlike the fire in 3.2–3, the *oven* will destroy, not purify. Cf. Isa 6.13 for the imagery of stubble consumed by fire. **2:** *Sun of righteousness* alludes to the winged sun disk, which symbolized divine beneficence and protection throughout the ancient Near East.

[4] Remember the teaching of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

[5] Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. [6] He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.[a]

[a] Or *a ban of utter destruction*

4.4–6: An epilogue, drawing on diverse biblical texts (Mal 1.6; Joel 2.31; 2 Kings 2), that integrates the book of Malachi with individuals (Moses and Elijah) and traditions mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. **4:** *Teaching* (Heb "torah") *of my servant Moses* (cf. Josh 8.31; Neh 8.1). *Horeb* is an alternate name for Mount Sinai (e.g., Ex 3.1). **5–6:** Elijah (see 3.1n.) can return because he never died (2 Kings 2.11). There was an expectation that a prophet or prophecy would return before the day of the LORD arrived (cf. Ezek 39.29; Joel 2.28; Sir 48.10). The book concludes with imagery of familial reconciliation.

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New Revised Standard Version

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

THE LITERARY GENRE OF THE GOSPELS

The English word "gospel" originally meant "good news," and it is an exact translation of the Gk word *euangelion* (from which the English word "evangelist" is derived). The opening of Mark's Gospel, "The beginning of the good news [or "gospel"] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1.1), uses the word "gospel" for the message about salvation through Jesus. In the New Testament the Gk word refers either to the act of preaching (1 Thess 1.5, NRSV: "our message of the gospel") or its content (Acts 15.7, NRSV: "message of the good news"; 20.24, NRSV: "good news"). Outside the New Testament and other early Christian writings, the term is used for celebratory announcements, such as a military victory, the birth of a son, or a wedding. An inscription from 9 BCE uses the noun (in the plural) to refer to the past event of the birth of the Roman emperor Augustus: "the birthday of the god was for the world the beginning of 'joyful messages' which have gone forth because of him." The idea that an emperor's birth, coming of age, and ascent to the throne was "good news" for the world would have come to mind when Christian missionaries came preaching "good news." Not until the mid-second century CE was the word for "gospel" used of a literary genre (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 10.2; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 50.26.6).

The use of the word "gospel" in Mark's introduction presumably led to its being adopted as the designation for written accounts of the ministry, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Short formulas in Paul's letters show that the "good news" of early preaching focused on the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus (1 Thess 1.9–10; Rom 1.2–4; 1 Cor 15.3–5). Mark expanded this usage to include Jesus's own preaching of the kingdom of God (Mk 1.14–15). So far as we know, Mark was the first to create a distinctive literary form that combined early Christian preaching about Jesus with a narrative account of Jesus's life and ministry. Writings that some scholars date earlier than Mark are collections of sayings with little or no narrative framework.

By presenting a narrative about Jesus as the basis of Christian preaching (see Lk 1.1–4), the Gospel writers (the "evangelists") assume that the life of Jesus provides evidence to support Christian beliefs about him. By providing an account of Jesus from the time of his emergence on the public stage through his trial and death, Mark created a "life" (Gk *bios*) of his subject. The ancient *bios* should not be confused with a modern biography, which explicates the subject's origins, family, cultural influences, and character development, and tends to emphasize uniqueness and individuality. Ancient writers often characterized persons as types, and the narratives of their lives reflected a view that individuals had fixed characters from birth rather than personalities that developed through life.

Still, scholars disagree over the extent to which the Gospels follow conventions of ancient biography. Because the story of Jesus concerns a figure with a crucial place in the history of God's relationship with Israel, it is closer to Jewish accounts of Moses or a prophet like Elijah than to typical Greek and Roman biographies of rulers or philosophers (e.g., Xenophon, *Agesilaus*; Isocrates, *Evagoras*; Tacitus, *Agricola*; Lucian, *Demonax*), which had a wider scope, including an account of the preliminary education of the subject of the biography. Greco-Roman biographies were addressed to a social and literary elite, which may explain why the Gospels, addressed to a much broader audience, do not match them very closely. Philo's *Life of Moses* adopts a Hellenistic-style laudatory biography for a Jewish subject. Echoes of the life of Moses as related in the book of Exodus and other Jewish sources appear in Matthew's version of the birth and infancy of Jesus (Mt 1–2).

Since the genre "biography" emerged from Greek historical writing, the question of whether the Gospels belong to this genre often involves a prior judgment concerning their historical plausibility. Scholars who reject biography as a description of the Gospels often overemphasize the ideological or legendary elements found in the narratives. They prefer to read the Gospels as etiological legends explaining the emergence of a new religion or as ideological representations of the Christology of particular early Christian communities. Such writings do not intend to provide historical information about their subject. Rather, they operate like myths and symbols to support Christian beliefs and practices.

Second-century CE authors, on the other hand, both adherents of Christianity like Justin Martyr and opponents like Celsus, presumed that the evangelists intended to provide information. Justin Martyr's designation

of the Gospels as "memoirs" (Gk *hypomnemata*; *1 Apology* 1.67.3) suggests something less than a full literary biography, something more like a gathering of notes about the subject and his teaching. This perception may have been enhanced by the fact that early Christians disseminated their writings using a codex (similar to a bound book) rather than a scroll. Though some modern readers think of the codex as a technological advance over the scroll, the ancients did not. Serious literary works were copied onto scrolls. Notes, preliminary drafts, and all sorts of records were kept in codices. Thus their physical appearance would suggest to an ancient reader that the Gospels were more educational handbooks than examples of high literary art. Papias's comment that Mark is "not in order" (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.5) shows that even some Christian readers considered it an unfinished composition. Papias also noted that Matthew was a more polished work (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16). Luke's prologue states that he intends to correct the deficiencies in earlier accounts (1.1–4). Such comments indicate that Mark's earliest readers treated the Gospel as a rough life of Jesus. A "biography" of this type naturally invited expansions in content and revisions of style like those that Matthew and Luke subsequently undertook.

THE SOURCES OF THE GOSPELS

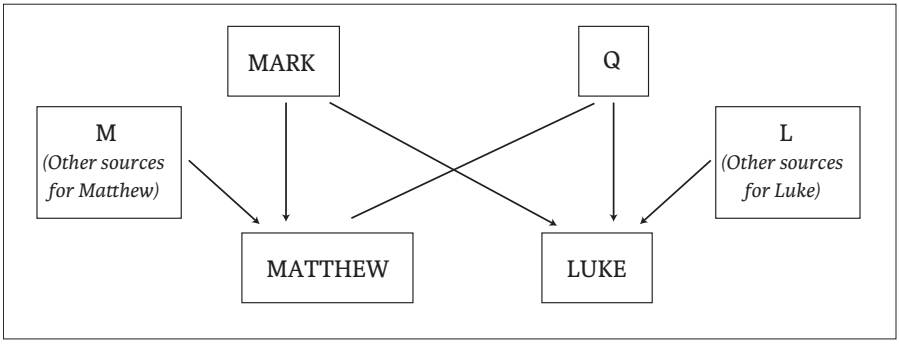
A historical genre does not necessarily guarantee historical accuracy or reliability, and neither the evangelists nor their first readers engaged in historical analysis. Their aim was to confirm Christian faith (Lk 1.4; Jn 20.31). Scholars generally agree that the Gospels were written forty to sixty years after the death of Jesus. They are not eyewitness or contemporary accounts of Jesus's life and teaching. Even the language has changed. Though Greek had become the common language used by groups whose primary languages were different in the eastern Roman Empire, and inscriptions and fragments of Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible show that Greek was used among Jews within Judea, Jesus, his disciples, and the crowds would have used Aramaic, a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew, which it had replaced as the principal spoken language of Palestine. Despite scholarly efforts to detect an underlying Aramaic original for Mark or Matthew, it is probable that all the evangelists wrote in the common (*koinē*) Greek of their day. Further, the vast majority of Hebrew Bible citations in the New Testament are taken from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint).

In the third century CE, Eusebius created a system of dividing the gospels into narrative units and creating lists indicating which sections appear in some form in all four, in various groupings of three and two, and finally which ones are unique to the gospel in question. Codices marked up with this system enabled readers to locate different versions of the same episode. Today students use special books laid out in parallel columns, a "gospel synopsis." Large sections of Matthew, Mark, and Luke repeat stories about and sayings of Jesus in nearly identical words. Hence these three Gospels are referred to as the "Synoptic" Gospels (from Gk *synoptikos*, "viewed together"). On a linguistic level, both Luke and Matthew improve on Mark's style, smoothing out inelegant expressions and repetitions. Luke eliminates Mark's characteristic use of parataxis (one short phrase following another without indicating how they are related) by employing balancing particles and subordinate clauses. Matthew follows Mark's outline, though the insertion of considerable sections of discourse material may obscure that relationship for the casual reader. Luke knows most of Mark but has no parallels to Mk 6.45–8.26; whether Luke chose to omit this section or had a different version of Mark remains unclear. Detailed analysis of the traditions shared by Matthew, Mark, and Luke provides strong support for the view that Mark provided the template that Matthew and Luke revised, both correcting and smoothing out its language and expanding the Jesus material it contained.

Further study of additional material shared by Matthew and Luke shows a number of close verbal parallels in passages such as the temptation of Jesus (Mt 4.2–11; Lk 4.2–13), the Beatitudes (Lk 6.20–23; Mt 5.3,6,4,11–12), the parable of the lost sheep (Lk 15.4–7; Mt 18.12–14), and the Lord's Prayer (Lk 11.2–4; Mt 6.9–13). These parallels include various types of sayings, controversy stories, and parables. Scholars hypothesized that a collection of such material must have been circulating in the early churches, and they have designated it with the symbol "Q," from the German *Quelle* ("source"). In 1945, a library of religious treatises in Coptic was discovered near Nag Hammadi in Egypt. They included just such a "sayings book," the *Gospel of Thomas*. Subsequently, sayings from a variant tradition of this Gospel in Greek were identified among Greek papyri. The *Gospel of Thomas* is not "Q": Some of its sayings and parables appear to have been taken from the Synoptic Gospels rather than from earlier oral tradition. But its discovery provides evidence that such sayings collec-

tions existed. Some scholars remain skeptical of the Q hypothesis, proposing instead complex explanations of how each successive gospel writer adapted the work of his predecessors. Sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* collection that reflect a specific Synoptic Gospel suggest that the entire collection derived from oral repetition of canonical gospel material.

Scholars generally presume that the Gospel writers had other such notebook-like collections of material such as parables and miracle stories. Presumably, additional items, such as genealogies, hymnic prayers, and legends in the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, were not created by the evangelists but come from earlier tradition. Similarly, some of the material found only in Matthew or in Luke is not likely to be the author's creation. The following diagram shows the understanding of a majority of scholars about the sources and literary relationships of the Synoptic Gospels.



Four-Source Hypothesis. In composing their Gospels, both Matthew and Luke independently used two earlier sources: the gospel of Mark and "Q," the collection of sayings of Jesus. Each also used other sources specific to each of them.

There may also have been an earlier narrative of the passion and death of Jesus; some scholars think that most of Mark's narrative came from such a source, while others maintain that there is no evidence for such an account. The origin of the story of Jesus's passion is unclear when measured against Jewish and Roman judicial practice, and some details may have been based on biblical descriptions of the suffering righteous one. It is important to recognize that in the scribal culture of the earliest centuries texts were not fixed by the initial author. Additional clarifications and even freely circulating material could be incorporated by later scribes. Modern editions sometimes mark these expansions (see Mk 16.9–20; Lk 22.43–44 textual note *a*; Jn 7.53–8.11).

While the Synoptic Gospels have a close literary relationship, the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, presents a much greater puzzle. Its chronology of Jesus's ministry differs from that of the Synoptics. In John, Jesus spends three years preaching, during which he journeys between Galilee and Jerusalem; in the Synoptic Gospels, he visits Jerusalem only once, at the end of a ministry that apparently lasted less than a year. The episode denouncing the sellers in the Temple, which enrages the religious authorities and leads to his death in the Synoptics, occurs near the beginning of the three-year ministry in John (Jn 2.13–22). John claims that Jesus's popularity with Jerusalem crowds after he dramatically restored Lazarus to life awakened political fears for the safety of the nation (Jn 11.45–57; 12.9–11). John's account of the passion also differs markedly: there is no agony. Conscious of his unity with the Father and the cross as his exaltation and return to preexistent glory, Jesus controls all the events; he engages Pilate, the Roman governor, in an ironic discussion of kingship; and John includes a disciple-witness, a resident of Jerusalem, who does not flee with the others. Is this unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 21.7,20; cf. 19.26; 20.2) a symbolic creation of the Evangelist? Some scholars think so; others suggest that he was a historical individual, responsible for the gospel's unique tradition and theology, as it alleges (19.35; 21.24). What led the author of the Gospel of John to compose this variant on the narrative of Jesus's life that still has a recognizable similarity to Mark (and in some instances to Luke)? Some scholars use the parallels as indications of a shorter sketch of Jesus's life known to both authors. Others think

that the Gospel of Mark, and perhaps also Luke, were already circulating in the Evangelist's area. He assumed that readers knew other accounts of Jesus's life and teaching, and formulated a different version of Jesus and what he taught to show that Jesus of Nazareth was not just a miracle-worker, prophet, or charismatic teacher but the incarnate Son of God. That claim constitutes the flash point between Jesus and the Jewish authorities throughout the narrative.

The Evangelists did more than edit notebooks of Jesus traditions. Rather, each shaped the narrative to emphasize particular features of Jesus and his teaching. Readers may approach every Gospel in a similar way, asking what are the special characteristics of Jesus and of his followers in each Evangelist's presentation of Jesus and of those who follow Jesus.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

CANONICAL STATUS

The authoritative status of the Gospel of Matthew was recognized as early as the beginning of the second century CE, and Matthew has always figured as the first book of the New Testament canon. This position is explicable for several reasons. First, as the Gospel that draws most extensively on the Jewish scriptures, Matthew links the Old and New Testaments by showing how prophecies from the former—including "fulfillment citations"—were realized in the person of Jesus. Second, Matthew was the most important Gospel for the early church and, until at least the end of the second century, the most influential writing in the New Testament. Its arrangement of the teaching of Jesus into five discourses, especially the Sermon on the Mount (chs 5–7), made it especially useful for the catechetical instruction of converts. In addition, its inclusion of narratives about Jesus's birth and resurrection offered a more comprehensive biographical shape to Jesus's life than the Gospel of Mark (which was likely Matthew's main source). Finally, unlike the other two Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of Matthew was traditionally attributed to Matthew, one of Jesus's actual twelve disciples (cf. 10.3). Mark was regarded as a follower of the apostle Peter, and Luke of the apostle Paul.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE, AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION

Judgments about the authorship of this Gospel hinge significantly on which view of the synoptic problem is accepted. The following discussion accepts the two-document hypothesis as the most satisfactory solution to understanding how the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke relate to each other. On this reading, the Gospel of Mark was the author's chief source, together with a hypothetical sayings-source that he shared with Luke (designated "Q"), and some 210 verses unique to Matthew ("M").

From the early second century the Gospel's author was identified as Matthew, one of the twelve disciples. This attribution to Matthew appears to be signaled by 9.9, where Mark's reference to Levi, the tax collector (Mk 2.13–17), is changed to Matthew, the tax collector. This change could be a subtle allusion to the Gospel's author, and for centuries it was regarded as such. If, however, the Evangelist's main sources were the Gospel of Mark and Q, it is difficult to explain why one of the twelve disciples should be so heavily reliant on a Gospel that was thought to have been written by someone who was not one of Jesus's disciples. Wouldn't Matthew have had a rich store of experiences to draw upon? It is, of course, possible that some of the Gospel's unique materials (M) do originate with Matthew, the disciple, but most scholars hold that the author/editor is someone other than the disciple Matthew (even if, as here, he is referred to as Matthew out of convenience).

The date of its composition is largely based on inferences from Matthew's Gospel itself. Many scholars see in Matthew 22.7 an allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, which would necessitate a post-70 dating. Others, however, interpret 22.7 as a prediction by Jesus of the Temple's demise that employs stock prophetic images of judgment. On this reading, Matthew could be earlier, with its date presupposing only the existence of Q and the Gospel of Mark. Depending on when these two documents are dated, Matthew could conceivably be as early as the 50s or 60s CE. At the other end of the time frame, citations of Matthew's Gospel in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, who died in the early second century, indicate that the Gospel must have been written before the end of the first century.

The Gospel's place of composition is also based on inferences from the text. Matthew 4:25 mentions that Jesus's reputation "extended to Syria"—a passage that the evangelist has added to Mark's account. Its deliberate inclusion could be taken as a clue to its origin. Since Syrian Antioch—the third-largest city in the Roman Empire—boasted sizable Christian and Jewish communities, it is generally regarded as the likeliest candidate for the provenance of the Gospel. Nevertheless, the inference is far from certain, and various other locales such as Galilee, the Decapolis, and Sepphoris, a Greco-Roman city located near Nazareth, are also distinct possibilities.

LITERARY FORM AND STRUCTURE

As noted earlier, Matthew's Gospel has a strong biographical character and shows affinities with the ancient Greek literary form of the *bios* ("life"). The *bios* differs from modern biographies in its focus on episodes that

reveal the underlying character of its subject. Thus, rather than illustrating the psychological development of Jesus, Matthew's *bios* consistently shows Jesus's words and deeds to be characteristic of the humble and compassionate Messiah. The Gospel displays other literary contours, the most distinctive of which are five discourses by Jesus. Matthew contains more of Jesus's teaching than any other Gospel (approximately 43 percent compared to Mark: 20 percent; Luke: 37 percent; and John: 34 percent), much of it presented in these discourses. Each one ends with the distinctive phrase, "when Jesus had finished saying these things . . ." or a variant of it. Taken together, these discourses present five different aspects of Jesus's teaching. The number probably echoes the five books of the Torah/Pentateuch. The first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount (chs 5–7), is justly famous as an encapsulation of the "entry requirements of the kingdom," while the other discourses provide an overview of the kingdom's progress: they address preaching about the kingdom (ch 10), its mysteries (ch 13), its application to the church (ch 18), and finally, its implications for the last days and final judgment (chs 24–25). These discourses are linked with narrative episodes, so that the overall Gospel consists of alternating accounts of Jesus's public ministry and his discourses, all framed by an "infancy" and a resurrection narrative.

As mentioned earlier, "fulfillment citations" are also a notable literary feature of the Gospel. Matthew is the evangelist who references the Jewish scriptures most frequently, alluding to some passages and specifically quoting others. Among the latter are approximately ten fulfillment citations (1.23; 2.15; 2.18; 2.23; 4.15–16; 8.17; 12.18–21; 13.35; 21.5; 27.9–10; cf. 2.5; 13.14; 24.15) that follow a formula that typically reads: "This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet." These citations are particularly prominent at the beginning of Jesus's ministry and focus on how Jesus's person and his actions were anticipated in Israel's scriptures.

INTERPRETATION

Matthew can be regarded as the first interpreter of Mark's Gospel, which he adapted to address issues confronting his own church(es). He is the only evangelist to use the word "church" (Gk *ekklesia*, 16.18; 18.17) and to address questions of church authority and discipline (ch 18). The evangelist has overlaid the situation of Christians in his day onto the story of Jesus so that Jesus's words and actions can be seen to apply both to the time of Jesus and to believers a half century later. This dual focus helps to explain one of the Gospel's major anomalies, namely, its conflicted portrayal of Jewish piety and its religious leaders. Matthew's high regard for the Jewish Torah (5.17–20; 23.1–3), its extensive use of prophecies from the Jewish scriptures, and occasional disdain for non-Jews (5.47; 6.7,32; 16.17) all suggest a positive assessment of Judaism. On the other hand, the Gospel displays a strident and unrelenting condemnation of the Jewish leadership—the chief priests, elders, Sadducees, Pharisees, and scribes.

In Matthew, these groups are indiscriminately paired with each other in a manner inconsistent with the historical distinctions that existed between these groups in Jesus's day. The chief priests would have included the current high priest and a larger priestly college based in Jerusalem that was comprised largely of elders, including many Sadducees and some Pharisees. These two groups were highly influential in the Second Temple period, though little is known with certainty about either. The Pharisees of Jesus's day appear to have been a Jewish reform movement, advocating stringent observance of the Law and their own "oral Torah." The Sadducees were likely aristocratic descendants of Zadok the priest (2 Sam 8.17) who considered the written, but not the "oral Torah" binding on Israel. In contrast to the Pharisees (Acts 23.6–10), they did not believe in angels, the spirit, or resurrection (Acts 23:8; cf. Mt 22.22–23). The scribes were not a distinct religious group, but a loose assemblage of lawyers, teachers, and interpreters of the Torah (Sir 39.1–11). The Gospel routinely condemns the Pharisees as hypocrites (e.g., 23.5–7), and the vehemence of this condemnation has led many scholars to suggest that their portrayal reflects later tensions between Matthew's church and emergent Rabbinic Judaism. In other words, the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees reflects tensions that emerged some fifty years after Jesus's death.

The crucifixion narrative displays this same telescoping of perspectives. Responsibility for Jesus's passion is shifted from Pontius Pilate and the Romans to the Jewish people and their leadership (27.20–25). The horrific pronouncement "His blood be on us and on our children!" (27.25) is Matthew's way of attributing the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE to Israel's rejection of Jesus. The vehemence with which the evangelist expresses such sentiments was likely intended to shock both Jewish Christians and their Jewish neighbors into reconsidering the claims made by the Gospel, and to discount rival claims being advanced by the leadership of emergent Rabbinic Judaism, such as the Jewish explanation for the resurrection of Jesus (Mt 27.52–66; 28.11–15).

While such strident rhetoric was characteristic of debates between groups in the first century CE, its long-term consequences have been disastrous. Subsequent non-Jewish Christians interpreted the Gospel as a warrant to exact retribution from Jews for the death of Jesus and the persecution of his first followers. A proper reading of the Gospel, therefore, requires being attuned to the polemical context in which it was written, and recognizing that the conflict between emerging Rabbinic Judaism and the smaller Jewish Christian minority ceased being relevant nearly two thousand years ago.

The type of methodology employed in this commentary is known as the historical-critical method. The details furnished in the notes are primarily intended to elucidate the context and historical and geographical background of the text. Readers should be aware that there are also other methodological approaches used by biblical scholars to interpret the Gospel, such as narrative criticism and social-scientific criticism. The former uses literary-critical approaches to analyze Matthew as a unified story, while the latter draws on the disciplines of anthropology and sociology to reconstruct the social world Jesus would have inhabited, and the societal values that would have been operative in his day.

J. R. C. Cousland

1 An account of the genealogy[a] of Jesus the Messiah,[b] the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[2] Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, [3] and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, [4] and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, [5] and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, [6] and Jesse the father of King David.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, [7] and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,[c] [8] and Asaph[c] the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, [9] and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, [10] and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos,[d] and Amos[d] the father of Josiah, [11] and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

[12] And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, [13] and

[a] Or *birth*
[b] Or *Jesus Christ*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Asa*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *Amon*

1.1–17: Jesus's genealogy (Lk 3.23–38). **1:** *Jesus,* "Joshua" (Heb "Yeshua'") is a later, abbreviated, form of the name "Yehoshua," meaning "The Lord (YHWH) is help (or salvation)." *Messiah*, Gk "Christos," "Anointed One." Those anointed by God—typically kings and priests—were set apart by God for a specific divine purpose (1 Sam 10.1; Ex 29.7). The designation *son* indicates Jesus's familial descent. That he is both the *son of David,* the king, and *son of Abraham,* the patriarch, demonstrates that Jesus is a scion of the royal family of David, and a true Israelite. **2–17:** The genealogy continues the "descent" motif by furnishing a stylized ancestral tree consisting of roughly three groups of *fourteen*: from Abraham to David, from David to *the deportation to Babylon* in 586 BCE (2 Kings 24.8–16), and from the deportation to Jesus (although Jechoniah has to be included for the final group to amount to fourteen). The numerical value of David's name in Hebrew is fourteen, which may account for this arrangement. While Matthew's genealogy is not complete (cf. 1 Chr 3.11–12), its chief purpose is to establish that David and Abraham were Jesus's forebears. Genealogies are common in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 1 Chr 1–9) and were a matter of pride and importance for demonstrating one's status as true Israelites (Neh 7.61–64). Jesus's genealogy is unusual, however, not simply because it includes women, but because it also features non-Israelite (i.e., Gentile) women, some of questionable repute: *Tamar* (v. 3; Gen 38), *Rahab* (v. 5; Josh 2.1–21; 6.22–25), *Ruth* (v. 5; Ruth 2–4), and Bathsheba, *the wife of Uriah* (v. 6; 2 Sam 11–12). Their inclusion may prefigure Mary's own marital dilemma (vv. 18–19) and the coming mission to the Gentiles (28.18–20).

Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud
the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father
of Azor, [14] and Azor the father of Zadok,
and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim
the father of Eliud, [15] and Eliud the father of
Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan,
and Matthan the father of Jacob, [16] and Jacob
the father of Joseph the husband of Mary,
of whom Jesus was born, who is called the
Messiah.[a]

[17] So all the generations from Abraham
to David are fourteen generations; and from
David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen
generations; and from the deportation to
Babylon to the Messiah,[a] fourteen genera-
tions.

[18] Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah[b]
took place in this way. When his mother
Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but
before they lived together, she was found
to be with child from the Holy Spirit. [19] Her
husband Joseph, being a righteous man and
unwilling to expose her to public disgrace,
planned to dismiss her quietly. [20] But just
when he had resolved to do this, an angel
of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and
said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid
to take Mary as your wife, for the child
conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
[21] She will bear a son, and you are to name
him Jesus, for he will save his people from
their sins." [22] All this took place to fulfill
what had been spoken by the Lord through
the prophet:

[23] "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear
a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." [24] When
Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel
of the Lord commanded him; he took her as
his wife, [25] but had no marital relations with
her until she had borne a son;[c] and he named
him Jesus.

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was
born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men[d]
from the East came to Jerusalem, [2] asking,
"Where is the child who has been born king
of the Jews? For we observed his star at its
rising,[e] and have come to pay him homage."
[3] When King Herod heard this, he was fright-
ened, and all Jerusalem with him; [4] and call-
ing together all the chief priests and scribes
of the people, he inquired of them where the
Messiah[a] was to be born. [5] They told him, "In
Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written
by the prophet:

[a] Or *the Christ*
[b] Or *Jesus Christ*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *her firstborn son*
[d] Or *astrologers*; Gk *magi*
[e] Or *in the East*

1.18–25: The conception and birth of Jesus Christ (Lk 2.1–7). Chapter 1 stresses that Jesus was of the line of David, but then indicates that Mary was a virgin and Joseph was not his father. This apparent difficulty is resolved by Joseph's formal adoption of Jesus, which legally situates Jesus within Joseph's line. **18:** *Engaged … before they lived together:* Marriage was a two-stage, contractual process; betrothal lasted for a year, after which the couple formally cohabited. Sexual relations did not occur until the second stage (*m. Ketub.* 1.2; 5.2). **20:** Dreams are a common means of revelation in Matthew (2.12,13,19–20,22; 27.19), and like his namesake in Genesis Joseph is also the recipient of dreams. **21:** The angel's reference to Jesus "saving his people" probably alludes to Jesus's name (see v. 1n.). **23:** The first of Matthew's fulfillment citations (Isa 7.14), showing how Jesus's life conforms to prophecies of the Jewish scriptures. These citations are especially prominent in the Gospel's opening chapters. *Emmanuel:* Cf. 28:20. These two verses function as symbolic bookends to the Gospel and point to Jesus's saving and abiding presence.

2.1–12: The visit of the wise men. 1: *King Herod* is Herod the Great (ruled 37–4 BCE), who was confirmed as the client king of Judea by the emperor Augustus (31 BCE–14 CE). Herod was only partly Jewish and was notorious for reacting savagely to potential rivals, particularly Jewish rivals. *Bethlehem*, located 5 mi (8 km) south of Jerusalem, was David's hometown and the place where he was anointed king of Israel (1 Sam 16.1–13). The *wise men* or Magi were traditionally a class of Parthian (Persian) priests, renowned as astrologers. **2:** As Gentiles, the Magi do not ask for the king of Israel, but for the *king of the Jews* (27.11,37). The *star* has been variously explained as a supernova, a comet, or a notable conjunction of the planets, but its meaning may be symbolic; see Num 24.17. **4:** *Chief priests … scribes,* see Introduction. **5–6:** Mic 5.1,3; cf. 2 Sam 5.2.

6 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of
Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers
of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd[a] my people Israel.' "
7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men[b] and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." 9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising,[c] until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped,[d] they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 Then Joseph[e] got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men,[b] he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.[b] 17 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because
they are no more."

19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 20 "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." 21 Then Joseph[e] got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. 23 There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."

[a] Or *rule*
[b] Or *astrologers*; Gk *magi*
[c] Or *in the East*
[d] Gk *saw the star*
[e] Gk *he*

11: *Frankincense* and *myrrh* were costly, resinous gums derived from trees and shrubs (Isa 60.6; Song 3.6). Because of their aromatic qualities, they were often employed in religious rituals (including burials). The mention of three gifts is probably the origin of the postbiblical tradition that there were three wise men.

2.13–23: The escape to Egypt and return. 15: A fulfillment citation from Hos 11.1, where *son* refers to the people of Israel (Ex 4.22): the experience of Israel and Jesus are paralleled. The citation calls to mind Israel's sojourn in Egypt and God's mighty deliverance of Israel through Moses. Jesus's subsequent baptism and temptation also recall Israel's flight through the Red Sea and testing in the wilderness.**16:** Herod's action recalls the command of the king of Egypt in Ex 1.16. **18:** A fulfillment citation from Jer 31.15. *Ramah* was located about 6 mi (10 km) north of Jerusalem. The tomb of *Rachel*, the wife of Jacob, the father of the twelve "tribes" of Israel, is situated just north of Bethlehem (Gen 35.16–20). **20:** Cf. Ex 4.19. **22:** Upon Herod's death in 4 BCE, his kingdom was divided among his sons *Archelaus* (4 BCE–6 CE), ethnarch (prince) over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Antipas (4 BCE–39 CE), tetrarch (minor prince) over Galilee and Perea; and Philip (4 BCE–33/34 CE), tetrarch of smaller territories northeast of the Sea of Galilee. **23:** *Nazareth* in Jesus's day was not so much a *town* as a village in Galilee, very close to the Hellenized city of Sepphoris. *Nazorean*, this fulfillment citation does not precisely correspond to any passage in the Jewish scriptures, though it echoes passages such as Isa 11.1 and Judg 13.5.

3 In those days John the Baptist appeared
in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,
2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has
come near."[a] 3 This is the one of whom the
prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

"The voice of one crying out in the
wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.' "

4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with
a leather belt around his waist, and his food
was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then the people
of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to
him, and all the region along the Jordan, 6 and
they were baptized by him in the river Jordan,
confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sad-
ducees coming for baptism, he said to them,
"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee
from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of
repentance. 9 Do not presume to say to your-
selves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor';
for I tell you, God is able from these stones to
raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the
ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree
therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut
down and thrown into the fire.

11 "I baptize you with[b] water for repen-
tance, but one who is more powerful than I is
coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his
sandals. He will baptize you with[b] the Holy
Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his
hand, and he will clear his threshing floor
and will gather his wheat into the granary;
but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable
fire."

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John
at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14 John
would have prevented him, saying, "I need to
be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"
15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now;
for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all
righteousness." Then he consented. 16 And
when Jesus had been baptized, just as he
came up from the water, suddenly the heav-
ens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit
of God descending like a dove and alighting
on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This
is my Son, the Beloved,[c] with whom I am well
pleased."

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit
into the wilderness to be tempted by
the devil. 2 He fasted forty days and forty
nights, and afterwards he was famished.

[a] Or *is at hand*
[b] Or *in*
[c] Or *my beloved Son*

3.1–12: The preaching of John the Baptist (Mk 1.1–8; Lk 3.1–9,15–17; Jn 1.19–28; Josephus, *Ant*. 18.116–19). **1:** *In those days*, a general reference to the time when Jesus began his public ministry. *John the Baptist*, the prophetic forerunner of Jesus. In Matthew, although John is portrayed as subordinate to Jesus, their ministries display strong parallels (cf. 3.2 with 4.17). *Wilderness of Judea*, the barren eastern slopes of the Judean hill country that face the lower Jordan valley and the Dead Sea. **2:** *Kingdom of heaven* is Matthew's circumlocution for kingdom of God, one that avoids mentioning the name of God directly (though the phrase "kingdom of God" is found at 6.33; 12.28; 21.31,43). The kingdom of heaven (or God) refers to the absolute rule of God over human affairs. Its establishment marks the onset of the new age and God's ultimate dominion. **3:** A fulfillment citation from Isa 40.3 (cf. Mk 1.2–3; CD 10.16; 16.15; 1QS 8.12–14). John acts as a herald announcing the coming of the king. **4:** John's manner of dress recalled that of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1.8), while his *food* was that of an ascetic. *Locusts* are one of the few types of insects not regarded as unclean (Lev 11.20–23). In Matthew, John is more closely identified with Elijah than in the other Gospels (17.11–13); John's preaching also prefigures Jesus's own message at 4:17 and 23:33. **7:** *Pharisees and Sadducees:* see the Introduction. **8:** *Repentance*, a turning away from evil and the forging of a new relationship with God. **11:** *Fire*: possibly signifying purification. **12:** A *winnowing fork* was a forked shovel used to toss threshed grain into the wind, allowing the kernels of *wheat* to separate from the husks and straw, the *chaff*, which was blown away.

3.13–17: The baptism of Jesus (Mk 1.9–11; Lk 3.21–22; Jn 1.31–34). **15:** *Righteousness* is a central theme in Matthew and means acting in accordance with the will of God. It furnishes the justification for the greater (Jesus) being baptized by the lesser (the Baptist; 11.11). **16:** *Heavens were opened*, Ezek 1.1. *Spirit*, 28.19; Gen 1.2; Isa 61.1. **17:** *Voice*, Dan 4.31–32. *My son, the Beloved* (see textual note *c*), 17.5; Ps 2.7; Isa 42.1; Hos 11.1.

4.1–11: The temptation of Jesus (Mk 1.12–13; Lk 4.1–13). **1:** *The devil*, a transcendent evil being, also described in this chapter as the tempter (v. 3) and Satan ("the adversary"; v. 10). **2:** The *forty days* recall the testing of Israel

3 The tempter came and said to him, "If
you are the Son of God, command these
stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he
answered, "It is written,
'One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the
mouth of God.' "
5 Then the devil took him to the holy
city and placed him on the pinnacle of the
temple, 6 saying to him, "If you are the Son of
God, throw yourself down; for it is written,
'He will command his angels concerning
you,'
and 'On their hands they will bear you
up,
so that you will not dash your foot against
a stone.' "
7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not
put the Lord your God to the test.' "
8 Again, the devil took him to a very high
mountain and showed him all the kingdoms
of the world and their splendor; 9 and he said
to him, "All these I will give you, if you will
fall down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to
him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written,
'Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.' "
11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly an-
gels came and waited on him.

12 Now when Jesus[a] heard that John had
been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 He
left Nazareth and made his home in Caper-
naum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun
and Naphtali, 14 so that what had been spoken
through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:
15 "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across the
Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
16 the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and
shadow of death
light has dawned."
17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim,
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come
near."[b]
18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he
saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter,
and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the
sea—for they were fishermen. 19 And he said
to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish
for people." 20 Immediately they left their nets
and followed him. 21 As he went from there, he
saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee
and his brother John, in the boat with their
father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he
called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat
and their father, and followed him.

23 Jesus[c] went throughout Galilee, teach-
ing in their synagogues and proclaiming
the good news[d] of the kingdom and curing

a Gk *he*
b Or *is at hand*
c Gk *He*
d Gk *gospel*

in the wilderness (Ex 34.28), and Elijah's forty-day journey into the Sinai wilderness (1 Kings 19.8). **3:** *Son of God*, the most comprehensive Christological designation for Jesus in Matthew (3.17; 16.16; 17.5; 27.54; 28.19). **4:** Deut 8.3. **5:** *Holy city*, Jerusalem; cf. 27.53; *pinnacle*, possibly the southeast corner of the Temple's terrace where there was a steep drop to the Kidron Valley below. **6:** Ps 91.11–12. **7:** Deut 6.16. **8:** Mountains figure prominently in Matthew as places of revelation (5.1; 14.23; 15.29; 17.1; 24.3; 28.16). **10:** Deut 6.13. All of Jesus's responses to Satan are citations from Deuteronomy, which epitomized the Torah. **11:** The *angels* feed Jesus as they had once fed Elijah (1 Kings 19.5–8).

4.12–25: The beginning of the Galilean ministry (Mk 1.14–20; Lk 4.14–15; 5.1–11; 6.17–19). **12:** *Galilee* was a region in northern Israel, one of the chief areas of Jesus's activity. It was separated from Judea (and Jerusalem) by Samaria. **13:** *Capernaum*, a village on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, is located in the traditional allotment of the Israelite tribe of Naphtali (Josh 19.34). Fishing was an important and lucrative economic activity in the region. **15–16:** Fulfillment citation of Isa 9.1–2. The name "Galilee" is derived from the Hebrew phrase "circle *of the Gentiles*" (Isa 8.23 [MT]). The Gentiles were non-Jews. After the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to Assyria (722 BCE), much of the area had been repopulated by Gentiles, although by Jesus's day it was again predominantly Jewish. **17:** Some scholars argue that the phrase *from that time* marks the beginning of the second of three major divisions in the Gospel; cf. 16.21. **18:** *Sea of Galilee*, not a sea but a freshwater lake, also known as Gennesaret (Lk 5.1) and the Lake of Tiberias (Jn 21.1). *Simon* … Peter: Simon was the disciple's Hebrew

every disease and every sickness among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

5 When Jesus[a] saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely[b] on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 15 No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I tell

[a] Gk *he*

[b] Other ancient authorities lack *falsely*

name; Peter his Greek name; cf. 16.18n. Under the influence of Hellenism, Jews often had both. **24:** *Syria* is mentioned in no other Gospel; many scholars think that its capital, Antioch-on-the-Orontes, was the location of Matthew's church. *Demoniacs,* those thought to be possessed by demons or evil spirits. **25:** The *crowds* typically represent the Jewish people as distinguished from their leaders. *Decapolis*: A league of some ten cities with all but Scythopolis (earlier Beth-shan) situated east of the Jordan River. Their populations were largely Gentile, but with substantial Jewish minorities.

5.1–7.29: The first discourse: The Sermon on the Mount. Matthew postpones his account of the Galilean ministry in order to introduce Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, the first and longest of Jesus's five discourses in Matthew (compare the much briefer "Sermon on the Plain" in Lk 6.20–49). Its prominence within Matthew testifies to its importance for understanding Jesus and the requirements for "entering the kingdom." Whether the Sermon advocates an idealized or a realizable ethic continues to be debated (5:48; contrast *Did.* 6.2). **5.1:** *Mountain*, recalling the figure of Moses giving the law to Israel (Ex 19–24). Just as the Law of Moses had five books, the Gospel of Matthew contains five discourses of Jesus. *He sat down*, the posture normally assumed by Jewish teachers. *Disciples*, for Jesus's named disciples in Matthew, see 9.9–13; 10.2. **5.3–12: The Beatitudes** (Lk 6.20–23). Luke has only four beatitudes in comparison to Matthew's nine, and all four have more of a this-worldly focus. **3:** Our term "Beatitudes" is derived from the Latin word "beatus," meaning "blessed" or "favored by God." Matthew's beatitudes emphasize that God's blessings will be bestowed on believers in the new age (Isa 61.2). *The poor in spirit*, Lk 6.20 has "the poor." **4.** *Mourn*, perhaps for one's sins or because of undeserved suffering. **5:** *Meek*, Ps 37.11. **8:** *Pure in heart,* Pss 24.4; 73.1. **12:** *Persecuted the prophets*, Matthew assumes that all true prophets were persecuted (1 Kings 19.10; Neh 9.26), John the Baptist and Jesus among them; *righteousness' sake,* 3.15n.

5.13–16: Salt and light (Mk 9.50; Lk 14.34–35). **13:** *Lost its taste*, genuine salt can leach away from impure salt, leaving only a tasteless residue. **16:** *Father* is one of Jesus's favorite expressions for God in Matthew.

5.17–20: Teaching about the law. The rest of ch 5 deals with issues relating to the Torah. **17:** *Prophets*, the

you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter,[a] not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore, whoever breaks[b] one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister,[c] you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult[d] a brother or sister,[e] you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell[f] of fire. 23 So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister[g] has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister,[g] and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court[h] with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.[f] 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.[f]

31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' 34 But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of

[a] Gk *one iota*
[b] Or *annuls*
[c] Gk *a brother*; other ancient authorities add *without cause*
[d] Gk *say Raca to* (an obscure term of abuse)
[e] Gk *a brother*
[f] Gk *Gehenna*
[g] Gk *your brother*
[h] Gk lacks *to court*

second of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible (Torah, Prophets, Writings). **18:** The phrase *truly* ("amen") *I tell you* in Jesus's mouth frequently signals pronouncements pertaining to the end time. *Letter,* Iota: the smallest Greek letter. *Until . . . all*: both temporal clauses refer to the end of the present age and the onset of the eschatological age. The verse suggests that the Torah remained in force among Jewish Christians in Matthew's church.

5.21–48: The antitheses. (Lk 6.27–36; cf. Lev 19.18; *m. Avot* 1.12). "Antitheses" suggests seemingly opposite propositions. In some of these "antitheses," however, Jesus's purpose is not to abrogate the Mosaic Law, but to advocate a profounder obedience to God's commandments; in others he proposes a different ethic for his followers. The phrase "you have heard that it was said" occurs six times in ch 5, each followed by a reference to one of the commandments in the Torah. **21:** Ex 20.13; Deut 5.17. **22:** *I say to you* occurs twelve other times in the Sermon and emphasizes Jesus's unprecedented authority to determine God's will—an authority that surpasses even that of Moses (28.18). *Council,* the Sanhedrin; see 26.59n. *Hell,* lit., "Gehenna," the Hinnom Valley to the immediate south of Jerusalem, formerly a place of child sacrifice (Jer 7.31), which may have been used in Jesus's day as a garbage dump and incinerator. **24:** *Gift*, true worship of God requires full reconciliation with one's neighbors. **25–26:** Imprisonment for debt was a Gentile, not a Jewish, practice. **27:** *Adultery*, cf. Ex. 20.14; Deut 5.18; cf. 5.32; 15.19; 19.9. Jesus not only condemns adultery, but even thoughts that would lead to adultery. **31:** *Divorce*, Deut 24.1–4; cf. Mt 19.7–9. Jesus indicates that the only justification for divorcing one's wife is sexual infidelity; otherwise the divorce is invalid, and any future marriages are adulterous. **33:** Lev 19.12; Num 30.2; Deut 23.21. **34–36:** *Heaven, earth,* and *Jerusalem* are all circumlocutions for "God;" they, along with one's *head*,

God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool,
or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great
King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for
you cannot make one hair white or black.
37 Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No';
anything more than this comes from the evil
one.[a]

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An
eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'
39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evil-
doer. But if anyone strikes you on the right
cheek, turn the other also; 40 and if anyone
wants to sue you and take your coat, give
your cloak as well; 41 and if anyone forces
you to go one mile, go also the second mile.
42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and
do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow
from you.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You
shall love your neighbor and hate your
enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so
that you may be children of your Father in
heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the
evil and on the good, and sends rain on the
righteous and on the unrighteous. 46 For if
you love those who love you, what reward
do you have? Do not even the tax collectors
do the same? 47 And if you greet only your
brothers and sisters,[b] what more are you
doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles
do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your
heavenly Father is perfect.

6 "Beware of practicing your piety before
others in order to be seen by them; for
then you have no reward from your Father in
heaven.

2 "So whenever you give alms, do not
sound a trumpet before you, as the hypo-
crites do in the synagogues and in the
streets, so that they may be praised by oth-
ers. Truly I tell you, they have received their
reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let
your left hand know what your right hand
is doing, 4 so that your alms may be done in
secret; and your Father who sees in secret
will reward you.[c]

5 "And whenever you pray, do not be like
the hypocrites; for they love to stand and
pray in the synagogues and at the street
corners, so that they may be seen by oth-
ers. Truly I tell you, they have received their
reward. 6 But whenever you pray, go into your
room and shut the door and pray to your
Father who is in secret; and your Father who
sees in secret will reward you.[c]

7 "When you are praying, do not heap up
empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they
think that they will be heard because of their
many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your
Father knows what you need before you ask
him.

[a] Or *evil*
[b] Gk *your brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *openly*

are in God's keeping and, therefore, not under humans' dominion. **35:** Isa 66.1; Ps 48.2. **38:** Jesus qualifies the law of retaliation, the "lex talionis" ("*an eye for an eye . . .*," Ex 21.23–24; Lev 24.19–20; Deut 19.21), by advocating the return of good for evil. **40:** Cf. Ex 22.26–27; Deut 24.12–13. **41:** *Second mile*; the Romans could conscript individuals for compulsory labor. **43:** *Love your neighbor* quotes Lev 19.18, but *hate your enemy* is not found in the Jewish scriptures. **44:** *Those who persecute you*, Matthew's version (cf. Lk 6.27–28) may refer to actual persecution experienced by his church, demonstrating the radical nature of the commandment (cf. 10.17). **46:** *Tax collectors,* though Jewish, were popularly regarded as unclean collaborators with the Romans. **47:** *Gentiles* sometimes have a negative connotation in the Gospel (5.47; 6.7,32; 15.26; 16.17). **48:** The word *perfect* occurs only here and at 19.21 in the Gospel; cf. Jas 1.4; 3.2. This understanding of "perfection" is closely linked with the love commandment (19.19).

6.1–18: Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. 1: This segment opens with a general principle, followed by three particular applications. True piety or righteousness, which is inconspicuous, is contrasted with false piety, which is motivated by ostentation. **2:** Giving *alms* involved not only the donation of money but also the performance of other merciful and charitable actions. Sounding a *trumpet* is probably metaphorical (as in "blow your own horn"). *Hypocrites* originally signified "actors." Here the word takes on some of that sense; elsewhere in Matthew it is used more pejoratively, particularly of the Pharisees and scribes, in the sense of "frauds," not the outstanding examples of piety people thought them to be. **5:** Performance of the daily Jewish prayers in the morning, at noon, and in the evening (Lk 11.2–4). *Stand*, standing with the face directed toward Jerusalem was

9 "Pray then in this way:
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
10 Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us this day our daily bread.[a]
12 And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And do not bring us to the time of trial,[b]
but rescue us from the evil one.[c]
14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

16 "And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.[d]

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust[e] consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust[e] consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; 23 but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.[f]

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,[g] or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?[h] 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God[i] and his[j]

a Or *our bread for tomorrow*
b Or *us into temptation*
c Or *from evil*. Other ancient authorities add, in some form, *For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.*
d Other ancient authorities add *openly*
e Gk *eating*
f Gk *mammon*
g Other ancient authorities lack *or what you will drink*
h Or *add one cubit to your height*
i Other ancient authorities lack *of God*
j Or *its*

the typical Jewish posture for prayer (1 Kings 8.35–48; Mk 11.25; Lk 18.13). **9:** *Pray*, The Lord's Prayer (vv. 9–13) is the symbolic heart of the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew's version of the prayer is considerably longer than Luke's (11.2–4), and the final doxology (see textual note *d*) appears to have been added later under the influence of 1 Chr 29.1–13. **12:** *Debts*, cf. Lk 11.4, which has "sins"; sins are the debts owed to God. **17:** *Oil on your head*, anointing and washing oneself were a feature of daily hygiene and not necessarily a sign of festivity.

6.19–34: Life and livelihood (Lk 12.22–34; 11.34–36). This section illustrates how to live in the world, without being subject to it. **22–23:** A sincere *eye is healthy* and has no hidden agenda, while an *unhealthy* or insincere eye was thought to occlude the entry of *light*. Light and virtue were often correlated; 1 Jn 2.8–11. **26–30:** These verses demonstrate a "less to greater" ("a fortiori") argument, where one establishes a greater premise from a lesser one (cf. 12.9–11). **29:** *Solomon*, 1 Kings 10; 2 Chr 1. **30:** *Thrown into the oven*, grass was used to fire baking ovens. **32: See** 5.47n.

righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

7 "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. 2 For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. 3 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's[a] eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your neighbor,[b] 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's[a] eye.

6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

7 "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

12 "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy[c] that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. 14 For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? 17 In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will know them by their fruits.

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' 23 Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.'

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"

[a] Gk *brother's*
[b] Gk *brother*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *for the road is wide and easy*

7.1–6: Judging others (Lk 6.37–38,41–42). **1:** *Be judged*, by God. **6:** *Holy*, meat from the sacrifice or possibly the deeper truths of the Gospel; *dogs* were considered scavengers, and *swine* were unclean animals.

7.7–23: The way of righteousness (Lk 11.9–13; 6.43–44; 13.24–27). The following sayings from Q embody Matthew's ethic of righteousness, which is central to the Gospel. **12:** The "Golden Rule" epitomizes Jesus's ethical teaching. A similar principle is attributed to the Pharisee Hillel (*b. Shabb.* 31a; cf. Tob 4.15). **13:** *Narrow gate*, a metaphor for entering the kingdom of God. **15:** *False prophets*, possibly itinerant Christian prophets; see 7.22; 23.34; *Did.* 11.7–12. **16:** *Fruits*, repentance and righteous behavior. **22:** *That day*, the day of judgment. *In your name*, "on behalf of" or "with the authority of." **23:** *Evildoers*, see Ps 6.8.

7.24–27: The two foundations (Lk 6.47–49). **24:** *These words of mine*, obedience to Jesus's words and, by implication, to the will of God (7.21), is the only way to achieve righteousness and enter the kingdom. In the Sermon, Jesus has provided his hearers with a solid foundation of *rock* (16.18). **27:** All five of Matthew's discourses

28 Now when Jesus had finished saying
these things, the crowds were astounded at
his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one hav-
ing authority, and not as their scribes.

8 When Jesus[a] had come down from the
mountain, great crowds followed him;
2 and there was a leper[b] who came to him and
knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose,
you can make me clean." 3 He stretched out his
hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose.
Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy[b] was
cleansed. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that
you say nothing to anyone; but go, show your-
self to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses
commanded, as a testimony to them."

5 When he entered Capernaum, a cen-
turion came to him, appealing to him 6 and
saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home
paralyzed, in terrible distress." 7 And he said
to him, "I will come and cure him." 8 The cen-
turion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to
have you come under my roof; but only speak
the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For
I also am a man under authority, with sol-
diers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he
goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes,
and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does
it." 10 When Jesus heard him, he was amazed
and said to those who followed him, "Truly I
tell you, in no one[c] in Israel have I found such
faith. 11 I tell you, many will come from east
and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac
and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while
the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown
into the outer darkness, where there will be
weeping and gnashing of teeth." 13 And to the
centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for
you according to your faith." And the servant
was healed in that hour.

14 When Jesus entered Peter's house, he
saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fe-
ver; 15 he touched her hand, and the fever left
her, and she got up and began to serve him.
16 That evening they brought to him many
who were possessed with demons; and he
cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all
who were sick. 17 This was to fulfill what had

[a] Gk *he*
[b] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Truly I tell you, not even*

close with a reference to judgment. **7.28–29: Conclusion. 28:** The *crowds,* not mentioned at the beginning of the discourse, appear as the audience beyond the inner circle of disciples. Their presence suggests that Jesus's words are directed not only to the disciples, but also to all followers of Jesus. **29:** *Scribes*, see 2.4n.

8.1–9.38: The deeds of the Messiah. Matthew follows his epitome of Jesus's teaching with a collection of Jesus's miracles: the "Messiah of word" is succeeded by the "Messiah of deed." While Matthew conforms to the order of Mark in a general way, he has made considerable use of Q and his own traditions (two of which are doublets; see 9.27–31 and 9.32–34). To create the "Messiah of deed" sequence, Matthew has introduced five miracle stories so that chs 8–9 form a composite of ten miracle accounts interleaved with two discipleship narratives (8.18–22; 9.9–17). The first three miracle stories focus on the healing of marginal figures in Jewish society – a person with leprosy, a Gentile, and a woman.

8.1–4: The cleansing of a man with leprosy (Mk 1.40–45; Lk 5.12–16). Matthew emphasizes Jesus's divine calm by eliminating Mark's reference to Jesus's emotions (Mk 1.41,43). **2:** *Make me clean*, the skin condition of persons with leprosy rendered them ritually unclean (Lev ch 13; Num 5.1–4). **3:** *Leprosy* was a serious skin disease, including what we describe as leprosy today (Hansen's disease), as well as many other disorders such as psoriasis, lupus, ringworm, and favus. **4:** *The gift that Moses commanded*, offerings for the cleansing of a person with leprosy (Lev. ch 14). This man heeds Jesus's command to tell no one (contrast Mk 1.40–5).

8.5–17: Many healings (Lk 7.1–10; Jn 4.43–54; Mk 1.29–34; Lk 4.38–41). **5:** *Centurion*, a Roman officer commanding about a hundred men. **6:** *Servant,* or "child." **8:** *I am not worthy*, contact with Gentiles could make Jews ritually unclean (Acts 10.28; *m. Avoda Zara*) **10:** *Faith*, in Matthew the two figures commended by Jesus for their faith are Gentiles (cf. 15.28). **11:** *Eat … in the kingdom*, the messianic banquet (22.1–10; Isa 2.2–4; 25.6). **12:** *1 En* 10.4–6; 62.11. *Gnashing of teeth*, an indication of sharp pain or vexation. This phrase, which occurs six times in Matthew, expresses the dire consequences of exclusion from the kingdom (13.42,50; 22.13; 24.51; 25.30; cf. Lk 12.47; 13.28). **17:** A fulfillment citation of Isa 53.4. Matthew's form of the citation emphasizes physical rather than spiritual healing.

been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

18 Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. 19 A scribe then approached and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 21 Another of his disciples said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. 24 A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. 25 And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" 26 And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. 27 They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

28 When he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes,[a] two demoniacs coming out of the tombs met him. They were so fierce that no one could pass that way. 29 Suddenly they shouted, "What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" 30 Now a large herd of swine was feeding at some distance from them. 31 The demons begged him, "If you cast us out, send us into the herd of swine." 32 And he said to them, "Go!" So they came out and entered the swine; and suddenly, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the water. 33 The swineherds ran off, and on going into the town, they told the whole story about what had happened to the demoniacs. 34 Then the whole town came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood.

9 1 And after getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town.

2 And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." 3 Then some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." 4 But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Stand up, take your bed and go to your home." 7 And he stood up and went to his home. 8 When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.

9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *Gergesenes*; others, *Gerasenes*

8.18–22: Would-be followers of Jesus (Lk 9.57–62). **18:** *Other side*, the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. **20:** *Son of Man*, an enigmatic self-designation used by Jesus that has at least three senses in Matthew: Jesus as a human being; Jesus as a figure who must suffer and die; Jesus as divine judge at the end of days (cf. Dan 7.13–14). The first sense is in view here. **21:** *Bury my father,* although the burial of kinsmen was among the most pressing of sacred duties for Jews (Tob 1.18–19; *b. Ber.* 18a), it is entirely eclipsed by the call to follow Jesus.

8.23–34: The calming of a storm and the healing of two persons possessed by demons (Mk 4.35–5.20; Lk 8.22–39). **26:** This nature miracle is Jesus's only nonhealing miracle in the first half of the Gospel. **27:** Jesus's authority over the *Sea* parallels that of God; Pss 65.7; 89.9. **28:** *Gadarenes*, Matthew situates the healing in Gadara, instead of Gerasa (Mk 5.1), which was located ca. 35 mi (56 km) from the sea. Gadara's territory was far closer to the Sea of Galilee. **29:** *Before the time*, the day of judgment. **30:** The presence of nonkosher *swine* suggests a Gentile region (7.6n.).

9.1–17: The ministry in Capernaum (Mk 2.1–22; Lk 5.17–39). **1:** *His own town*, Capernaum. **2:** *Sins are forgiven*; on the correlation of healing and forgiveness, see *b. Ned.* 41a; *b. Meg.* 17b. **3:** The scribes claim that Jesus is *blaspheming* and dishonoring God's name because he claims that he, like God, can forgive sins. **8:** *To human beings*, Jesus's own authority to forgive has been bequeathed to Matthew's church. **9:** The change of Levi's name (Mk

10 And as he sat at dinner[a] in the house,
many tax collectors and sinners came and
were sitting[b] with him and his disciples.
11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to
his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat
with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when
he heard this, he said, "Those who are well
have no need of a physician, but those who
are sick. 13 Go and learn what this means, 'I
desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come
to call not the righteous but sinners."
14 Then the disciples of John came to him,
saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast
often,[c] but your disciples do not fast?" 15 And
Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests
cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom
is with them, can they? The days will come
when the bridegroom is taken away from
them, and then they will fast. 16 No one sews
a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak,
for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and
a worse tear is made. 17 Neither is new wine
put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins
burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins
are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh
wineskins, and so both are preserved."
18 While he was saying these things to
them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue[d]
came in and knelt before him, saying, "My
daughter has just died; but come and lay your
hand on her, and she will live." 19 And Jesus
got up and followed him, with his disciples.
20 Then suddenly a woman who had been
suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years
came up behind him and touched the fringe
of his cloak, 21 for she said to herself, "If I only
touch his cloak, I will be made well." 22 Jesus
turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart,
daughter; your faith has made you well." And
instantly the woman was made well. 23 When
Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the
flute players and the crowd making a com-
motion, 24 he said, "Go away; for the girl is not
dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him.
25 But when the crowd had been put outside,
he went in and took her by the hand, and the
girl got up. 26 And the report of this spread
throughout that district.
27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind
men followed him, crying loudly, "Have
mercy on us, Son of David!" 28 When he en-
tered the house, the blind men came to him;
and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that
I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes,
Lord." 29 Then he touched their eyes and said,
"According to your faith let it be done to you."
30 And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus
sternly ordered them, "See that no one knows
of this." 31 But they went away and spread the
news about him throughout that district.
32 After they had gone away, a demoniac who
was mute was brought to him. 33 And when the
demon had been cast out, the one who had
been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed
and said, "Never has anything like this been
seen in Israel." 34 But the Pharisees said, "By the
ruler of the demons he casts out the demons."[e]

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and
villages, teaching in their synagogues, and

[a] Gk *reclined*
[b] Gk *were reclining*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *often*
[d] Gk lacks *of the synagogue*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack this verse

2.14) has led some scholars to consider "*Matthew*" to be the evangelist's own signature; see also 5.46n. **13:** Jesus cites Hos 6.6 here and again at 12.7. **15:** *Bridegroom*, Jesus's association with the coming of the kingdom makes him a festal figure like a bridegroom (cf. 22.1–14; 25.1–13).

9.18–34: Four healings (Mk 5.21–43; Lk 8.40–56). **21:** *Touch his cloak*, if the hemorrhage was from the uterus, the woman was ritually impure and would have made Jesus impure by touching him. **23:** *Flute players* were a feature of funeral rites. **27–31:** This healing narrative is a doublet of 20.29–34; see also 1 Kings 17.17–24; 2 Kings 4.32–37. The evangelist frequently doubles the number of figures in his sources (8.28–34; 9.27–31), possibly in keeping with the Jewish legal tradition of furnishing double witnesses to testify to the truth of something (Deut 19.15). **27:** The sick and marginalized often address Jesus as *Son of David* (1.1) in order to be healed. In the other Gospels the title does not have such therapeutic associations. **32–34:** A doublet of 12.22–24. **34:** *Ruler of the demons*: cf. 12.24–32.

9.35–38: The compassion of Jesus. 35: *Their synagogues,* Synagogue buildings were well established as places of worship in the first century CE (Lk 4.16). By Matthew's day, however, Jewish Christians may have no

proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

10 Then Jesus[a] summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. 2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;[b] 4 Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'[c] 8 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers,[d] cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. 9 Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, 10 no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. 11 Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. 12 As you enter the house, greet it. 13 If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. 15 Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

16 "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. 17 Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; 18 and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. 19 When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; 20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *Lebbaeus*, or *Lebbaeus called Thaddaeus*
[c] Or *is at hand*
[d] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

longer participated in Jewish synagogues, but in assemblies of their own (18.17). **36:** Jesus's compassion for the leaderless people of Israel is a defining feature of Matthew's Jesus; cf. Num 27.17; Ezek 34.5. **37:** Normally a symbol for the final judgment, the *harvest* appears here as a metaphor for Jesus's mission and forms a fitting introduction to the mission discourse.

10.1–11.1: The second (mission) discourse. This discourse appears to reflect both the time of Jesus and that of the early church. While Jesus delimits the disciples' mission to the people of Israel (10.5–6), the discourse goes on to speak of a later phase where the disciples were dragged before governors and provided testimony to the Gentiles (10.18; cf. 28.19).

10.1–15: The commissioning of the twelve (Mk 3.13–19; Lk 6.12–16; Mk 6.7–13; Lk 9.1–6). The miraculous acts performed by Jesus now become a feature of the disciples' own ministry. **2:** *Twelve apostles*, this is the first time Matthew explicitly names the twelve; their number reflects the twelve tribes of Israel (19.28). **3:** Matthew has added *tax collector*. **4:** *Iscariot* may mean "man from Kerioth," a town in southern Judea. **5:** *Gentiles*, only Matthew has Jesus delimit his own and his disciples' ministry to *Israel. Samaritans* were the inhabitants of Samaria, a region that had been part of the northern kingdom of Israel until its defeat by the Assyrians in 722 BCE. Those Jews who were not deported were thought to have intermarried with Gentiles, and their descendants, the Samaritans, were reviled by Jews as being half-breeds (see Jn 4.9). **6:** *Lost sheep*, see 9.36n. **15:** *Sodom and Gomorrah,* Gen 18.16–19.39.

10.16–25: Coming persecutions (Mk 13.9–13; Lk 21.12–17). **17:** *Councils*, local Jewish courts. *Flog*, cf. 2 Cor 11.24–5. *Their synagogues,* see 9.35n. **18:** *Governors*, Roman officials, including prefects and procurators. *Gentiles*,

speaking through you. 21 Brother will betray
brother to death, and a father his child, and
children will rise against parents and have
them put to death; 22 and you will be hated by
all because of my name. But the one who en-
dures to the end will be saved. 23 When they
persecute you in one town, flee to the next;
for truly I tell you, you will not have gone
through all the towns of Israel before the Son
of Man comes.

24 "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor
a slave above the master; 25 it is enough for
the disciple to be like the teacher, and the
slave like the master. If they have called the
master of the house Beelzebul, how much
more will they malign those of his house-
hold!

26 "So have no fear of them; for nothing is
covered up that will not be uncovered, and
nothing secret that will not become known.
27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the
light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim
from the housetops. 28 Do not fear those who
kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather
fear him who can destroy both soul and body
in hell.[a] 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a
penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the
ground apart from your Father. 30 And even
the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So
do not be afraid; you are of more value than
many sparrows.

32 "Everyone therefore who acknowledges
me before others, I also will acknowledge
before my Father in heaven; 33 but whoever
denies me before others, I also will deny
before my Father in heaven.

34 "Do not think that I have come to bring
peace to the earth; I have not come to bring
peace, but a sword.

35 For I have come to set a man against his
father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-
in-law;
36 and one's foes will be members of one's
own household.

37 Whoever loves father or mother more
than me is not worthy of me; and whoever
loves son or daughter more than me is not
worthy of me; 38 and whoever does not take
up the cross and follow me is not worthy of
me. 39 Those who find their life will lose it,
and those who lose their life for my sake will
find it.

40 "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me,
and whoever welcomes me welcomes the
one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a
prophet in the name of a prophet will receive
a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a
righteous person in the name of a righteous
person will receive the reward of the right-
eous; 42 and whoever gives even a cup of cold
water to one of these little ones in the name
of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these
will lose their reward."

11 Now when Jesus had finished instruct-
ing his twelve disciples, he went on
from there to teach and proclaim his message
in their cities.

2 When John heard in prison what the
Messiah[b] was doing, he sent word by his[c] dis-
ciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who
is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

[a] Gk *Gehenna*
[b] Or *the Christ*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *two of his*

an anticipation of the postresurrection mission (28.19). **23:** *Son of Man*, most scholars interpret this difficult verse as a reference to Jesus's return (the Second Coming or parousia). **25:** *They*, the Pharisees (9.34; 12.24). *Beelzebul*, a ruler of demons often identified with Satan; originally the name for the Canaanite deity Baal-zebul, "Baal (or "Lord") the Prince" (2 Kings 1.2–6).

10.26–11.1: The consequences of mission (Lk 12.2–9; 12.51–53; 14.26–27; Mk 9.41). **26:** *Them*, the scribes and Pharisees. **29:** *Sparrows*, the least expensive of edible birds. **34–39:** The affliction and pain that must come prior to the messianic age of peace. **35–36:** See Mic 7.6 **38:** *Cross*, a Roman punishment reserved for slaves and rebels. The condemned were forced to carry their cross to the place of execution (27.32). **41:** *In the name of a prophet*, i.e., because he is a prophet. **42:** *Little ones*, those disciples occupying a humble or lowly position (18.6). **11.1:** In contrast to Mk 3.13

11.2–19: The messengers from John the Baptist (Lk 7.18–35). **2:** *Prison*, Herod's stronghold Machaerus, 5 mi (8 km) east of the Dead Sea (see 14.1–12). **3:** *The one who is to come*, the Messiah. **5:** *The blind … to them*, the

4 Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what
you hear and see: 5 the blind receive their
sight, the lame walk, the lepers[a] are cleansed,
the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the
poor have good news brought to them. 6 And
blessed is anyone who takes no offense at
me."

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak
to the crowds about John: "What did you go
out into the wilderness to look at? A reed
shaken by the wind? 8 What then did you go
out to see? Someone[b] dressed in soft robes?
Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal
palaces. 9 What then did you go out to see?
A prophet?[c] Yes, I tell you, and more than a
prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is
written,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of
you,
who will prepare your way before you.'

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of
women no one has arisen greater than John
the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of
heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days
of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of
heaven has suffered violence,[d] and the vio-
lent take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and
the law prophesied until John came; 14 and if
you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is
to come. 15 Let anyone with ears[e] listen!

16 "But to what will I compare this genera-
tion? It is like children sitting in the market-
places and calling to one another,

17 'We played the flute for you, and you did
not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking,
and they say, 'He has a demon'; 19 the Son
of Man came eating and drinking, and they
say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend
of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is
vindicated by her deeds."[f]

20 Then he began to reproach the cities in
which most of his deeds of power had been
done, because they did not repent. 21 "Woe
to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For
if the deeds of power done in you had been
done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have
repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.
22 But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will
be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for
you. 23 And you, Capernaum,

will you be exalted to heaven?
No, you will be brought down to
Hades.

For if the deeds of power done in you had
been done in Sodom, it would have remained
until this day. 24 But I tell you that on the day
of judgment it will be more tolerable for the
land of Sodom than for you."

[a] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases
[b] Or *Why then did you go out? To see someone*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Why then did you go out? To see a prophet?*
[d] Or *has been coming violently*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *to hear*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *children*

deeds predicted of the Messiah (Isa 35.4–6; 61.1). **5:** *Lepers*: see 8.3n. **10: Mal 3.1. 11:** *The least*: The least are greater through having witnessed the kingdom's arrival in Jesus and through having been given the opportunity to act on that knowledge (5.19; 18.4). **12:** As had happened with many true prophets, violence would soon be visited on John and Jesus. **14:** John is the *Elijah* to come before the day of the Lord: he ushers in the kingdom (Mal 4.5; cf. Mt 17.12–13). **15:** 13.9. **16:** *This generation*, the entire generation of Israel contemporaneous with Jesus. **19:** *Glutton*: Deut 21.20. *Son of Man*, see 8.20n. Jesus, like John, embodies *Wisdom*, and his actions confirm this (11.4–5).

11.20–24: Woes to unrepentant cities (Lk 10.13–15). **21:** A woe oracle against Galilean towns for failing to respond to Jesus. *Chorazin* has been identified with Karazeh, a site near Capernaum. After Jerusalem and Capernaum, *Bethsaida* is the place most commonly associated with Jesus's ministry in the Gospels (Mk 8.22–6). Its location is still disputed. *Sackcloth*, a rough fabric worn as a symbol of mourning and repentance; cf. Jon 3:5–8. **21–23:** *Tyre* and *Sidon,* on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel, were often linked in prophetic oracles (Isa 23; Jer 25.22; 27.3–7; 47.4; Ezek 28.11–23; Joel 3.4–8*): Hades* is the Greek term for both the god of the dead and his realm, the latter roughly equivalent to Heb Sheol, the shadowy domain of all the dead. Here it may also suggest Gehenna; 5.22n. *Sodom* was a stock example of an evil and unrepentant city (see 10.15n.).

25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank[a] you,
Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because
you have hidden these things from the
wise and the intelligent and have revealed
them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was
your gracious will.[b] 27 All things have been
handed over to me by my Father; and no
one knows the Son except the Father, and
no one knows the Father except the Son and
anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal
him.
28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and
are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give
you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn
from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my
yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

12 At that time Jesus went through
the grainfields on the sabbath; his
disciples were hungry, and they began to
pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2 When the
Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look,
your disciples are doing what is not lawful
to do on the sabbath." 3 He said to them,
"Have you not read what David did when
he and his companions were hungry? 4 He
entered the house of God and ate the bread
of the Presence, which it was not lawful for
him or his companions to eat, but only for
the priests. 5 Or have you not read in the
law that on the sabbath the priests in the
temple break the sabbath and yet are guilt-
less? 6 I tell you, something greater than the
temple is here. 7 But if you had known what
this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacri-
fice,' you would not have condemned the
guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is lord of the
sabbath."
9 He left that place and entered their syna-
gogue; 10 a man was there with a withered
hand, and they asked him, "Is it lawful to cure
on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse
him. 11 He said to them, "Suppose one of you
has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on
the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift
it out? 12 How much more valuable is a human
being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good
on the sabbath." 13 Then he said to the man,
"Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out,
and it was restored, as sound as the other.
14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired
against him, how to destroy him.
15 When Jesus became aware of this, he
departed. Many crowds[c] followed him, and he
cured all of them, 16 and he ordered them not
to make him known. 17 This was to fulfill what
had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

18 "Here is my servant, whom I have
chosen,
my beloved, with whom my soul is well
pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the
Gentiles.
19 He will not wrangle or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the
streets.
20 He will not break a bruised reed
or quench a smoldering wick
until he brings justice to victory.
21 And in his name the Gentiles will
hope."

[a] Or *praise*
[b] Or *for so it was well-pleasing in your sight*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *crowds*

11.25–30: Come to me and rest (Lk 11.21–22). **28:** *Heavy burdens*, 23.4. *Rest*, a defining feature of the new age (*1 En* 63.6). **29:** *Yoke*, either Jesus's way of life or his teaching of the Torah's requirements. Jesus may be addressing his disciples here, but it is more likely the crowds in general (v. 7).

12.1–8: Plucking grain on the sabbath (Mk 2.23–28; Lk 6.1–5). **1:** *Grainfields*, wheat or barley. *Sabbath*, Ex 20.8–11; 34.21. Harvesting grain was considered to be "work." **3:** *David*, 1 Sam 21.1–6. **4:** Priests were permitted to eat the *bread of the Presence* once it had been replaced with freshly consecrated loaves (Ex 25.30; Lev 24.5–9). **7:** A second citation (see 9.13) of Hos 6.6. For God, acts of mercy outweigh ritual observances. **8:** Jesus's authority as *Lord of the sabbath* exceeds even that of divinely established institutions.

12.9–21: The healing Messiah (Mk 3.1–6; Lk 6.6–11). **10:** Healing would be permitted if the afflicted person was unlikely to survive the sabbath. See also 6.26–30n. **11:** *One sheep,* most authorities permitted the rescue of animals on the sabbath (cf. *m. Shabb.* 18.3; but for a ruling against doing so, see CD 11.13–14). **15–21:** Isa 42.1–4, the longest fulfillment citation in Matthew. Here the servanthood of Jesus is strongly emphasized, as well as the involvement of the Gentiles.

22 Then they brought to him a demoniac
who was blind and mute; and he cured
him, so that the one who had been mute
could speak and see. 23 All the crowds were
amazed and said, "Can this be the Son of
David?" 24 But when the Pharisees heard
it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the
ruler of the demons, that this fellow casts
out the demons." 25 He knew what they
were thinking and said to them, "Every
kingdom divided against itself is laid waste,
and no city or house divided against itself
will stand. 26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is
divided against himself; how then will his
kingdom stand? 27 If I cast out demons by
Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists[a]
cast them out? Therefore they will be your
judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God
that I cast out demons, then the kingdom
of God has come to you. 29 Or how can one
enter a strong man's house and plunder his
property, without first tying up the strong
man? Then indeed the house can be plun-
dered. 30 Whoever is not with me is against
me, and whoever does not gather with me
scatters. 31 Therefore I tell you, people will
be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy,
but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be
forgiven. 32 Whoever speaks a word against
the Son of Man will be forgiven, but who-
ever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not
be forgiven, either in this age or in the age
to come.

33 "Either make the tree good, and its fruit
good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit
bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. 34 You
brood of vipers! How can you speak good
things, when you are evil? For out of the
abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
35 The good person brings good things out of
a good treasure, and the evil person brings
evil things out of an evil treasure. 36 I tell
you, on the day of judgment you will have
to give an account for every careless word
you utter; 37 for by your words you will be
justified, and by your words you will be
condemned."

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees
said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign
from you." 39 But he answered them, "An
evil and adulterous generation asks for a
sign, but no sign will be given to it except
the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For just as
Jonah was three days and three nights in
the belly of the sea monster, so for three
days and three nights the Son of Man will
be in the heart of the earth. 41 The people of
Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with
this generation and condemn it, because
they repented at the proclamation of Jonah,
and see, something greater than Jonah is
here! 42 The queen of the South will rise up
at the judgment with this generation and
condemn it, because she came from the
ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of
Solomon, and see, something greater than
Solomon is here!

43 "When the unclean spirit has gone out
of a person, it wanders through waterless
regions looking for a resting place, but it
finds none. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to my
house from which I came.' When it comes,
it finds it empty, swept, and put in order.
45 Then it goes and brings along seven other
spirits more evil than itself, and they enter
and live there; and the last state of that per-
son is worse than the first. So will it be also
with this evil generation."

[a] Gk *sons*

12.22–37: Jesus and Beelzebul (Mk 3.20–30; Lk 11.14–23; 12.10; 6.43–45). **22–24:** A doublet of 9.32–34. **23:** The title *Son of David* is synonymous with the Messiah of Israel (1.1; 9.27n.; Ezek 34; *Pss. Sol.* 17). The crowds merely broach the question of Jesus's identity, but their question is framed in such a way as to expect a negative answer: "This isn't the Son of David, is it?" **24:** *Beelzebul*, 10.25n. **31:** *Blasphemy*, impious denigration. **33:** 7.17. **34:** 3.7. **37:** Jas 3.1–12.

12.38–45: The demand for a sign (Mk 8.11–12; Lk 11.29–32; 11.24–26). **38:** See 16.1n. **39:** *Adulterous*, unfaithful to God. *Sign of the prophet Jonah*, Jesus's resurrection after three days and nights. **40:** See Jon 1.17. **41:** *Nineveh*, capital of the Assyrian empire, proverbial for its size and power, and the subject of numerous prophetic oracles (Nah; Zeph 2.13; Tob 14). *Repented,* Jon 3.5–9. **42:** *Queen of the South*, the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10.1–13; 2 Chr 9.1–12). **43:** *Waterless regions*, demons were thought to reside in deserts (Mt 4.1; Tob 8.3). **45:** *Seven* often symbolizes "completeness," here suggesting complete possession. *This evil generation*, 11.16n.

46 While he was still speaking to the
crowds, his mother and his brothers were
standing outside, wanting to speak to him.
47 Someone told him, "Look, your mother and
your brothers are standing outside, want-
ing to speak to you."[a] 48 But to the one who
had told him this, Jesus[b] replied, "Who is my
mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 And
pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are
my mother and my brothers! 50 For whoever
does the will of my Father in heaven is my
brother and sister and mother."

13 That same day Jesus went out of the
house and sat beside the sea. 2 Such
great crowds gathered around him that he
got into a boat and sat there, while the whole
crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them
many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A
sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed,
some seeds fell on the path, and the birds
came and ate them up. 5 Other seeds fell on
rocky ground, where they did not have much
soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they
had no depth of soil. 6 But when the sun rose,
they were scorched; and since they had no
root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell
among thorns, and the thorns grew up and
choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil
and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold,
some sixty, some thirty. 9 Let anyone with
ears[c] listen!"

10 Then the disciples came and asked him,
"Why do you speak to them in parables?"
11 He answered, "To you it has been given to
know the secrets[d] of the kingdom of heaven,
but to them it has not been given. 12 For to
those who have, more will be given, and they
will have an abundance; but from those who
have nothing, even what they have will be
taken away. 13 The reason I speak to them in
parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive,
and hearing they do not listen, nor do they
understand.' 14 With them indeed is fulfilled
the prophecy of Isaiah that says:

'You will indeed listen, but never
understand,
and you will indeed look, but never
perceive.
15 For this people's heart has grown dull,
and their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have shut their eyes;
so that they might not look with
their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart and
turn—
and I would heal them.'

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and
your ears, for they hear. 17 Truly I tell you,
many prophets and righteous people longed
to see what you see, but did not see it, and to
hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

18 "Hear then the parable of the sower.
19 When anyone hears the word of the king-
dom and does not understand it, the evil one
comes and snatches away what is sown in
the heart; this is what was sown on the path.
20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this

[a] Other ancient authorities lack verse 47
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *to hear*
[d] Or *mysteries*

12.46–50: The mother and brothers of Jesus (Mk 3.31–35; Lk 8.19–21). Obedience to God the Father is not only the most fundamental of familial obligations (8.21n.); it is also the ultimate basis of kinship.

13.1–53: The third discourse (the parable discourse). The word "parable" is derived from Gk "parabole," "a placing beside," where a literary figure or story illumines something "placed beside" it—here, the nature of the kingdom of heaven. In ch 13, only the parable of the sower is not introduced as a "kingdom" parable (but see v. 19). Four of the parables in this chapter and one of the interpretations (vv. 36–43) are unique to Matthew. The theme of growth in the first four parables emphasizes the inexorable expansion of the kingdom.

13.1–23: The parable of the sower and its interpretation (Mk 4.1–20; Lk 8.4–15). **1:** *Sea,* of Galilee. *Sat,* see 5.1n. **2:** *Crowds,* see 4.25n. **8:** These yields are exceptional, but not impossible. **11:** *Secrets*, the mysteries of the end of days (Dan 2.28). **13:** Where Mk 4.12 suggests that the purpose of Jesus's parabolic speech is to promote incomprehension, Matthew indicates that Jesus speaks in parables as a consequence of incomprehension by Jesus's audience. **14–15:** Isa 6.9–10; Acts 28.26–27. **16:** The disciples are *blessed* because, unlike "this people" (v. 15), they comprehend Jesus and his message. **18–23:** In the Gospels only a few of Jesus's parables are provided with interpretations. **19:** *Does not understand it*, a characteristic Matthean addition.

is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; [21] yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.[a] [22] As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. [23] But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

[24] He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; [25] but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. [26] So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. [27] And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' [28] He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' [29] But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. [30] Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

[31] He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; [32] it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

[33] He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with[b] three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

[34] Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. [35] This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:[c]

"I will open my mouth to speak in parables;
I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world."[d]

[36] Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." [37] He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; [38] the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, [39] and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. [40] Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. [41] The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, [42] and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [43] Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears[e] listen!

[a] Gk *stumbles*
[b] Gk *hid in*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *the prophet Isaiah*
[d] Other ancient authorities lack *of the world*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *to hear*

13.24–33: Three parables of growth (Mk 4.30–32; Lk 13.18–21). **25:** *Weeds*, perhaps darnel, a weed resembling wheat. **31:** *Mustard seed*, the precise species cannot be determined, though mustard seed was popularly regarded as the smallest of seeds planted by farmers. **32:** *Tree*, actually a shrub growing up to ca. 10 ft (3 m) high. *Birds*, Ezek 17.23; Dan 4.10–12. **33:** *Yeast*, not yeast but leaven, a remnant of fermented dough used as a "starter" for raising a new batch of dough. *Three measures*, ca. 2/3 bu (21 L).

13.34–35: The use of parables (Mk 4.33–34). A fulfillment citation (Ps 78.2) attributed to Asaph the seer (2 Chr 29.30). In the next half of the discourse Jesus's teaching is reserved for the disciples.

13.36–43: The parable of the weeds explained. 36: *House*, 13.1. **38:** *Children of the kingdom*, those worthy of the kingdom. **41:** *Out of his kingdom*, some scholars have identified the kingdom with the church, but in view of v. 38 it is better understood as the world. *Causes of sin*, 16.23; 18.7. *Evildoers*, 7.23. **42:** 8.12n. **43:** *Shine like the sun*, Dan 12.3.

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure
hidden in a field, which someone found and
hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that
he has and buys that field.
45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a
merchant in search of fine pearls; 46 on find-
ing one pearl of great value, he went and sold
all that he had and bought it.
47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a
net that was thrown into the sea and caught
fish of every kind; 48 when it was full, they
drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good
into baskets but threw out the bad. 49 So it
will be at the end of the age. The angels will
come out and separate the evil from the
righteous 50 and throw them into the furnace
of fire, where there will be weeping and
gnashing of teeth.
51 "Have you understood all this?" They
answered, "Yes." 52 And he said to them,
"Therefore every scribe who has been
trained for the kingdom of heaven is like
the master of a household who brings out
of his treasure what is new and what is old."
53 When Jesus had finished these parables,
he left that place.
54 He came to his hometown and began
to teach the people[a] in their synagogue, so
that they were astounded and said, "Where
did this man get this wisdom and these
deeds of power? 55 Is not this the carpenter's
son? Is not his mother called Mary? And
are not his brothers James and Joseph and
Simon and Judas? 56 And are not all his sis-
ters with us? Where then did this man get
all this?" 57 And they took offense at him.
But Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not
without honor except in their own country
and in their own house." 58 And he did not
do many deeds of power there, because of
their unbelief.

14 At that time Herod the ruler[b] heard
reports about Jesus; 2 and he said to
his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he
has been raised from the dead, and for this
reason these powers are at work in him."
3 For Herod had arrested John, bound him,
and put him in prison on account of Hero-
dias, his brother Philip's wife,[c] 4 because
John had been telling him, "It is not lawful
for you to have her." 5 Though Herod[d]
wanted to put him to death, he feared the
crowd, because they regarded him as a
prophet. 6 But when Herod's birthday came,
the daughter of Herodias danced before
the company, and she pleased Herod 7 so
much that he promised on oath to grant her
whatever she might ask. 8 Prompted by her
mother, she said, "Give me the head of John
the Baptist here on a platter." 9 The king
was grieved, yet out of regard for his oaths
and for the guests, he commanded it to be
given; 10 he sent and had John beheaded in
the prison. 11 The head was brought on a
platter and given to the girl, who brought
it to her mother. 12 His disciples came and
took the body and buried it; then they went
and told Jesus.

[a] Gk *them*
[b] Gk *tetrarch*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *his brother's wife*
[d] Gk *he*

13.44–53: Four more parables. 44: *Field*, in the absence of banks, valuables were often buried for safekeeping (25.25). The purchase of property would include anything it contained; *m. B. Bat. 4.8–9.* **47:** *Net*, a seine net. **51:** The final parable in the chapter. *Understood*, in contrast to Jesus's disciples in Mk 4.13,33–34, here the disciples confirm their understanding of Jesus's teaching. **52:** *Scribe*, perhaps a self-portrait of the Gospel's author, or an indication of early Christian scribes (23.34). *His treasure*, the storeroom from which he draws his understanding of Jesus's ministry (the *new*) and of the Jewish scriptures (the *old*).

13.54–58: The rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (Mk 6.1–6; Lk 4.16–30). **54:** *His hometown*, Nazareth. **55:** *Carpenter's son* contrasts with "carpenter" (Mk 6.3). The word translated here as "carpenter" can also mean "builder" or "stonemason." Jesus's inability to perform mighty deeds in Nazareth (Mk 6.5) becomes, in Matthew, an unwillingness to do so in the face of the Nazarenes' disbelief (13.58).

14.1–12: The death of John the Baptist (Mk 6.14–29; Lk 9.7–9). **1:** *Herod*, Matthew uses the correct designation "Herod the Tetrarch" (see textual note *b*) for Herod Antipas (2.22n.) in contrast to the "King Herod" of Mk 6.14. **3.** *Philip*, cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 18.136–37. **4:** Lev 18.16; 20.21. **6:** *Daughter of Herodias*, Josephus identifies her as Salome (*Ant*. 18.136; for Josephus's account of John's death, see *Ant*. 18.116–19). Compare Esth 2.9.

13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew
from there in a boat to a deserted place by
himself. But when the crowds heard it, they
followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When
he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he
had compassion for them and cured their sick.
15 When it was evening, the disciples came to
him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the
hour is now late; send the crowds away so that
they may go into the villages and buy food for
themselves." 16 Jesus said to them, "They need
not go away; you give them something to eat."
17 They replied, "We have nothing here but five
loaves and two fish." 18 And he said, "Bring them
here to me." 19 Then he ordered the crowds to
sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves
and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and
blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to
the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the
crowds. 20 And all ate and were filled; and they
took up what was left over of the broken pieces,
twelve baskets full. 21 And those who ate were
about five thousand men, besides women and
children.

22 Immediately he made the disciples get
into the boat and go on ahead to the other
side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And
after he had dismissed the crowds, he went
up the mountain by himself to pray. When
evening came, he was there alone, 24 but by
this time the boat, battered by the waves, was
far from the land,[a] for the wind was against
them. 25 And early in the morning he came
walking toward them on the sea. 26 But when
the disciples saw him walking on the sea,
they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!"
And they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately
Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it
is I; do not be afraid."

28 Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you,
command me to come to you on the water."
29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the
boat, started walking on the water, and came
toward Jesus. 30 But when he noticed the strong
wind,[b] he became frightened, and beginning
to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Jesus
immediately reached out his hand and caught
him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did
you doubt?" 32 When they got into the boat, the
wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped
him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

34 When they had crossed over, they came
to land at Gennesaret. 35 After the people of
that place recognized him, they sent word
throughout the region and brought all who
were sick to him, 36 and begged him that they
might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and
all who touched it were healed.

15 Then Pharisees and scribes came to
Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 "Why
do your disciples break the tradition of the el-
ders? For they do not wash their hands before
they eat." 3 He answered them, "And why do
you break the commandment of God for the
sake of your tradition? 4 For God said,[c] 'Honor
your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever
speaks evil of father or mother must surely
die.' 5 But you say that whoever tells father
or mother, 'Whatever support you might
have had from me is given to God,'[d] then that
person need not honor the father.[e] 6 So, for
the sake of your tradition, you make void the

[a] Other ancient authorities read *was out on the sea*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *the wind*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *commanded, saying*
[d] Or *is an offering*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *or the mother*

14.13–36: The feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water (Mk 6.30–56; Lk 9.10–17; Jn 6.1–21). These are the only miracles found in all four Gospels. There is a doublet for the feeding in 15.32–38; cf. also 1 Kings 17.8–16; 2 Kings 4.42–44. **19:** *Looked… blessed… broke… gave*, the language suggests eucharistic ritual; cf. 26.26. **21:** Matthew increases the magnitude of the miracle by adding *besides women and children* (cf. Mk 6.44). **22:** The *other side* of the Sea of Galilee. **25:** *Early in the morning*, lit., "in the fourth watch of the night," i.e., between 3 and 6 am. **27:** *It is I*, lit., "I am," a reference to the divine name (Ex 3.14). **28:** Peter's walking on the water is unique to Matthew and brings out both the role of Peter as the representative of the disciples, and his—and their—need for faith. This is the first time in the Gospel that the disciples *worship* Jesus and refer to him as *Son of God* (cf. 16.16; 27.54). **34:** *Gennesaret* is either a narrow plain on the west side of the Sea or a town on that plain; 4.18n.

15.1–20: The tradition of the elders (Mk 7.1–23). **2:** *Tradition of the elders*, Pharisaic oral law designed to elucidate and protect the law of Moses (3.8n.). *Wash*, eat food in a state of ritual purity; cf. Ex 30.17–21. **3:** Hand-washing was a Pharisaic *tradition*, not stipulated by the Torah. **4:** *God said*, Ex 20.12; 21.17; Lev 20.9; Deut 5.16. **5:** *Given to God*,

word[a] of God. [7] You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said:

[8] 'This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
[9] in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.' "

[10] Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand: [11] it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." [12] Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" [13] He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. [14] Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind.[b] And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." [15] But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." [16] Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? [17] Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? [18] But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. [19] For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. [20] These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

[21] Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. [22] Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." [23] But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." [24] He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." [25] But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." [26] He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." [27] She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." [28] Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

[29] After Jesus had left that place, he passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up the mountain, where he sat down. [30] Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, [31] so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

[32] Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way." [33] The disciples said to him, "Where are we to get enough bread in the desert to feed so great a crowd?" [34] Jesus asked them, "How many loaves have you?" They said, "Seven, and a few small fish." [35] Then ordering the crowd to sit down on the ground, [36] he took the seven loaves and the fish; and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. [37] And all of them ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. [38] Those who had eaten were four thousand men, besides women and children. [39] After

[a] Other ancient authorities read *law*; others, *commandment*

[b] Other ancient authorities lack *of the blind*

m. Ned. 3.2; 5.6. **7–9:** Isa 29.13. **11:** *Defiles*, renders one ritually unclean. **13:** Isa 61.21; Jer 12.17. **14:** *Blind guides*, 23.16,24; Lk 6.39. **15:** Significantly, Matthew stops short of Mark's conclusion, "Thus he declared all foods clean" (Mk 7.19).

15.21–28: The Canaanite woman's faith (Mk 7.24–30). **21:** *District*, perhaps the largely Jewish enclave in Syria bordering on northwest Galilee. **22:** *Canaanite* replaces Mark's more accurate political designation "Syrophoenician." The archaic term "Canaanite" may be designed to recall Israel's traditional enemies (Deut 7.1). *Son of David,* see 9.27n. **24:** The limited mission to Israel enjoined on the disciples at 10.5–6 also applies to Jesus's own ministry. **27:** *Dogs*, "little dogs" or household pets as metaphors for Gentiles. **28:** Like the Roman centurion (8.5–10), the Gentile woman is praised for exemplary *faith*.

15.29–39: The healing and feeding of many people. 32–39 (Mark 8.1–10):This is a doublet to the feeding in 14.13–23. **30:** 9.35–36n. **38:** The four thousand may be Gentiles but are more likely Jews. **39:** *Magadan* (see textual note *a* on the next page) replaces Mark's "district of Dalmanutha" (Mk 8.10); both locales are unknown.

sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.[a]

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus[b] they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. [2] He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' [3] And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.[c] [4] An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." Then he left them and went away.

[5] When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. [6] Jesus said to them, "Watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." [7] They said to one another, "It is because we have brought no bread." [8] And becoming aware of it, Jesus said, "You of little faith, why are you talking about having no bread? [9] Do you still not perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? [10] Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? [11] How could you fail to perceive that I was not speaking about bread? Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!" [12] Then they understood that he had not told them to beware of the yeast of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[13] Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" [14] And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15] He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" [16] Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah,[d] the Son of the living God." [17] And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. [18] And I tell you, you are Peter,[e] and on this rock[f] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. [19] I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." [20] Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was[g] the Messiah.[d]

[a] Other ancient authorities read *Magdala* or *Magdalan*
[b] Gk *him*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack [2]*When it is . . . of the times*
[d] Or *the Christ*
[e] Gk *Petros*
[f] Gk *petra*
[g] Other ancient authorities add *Jesus*

16.1–12: The Pharisees and Sadducees (Mk 8.11–21; Lk 12.54–56). **1:** 3.7n. *Sign*, probably a cosmic event. **4:** *Sign of Jonah,* see 12.38–41. In Matthew the *sign* is Jesus's burial and resurrection; in Lk, see 11:29–32, it is Jesus's role as a prophet demanding repentance. **6:** Here *yeast* (leaven) is a metaphor for teaching, but teaching that has the capacity to corrupt everything with which it comes into contact. At 13.33 the image is used positively. **8:** 14.28n. **9:** Cf. 14.13–21. **10:** Cf. 15.32–39.

16.13–20: Peter's confession about Jesus (Mk 8.27–30; Lk 9.18–21). **13:** *Caesarea Philippi*, a city 25 mi (40 km) north of the Sea of Galilee, formerly Baneas and renamed by Philip in honor of Caesar Augustus. It is to be distinguished from Caesarea Maritima, the Hellenistic city redesigned and expanded by Herod the Great on the Mediterranean coast that served as the headquarters of the Roman governor (Acts 8.40; 21.8,16). *Son of Man*, 8.20n. **14:** *Jeremiah*, Matthew's inclusion of Jeremiah among the prophets emphasizes the parallels between Jesus and Jeremiah (also mentioned in 2.17; 27.9). **16:** *Son of the living God* is found only in Matthew's version of Peter's confession (cf. 26.63; Ps 42.2). The title has strong messianic overtones (4Q174.10–14). **17:** *Son of Jonah,* either a variant of "son of John" (Jn 1.42) or an indication that Peter has a prophetic gift like Jonah's. *Flesh and blood*, humans. **18:** This promise to Peter is found only in Matthew. *Peter . . . rock*, Jesus's nickname for Simon (Gk "petros") means "stone" or "rock." The same pun works with its Aramaic equivalent, Kephas (1 Cor 1.12; 15.5; Gal 1.18). *Church*, the only occurrences of the word "church" (Gk "ekklesia") in the Gospels are here and at 18.17. The *gates of Hades* may mean the "powers of death." **19:** *Keys*, a symbolic ascription of power (see Isa 22.22), bequeathing Peter the authority to oversee admission to the church (cf. 18.18).

21 From that time on, Jesus began to show
his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and
undergo great suffering at the hands of the
elders and chief priests and scribes, and be
killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And
Peter took him aside and began to rebuke
him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must
never happen to you." 23 But he turned and
said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are
a stumbling block to me; for you are setting
your mind not on divine things but on hu-
man things."

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any
want to become my followers, let them deny
themselves and take up their cross and follow
me. 25 For those who want to save their life
will lose it, and those who lose their life for
my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit
them if they gain the whole world but forfeit
their life? Or what will they give in return for
their life?

27 "For the Son of Man is to come with his
angels in the glory of his Father, and then he
will repay everyone for what has been done.
28 Truly I tell you, there are some standing
here who will not taste death before they see
the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

17 Six days later, Jesus took with him
Peter and James and his brother John
and led them up a high mountain, by them-
selves. 2 And he was transfigured before
them, and his face shone like the sun, and
his clothes became dazzling white. 3 Sud-
denly there appeared to them Moses and
Elijah, talking with him. 4 Then Peter said to
Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if
you wish, I[a] will make three dwellings[b] here,
one for you, one for Moses, and one for Eli-
jah." 5 While he was still speaking, suddenly
a bright cloud overshadowed them, and
from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son,
the Beloved;[c] with him I am well pleased;
listen to him!" 6 When the disciples heard
this, they fell to the ground and were over-
come by fear. 7 But Jesus came and touched
them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid."
8 And when they looked up, they saw no one
except Jesus himself alone.

9 As they were coming down the moun-
tain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about
the vision until after the Son of Man has been
raised from the dead." 10 And the disciples
asked him, "Why, then, do the scribes say
that Elijah must come first?" 11 He replied,
"Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all
things; 12 but I tell you that Elijah has already
come, and they did not recognize him, but
they did to him whatever they pleased. So
also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their
hands." 13 Then the disciples understood
that he was speaking to them about John the
Baptist.

14 When they came to the crowd, a man
came to him, knelt before him, 15 and said,
"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an
epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls
into the fire and often into the water. 16 And
I brought him to your disciples, but they
could not cure him." 17 Jesus answered, "You
faithless and perverse generation, how much
longer must I be with you? How much longer
must I put up with you? Bring him here to

[a] Other ancient authorities read *we*
[b] Or *tents*
[c] Or *my beloved Son*

16.21–28: Jesus foretells his death and resurrection (Mk 8.31–9.1; Lk 9.22–27). **21:** The phrase *from that time on* may be a marker signaling the beginning of the last third of the Gospel (4.17n.). The first of three passion predictions (17.22–23; 20.17–19; cf. 26.1–2). **23:** Peter resembles *Satan* (4.10) by tempting Jesus to forego his divinely appointed suffering. **24–25:** Cf. 10.38–39. *Cross, see* 10.38n. **28:** *Some standing here*, possibly a reference to Jesus's transfiguration (17.1–13).

17.1–13: The transfiguration of Jesus (Mk 9.2–13; Lk 9.28–36). **1:** *High mountain*, traditionally identified with Mount Tabor or, because of its proximity to Caesarea Philippi, with Mount Hermon. The setting and reference to *six days* are reminiscent of God's revelation to Moses, and later Elijah, on Sinai (Horeb) (Ex 34.1–9; 1 Kings 19.1–18). **2:** *His face shone*, Ex 34.35. **3:** *Moses and Elijah* symbolize, respectively, the Law and the Prophets, the first two divisions of the Hebrew Bible. **5:** *My Son*, 3.17n. **10:** *Elijah must come first*, according to the traditional interpretation of Mal 4.5, Elijah would come "before the day of the Lord." **12:** *Elijah has already come* in the person of John the Baptist.

17.14–21: The healing of a boy with a demon (Mk 9.14–29; Lk 9.37–43). **17:** *Faithless and perverse generation*,

me." [18] And Jesus rebuked the demon,[a] and it[b] came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. [19] Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" [20] He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a[c] mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."[d]

[22] As they were gathering[e] in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, [23] and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised." And they were greatly distressed.

[24] When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax[f] came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?"[f] [25] He said, "Yes, he does." And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?" [26] When Peter[g] said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the children are free. [27] However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin;[h] take that and give it to them for you and me."

18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" [2] He called a child, whom he put among them, [3] and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. [4] Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. [5] Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

[6] "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. [7] Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!

[8] "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. [9] And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one

[a] Gk *it* or *him*
[b] Gk *the demon*
[c] Gk *faith as a grain of*
[d] Other ancient authorities add verse 21, *But this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *living*
[f] Gk *didrachma*
[g] Gk *he*
[h] Gk *stater*; the stater was worth two didrachmas

Jesus's disciples; cf. Deut 32.5,20. **20:** *Little faith* is the main problem besetting Jesus's disciples in Matthew. *Mustard seed*, 13.31n.

17.22–23: Jesus's second prediction of his death and resurrection (Mk 9.30–32; Lk 9.43–45). **22:** *Were gathering*, in order to visit Jerusalem for Passover. **23:** Whereas in Mk 9.32 the disciples are perplexed, Matthew's disciples are *greatly distressed*.

17.24–27: Payment of the temple tax. 24: *Temple tax*, lit., "the didrachma." This "double drachma" was equivalent to half a shekel, an amount enjoined on all Israel (Ex 30.11–16). Used in Jesus's day for sacrifices and the upkeep of the Temple, the tax (the "fiscus judaicus") continued to be levied by Rome after the Temple's destruction in 70 CE, as a penalty for the Jewish people's revolt in 66–70 CE. **26:** *The children are free*, just as a king's children are tax-exempt, so too are God's children, i.e., Jesus and his brothers and sisters (12.50). **27:** *Give offense,* offend the devout people who collect the tax.

18.1–35: The fourth discourse, on community or church. This discourse focuses on community interrelations and church discipline—specifically the need for the church to care for their disadvantaged and forgive one another.

18.1–9: The greatest in the kingdom and temptations to sin (Mk 9.33–37; 42–48; Lk 9.46–48; 17.1–2). **3–6:** *Children* and *little ones*, humble Christian disciples. **6:** *Great millstone*, a large, circular, stone harnessed to a donkey or ox to grind grain. *Sea*, millstones were sometimes used as anchors (cf. Rev 18.21). **9:** *Hell*, cf. 5.29n.

eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell[a] of fire.

10 "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.[b] 12 What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? 13 And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. 14 So it is not the will of your[c] Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

15 "If another member of the church[d] sins against you,[e] go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.[f] 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

21 Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church[g] sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven[h] times.

23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents[i] was brought to him; 25 and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. 26 So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii;[j] and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' 29 Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. 31 When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. 32 Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' 34 And in anger his

[a] Gk *Gehenna*
[b] Other ancient authorities add verse 11, *For the Son of Man came to save the lost*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *my*
[d] Gk *If your brother*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *against you*
[f] Gk *the brother*
[g] Gk *if my brother*
[h] Or *seventy times seven*
[i] A talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer
[j] The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer

18.10–20: Lost sheep and sinning brothers (Lk 15.3–7; 17.3). **10:** *Their angels*, both individuals and nations were thought to have guardian angels (Dan 10.20–21; Acts 12.15). *Face of my Father*, receive God's special attention. **12:** Luke's version of the parable varies considerably; in Matthew the emphasis is not on the shepherd's joy at finding the lost sheep, but on his responsibility not to lose a straying sheep. **15:** *Alone*, to avoid publicly shaming the church member. *Witnesses*, 9.27–31n; cf. Deut 19.15. **17:** *Gentile … tax collector*, 5.46,47n. **18:** 16.16. This authority is extended to the church as a whole.

18.21–35: The parable of the unforgiving servant. 21–22: *Seven*, 12.45n.; cf. Gen 4.24. **23:** *A king*, God. **24:** *Ten thousand talents*, a vast sum amounting to more than the entire tribute paid by Galilee to Rome over a fifteen-year period. A talent was equivalent to six thousand denarii (a denarius was a day-laborer's wage). **25:** *Ordered him to be sold*, slaves, their families and possessions were chattel. **28:** *A hundred denarii*, roughly three months' wages. **30:** 5.25n. **34:** *Tortured*, to ascertain the location of the slave's money or to coerce money from his family.

lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. 35 So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister[a] from your heart."

19 When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. 2 Large crowds followed him, and he cured them there.

3 Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?" 4 He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." 7 They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" 8 He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery."[b]

10 His disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." 11 But he said to them, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. 12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."

13 Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; 14 but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." 15 And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

16 Then someone came to him and said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" 17 And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." 18 He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; 19 Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 20 The young man said to him, "I have kept all these;[c] what do I still lack?" 21 Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money[d] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell

[a] Gk *brother*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery*; others add at the end of the verse *and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *from my youth*
[d] Gk lacks *the money*

19.1–20.34: Jesus moves from Galilee to Judea. In Matthew, this transition marks Jesus's first (and final) trip to Judea.

19.1–12: Teaching about divorce (Mk 10.1–12). **1:** *Beyond the Jordan*, the Transjordan or Perea, regions on the east side of the Jordan River. Galileans traveling to Jerusalem for Passover would often cross over the Jordan to bypass Samaria (Lk 9.51–56). **2:** *Large crowds*, 4.25n. **3:** The Pharisaic schools of Hillel and Shammai both permitted divorce but differed over the appropriate grounds. **4–5:** Gen 1.27; 2.24. **7:** *Moses*, Deut 24.1–4. **9:** *Except for unchastity*, this exception clause has been added by Matthew; see also 5.32. **12:** *Made themselves eunuchs*, hyperbole for the voluntary practice of celibacy; a eunuch is a castrated male.

19.13–30: Little children and the rich young man (Mk 10.13–31; Lk 18.15–30). **13–15:** Cf. 18.1–5. **17:** *Only one*, God; Mk 10.18. To *enter into life* means both "to enter the kingdom" and "to gain eternal life" (vv. 16,23,24). **19:** Ex 20.12–16; Deut 5.16–20; Matthew adds the love commandment from Lev 19.18 (cf. 22.39). **21:** *Perfect*, 5.48n. **22:** *Young*, only found in Matthew. **24:** *Camel*, the largest animal in the region (23.24).

you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, "Then who can be saved?" 26 But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

27 Then Peter said in reply, "Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" 28 Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold,[a] and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

20 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage,[b] he sent them into his vineyard. 3 When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; 4 and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. 5 When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. 6 And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' 7 They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' 8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' 9 When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.[b] 10 Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.[b] 11 And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, 12 saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' 13 But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?[b] 14 Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'[c] 16 So the last will be first, and the first will be last."[d]

17 While Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, 18 "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; 19 then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised."

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. 21 And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." 22 But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"[e] They said to him, "We

[a] Other ancient authorities read *manifold*
[b] Gk *a denarius*
[c] Gk *is your eye evil because I am good?*
[d] Other ancient authorities add *for many are called but few are chosen*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*

28: *Renewal*, the new age on earth, featuring a general resurrection. *Thrones*, Dan 7.9–14. **30:** 20.16.

20.1–16: The workers in the vineyard. 2: 18.28n. **15:** *Envious*, lit., "Is your eye evil?" (cf. 6.22–23n.). **16:** See 19.30.

20.17–19: A third time Jesus foretells his death and resurrection (Mk 10.32–34; Lk 18.31–34). **17–19:** Cf. 16.21–28; 17.22–23. This prediction explicitly indicts the Gentiles in Jesus's death.

20.20–28: The request of James and John (Mk 10.35–45). In contrast to Mark, the request here originates with their mother. **21:** *Right … left*, indicates those figures who, flanking a monarch, would rank as second and

are able." [23] He said to them, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."

[24] When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. [25] But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. [26] It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, [27] and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; [28] just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

[29] As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. [30] There were two blind men sitting by the roadside. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, "Lord,[a] have mercy on us, Son of David!" [31] The crowd sternly ordered them to be quiet; but they shouted even more loudly, "Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!" [32] Jesus stood still and called them, saying, "What do you want me to do for you?" [33] They said to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." [34] Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight and followed him.

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, [2] saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. [3] If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately.[b]" [4] This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

[5] "Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

[6] The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; [7] they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. [8] A very large crowd[c] spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. [9] The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the
name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

[10] When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" [11] The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

[12] Then Jesus entered the temple[d] and drove out all who were selling and buying in

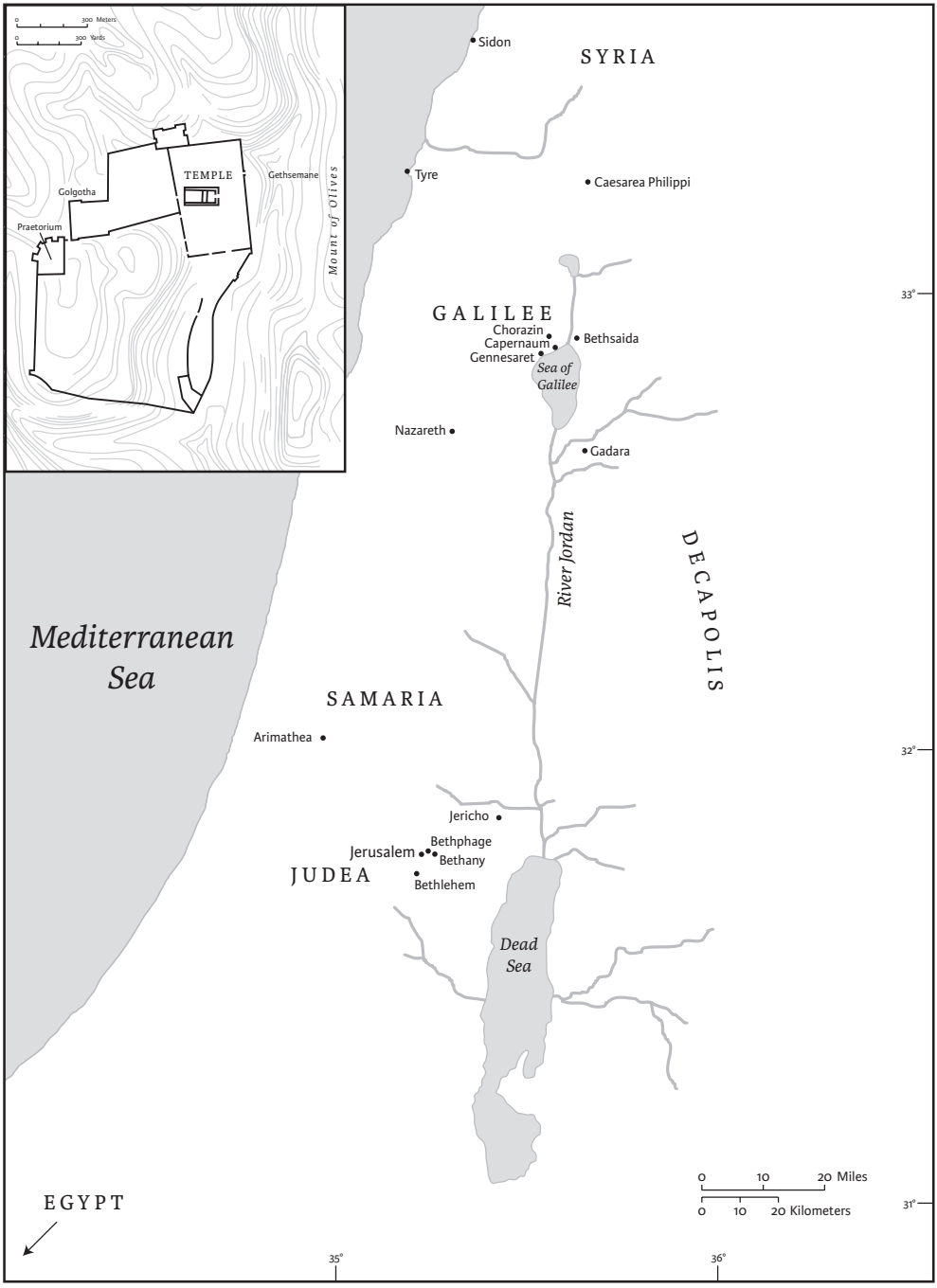
[a] Other ancient authorities lack *Lord*
[b] Or *'The Lord needs them and will send them back immediately.'*
[c] Or *Most of the crowd*
[d] Other ancient authorities add *of God*

third in authority. **23:** *My cup*, death. Acts 12.2 mentions James's martyrdom; according to postbiblical tradition, his brother John was also martyred. **28:** *Ransom*, the price paid to liberate a slave.

20.29–34: The healing of two men who were blind (Mk 10.46–52; Lk 18.35–43); a doublet of 9.27–31. **29:** *Jericho*, city and oasis 15 mi (24 km) east of Jerusalem and 8 mi (13 km) north of the Dead Sea. **30:** *Two blind men*, in Mk 10.46 the single man who is blind is identified as Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus. **31:** *Son of David*, see 9.27n.

21.1–11: The triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mk 11.1–11; Lk 19.28–38; Jn 12:12–19). **1:** *Bethphage* ("House of Figs"), a village on the Mount of Olives ca. 1 mi (1.6 km) east of the Jerusalem Temple. **2:** *Village*, perhaps Bethany (see v. 17; Mk 11.1). *Donkey*, instead of a warhorse connoting a military leader (*Pss. Sol.* 17), Jesus rides a donkey symbolizing humility and peace (Zech 9.9–10). **4–5:** A composite fulfillment citation of Isa 62.11 and Zech 9.9. *Daughter of Zion*, Jerusalem and its residents. **7:** *Colt*, while Zechariah refers to only one donkey, expressed by poetic parallelism, Matthew's fulfillment citation interprets the expression as two: a donkey and its foal. **8:** *Cloaks*, an act of royal homage; 2 Kings 9.13. **9:** The cry *Hosanna* (lit., in Heb "Help" or "Save, I pray") had become by Jesus's day an exclamation of praise. *Blessed*, a citation of Ps 118.26, which was used as a traditional greeting for pilgrims arriving in Jerusalem for the great festivals. **11:** *Prophet*, 21.46

21.12–27: The Temple and the fig tree (Mk 11.12–24; 27–33; Lk 19.45–48; 20.1–8). **12:** In Jn 2.13–22 this episode is situated early in Jesus's ministry, in Mk 11.11–19 on the day after Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem. *Selling and buying*,



The geography of the Gospel of Matthew

the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 He said to them, "It is written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer';
but you are making it a den of robbers."

14 The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. 15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard[a] the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry 16 and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise for yourself'?"

17 He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

18 In the morning, when he returned to the city, he was hungry. 19 And seeing a fig tree by the side of the road, he went to it and found nothing at all on it but leaves. Then he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once. 20 When the disciples saw it, they were amazed, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" 21 Jesus answered them, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will be done. 22 Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive."

23 When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" 24 Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 26 But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

28 "What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' 29 He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. 30 The father[b] went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. 34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. 35 But

[a] Gk lacks *heard*
[b] Gk *He*

animals for sacrifice. *Money changers*, Roman money had to be changed into Tyrian shekels, the only currency acceptable for use within the Temple. *Doves*, offerings typical of the poor (Lev 5.7–10). Business transactions took place in the large outer Court of the Gentiles; it was here that Jesus's "cleansing" took place. **13:** *Written*, Isa 56.7; Jer 7.11. **14:** Jesus's cleansing culminates in the healing of persons who are *blind* and *lame*, who were normally excluded from the Temple (Lev 21.16–23). **15:** *Hosanna* 21.9n. **16:** Ps 8.2. **19:** *Fig tree*, "it was not the season for figs" (Mk 11.13) is omitted. As fig trees often symbolized Jerusalem or the Temple, Jesus's action is best understood as a prophecy of judgment (23.37–24.2). **23:** *Authority*, 7.29; 9.6–8. **25:** *From heaven*, from God.

21.28–22.14: Three parables (Mk 12.1–12; Lk 20.9–19; Lk 14.15–24). **21.28–32:** The first of three consecutive parables condemning the Jewish religious leadership. **31:** *The tax collectors and the prostitutes*, the people who were presumed to have the lowest morals (5.46n.). **33–37:** The second parable is an allegory based on Isa 5.1–7, outlining the history of God and Israel. The *vineyard* is a metaphor for Israel, with God as the *landowner*, the

the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. 37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' 39 So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;[a]
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes'?

43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.[b] 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."[c]

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

22 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' 5 But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. 16 So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"

[a] Or *keystone*
[b] Gk *the fruits of it*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack verse 44

Jewish leadership as the *tenants*, the prophets as the *slaves*, and Jesus as the *son*. **42:** Ps 118.22–23; *cornerstone*, the keystone of an arch. **43:** *A people that produces the fruits*, a reference to the Christian church and its practice of righteousness. **44:** If this verse is Matthean (see textual note *c*), it refers to the dire consequences of misunderstanding who Jesus was. **46:** *Prophet,* v. 11. **22.1–14:** The third parable. **7:** *Burned their city*, a probable allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. **11–14:** These four verses are a Matthean addition to the parable. **11:** A *wedding robe* may suggest the righteous deeds necessary for believers to enter the kingdom (see Mt 7.21–23). **13:** 8.12n.

22.15–46: Attempts to ensnare Jesus (Mk 12.13–37; Lk 20.20–44; 10.25–28). The preceding three parables are followed by three trick questions meant to entrap Jesus in his own words. **16:** *Herodians*, possibly aristocratic supporters of Herod Antipas and his family. **17:** *Taxes*, on agricultural yield and personal property amounting to

18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why
are you putting me to the test, you hypo-
crites? 19 Show me the coin used for the tax."
And they brought him a denarius. 20 Then he
said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose
title?" 21 They answered, "The emperor's."
Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the
emperor the things that are the emperor's,
and to God the things that are God's."
22 When they heard this, they were amazed;
and they left him and went away.

23 The same day some Sadducees came
to him, saying there is no resurrection;[a] and
they asked him a question, saying, 24 "Teach-
er, Moses said, 'If a man dies childless, his
brother shall marry the widow, and raise up
children for his brother.' 25 Now there were
seven brothers among us; the first married,
and died childless, leaving the widow to his
brother. 26 The second did the same, so also
the third, down to the seventh. 27 Last of all,
the woman herself died. 28 In the resurrec-
tion, then, whose wife of the seven will she
be? For all of them had married her."

29 Jesus answered them, "You are wrong,
because you know neither the scriptures nor
the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection
they neither marry nor are given in mar-
riage, but are like angels[b] in heaven. 31 And
as for the resurrection of the dead, have you
not read what was said to you by God, 32 'I
am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,
and the God of Jacob'? He is God not of the
dead, but of the living." 33 And when the
crowd heard it, they were astounded at his
teaching.

34 When the Pharisees heard that he
had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered
together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked
him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which
commandment in the law is the greatest?"
37 He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord
your God with all your heart, and with all
your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is
the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a
second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor
as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments
hang all the law and the prophets."

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered
together, Jesus asked them this question:
42 "What do you think of the Messiah?[c] Whose
son is he?" They said to him, "The son of
David." 43 He said to them, "How is it then that
David by the Spirit[d] calls him Lord, saying,

44 'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your
feet" '?

45 If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be
his son?" 46 No one was able to give him an
answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to
ask him any more questions.

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to
his disciples, 2 "The scribes and the
Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; 3 therefore, do
whatever they teach you and follow it; but

[a] Other ancient authorities read *who say that there is no resurrection*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *of God*
[c] Or *Christ*
[d] Gk *in spirit*

about a denarius a year. *Emperor*, Tiberius Caesar (14–37 CE). **18:** *Hypocrites*, 6.2n. **20:** A typical silver denarius of Tiberias's day would have his portrait on the obverse and the Latin inscription "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus" on the reverse. **23:** *Sadducees*, see introduction. **24:** *Moses said*, Deut 25.5; cf. Gen 38.7–11. **30:** *Marry*, in the coming age men no longer marry and women are no longer given in marriage. *Like angels*, since angels are eternal, they do not need to reproduce; the same holds true for the resurrected dead. **32:** Ex 3.6. Otherwise God would have said, "I *was* the God of Abraham." **34–40:** For Matthew, the love commandment is preeminent; all other commandments are subsidiary and to be interpreted and performed out of love for God and one's neighbor. **37:** Deut 6.4–5. **39:** 19.19; Lev 19.18. **44–45:** Jesus replies with a query of his own. In Ps 110.1 David (reputed author of the Psalms) describes the *Lord* (God) as speaking to *my Lord* (the Messiah). How can David's Lord be his son, since it is invariably sons who call their fathers "my lord"?

23.1–39: The denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees (Mk 12.38–40; Lk 11.37–52; 13.34–35; 20.45–47). This chapter contains the harshest and most sustained criticism of the scribes and Pharisees in the Gospels; cf. the Introduction. Some scholars regard ch 23 as part of Matthew's fifth discourse (chs 24–25), but Matthew shifts the latter to a new setting (see 24.1). **2:** *Moses' seat*, either a stone seat for synagogue leaders or a receptacle for the Torah scroll. **3:** *Do whatever they teach you*, a surprising directive from Matthew's Jesus. It may mean,

do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. 4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear,[a] and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. 5 They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. 6 They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, 7 and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. 8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students.[b] 9 And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah.[c] 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them.[d] 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell[e] as yourselves.

16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.' 17 You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred? 18 And you say, 'Whoever swears by the altar is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar is bound by the oath.' 19 How blind you are! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 So whoever swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it; 21 and whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears by it and by the one who dwells in it; 22 and whoever swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by the one who is seated upon it.

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup,[f] so that the outside also may become clean.

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. 28 So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous, 30 and you say, 'If we had lived

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *hard to bear*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Or *the Christ*
[d] Other authorities add here (or after verse 12) verse 14, *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation*
[e] Gk *Gehenna*
[f] Other ancient authorities add *and of the plate*

"Follow their guidelines if you must, but by no means follow their example." **4:** *Heavy burdens*, contrast 11.30. **5:** *Phylacteries*, small cases ("tefillin"), often made of leather, containing scriptural passages such as Deut 6.4–9. They were strapped to the left arm and forehead during prayer (Deut 6.8). *Fringes*, tassels ("tsitsit") attached to the corners of an outer garment or prayer shawl (Num 15.38). **6:** *Place of honor*, normally, the place nearest the host. **7:** *Rabbi*, a designation of respect; lit., "my great one" or "my teacher." **9:** *Father*, do not use "father" as an honorific title. **13:** *Woe*, lit., "Alas!" The seven woes given here can be contrasted with the beatitudes at 5.3–12. **15:** *Hypocrites*, 6.2n. *You cross sea and land*, "you do everything possible." *New convert*, a proselyte (Gentile convert) to Judaism. **16:** *Blind guides*, 15.14. *Gold of the sanctuary*, perhaps the Temple treasury, which was also used as a bank. **23:** *Tithe*, see Lev 27.30; Deut 14.22–23. **25:** *Cup … plate* may symbolize the Pharisees themselves. **27:** Tombs were *whitewashed* during festivals to prevent pilgrims from touching them and ritually

in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' 31 Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors. 33 You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell?[a] 34 Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, 35 so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. 36 Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation.

37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 38 See, your house is left to you, desolate.[b] 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

24 As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. 2 Then he asked them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" 4 Jesus answered them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!'[c] and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines[d] and earthquakes in various places: 8 all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

9 "Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. 10 Then many will fall away,[e] and they will betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this good news[f] of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

[a] Gk *Gehenna*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *desolate*
[c] Or *the Christ*
[d] Other ancient authorities add *and pestilences*
[e] Or *stumble*
[f] Or *gospel*

polluting themselves by contact with the dead. **34:** *Prophets … scribes*, Christian missionaries. *Synagogues,* see 9.35n. **35:** *Abel*, Gen 4.8–11. The allusion to *Zechariah, son of Barachiah* likely conflates Zechariah the martyr (son of Jehoiada, 2 Chr 24.20–22) with Zechariah the prophet (son of Berechiah, Zech 1.1). **38:** *Your house … desolate*; with the destruction of the Temple, Jerusalem will be abandoned by God. **39:** Ps 118.26; cf. Mt 21.9.

24.1–51: The fifth (apocalyptic) discourse. As with the mission discourse (ch 10), it is not clear whether these prophetic words speak of events that are imminent or had already occurred when the Gospel was written; probably they combine both perspectives. Matthew views some of the tribulations as consequent upon the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and others as the prelude to the parousia (Second Coming).

24.1–14: The Temple's destruction and the beginning of woes (Mk 13.1–13; Lk 21.5–19). **2:** *Buildings of the temple*, the Jerusalem Temple was one of the most magnificent sanctuaries of the ancient world. The reconstruction begun by Herod the Great spanned eighty years (20 BCE–63 CE) and came to include separate courtyards for Gentiles, Jewish women, Jewish males, and priests. **3:** *Mount of Olives*, a low mountain facing the east side of the Temple from across the Kidron Valley. Jesus and his disciples may have camped here during the crowded Passover festival. Zech 14.1–10 indicates that the Messiah would appear here. **8:** *Birth pangs*, a metaphor for the onset of the end-time woes. **14:** See 28.19–20.

15 "So when you see the desolating
sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was
spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the
reader understand), 16 then those in Judea
must flee to the mountains; 17 the one on the
housetop must not go down to take what is
in the house; 18 the one in the field must not
turn back to get a coat. 19 Woe to those who
are pregnant and to those who are nursing
infants in those days! 20 Pray that your flight
may not be in winter or on a sabbath. 21 For at
that time there will be great suffering, such
as has not been from the beginning of the
world until now, no, and never will be. 22 And
if those days had not been cut short, no one
would be saved; but for the sake of the elect
those days will be cut short. 23 Then if anyone
says to you, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!'[a] or
'There he is!'—do not believe it. 24 For false
messiahs[b] and false prophets will appear and
produce great signs and omens, to lead astray,
if possible, even the elect. 25 Take note, I have
told you beforehand. 26 So, if they say to you,
'Look! He is in the wilderness,' do not go out.
If they say, 'Look! He is in the inner rooms,'
do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes
from the east and flashes as far as the west,
so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures
will gather.

29 "Immediately after the suffering of those
days
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from heaven,
and the powers of heaven will be
shaken.
30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear
in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth
will mourn, and they will see 'the Son of Man
coming on the clouds of heaven' with power
and great glory. 31 And he will send out his
angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will
gather his elect from the four winds, from
one end of heaven to the other.

32 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as
soon as its branch becomes tender and puts
forth its leaves, you know that summer is
near. 33 So also, when you see all these things,
you know that he[c] is near, at the very gates.
34 Truly I tell you, this generation will not
pass away until all these things have taken
place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but
my words will not pass away.

36 "But about that day and hour no one
knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the
Son,[d] but only the Father. 37 For as the days
of Noah were, so will be the coming of the
Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the
flood they were eating and drinking, marry-
ing and giving in marriage, until the day Noah
entered the ark, 39 and they knew nothing
until the flood came and swept them all away,
so too will be the coming of the Son of Man.
40 Then two will be in the field; one will be
taken and one will be left. 41 Two women will
be grinding meal together; one will be taken
and one will be left. 42 Keep awake therefore,
for you do not know on what day[e] your Lord
is coming. 43 But understand this: if the owner
of the house had known in what part of the
night the thief was coming, he would have
stayed awake and would not have let his
house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also
must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming
at an unexpected hour.

[a] Or *the Christ*
[b] Or *christs*
[c] Or *it*
[d] Other ancient authorities lack *nor the Son*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *at what hour*

24.15–28: The great tribulation (Mk 13.14–23; Lk 21.20–24). **15:** *Desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place*, the image of Zeus Olympios erected in the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BCE (Dan 9.27; 11.31; 12.11; 1 Macc 1.54; 6.7). The phrase may also refer to Gaius Caligula's attempt in 40 CE to install an image of himself in the Jerusalem Temple. *The reader*, either an editorial aside (as it is translated above) or Jesus's reference to the readers of Daniel. **16:** *Mountains* had caves where one might hide. **19:** Lk.23.28–31. **20:** *Winter or on a sabbath*, times when travel was difficult or prohibited.

24.29–51: The coming of the Son of Man (Mk 13.24–37; Lk 21.25–33: Lk 17.26–30, 34–36; Lk 12.41–48). **29:** Isa 13.10; Ezek 32.7; Joel 2.10,31; 3.15. **30:** The Son of Man is himself the *sign*; see Dan 7.13. **31:** *Trumpet,* see Isa 27.13; Zech 9.14; 1 Thess 4.16. **35:** Cf. 5.18. **38:** *Noah*, Gen 7.7. **51:** *Cut him in pieces*, perhaps a figurative expression for "cut off from the community" (1QS 2.16–17).

45 "Who then is the faithful and wise
slave, whom his master has put in charge
of his household, to give the other slaves[a]
their allowance of food at the proper time?
46 Blessed is that slave whom his master will
find at work when he arrives. 47 Truly I tell
you, he will put that one in charge of all his
possessions. 48 But if that wicked slave says
to himself, 'My master is delayed,' 49 and he
begins to beat his fellow slaves, and eats and
drinks with drunkards, 50 the master of that
slave will come on a day when he does not
expect him and at an hour that he does not
know. 51 He will cut him in pieces[b] and put
him with the hypocrites, where there will be
weeping and gnashing of teeth.

25 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be
like this. Ten bridesmaids[c] took their
lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.[d]
2 Five of them were foolish, and five were
wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps,
they took no oil with them; 4 but the wise
took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5 As the
bridegroom was delayed, all of them became
drowsy and slept. 6 But at midnight there was
a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come
out to meet him.' 7 Then all those brides-
maids[c] got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The
foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your
oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise
replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you
and for us; you had better go to the dealers
and buy some for yourselves.' 10 And while
they went to buy it, the bridegroom came,
and those who were ready went with him into
the wedding banquet; and the door was shut.
11 Later the other bridesmaids[c] came also, say-
ing, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he replied,
'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' 13 Keep
awake therefore, for you know neither the
day nor the hour.[e]

14 "For it is as if a man, going on a journey,
summoned his slaves and entrusted his prop-
erty to them; 15 to one he gave five talents,[f]
to another two, to another one, to each
according to his ability. Then he went away.
16 The one who had received the five talents
went off at once and traded with them, and
made five more talents. 17 In the same way,
the one who had the two talents made two
more talents. 18 But the one who had received
the one talent went off and dug a hole in the
ground and hid his master's money. 19 After
a long time the master of those slaves came
and settled accounts with them. 20 Then the
one who had received the five talents came
forward, bringing five more talents, saying,
'Master, you handed over to me five talents;
see, I have made five more talents.' 21 His
master said to him, 'Well done, good and
trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy
in a few things, I will put you in charge of
many things; enter into the joy of your mas-
ter.' 22 And the one with the two talents also
came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed
over to me two talents; see, I have made two
more talents.' 23 His master said to him, 'Well
done, good and trustworthy slave; you have
been trustworthy in a few things, I will put
you in charge of many things; enter into the
joy of your master.' 24 Then the one who had
received the one talent also came forward,
saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh
man, reaping where you did not sow, and
gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25 so
I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent
in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'
26 But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy
slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I
did not sow, and gather where I did not scat-
ter? 27 Then you ought to have invested my

[a] Gk *to give them*
[b] Or *cut him off*
[c] Gk *virgins*
[d] Other ancient authorities add *and the bride*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *in which the Son of Man is coming*
[f] A talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer

25.1–30: Two parables of the end-times (Lk 19.11–27). **1:** *Bridesmaids* would accompany the bridegroom to the bridal chamber. *Lamps*, torches made from rags wrapped around the end of a pole and soaked in olive oil. *Bridegroom*, 9.15n. **2:** *Foolish … wise*, 7.24–27. **7:** *Trimmed their lamps*, cut away the charred cloth wicks and added more oil. **13:** 24.42. **14:** *Slaves*, in Jesus's day, it was not unusual to entrust slaves with large amounts of money and responsibility. **15:** *Talents*, 18.24n. This parable furnishes the basis for the English word "talent." **18:** 13.44n. **19:** The delay of the parousia (Jesus's return). **23:** *Joy of your master*, possibly the messianic banquet (8.11n.).

money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29 For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30 As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,[a] you did it to me.' 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

26 When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, 2 "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, 4 and they conspired to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. 5 But they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

6 Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,[b] 7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. 8 But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? 9 For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor." 10 But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. 11 For you always have the poor with you, but you will not

[a] Gk *these my brothers*

[b] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

29: Cf. 13.12.

25.31–46: The judgment of the nations. 31: *The Son of Man*, 8.20n. **32:** 24.9; 28.19; Isa 66.18; Joel 3.2. **33:** *Right*, the auspicious side, while *left* was the bad or unlucky side. The distinction between sheep and goats may reside in the fabrics the two produce: goats produce dark hair, which was used to make ill-omened sackcloth (11.21n.), while white wool was a sign of prosperity.

26.1–16: Preliminaries to the Passover (Mk 14.3–11; Lk 22.3–6; Jn 12.1–8). **1:** The conclusion of Jesus's final discourse. **2:** *Passover*, the annual Jewish festival celebrating Israel's exodus from Egypt (Ex 12.1–20). *Crucified*: Jesus's fourth passion prediction. **3:** *Caiaphas*, high priest ca.18–36 CE, was the son-in-law of the high priest Annas (6–15 CE; 26.57). **5:** *Riots* were always a possibility during the major festivals. **6:** *Bethany*, a village on the Mount of Olives just east of Jerusalem. **7:** *Alabaster jar*, a small vial or bottle called an alabastron.

always have me. 12 By pouring this ointment
on my body she has prepared me for burial.
13 Truly I tell you, wherever this good news[a] is
proclaimed in the whole world, what she has
done will be told in remembrance of her."

14 Then one of the twelve, who was called
Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and
said, "What will you give me if I betray him
to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver.
16 And from that moment he began to look for
an opportunity to betray him.

17 On the first day of Unleavened Bread the
disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do
you want us to make the preparations for you
to eat the Passover?" 18 He said, "Go into the
city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The
Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the
Passover at your house with my disciples.'"
19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed
them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

20 When it was evening, he took his place
with the twelve;[b] 21 and while they were
eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you
will betray me." 22 And they became greatly
distressed and began to say to him one after
another, "Surely not I, Lord?" 23 He answered,
"The one who has dipped his hand into the
bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of
Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to
that one by whom the Son of Man is be-
trayed! It would have been better for that
one not to have been born." 25 Judas, who
betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He
replied, "You have said so."

26 While they were eating, Jesus took a
loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke
it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take,
eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took a cup,
and after giving thanks he gave it to them,
saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is
my blood of the[c] covenant, which is poured
out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I
tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit
of the vine until that day when I drink it new
with you in my Father's kingdom."

30 When they had sung the hymn, they
went out to the Mount of Olives.

31 Then Jesus said to them, "You will all
become deserters because of me this night;
for it is written,

'I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be
scattered.'

32 But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of
you to Galilee." 33 Peter said to him, "Though
all become deserters because of you, I will
never desert you." 34 Jesus said to him, "Truly
I tell you, this very night, before the cock
crows, you will deny me three times." 35 Peter
said to him, "Even though I must die with
you, I will not deny you." And so said all the
disciples.

36 Then Jesus went with them to a place
called Gethsemane; and he said to his disci-
ples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."
37 He took with him Peter and the two sons
of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agi-
tated. 38 Then he said to them, "I am deeply
grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay
awake with me." 39 And going a little farther,
he threw himself on the ground and prayed,
"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass
from me; yet not what I want but what you
want." 40 Then he came to the disciples and
found them sleeping; and he said to Peter,
"So, could you not stay awake with me one

[a] Or *gospel*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *disciples*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *new*

14: *Judas Iscariot*, 10.4n. *Thirty pieces of silver*, tetradrachmas worth about one hundred and twenty denarii, a third of a year's wages; cf. Zech 11.12.

26.17–35: The Passover and Lord's Supper (Mk 14.12–31; Lk 22.7–23,31–34 Jn 13.21–30, 36–38; cf. 1 Cor 11.23–25). **17:** *First day*, the fourteenth of Nisan (March-April), sometimes described as "the preparation of the Passover." It marks the beginning of the week-long festival. **25:** *Rabbi*, a title for Jesus that is typically used by nondisciples in Matthew (23.7n.); Judas is the only disciple to use the title in Matthew. *You have said so* means "Yes." **26:** Cf. 14.19; 15.36. **28:** *Blood of the covenant*, Ex 24.8. **30:** *The hymn*, possibly from Ps 136 or one of the Hallel Psalms (113–18). **31:** *I will strike . . .*, Zech 13.7. **32:** See 28.7,10,16–20.

26.36–56: The arrest in Gethsemane (Mk 14.32–50; Lk 22.39–53; Jn 18.3–12). **36:** *Gethsemane*, the name means "oil press," so the site was likely an olive grove on the Mount of Olives (Lk 22.39) with olive presses nearby. **37:** *Sons of Zebedee*, James and John (4.21; 17.1; 20.20–23n.). **38:** Cf. Ps 42.6; Jon 4.9. **39:** *Cup,* see 20.22.

hour? 41 Stay awake and pray that you may
not come into the time of trial;[a] the spirit in-
deed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 Again
he went away for the second time and prayed,
"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink
it, your will be done." 43 Again he came and
found them sleeping, for their eyes were
heavy. 44 So leaving them again, he went away
and prayed for the third time, saying the
same words. 45 Then he came to the disciples
and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and
taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and
the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands
of sinners. 46 Get up, let us be going. See, my
betrayer is at hand."

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one
of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large
crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief
priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now
the betrayer had given them a sign, saying,
"The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him."
49 At once he came up to Jesus and said,
"Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. 50 Jesus
said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to
do." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus
and arrested him. 51 Suddenly, one of those
with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it,
and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting
off his ear. 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put
your sword back into its place; for all who
take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Do
you think that I cannot appeal to my Father,
and he will at once send me more than twelve
legions of angels? 54 But how then would the
scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must hap-
pen in this way?" 55 At that hour Jesus said to
the crowds, "Have you come out with swords
and clubs to arrest me as though I were a
bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple
teaching, and you did not arrest me. 56 But all
this has taken place, so that the scriptures of
the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the
disciples deserted him and fled.

57 Those who had arrested Jesus took him
to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house
the scribes and the elders had gathered. 58 But
Peter was following him at a distance, as far
as the courtyard of the high priest; and going
inside, he sat with the guards in order to see
how this would end. 59 Now the chief priests
and the whole council were looking for false
testimony against Jesus so that they might
put him to death, 60 but they found none,
though many false witnesses came forward.
At last two came forward 61 and said, "This
fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple
of God and to build it in three days.' " 62 The
high priest stood up and said, "Have you no
answer? What is it that they testify against
you?" 63 But Jesus was silent. Then the high
priest said to him, "I put you under oath
before the living God, tell us if you are the
Messiah,[b] the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to
him, "You have said so. But I tell you,

> From now on you will see the Son of Man
> seated at the right hand of Power
> and coming on the clouds of heaven."

65 Then the high priest tore his clothes and
said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still
need witnesses? You have now heard his
blasphemy. 66 What is your verdict?" They
answered, "He deserves death." 67 Then they
spat in his face and struck him; and some
slapped him, 68 saying, "Prophesy to us, you
Messiah![b] Who is it that struck you?"

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the
courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and
said, "You also were with Jesus the Gali-
lean." 70 But he denied it before all of them,
saying, "I do not know what you are talking
about." 71 When he went out to the porch,
another servant-girl saw him, and she said
to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus
of Nazareth."[c] 72 Again he denied it with an
oath, "I do not know the man." 73 After a little
while the bystanders came up and said to

[a] Or *into temptation*
[b] Or *Christ*
[c] Gk *the Nazorean*

49: *Rabbi*, see 26.25n. **53:** In the Roman army a *legion* was about five thousand soldiers. **56:** *Scriptures*, not individual passages, but the Jewish scriptures as a whole.

26.57–27.2: Jesus before the council and Pilate (Mk 14.53–15.1; Lk 22.54–23.2; Jn 18.13–27). **26.59:** *Whole council*, the Sanhedrin, the highest council of the Jews, possessing judicial authority in noncapital cases. Judicial hearings were normally forbidden on festivals (*m. San.* 4.1). **61:** Cf. 24.2. **63:** *Messiah, the Son of God*, 16.16n. **64:** *You have said so*: Jesus's response confirms the high priest's identification (25.25n.; 27.11). *Son of Man,* 8.20n. Cf.

Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you." 74 Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know the man!" At that moment the cock crowed. 75 Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

27 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. 2 They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

3 When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus[a] was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. 4 He said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent[b] blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." 5 Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money." 7 After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. 8 For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah,[c] "And they took[d] the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set,[e] on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, 10 and they gave[f] them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." 12 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. 13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" 14 But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

15 Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. 16 At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus[g] Barabbas. 17 So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus[g] Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?"[h] 18 For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. 19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." 20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. 21 The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." 22 Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"[h] All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" 23 Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

24 So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood;[i] see to it yourselves." 25 Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" 26 So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *righteous*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Zechariah* or *Isaiah*
[d] Or *I took*
[e] Or *the price of the precious One*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *I gave*
[g] Other ancient authorities lack *Jesus*
[h] Or *the Christ*
[i] Other ancient authorities read *this righteous blood*, or *this righteous man's blood*

Ps 110.1; Dan 7.13. **75:** 26.34. **27.2:** *Pilate the governor*, Roman administrator of Judea, 26–36 CE.

27.3–10: The death of Judas. Compare Acts 1.18–20. **9–10:** A fulfillment citation from Zech 11.12–13, with echoes of Jer 32.6–9.

27.11–31: Jesus on trial before Pilate (Mk 15.2–20; Lk 23.3–5,13–25; Jn 18.33–19.16). **11:** 26.64n. **16:** *Barabbas* ("son of the father" or "son of Abba") was a common Jewish name. **19:** *Judgment seat*, a raised, paved area outside Pilate's residence. *Dream*, this episode is unique to Matthew. **24:** *Washed his hands*, Deut 21.6; Ps 73.13. **25:** *Children*, an

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took
Jesus into the governor's headquarters,[a] and
they gathered the whole cohort around him.
28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe
on him, 29 and after twisting some thorns into
a crown, they put it on his head. They put a
reed in his right hand and knelt before him
and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the
Jews!" 30 They spat on him, and took the reed
and struck him on the head. 31 After mocking
him, they stripped him of the robe and put
his own clothes on him. Then they led him
away to crucify him.

32 As they went out, they came upon a man
from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled
this man to carry his cross. 33 And when
they came to a place called Golgotha (which
means Place of a Skull), 34 they offered him
wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he
tasted it, he would not drink it. 35 And when
they had crucified him, they divided his
clothes among themselves by casting lots;[b]
36 then they sat down there and kept watch
over him. 37 Over his head they put the charge
against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the
King of the Jews."

38 Then two bandits were crucified with
him, one on his right and one on his left.
39 Those who passed by derided[c] him, shak-
ing their heads 40 and saying, "You who would
destroy the temple and build it in three days,
save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come
down from the cross." 41 In the same way
the chief priests also, along with the scribes
and elders, were mocking him, saying, 42 "He
saved others; he cannot save himself.[d] He is
the King of Israel; let him come down from
the cross now, and we will believe in him.
43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now,
if he wants to; for he said, 'I am God's Son.' "
44 The bandits who were crucified with him
also taunted him in the same way.

45 From noon on, darkness came over the
whole land[e] until three in the afternoon.
46 And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a
loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that
is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken
me?" 47 When some of the bystanders heard
it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah."
48 At once one of them ran and got a sponge,
filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and
gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said,
"Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to
save him."[f] 50 Then Jesus cried again with a
loud voice and breathed his last.[g] 51 At that
moment the curtain of the temple was torn
in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook,
and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also
were opened, and many bodies of the saints
who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 After his
resurrection they came out of the tombs and
entered the holy city and appeared to many.
54 Now when the centurion and those with
him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw

[a] Gk *the praetorium*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *in order that what had been spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."*
[c] Or *blasphemed*
[d] Or *is he unable to save himself?*
[e] Or *earth*
[f] Other ancient authorities add *And another took a spear and pierced his side, and out came water and blood*
[g] Or *gave up his spirit*

indication that the next generation would experience the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. **27:** *The governor's headquarters* (see textual note *a*), Pilate's residence (Jn 19.13). *Whole cohort*, ca. 600–1,000 soldiers.

27.32–56: The crucifixion and death of Jesus (Mk 15.21–41; Lk 23.26–49; Jn 19.17–30). **32:** *Simon*, Mk 15.21. **33:** *Golgotha* is Aramaic for skull. **34:** *Gall*, a bitter, poisonous plant (see Ps 69.21). **35:** See Ps 22.18 and note *b*. **37:** *King of the Jews*, the official charge against Jesus was inscribed on a tablet. The charge suggests that he was considered a political threat (2.2). **45.** *Darkness*, Amos 8.9. **46:** *Eli . . .* , an Aramaic translation of Ps 22.1. The invocation to God ("Eli," "my God") sounds similar to the name Elijah ("The Lord is my God"). **47:** *Elijah* was popularly regarded as a helper to those in need. **51:** *The curtain of the temple,* a large tapestry that hung in front of the Holy of Holies, the innermost room of the Temple. *The earth shook*, 28.2. **53:** *The holy city,* Jerusalem. **54:** *God's Son*, the first acclamation of Jesus as Son of God by a Gentile. **56:** *Mary Magdalene*, 27.61; 28.1; Mk 16.9; Lk 8.2. Magdala was a fishing town on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee, northwest of Tiberias. *Sons of Zebedee,* see 26.37n.

the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"[a]

55 Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." 65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard[b] of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can."[c] 66 So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

28 After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he[d] lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead,[e] and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." 8 So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

11 While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 After the priests[f] had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 telling them, "You must say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." 15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

[a] Or *a son of God*
[b] Or *Take a guard*
[c] Gk *you know how*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *from the dead*
[f] Gk *they*

27.57–66: The burial of Jesus and the guard at the tomb. (Mk 15.42–47; Lk 23.50–56; Jn 19.38–42). **57:** *Evening*, burials were not permitted on the sabbath. **61:** *Other Mary*, the mother of James and Joseph (27.56; 28.1). **62:** *After the day of Preparation*, the sabbath (Saturday). Friday was the day of Preparation. *The Pharisees*, last mentioned at 23.29, were not involved in Jesus's trial and crucifixion. **65:** *Guard of soldiers,* Roman soldiers, not the Temple police.

28.1–15: The resurrection of Jesus and the guards' report (Mk 16.1–8; Lk 24.1–12; Jn 20.1–10). **1:** *First day of the week,* Sunday. *The other Mary*, 27.61n. **2:** 27.51. **7:** *Galilee*, 26.32; Mk 16.7; contrast Acts 1.4; Jn 20.19. **9:** Here, as in the other Gospels, Jesus's women disciples are the first to witness the risen Jesus. **10:** *My brothers*, Jesus identifies his disciples as "brothers," indicating his ongoing love for them despite their lapses. **14:** *Governor's ears*, an investigation before Pilate. **15:** Not *among the Jews* but "among Jews," i.e., among Jews who had not accepted the Christian message.

[16] Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee,
to the mountain to which Jesus had directed
them. [17] When they saw him, they worshiped
him; but some doubted. [18] And Jesus came
and said to them, "All authority in heaven and
on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore
and make disciples of all nations, baptizing
them in the name of the Father and of the
Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching
them to obey everything that I have com-
manded you. And remember, I am with you
always, to the end of the age."[a]

[a] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

28.16–20: The commissioning of the disciples (Mk 16.14–18; Lk 24.36–49; Jn 20.19–23; Acts 1.6–8). **17:** *Some doubted*, doubt still characterizes some of the disciples in Matthew. **18:** *All authority*, 7.29n. 9.6; Dan 7.13–14. **19:** *All nations*, all people, including the Jews. *Baptizing* becomes the rite of entry. **20.** *I am with you*, 18.20; 1.23n.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

CANONICAL STATUS

Among canonical Gospels, Mark features the briefest account of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Yet its authoritative status is clear from its use in Matthew and Luke and its inclusion in the biblical codices of the fourth century, where it is placed second, between Matthew and Luke.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mark was written anonymously. The designation "according to Mark" was added in the second century CE, as Gospels began to circulate beyond the audiences for whom they were written. One early second-century source claims that "Mark" was the apostle Peter's "interpreter" at the end of Peter's life, but no other evidence confirms that connection. Others have identified Mark as the "John Mark" who traveled with the apostle Paul (see Acts 12.12,25; 15.37–39; Col 4.10; 2 Tim 4.11; Philem 24), but none of these passages link John Mark with a written Gospel.

Though the author's identity is unknown, scholars find clues about its author in the Gospel itself. For example, its awkward style suggests that Greek was not the author's first language. Other details, such as the imprecise citation of Jewish scripture (1.2), the over-generalized portrait of Jewish practice (7.3–4), and problematic geographical details (5.1,13) suggest that the evangelist was a Hellenized Jew who lived outside of Palestine.

The Gospel appears to address a mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles who faced persecution because of their devotion to Jesus of Nazareth as the long-awaited Jewish messiah. Early church tradition saw ties to the Christian community in Rome, where Nero punished Christians as scapegoats for the fire in 64 CE, which raged for nine days and devastated much of the city (see Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44). Most scholars today opt for a different context in the same time period. They argue that specific details in Mark 13.9–13 are better suited to a setting in Syria-Palestine, where Jesus's followers may have been hated by both Jews and Gentiles for not taking sides, in the Jewish War (66–72 CE).

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

The Gospel may be outlined as follows:

I. Prologue: Jesus's Baptism and appearance in Galilee (1.1–15)
II. Jesus's messianic mission: word and deed (1.16–8.26)
    A. Jesus in and around Galilee (1.16–4.41)
    B. Across the sea and back (5.1–6.52)
    C. Jesus among the Gentiles (6.53–8.26)
III. Jesus's messianic mission: sacrifice (8.27–15.47)
    A. The way of the cross (8.27–10.52)
    B. Jesus's destiny in Jerusalem (11.1–15.47)
IV. Epilogue: Jesus's resurrection (16.1–8) and appearance [16.9–20]

Mark begins and ends abruptly, omitting several episodes and teachings found in the other Gospels (e.g., Jesus's birth; the Sermon on the Mount; postresurrection appearances). In its first half, Mark emphasizes Jesus's miraculous powers more than his teaching. Its second half pivots toward the "way of the cross," as the story aligns Jesus's destiny in Jerusalem with that of his followers. Along the way, Mark's narrative is fraught with perplexing motifs such as Jesus's insistence on secrecy and the disciples' repeated misunderstanding.

The Gospel is constructed around the unifying message announced at the beginning: the "good news" that God's kingdom has drawn near (1.14–15). Both Jesus's deeds of power and his destined suffering expose the contours of that divine reign taking root on earth through Jesus and, by extension, through those he gathers as its subjects. Indeed, the Gospel's original ending at Mark 16.8 leaves readers, implicitly rather than explicitly, to continue Jesus's messianic mission by trusting in God's sovereign power over evil in the postresurrection age.

INTERPRETATION

Lacking the content and polish of the other NT Gospels, Mark was often neglected. Only a few papyrus fragments survive from the period before the fourth century. Augustine thought that Mark was an abbreviation of

Matthew. Yet modern readers have turned to this sometimes-puzzling story with renewed interest. Since scholars generally agree that Mark is the earliest written Gospel, it may include facets of Jesus's historical ministry that have been reshaped by later evangelists. From a different perspective, literary critics have found artistry in a story long disparaged for its crudeness; for instance, Mark often tells a "story within a story" (a technique called "intercalation") to sharpen thematic contrast (14.1–11) or emphasize important motifs (5.21–43).

To be sure, Mark still appears problematic to many readers: Jesus utters confounding teaching (4.11–12), suppresses his identity (1.34; 3.12; etc.), and even seems to question God (14.36; 15.34). For their part, his disciples misunderstand Jesus's message again and again (4.13; 6.52; 8.17–21; etc.) and disappear when he faces death (14.27,50).

Increasingly, interpreters find that Jewish apocalyptic writings offer a helpful lens for reading Mark's story as a showdown between human and divine sovereignty. In his healings, exorcisms, and nature miracles, Mark's Jesus acts as authorized agent of the divine power emanating from God's coming kingdom; in his conflict with human authorities—religious and political—he exposes the nature of that divine power, which operates in restorative, vulnerable solidarity with the weak. Thus Mark emerges as a story that establishes the contours of God's kingdom and elicits allegiance to it. If that allegiance entails persecution, and even death, Mark's apocalyptic message ends with the hope that redemption still awaits, since the risen Lord will "go before" (14.28; cf. 16.7) the faithful as God's kingdom takes root on the earth.

Suzanne Watts Henderson

1 The beginning of the good news[a] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.[b]
[2] As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,[c]
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,[d]
who will prepare your way;
[3] the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,' "
[4] John the baptizer appeared[e] in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [5] And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. [6] Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. [7] He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the

[a] Or *gospel*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *the Son of God*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *in the prophets*
[d] Gk *before your face*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *John was baptizing*

1.1–15: Prologue: Jesus's baptism and appearance in Galilee. Mark sets Jesus's story against the backdrop of biblical prophecy and the career of John the Baptist.

1.1: Introduction. *Good news*, language associated in Jewish scripture with God's decisive defeat of opposing forces (Isa 40.9; 52.7; 61.1) and in Roman imperial propaganda with the birth of Caesar. *Of Jesus Christ*, an ambiguous phrase grammatically, meaning that Jesus both proclaims and embodies the "good news" that God's kingdom has drawn near (see 1.14–15). Though *Christ* (from Gk "Christos," which translates Heb "mashiaḥ," both meaning "anointed") originally referred broadly to kings, priests, or prophets, some Jewish groups in the first century CE thought that a specially "anointed one" would preside over God's kingdom on earth in a political and/or religious sense.

1.2–8: John appears in the wilderness (Mt 3.1–12; Lk 3.1–20; Jn 1.19–28). **2–3:** Mark combines Isa 40.3 with elements of Ex 23.20 and Mal 3.1. *Wilderness*, or "deserted place," an important theme in Mark (1.4,12,13,35,45; 6.31,32,35) and the biblical setting of Israel's deliverance (Ex 6; 13.17–22; Isa 41.18–20; 43.19–21; Hos 2.14–15). **4:** *Baptism . . . sins*, a ritual cleansing performed, in this case, apart from institutional religious sanction and preparing for God's renewal of the earth. See Isa 1.16–17. **6:** John's clothing resembles the prophet Elijah's (2 Kings 1.8; cf. Mal 4.5–6); cf. 6.15; 8.28; 15.35–36. **7:** *More powerful than I*, possible allusion to a messianic figure (see Isa 11.2; *Pss. Sol.* 17.37; cf. Mk 3.27).

thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with[a] water; but he will baptize you with[a] the Holy Spirit."

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;[b] with you I am well pleased."

12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news[c] of God,[d] 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;[e] repent, and believe in the good news."[c]

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

21 They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. 22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 24 and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" 26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of

[a] Or *in*
[b] Or *my beloved Son*
[c] Or *gospel*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *of the kingdom*
[e] Or *is at hand*

1.9–11: John baptizes Jesus (Mt 3.13–17; Lk 3.21–22; Jn 1.29–34). **9:** *From Nazareth*, a small village in southern *Galilee,* the base for Jesus's public ministry (1.14,16; 39; 3.7; 7.31; 9.30; etc.). **10:** *Torn apart*, the rending of the heavens accompanies the divine penetration of the created realm (Isa 64.1; Ezek 1.1; see also Mk 15.38), through *the Spirit* (see Joel 2.28–32; Acts 2.17–22). **11:** *My Son, the Beloved*, combines Ps 2.7 with Isa 42.1 to assign royal status to God's servant. Cf. 1.1; 9.7; 14.61; 15.39.

1.12–13: Wilderness testing (cf. Mt 4.1–11; Lk 4.1–13). Mark does not elaborate on the nature of Jesus's testing. **12:** *Immediately*, a typically Markan term that lends urgency to the story. **13:** *Satan*, a powerful evil figure who opposes power associated with God's coming kingdom (see 3.23–27; 4.15; 8.33).

1.14–15: Opening proclamation (Mt 4.12–17; Lk 4.14–15). **14**: *Good news of God*, the message that "the kingdom of God has come near" (v. 15) in the life and death of Jesus. **15**: *Time is fulfilled*, i.e., the "season" of God's renewal of the world approaches. Cf. 11.13; 12.2; also Ezek 7.12; Dan 7.22; Rev 1.3. *Repent, and believe*, or "turn around and trust"; Jesus summons exclusive allegiance to God's sovereign power.

1.16–8.26: Jesus's messianic mission: word and deed.

1.16–4.41: Jesus in and around Galilee.

1.16–20: First call to discipleship (Mt 4.18–22; cf. Lk 5.1–11; Jn 1.35–51). **16**: *Sea of Galilee*, technically a freshwater lake, sometimes called Gennesaret. *Simon*, that is, Peter, Jesus's most prominent disciple (see 3.16; 8.29; 9.2; 14.66–72; 16.7). **17:** *Fish for people*, both a play on words and a biblical allusion (see Jer 16.16). **20:** *Hired men*, an indication that fishing was a profitable business venture in the first century.

1.21–28: Jesus in Capernaum (Mt 7.28–29; Lk 4.33–37). **21:** *Capernaum*, located on the sea's northwest coast. *Synagogue*, lit., a "gathering," typically for religious instruction and prayer. **22**: *Scribes*, religious leaders whose literacy and training in Jewish law gave them elite status and who often oppose Jesus in Mark. **23:** *Unclean spirit*, demonic force associated with physical or mental disease; see also 1.27; 3.11,30; 5.2. **24:** *Holy One of God*, a name that contrasts with unclean spirit and has both prophetic (2 Kings 4.9) and priestly (Ps 106.16) connotations. **25:** *Rebuked . . . silent*, a Markan motif that stresses Jesus's authoritative command over evil forces, often to suppress

him. 27 They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He[a] commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." 28 At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

29 As soon as they[b] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31 He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 38 He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." 39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

40 A leper[c] came to him begging him, and kneeling[d] he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity,[e] Jesus[f] stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy[c] left him, and he was made clean. 43 After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, 44 saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus[f] could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

2 When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3 Then some people[g] came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried

[a] Or *A new teaching! With authority he*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *he*
[c] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases
[d] Other ancient authorities lack *kneeling*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *anger*
[f] Gk *he*
[g] Gk *they*

public acclaim; see also 1.34,43–44; 3.12; 8.30; 9.30. **27:** The exorcism combines with Jesus's teaching (1.22) to confirm his authority in word and deed.

1.29–34: Healings at Simon's house (Mt 8.14–17; Lk 4.38–41). **30:** *Simon's mother-in-law*, suggests that Peter was married. See 1 Cor 9.5. **31:** Jesus's healing power emanates through physical touch, which often violates purity codes that require separation from disease, blood, and death; see also 1.41; 3.10; 5.28; 6.56; 7.33; 8.23. *Serve them*, possibly in a financial sense (cf. 15.41). **32–34:** A summary report that is typical In Mark; see also 3.7–12; 6.53–56. *Not permit the demons to speak*, see 1.25n.

1.35–39: Jesus throughout Galilee (Mt 4.23–25; Lk 4.42–44). **35:** *Deserted place*, or "wilderness"; see 1.3n. **39:** Together, Jesus's proclaiming the *message* (lit., "word") and his *casting out demons* bear witness to the dawn of God's kingdom on earth. See 1.27.

1.40–45: Jesus cures a man who had leprosy (Mt 8.2–4; Lk 5.12–16). **40:** *Leper*, a person with a highly contagious skin disease who was deemed ritually impure and thus banished from the community (see Lev 13–14). **41:** *Pity*, attested in most ancient manuscripts (see also 6.34; 9.22). The alternative reading, which claims Jesus was "moved by anger," may be original. *Touched him*, see 1.31n. **43–44:** Earlier, Jesus commanded evil spirits to remain silent (see 1.25n.); here, the injunction applies to the healed man. *Show yourself to the priest*, Jesus promotes adherence to religious protocol, since it will restore the man's social and religious status. **45:** *Word*, i.e., the message about God's sovereign power unleashed in the world.

2.1–3.6: A series of controversy stories. 2.1–12: The controversy about forgiveness (Mt 9.1–8; Lk 5.17–26). **1:** *At home*, or, "in a home." The Gospels do not name Capernaum as Jesus's "home." **2:** *Speaking the word*, that is,

by four of them. [4] And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. [5] When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." [6] Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, [7] "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" [8] At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? [9] Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? [10] But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— [11] "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." [12] And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

[13] Jesus[a] went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. [14] As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

[15] And as he sat at dinner[b] in Levi's[c] house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting[d] with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. [16] When the scribes of[e] the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat[f] with tax collectors and sinners?" [17] When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

[18] Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people[g] came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" [19] Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

[a] Gk *He*
[b] Gk *reclined*
[c] Gk *his*
[d] Gk *reclining*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *and*
[f] Other ancient authorities add *and drink*
[g] Gk *they*

the message about God's coming kingdom (see 1.14–15; 1.45n.). **4:** A *roof* was usually flat, made of mud plaster over a wood framework. **5:** *Their faith*, the friends implicitly trust Jesus's access to God's sovereign power and thus inspire Jesus to pronounce the man's spiritual restoration. On faith as operative for healing, see 5.34,36; 10.52; 11.22; cf. 6.6a; 9.23–24. **7:** *Blasphemy*, a charge arising from the view that God alone can grant forgiveness and does so through religious ritual. **10:** *Son of Man*, or, "a son of the human one," an ambiguous term that appears frequently in Mark (see 2.28; 8.31,38; 9.9,12. 31; 10.33,45; 13.26; 14.21,41,62) and likely identifies Jesus as authorized prototype for the "new humanity" that will inhabit God's coming kingdom (see Dan 7.13–14). **12:** *Glorified God*, worship is granted to the source of Jesus's healing ability (cf. 5.19).

2.13–17: The controversy about meal practices (Mt 9.9–13; Lk 5.27–32). **14:** *Levi son of Alphaeus*, missing from Mark's list of twelve disciples (3.16–19; but see *James son of Alphaeus*, 3.18; cf. Mt 9.3; Lk 10.3). **15:** *Tax collectors and sinners*, a stock group of religious outcasts. "Tax (or toll) collectors" often exacted and pocketed heavy surcharges on tolls due to the Roman government. "Sinners" were those who failed to observe the requirements of the Torah. **16:** *Scribes of the Pharisees*, on "scribes," see 1.22n. "Pharisees" were similarly devoted to the application of Torah in daily life and appear throughout Mark as Jesus's opponents (2.24; 3.6; 7.1; 8.11,15; 10.2; 12.13). Jesus's table fellowship with "outsiders" violated current interpretation of biblical law because of the defilement it entailed. **17:** Jesus uses a familiar philosophical aphorism to characterize his mission. The *righteous* are those in good standing with religious authorities.

2.18–22: The controversy about fasting (Mt 9.14–17; Lk 5.33–39). **18:** Fasting was a Jewish practice performed in observance of liturgical seasons (Lev 16.29; Zech 7.5) and, at other times, in conjunction with repentance (Ezra 8.21–23; Jon 3.7–9). Apocalyptic figures such as John probably promoted fasting in preparation for the "day of the Lord." **19:** Wedding imagery sometimes depicts God's sovereign rule established on earth (Isa 54.4–8;

20 The days will come when the bridegroom
is taken away from them, and then they will
fast on that day.
21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth
on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls
away from it, the new from the old, and a
worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new
wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine
will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and
so are the skins; but one puts new wine into
fresh wineskins."[a]
23 One sabbath he was going through the
grainfields; and as they made their way his
disciples began to pluck heads of grain. 24 The
Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they
doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?"
25 And he said to them, "Have you never read
what David did when he and his compan-
ions were hungry and in need of food? 26 He
entered the house of God, when Abiathar was
high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence,
which it is not lawful for any but the priests
to eat, and he gave some to his companions."
27 Then he said to them, "The sabbath was
made for humankind, and not humankind for
the sabbath; 28 so the Son of Man is lord even
of the sabbath."

3 Again he entered the synagogue, and a
man was there who had a withered hand.
2 They watched him to see whether he would
cure him on the sabbath, so that they might
accuse him. 3 And he said to the man who had
the withered hand, "Come forward." 4 Then
he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or
to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or
to kill?" But they were silent. 5 He looked
around at them with anger; he was grieved at
their hardness of heart and said to the man,
"Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out,
and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees
went out and immediately conspired with the
Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

7 Jesus departed with his disciples to the
sea, and a great multitude from Galilee fol-
lowed him; 8 hearing all that he was doing,
they came to him in great numbers from
Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan,
and the region around Tyre and Sidon. 9 He
told his disciples to have a boat ready for him
because of the crowd, so that they would not
crush him; 10 for he had cured many, so that all
who had diseases pressed upon him to touch
him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him,
they fell down before him and shouted, "You
are the Son of God!" 12 But he sternly ordered
them not to make him known.

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins*

62.4–5). Early Christian writers portrayed Jesus as bridegroom (2 Cor 11.2; Eph 5.32; Rev 19.7). **21–22:** Jesus's followers already belong to God's coming kingdom; as a result, their practices do not conform to habit of the "present evil age" (Gal 1.4).

2.23–28: The controversy about harvesting on the sabbath (Mt 12.1–8; Lk 6.1–5). **23:** biblical law mandates that landowners allow sojourners access to their agricultural produce (Lev 19.9–10; 23.22; Deut 24.19–20). **24:** *Not lawful*, a ruling on a hotly debated topic—i.e., whether harvesting food to eat constituted "work" (see Ex 20.8–10; Deut 5.12–15). **25–26.** In 1 Sam 21.1–6, the high priest in the story is not Abiathar (see 1 Sam 22.20; 2 Sam 15.35) but his father, Ahimelech, an error corrected in Mt 12.4 and Lk 6.4. *Bread of the Presence*, twelve loaves placed in the sanctuary every sabbath (Ex 25.30; Lev 24.5–9). **27–28:** Jesus's authority (1.22) extends to his disciples. As the *Son of Man,* Jesus incorporates his followers into the new humanity he establishes (see 2.10n.).

3.1–6: The controversy about healing on the sabbath (Mt 12.9–14; Lk 6.6–11). **1:** *Synagogue*, see 1.21n. **2:** Healing on the sabbath, unless someone's life was at stake, is questionable in some rabbinic sources (*m. Yoma* 8.6). **4:** Jesus equates "doing good" with saving life. **5:** *Anger . . . grieved*, emotional language (cf. 1.41; 6.34; 9.22; 14.19) that contrasts with the Pharisees' "hardness of heart" (Ex 7.3; Ps 95.8; cf. 6.52; 8.17; 10.5). **6:** *Herodians*, supporters or officials of the Roman client king Herod Antipas (6.14–29), who ruled Galilee and part of Transjordan from 4 BCE to 39 CE.

3.7–12: Jesus's growing acclaim (Mt 4.24–25; 12.15–16; Lk 6.17–19). Another Markan summary report (see 1.32–34n.). **7:** *Sea*, the Sea of Galilee. See 1.16n. *Great multitude*, Jesus's following grows as opposition intensifies. **8:** Jesus attracts a large and diverse group, both ethnically and geographically. **10:** *Touch him*, see 1.31n. **11:** *Unclean spirits*, see 1.23n. *Fell down before him*, a posture of worship; see 1.40; 5.6,22,33; 7.25. *Son of God*, In Mark, Jesus's identity as God's son is more evident to spiritual forces than to humans (see 1.11; 9.7; cf. 15.39). **12:** See 1.25n.

13 He went up the mountain and called to
him those whom he wanted, and they came
to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he
also named apostles,[a] to be with him, and to
be sent out to proclaim the message, 15 and to
have authority to cast out demons. 16 So he
appointed the twelve:[b] Simon (to whom he
gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee
and John the brother of James (to whom he
gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of
Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bar-
tholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and
James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and
Simon the Cananaean, 19 and Judas Iscariot,
who betrayed him.

Then he went home; 20 and the crowd
came together again, so that they could not
even eat. 21 When his family heard it, they
went out to restrain him, for people were
saying, "He has gone out of his mind." 22 And
the scribes who came down from Jerusalem
said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of
the demons he casts out demons." 23 And
he called them to him, and spoke to them
in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan?
24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that
kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is
divided against itself, that house will not be
able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up
against himself and is divided, he cannot
stand, but his end has come. 27 But no one
can enter a strong man's house and plun-
der his property without first tying up the
strong man; then indeed the house can be
plundered.

28 "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven
for their sins and whatever blasphemies they
utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the
Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is
guilty of an eternal sin"— 30 for they had said,
"He has an unclean spirit."

31 Then his mother and his brothers came;
and standing outside, they sent to him and
called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him;
and they said to him, "Your mother and your
brothers and sisters[c] are outside, asking for
you." 33 And he replied, "Who are my mother
and my brothers?" 34 And looking at those
who sat around him, he said, "Here are my
mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does
the will of God is my brother and sister and
mother."

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *whom he also named apostles*

[b] Other ancient authorities lack *So he appointed the twelve*

[c] Other ancient authorities lack *and sisters*

3.13–19a.: Jesus establishes a new Israel (Mt 10.1–4; Lk 6.12–16). **13:** *Up the mountain*, like Moses (Ex 19.3–25) and Elijah (1 Kings 19.8), Jesus ascends to a high place on a divine mission; unlike them, he takes companions (but see Ex 24.9); cf. 6.46; 9.2–13. **14:** *Twelve* corresponds to the traditional number of Israel's tribes (see Gen 49.28; Num 1.4–16). The group constitutes a "new Israel" loyal to God's coming kingdom. *Apostles*, lit., those "sent out" (cf. 6.7). *Proclaim the message*, deliver the same word about God's coming kingdom that Jesus announces (1.14–15; 1.45; 2.2). **15:** *Authority*, divine power over evil spirits (6.7,13; cf. Lk 10.17–19). **16–19:** Mark's list of apostles differs slightly from the other Gospel accounts (cf. Mt 10.2–4; Lk 6.14–16; Jn 1.40–49; 21.2). **17:** *Boanerges . . . sons of Thunder,* Mark translates an Aramaic word for the Gospel's Greek-speaking audience (see also 5.41; 7.11,34; 10.46; 11.9–10; 14.36; 15.22,34,42). **19a.** *Iscariot*, an ambiguous term that probably either indicates Judas's hometown, Qerioth, or comments on his character ("assassin" or "fraud"). *Betrayed him,* see 14.10–11,43–45.

3.19b–35: Jesus at home (Mt 12.22–32; Lk 11.14–23; 12.10). An intertwined intercalation of two passages, linked by the motif of household. For other examples of this technique, see 5.21–43; 11.12–25[26]; 14.1–11. **22:** *Scribes*, see 1.22n. *Jerusalem*, Mark's first mention of the city where Jesus will be executed; see 10.32–34. *Beelzebul*, traditionally linked with the Canaanite god Baal (see 2 Kings 1.2) but identified in Jesus's day with Satan. **23:** *Parable*, illustrative story that sometimes mystifies Jesus's audience (cf. 4.3–34; 7.14–17; 12.1–12). **27:** *Strong man*, or "powerful one"; see 1.7; also Isa 49.24–25. **28–30:** Jesus reserves judgment for those who speak against the work of God's spirit which activates his mission (1.10). **31–35:** Jesus redefines the household according to ultimate loyalty to God's will rather than bloodline. Mark may address those who had been banished from their families because of their devotion to Jesus. "Father" is notably absent from the household members (see also 6.3), perhaps implicitly making God the family's patriarch.

4 Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around
him that he got into a boat on the sea and
sat there, while the whole crowd was beside
the sea on the land. 2 He began to teach them
many things in parables, and in his teaching
he said to them: 3 "Listen! A sower went out
to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on
the path, and the birds came and ate it up.
5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did
not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly,
since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the
sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no
root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among
thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked
it, and it yielded no grain. 8 Other seed fell
into good soil and brought forth grain, grow-
ing up and increasing and yielding thirty and
sixty and a hundredfold." 9 And he said, "Let
anyone with ears to hear listen!"

10 When he was alone, those who were
around him along with the twelve asked him
about the parables. 11 And he said to them,
"To you has been given the secret[a] of the
kingdom of God, but for those outside, every-
thing comes in parables; 12 in order that

'they may indeed look, but not perceive,
and may indeed listen, but not
understand;
so that they may not turn again and be
forgiven.'"

13 And he said to them, "Do you not under-
stand this parable? Then how will you un-
derstand all the parables? 14 The sower sows
the word. 15 These are the ones on the path
where the word is sown: when they hear,
Satan immediately comes and takes away the
word that is sown in them. 16 And these are
the ones sown on rocky ground: when they
hear the word, they immediately receive it
with joy. 17 But they have no root, and endure
only for a while; then, when trouble or
persecution arises on account of the word,
immediately they fall away.[b] 18 And others
are those sown among the thorns: these are
the ones who hear the word, 19 but the cares
of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the
desire for other things come in and choke the
word, and it yields nothing. 20 And these are
the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the
word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and
sixty and a hundredfold."

21 He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to
be put under the bushel basket, or under the
bed, and not on the lampstand? 22 For there is
nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is
anything secret, except to come to light. 23 Let
anyone with ears to hear listen!" 24 And he
said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear;
the measure you give will be the measure you
get, and still more will be given you. 25 For to
those who have, more will be given; and from
those who have nothing, even what they have
will be taken away."

26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is
as if someone would scatter seed on the
ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and

[a] Or *mystery*
[b] Or *stumble*

4.1–34: Parables about God's coming kingdom. 4.1–20: The sower parable (Mt 13.1–23; Lk 8.4–15). Agrarian images are common in Jewish literature and familiar to Jesus's hearers (e.g., Isa 28.23–27; 2 Esd 4.26–32; cf. 1 Cor 3.6–8). **1:** Jesus's following continues to expand (cf. 3.7). **2:** *In parables*, see 3.23n. **8:** The yields all exceed the expected harvest of sevenfold. **10:** *Those . . . around him along with the Twelve*, as is often the case in Mark, Jesus shifts from public (4.1) to private instruction. On the "Twelve," see 3.13–19; 3.14n. **11:** *Given*, Jesus has already imparted his message and power to his closest companions (cf. 3.14–15). *Secret*, lit., "mystery," commonly associated with God's purposes in apocalyptic writings; see Dan 2.18–19,27–30; Rom 11.25; 1 Cor 2.1; 15.51; Rev 1.20. *Those outside*, standard apocalyptic division between insiders and outsiders. **12:** Isa 6.9–10. **13:** *Not understand*, in Mark even insiders often remain befuddled; cf. 6.52; 8.17,21. **14–20:** The private instruction is probably a later tradition, reflecting the adversities faced by Jesus's followers in the decades after his death. **14:** *Word*, see 1.45n. **15:** *Satan*, see 1.13n.; 3.23–27; 8.33. **17:** *Fall away*, lit., "are scandalized," suggesting desertion from a previous allegiance; cf. 6.3; 9.42–47; 14.27. **19:** *Wealth*, cf. 10.23–25. **20:** Receptivity to the message about God's kingdom leads organically to bounty (cf. 4.30–32).

4.21–34: Three kingdom-related parables. 4.21–25: The mystery presses toward disclosure. 21–22: Since Jesus's closest followers have been entrusted with the message about God's coming kingdom (see 4.11), they should ensure that it remains in full view. *Lamp*, see Ps 119.105; Zech 4.2. **25:** *Given*, see 4.11n. **26–29:** Another

day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he
does not know how. 28 The earth produces of
itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the
full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain
is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle,
because the harvest has come."

30 He also said, "With what can we com-
pare the kingdom of God, or what parable
will we use for it? 31 It is like a mustard seed,
which, when sown upon the ground, is
the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 32 yet
when it is sown it grows up and becomes the
greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large
branches, so that the birds of the air can
make nests in its shade."

33 With many such parables he spoke the
word to them, as they were able to hear it;
34 he did not speak to them except in para-
bles, but he explained everything in private
to his disciples.

35 On that day, when evening had come, he
said to them, "Let us go across to the other
side." 36 And leaving the crowd behind, they
took him with them in the boat, just as he
was. Other boats were with him. 37 A great
windstorm arose, and the waves beat into
the boat, so that the boat was already being
swamped. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep
on the cushion; and they woke him up and
said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we
are perishing?" 39 He woke up and rebuked
the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be
still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a
dead calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you
afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they
were filled with great awe and said to one an-
other, "Who then is this, that even the wind
and the sea obey him?"

5 They came to the other side of the sea,
to the country of the Gerasenes.[a] 2 And
when he had stepped out of the boat, im-
mediately a man out of the tombs with an
unclean spirit met him. 3 He lived among the
tombs; and no one could restrain him any
more, even with a chain; 4 for he had often
been restrained with shackles and chains,
but the chains he wrenched apart, and the
shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had
the strength to subdue him. 5 Night and day
among the tombs and on the mountains he
was always howling and bruising himself
with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from a
distance, he ran and bowed down before
him; 7 and he shouted at the top of his voice,
"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of
the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do
not torment me." 8 For he had said to him,
"Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"
9 Then Jesus[b] asked him, "What is your

[a] Other ancient authorities read *Gergesenes*; others, *Gadarenes*
[b] Gk *he*

agrarian image, in the only Markan parable not found in another NT Gospel. **28:** *Of itself*, lit., "automatically," implying that God causes the plant to sprout. **29:** *Sickle*, allusion to end-time judgment (see Joel 3.13; Rev 14.14–20). **30–32:** A third parable. **32:** *Birds . . . shade*, an image of refuge for those gathered into God's kingdom (including Gentiles); cf. Ezek 17.23; 31.6; Dan 4.12,21. **33–34:** Another "summary report" (cf. 1.32–34; 3.7–12).

4.35–41: The first sea-crossing story (Mt 8.23–27; Lk 8.22–25). Three stories at sea contrast the disciples' fear with Jesus's faith; see also 6.45–52; 8.14–21. **35:** *Other side*, toward the Decapolis (see 5.1n., 20). **37:** Since such maritime conditions threatened life and livelihood, ancient people attributed them to cosmic forces (see Ps 107.23–32; Jon 1.4; Rev 21.1). **38:** *Asleep*, Jesus's repose connotes trust in God (cf. 4.27; also Pss 3.5; 4.8; Job 11.18–19), though the disciples think Jesus is apathetic. **39:** *Rebuked*, see 1.25n. **40:** *Afraid . . . no faith*, the disciples direct their fearful plea (4.38) to Jesus; his question about their lack of faith may arise from the fact that they do not address God directly (cf. Ps 107.28). On the opposition between fear and faith, see also 5.36; 6.50. **41:** Though Jesus deflects attention from himself, his disciples once again marvel at his remarkable abilities; cf. 1.27.

5.1–6.52: Across the sea and back.

5.1–20: The exorcism of an unclean spirit called "legion" (Mt 8.28–34; Lk 8.26–39). **1:** *Other side . . . Gerasenes*, a location ca 35 mi (55 km) southwest of the Sea of Galilee, Gerasa (modern Jerash) ill fits the story's details (cf. 5.13). Perhaps because of this narrative awkwardness, later evangelists and scribes changed the destination as "Gadara" (see Mt 8.28) and "Gergesa" (see textual note *a*). **2:** *Tombs*, a traditional dwelling for evil spirits (see Isa 65.1–7). *Unclean spirit*, see 1.23n. **4:** *Strength*, see 1.7n.; 3.27. **7:** *Son of the Most High God*, a typically Gentile name for God (1.24; see also Isa 14.14; Dan 3.26; 4.2). **9:** *Legion*, a Roman military unit comprised of several thousand

name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." [10] He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. [11] Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; [12] and the unclean spirits[a] begged him, "Send us into the swine; let us enter them." [13] So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea.

[14] The swineherds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened. [15] They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; and they were afraid. [16] Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it. [17] Then they began to beg Jesus[b] to leave their neighborhood. [18] As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him. [19] But Jesus[c] refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you." [20] And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

[21] When Jesus had crossed again in the boat[d] to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. [22] Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet [23] and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." [24] So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. [25] Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. [26] She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. [27] She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, [28] for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." [29] Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. [30] Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" [31] And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" [32] He looked all around to see who had done it. [33] But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. [34] He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

[35] While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say,

[a] Gk *they*
[b] Gk *him*
[c] Gk *he*
[d] Other ancient authorities lack *in the boat*

soldiers. **11:** *Swine*, designated by biblical law as unclean (Lev 11.7–8; Isa 65.4; 66.17). **15:** *Afraid*, the people's response to Jesus's power is a common one in Mark; see 4.40n. **18:** *Be with him*, a phrase denoting discipleship (3.14). **19:** *Go home*, the man's healing brings restoration to his community as well. *Lord*, probably God, the source of Jesus's power. This fits with Jesus's efforts elsewhere in the Gospel to divert attention from *his* power (cf. 1.34,44). **20:** *Decapolis*, a Hellenized region east of the Jordan River with a significant Jewish population.

5.21–43: Two related healing stories (Mt 9.18–26; Lk 8.40–56). Another Markan intercalation of two stories that share several features: attention to female suffering, the number *twelve*, and restored physical and social well-being through physical contact. **21:** *Other side*, presumably, back to the western side of the sea. **22:** *One of the leaders of the synagogue*, a prominent religious figure who seeks Jesus's curative power. *Fell at his feet*, see 3.11n.; 5.6. **23:** Details in this story echo biblical stories that credit Elijah (1 Kings 17.17–24) and Elisha (2 Kings 4.18–37) with healing power. *Lay your hands on her*, see 1.31n. **25:** Purity laws (see Lev 12.1–8; 15.25–30) designate bleeding women "unclean." **26:** Mark notes the economic implications of the woman's condition. **27:** *His cloak*, see 1.31n.; 6.56n. **28:** *Made well*, lit., "saved." Cf. 5.34. **29–30:** Both the woman and Jesus sense the flow of healing power through physical contact. **32:** *Looked all around*, Mark often links physical sight to spiritual insight; cf. 2.5; 4.12; 8.25. **33:** *Fear and trembling*, see 4.40; 5.15. *Fell down*, see 3.11n. **34:** *Faith*, see 2.5n.

"Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing[a] what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" 42 And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. 43 He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

6 He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary[b] and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense[c] at him. 4 Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." 5 And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. 6 And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. 7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10 He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." 12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13 They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

[a] Or *ignoring*; other ancient authorities read *hearing*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *son of the carpenter and of Mary*
[c] Or *stumbled*

36: *Do not fear, only believe*, see 4.40n. **37:** *Peter and James and John*, Jesus's inner circle of disciples; cf. 1.16,19; 9.2; 14.33. **39:** *Sleeping*, in context, an ambiguous expression, since the verb sometimes indicates death (see 1 Cor 15.51; 1 Thess 5.10) but here seems not to; cf. 4.38n. **41:** *Talitha cum*, see 3.17n. *Get up*, lit., "rise up," used elsewhere for resurrection (2 King 18.26; also 15.34). **42:** *Twelve years*, the number connects the girl's story to the woman's (cf. 5.25). **43:** *Strictly ordered*, Jesus again enjoins silence about his healing power; see 1.25n. *Something to eat*, food connotes restored life in God's coming kingdom; cf. 6.37.

6.1–6: Jesus returns home (Mt 13.53–58; Lk 4.16–30). **1:** *Hometown*, elsewhere named as Nazareth; see 1.9n. **2:** *Teach in the synagogue*, see 1.21. *Astounded*, see 1.22. *Wisdom . . . deeds of power*, Jesus's teaching and miracles together suggest his divine agency; cf. 1.27. **3:** *Carpenter*, or "craftsperson." *Son of Mary. . . sisters*, see 3.32n. *James,* see Gal 1.19. *Took offense at*, see 4.17n. **4:** Jesus identifies with rejected prophets (cf. 12.1–12; see also Jn 4.44). **5–6a:** The people's *lack of faith* stymies Jesus's efficacy; see 2.5n. and cf. 9.19.

6.6b–13: The twelve extend Jesus's mission (Mt 10.1,9–14; 14.1–12; Lk 9.1–10a; see also 3.13–19). **7:** *Two by two*, biblical law requires confirmation by two witnesses (see Deut 17.6; 19.15; Num 35.30). *Authority over the unclean spirits*, see 1.23n.; 3.15. **8:** *Nothing for their journey*, the radical demands here (*no bread, no bags, no money*) contrast with Cynic philosophers, who rejected material wealth but traveled with basic provisions. **11:** *Shake off the dust*, an ancient gesture to signal a broken relationship (see Neh 5.13; Acts 18.6). *Testimony against them*, perhaps at the final judgment associated with God's coming kingdom. **12–13:** The apostles' activities echo Jesus's: they *proclaimed* (see 1.15; 3.14) and performed exorcisms and healings (see 1.34; 3.15).

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus'[a] name had
become known. Some were[b] saying, "John the
baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for
this reason these powers are at work in him."
15 But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said,
"It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old."
16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John,
whom I beheaded, has been raised."
17 For Herod himself had sent men who
arrested John, bound him, and put him in
prison on account of Herodias, his brother
Philip's wife, because Herod[c] had married
her. 18 For John had been telling Herod, "It
is not lawful for you to have your brother's
wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against
him, and wanted to kill him. But she could
not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that
he was a righteous and holy man, and he
protected him. When he heard him, he was
greatly perplexed;[d] and yet he liked to listen
to him. 21 But an opportunity came when
Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for
his courtiers and officers and for the leaders
of Galilee. 22 When his daughter Herodias[e]
came in and danced, she pleased Herod and
his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask
me for whatever you wish, and I will give it."
23 And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever
you ask me, I will give you, even half of my
kingdom." 24 She went out and said to her
mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied,
"The head of John the baptizer." 25 Im-
mediately she rushed back to the king and
requested, "I want you to give me at once the
head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 The
king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for
his oaths and for the guests, he did not want
to refuse her. 27 Immediately the king sent
a soldier of the guard with orders to bring
John's[a] head. He went and beheaded him in
the prison, 28 brought his head on a platter,
and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to
her mother. 29 When his disciples heard about
it, they came and took his body, and laid it in
a tomb.

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus, and
told him all that they had done and taught.
31 He said to them, "Come away to a deserted
place all by yourselves and rest a while." For
many were coming and going, and they had
no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away
in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.
33 Now many saw them going and recognized
them, and they hurried there on foot from all
the towns and arrived ahead of them. 34 As
he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and
he had compassion for them, because they
were like sheep without a shepherd; and he
began to teach them many things. 35 When
it grew late, his disciples came to him and
said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is
now very late; 36 send them away so that they
may go into the surrounding country and
villages and buy something for themselves
to eat." 37 But he answered them, "You give
them something to eat." They said to him,
"Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii[f]
worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?"
38 And he said to them, "How many loaves

[a] Gk *his*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *He was*
[c] Gk *he*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *he did many things*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *the daughter of Herodias herself*
[f] The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer

6.14–29: John the Baptist's execution at Herod's feast (Mt 14.1–12; Lk 9.7–9). Mark places this story thematically, not chronologically (see 1.14), to highlight the contrasting nature of Herod's and God's reigns. It also foreshadows the destiny of those whose allegiance to God's kingdom threatens earthly powers. **14:** *King Herod*, see 3.6n. Mark may call the tetrarch "king" to sharpen the distinction between Herod and God as rulers. **15:** *Elijah*, see 1.6n. **16:** *Raised*, some first-century Jews, including many Pharisees, thought the "resurrection of the dead" would accompany God's coming kingdom; see 9.9; 12.18. **17–18:** As a Jew, Herod's marriage to his brother's wife during his brother's lifetime violated biblical law (Lev 18.16; 20.21). **19–20:** See 1 Kings 21.1–16, where Jezebel involves Ahab in her plot against Elijah. **22:** *Herodias*, Josephus names Herod's daughter Salome (cf. Mt 14.6).

6.30–44: Jesus and his disciples feed a hungry crowd (Mt 14.13–21; Lk 9.10–17; Jn 6.1–13). The only miracle story found in all four Gospels. **31:** *Deserted place*, lit., "wilderness"; see 1.3n. **34:** *Sheep without a shepherd*, implies the crowd's need for instruction and guidance; cf. Num 27.15–17; 1 Kings 22.17; Ezek 34.5. *Many things*, Jesus's instruction generally concerns God's coming kingdom (e.g., 1.14–15; 4.1–34). **37:** *You give them something*

have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." [39] Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. [40] So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. [41] Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. [42] And all ate and were filled; [43] and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. [44] Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

[45] Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. [46] After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

[47] When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. [48] When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. [49] But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; [50] for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." [51] Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, [52] for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

[53] When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. [54] When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, [55] and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. [56] And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

7 Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, [2] they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. [3] (For

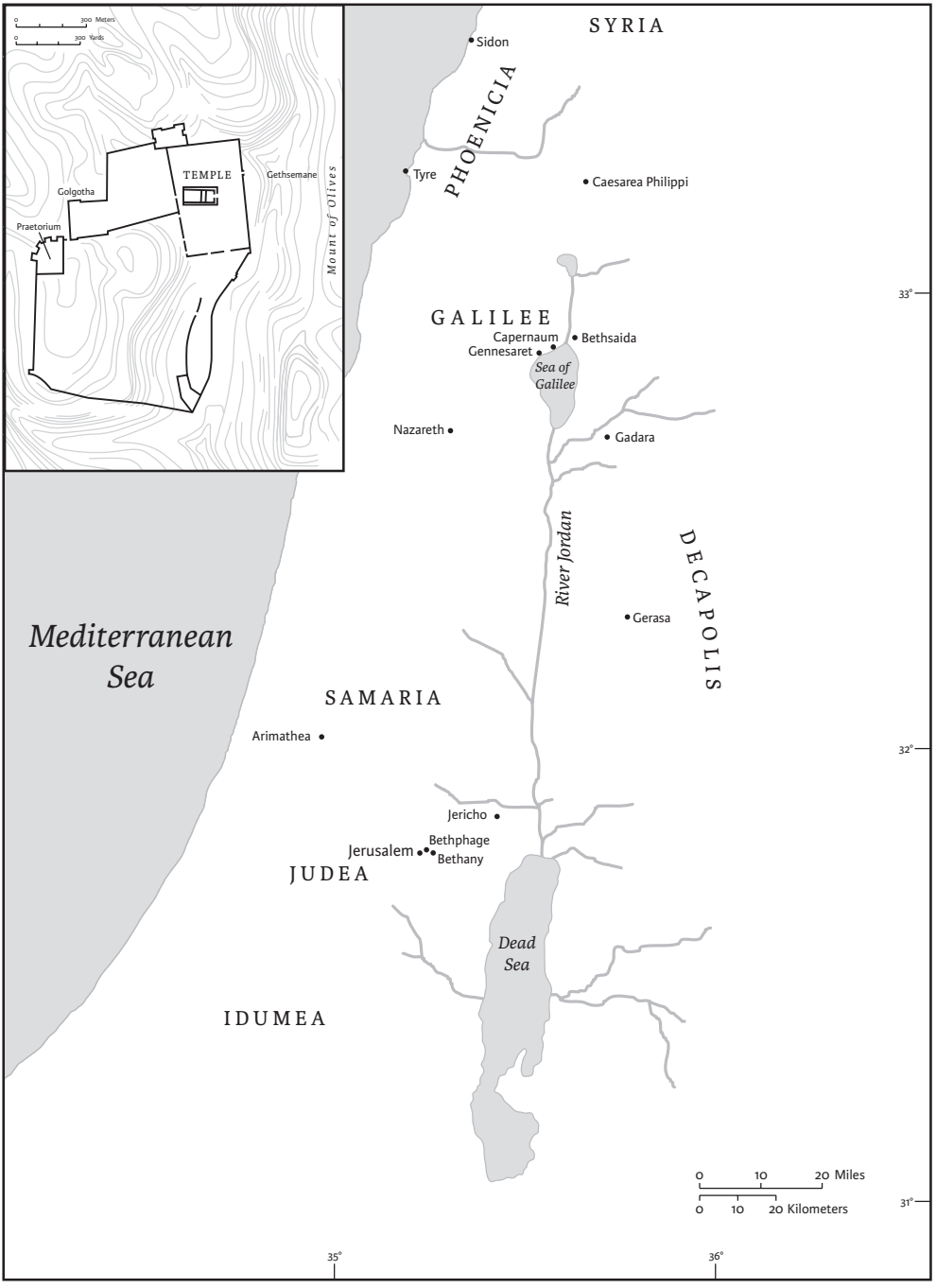
to eat, the use of an emphatic pronoun suggests that Jesus intends the disciples to feed the crowd (see 2 Kings 4.42–44; cf. Jn 6.5–6). **39:** *In groups*, language typically designating a formal celebration with invited guests. **40:** *Of hundreds and of fifties*, reminiscent of God's provision in the wilderness (Ex 18.21,25). **41:** Jesus presides over a traditional Jewish meal (cf. 14.22). His disciples participate in the distribution of the loaves, but not the fish. **42:** *Filled*, lit., "satisfied," an outcome that contrasts with the outcome of Herod's feast. **44:** *Five thousand men*, women and children present would have made the crowd considerably larger.

6.45–52: The second sea-crossing story (Mt 14.22–33; Jn 6.15–21). See also 4.35–41; 8.14–21. **45:** *Go on ahead*, reversing Jesus's tendency "go ahead" of his disciples (cf. 14.28; 16.7). *Other side*, see 4.35n. *Bethsaida*, a village on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. **46:** *Up on the mountain*, see 3.13n. *Pray*, Jesus uses prayer as a nonviolent force against evil (cf. 9.29). **48:** *Straining at the oars*, doing active battle against the wind and sea; see 4.35n. *Pass by them*, as God "passes by" both Moses (Ex 34.6) and Elijah (1 Kings 19.11) in self-revelation that reinvigorates their respective missions. **50:** *It is I*, lit., "I am," a phrase that may identify Jesus with God (see Ex 3.13–15; Isa 41.4; 43.10–11). *Do not be afraid*, see 4.40n. **52**: *About the loaves*, Mark connects the disciples' fearful response at sea to the feeding story (6.30–44) but does not specify the nature of their incomprehension. They may misunderstand Jesus's divine power (cf. 4.40–41; Lk 24.30–31), their share in that power by distributing the loaves (cf. 3.14–15; 6.7,13,41), or some combination of the two. *Hearts were hardened*, an ironic claim, since the phrase sometimes characterizes Jesus's opponents (see 3.5n.).

6.53–8.26: Jesus among the Gentiles.

6.53–56: Jesus beyond Galilee (Mt 14.34–36). A Markan summary report (see 1.32–34n.). **53:** *Gennesaret*, on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee and in a different direction from Bethsaida, the original destination (6.45). **56**: *Fringe of his cloak*, Jesus's healing power is contagious, even through his clothing (1.31n.; 5.27–28).

7.1–23: Jesus on Jewish law and its interpretation (Mt 15.1–20). **1:** *Pharisees . . . from Jerusalem*, see 2.16n.; 3.22n. **2:** *Eating*, lit., "eating the loaves," a colloquial expression that may echo the feeding story (6.30–44; 6.52n.). *Defiled hands*, a condition of impurity (Lev 15.11), a consistent concern among Jesus's religious opponents. **2b–4:** Mark explains but exaggerates hand-washing as a ubiquitous Jewish practice, a feature that reflects a non-Jewish component of the Gospel's original audience. **3:** *Tradition of the elders*, the oral instruction



The geography of the Gospel of Mark.

the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands,[a] thus observing the tradition of the elders; 4 and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it;[b] and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.[c]) 5 So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live[d] according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" 6 He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

'This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
7 in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.'

8 You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

9 Then he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' 11 But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God[e])— 12 then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this."

14 Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."[f]

17 When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 He said to them, "Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, 19 since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles. 21 For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, 22 adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

24 From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre.[g] He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, 25 but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she

[a] Meaning of Gk uncertain
[b] Other ancient authorities read *and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they purify themselves*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *and beds*
[d] Gk *walk*
[e] Gk lacks *to God*
[f] Other ancient authorities add verse 16, *"Let anyone with ears to hear listen"*
[g] Other ancient authorities add *and Sidon*

the Pharisees considered authoritative interpretation of biblical law. Cf. Lk 11.38; Gal 1.14. **5:** *Your disciples*, the Pharisees hold Jesus accountable for his followers' conduct; cf. 2.18,24. **6–7:** See Isa 29.13 (LXX); see also Jer 7.3–7; Am 5.21–25. **8–9:** *Commandment of God . . . human tradition*, for Jesus, the written law takes precedence over its interpretation, not the other way around. **10:** Jesus combines the commandment to honor parents (Ex 20.12; Deut 5.16) with the consequence for breaking it (Ex 21.17; Lev 20.9). **11:** *Corban*, Aramaic for "offering." *To God*, a phrase that is absent in the Greek text, which implies but does not state the offering's object. **13:** *Word of God*, the laws just cited.

7.14–23: Jesus on defilement. **17:** *Entered the house*, another shift from a public setting to a private audience (see 4.10–12,20–34). **18:** *Fail to understand*, a common theme in Mark; see 4.13; 6.52; 8.17. **19:** *Heart*, the moral center of the human being, according to ancient thought. Jesus thus defines purity as a matter of conduct rather than consumption. *All foods clean*, Mark applies Jesus's saying to dietary laws in Torah (Lev 11.1–47), since Mark's audience probably wrestled with which aspects of Jewish law pertained to its non-Jewish members. Cf. Acts 10.9–16; Gal 2.11–14. **21–22:** Vice lists appear frequently in texts from the Hellenistic world. For Mark's Jesus, it is ethical infractions more than flawed ritual practice that *defile* (7.20,23).

7.24–30: Jesus exorcises a demon (Mt 15.21–28). **24:** *Region of Tyre*, a predominantly Gentile area northwest of Galilee. Cf. 3.8. **25:** *Bowed down at his feet*, see 3.11n. **26:** *Gentile,* lit., "Greek," combining with the woman's

came and bowed down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Sir,[a] even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." 30 So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 Then Jesus[b] ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

8 In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, 2 "I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. 3 If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance." 4 His disciples replied, "How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?" 5 He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." 6 Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. 7 They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. 8 They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. 9 Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. 10 And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.[c]

11 The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven,

[a] Or *Lord*; other ancient authorities prefix *Yes*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Mageda* or *Magdala*

Syrophoenician origin to emphasize that she is a cultural and ethnic "outsider." **27:** *Dogs*, sometimes used as a slur in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 1 Sam 17.43; 24.14); Jesus exhibits a surprisingly provincial attitude here. **28:** The woman accepts Jewish *priority* but challenges Jewish *exclusivity*, suggesting that "leftovers" in God's kingdom (6.43) could be offered to "outsiders." **29:** *The demon has left*, Jesus declares the exorcism accomplished, even from a distance.

7.31–37: Jesus heals another Gentile (Mt 15.29–31). **31:** *Decapolis*, see 5.20n. Jesus's route here is a circuitous one. **33:** On healing by physical touch, see 1.31n. **34:** *Ephaphatha . . . Be opened*, see 3.17n. **36:** *Tell no one*, see 1.43–44n.; 7.24. *Proclaimed*, probably the "good news" about God's coming kingdom (and the related power Jesus exhibits); see 1.14; 3.14. **37:** *Astounded beyond measure*, see 1.22n. *Deaf . . . mute*, evidence of God's sovereign power taking root on earth (see Isa 35.5–6).

8.1–10: Jesus and his disciples feed a second hungry crowd (Mt 15.32–39). Unlike the first miraculous feeding (6.30–44), this story takes place in a Gentile setting. **2:** *Nothing to eat*, the basis of Jesus's compassion is the crowd's physical hunger (cf. 6.34). **4:** *Desert*, see 1.3n. The disciples' question implies they have forgotten the first miraculous feeding, as well as the biblical promise of God's wilderness provision (Ex 16.1–36; Isa 58.1). **5–9:** The numbers of loaves, baskets of leftovers, and crowd members differ from the first feeding story, though their symbolic significance is hard to determine. **7:** While in the first feeding story, the disciples distribute only bread (6.41), here they hand out fish as well. **10:** *Dalmanutha*, an otherwise unknown location that in this Gospel seems to lie between the Decapolis and Bethsaida; Mt 15.39 has "Magadan."

8.11–13: The Pharisees seek a sign (Mt 16.1–4; Lk 11.16,29–32). **11:** *Sign from heaven*, in the Hebrew Bible, signs

to test him. 12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation." 13 And he left them, and getting into the boat again, he went across to the other side.

14 Now the disciples[a] had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. 15 And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod."[b] 16 They said to one another, "It is because we have no bread." 17 And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" They said to him, "Twelve." 20 "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 Then he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

22 They came to Bethsaida. Some people[c] brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" 24 And the man[d] looked up and said, "I can see people, but they look like trees, walking." 25 Then Jesus[d] laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Then he sent him away to his home, saying, "Do not even go into the village."[e]

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."[f] 30 And

a Gk *they*
b Other ancient authorities read *the Herodians*
c Gk *They*
d Gk *he*
e Other ancient authorities add *or tell anyone in the village*
f Or *the Christ*

confirm God's presence (see, e.g., Gen 9.12,13,17; Ex 3.12; 4.28,30). **12:** *This generation*, a biblical term that often connotes unfaithfulness to God's priorities (see Gen 7.1; Deut 32.5,20; Ps 95.10); cf. 8.38; 9.19; 13.30.

8.14–21: The third sea-crossing story (Mt 16.5–12; Lk 12.1; Jn 6.32–36). See also 4.35–41; 6.45–52. **14:** *One loaf*, a sparse detail that contrasts sharply with the outcome of the preceding feeding story (cf. 8.8). **15:** *Pharisees . . . Herod*, see 2.16n.; 3.6n. *Yeast* here implies religious and political corruption (see 1 Cor 5.6). **16:** *No bread*, an overstatement; cf. 8.14. **17–18:** A series of rhetorical questions intensifies Jesus's earlier critique of his disciples (4.13; 6.52), ultimately comparing them both to Pharisees (3.5) and to other "outsiders" (4.11–12). **19–20:** *Baskets full of broken pieces*, emphasizing the surplus, while the disciples had exaggerated dearth (8.16). **21:** *Not yet understand*, see 6.52n.; 8.17–18. The disciples again fail to trust God's abundant provision where scarcity seems to prevail.

8.22–26: A two-staged healing of a man who was blind (Jn 9.1–7). This story functions as narrative hinge, from Jesus's miraculous power to his suffering destiny; with the healing of Bartimaeus (10.46–52), it also constitutes a frame for the Gospel's central section, constructed around three passion predictions and accompanying instruction on discipleship. **22:** *Bethsaida*, see 6.45n. **23:** *Out of the village*, Jesus often performs miracles in private (e.g., 5.37). *Saliva . . . hands*, see 7.33; cf. Jn 9.6. **24:** The two-staged healing is unique in the NT. **25:** *Everything clearly*, restored sight symbolizes clear understanding. **26:** Jesus again suppresses public acclaim; see 1.44–45; 5.43; 7.24,36; 8.23.

8.27–15.47: Jesus's messianic mission: sacrifice.

8.27–10.52: The way of the cross.

8.27–9.1: First passion prediction and discipleship instruction (Mt 16.21–28; Lk 9.22–27). See also 9.30–37; 10.32–45. **27:** *Caesarea Philippi*, a city thirty miles north of Bethsaida named for Caesar Augustus because of a temple there built in his honor by Herod the Great. The area was governed in Jesus's day by the tetrarch Herod Philip. **29:** *Messiah*, or "Christ"; lit., "anointed one." See 1.1n. **30:** *Sternly ordered*, see 1.25n. *Not to tell anyone*,

he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel,[a] will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words[b] in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." 1 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with[c] power."

2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one[d] on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,[e] one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved;[f] listen to him!" 8 Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

9 As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean. 11 Then they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah

[a] Other ancient authorities read *lose their life for the sake of the gospel*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *and of mine*
[c] Or *in*
[d] Gk *no fuller*
[e] Or *tents*
[f] Or *my beloved Son*

see 1.43–44n. **31:** *Son of Man*, see 2.10n.,28. *Must undergo*, the Greek construction connotes an underlying divine purpose that presses toward the predicted destiny. *The elders, the chief priests, and the scribes*, constituent elements of Jerusalem's ruling council (see 14.55; 15.1,43). **32:** *Openly*, in contrast, e.g., to 8.30, where Jesus suppresses mention of his messianic *identity*, here he discloses his inevitable *destiny*. **33:** *Satan*, see 1.13n. The opposition Jesus names here resists his destiny as *suffering* messiah. **34:** Jesus's death establishes a pattern for his followers: their loyalty to God's reign, too, will bring persecution. **35:** In the most reliable manuscripts (see note *a*), Jesus distinguishes himself (*for my sake*) from the *sake of the gospel* (or "good news") he proclaims (see 1.14–15); cf. 10.29. **38:** *Ashamed*, the ancient world assigned shame to those who embodied weakness. *Generation*, see 8.12n. *Comes in the glory of his Father*, see Dan 7.13–14, where the Son of Man inherits authority to judge over all the earth. **9.1:** *Kingdom of God*, see 1.15. Jesus predicts the imminent arrival of God's kingdom on earth (cf. 13.32).

9.2–13: Jesus's mountaintop transfiguration (Mt 17.1–8; Lk 9.28–36). **2:** *Peter and James and John*, see 5.37n. *High mountain*, see 3.13n. *Transfigured*, lit., "changed in form," a term that speaks to Jesus's divine nature (cf. 9.7; see Dan 11.36). **4:** *Elijah with Moses*, individuals expected by many to play a role in God's kingdom dawning on earth (see 1.6n.). **5:** *Rabbi,* a Jewish title meaning "teacher" (lit., "my master"), used occasionally of Jesus. *Dwellings*, or "tents," temporary shelters like the shrine God inhabited before Solomon built the Temple (Ex 25.9; 2 Sam 7.2,6). **7:** *My Son, the Beloved*, a heavenly voice declares Jesus's divine sonship to the disciples (cf. 1.11). *Listen*, a command that fits Jesus's prophet-like role (see Deut 18.15). **9:** Jesus's identity, for Mark, grows clear only after the resurrection. See 1.34n. **10:** *Rising from the dead*, see 6.16n.; part of the Jewish apocalyptic

must come first?" [12] He said to them, "Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? [13] But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him."

[14] When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. [15] When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him. [16] He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" [17] Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; [18] and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." [19] He answered them, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me." [20] And they brought the boy[a] to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy,[a] and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. [21] Jesus[b] asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. [22] It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us." [23] Jesus said to him, "If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes." [24] Immediately the father of the child cried out,[c] "I believe; help my unbelief!" [25] When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!" [26] After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." [27] But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. [28] When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" [29] He said to them, "This kind can come out only through prayer."[d]

[30] They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; [31] for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." [32] But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

[33] Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" [34] But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. [35] He sat down, called the twelve,

[a] Gk *him*
[b] Gk *He*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *with tears*
[d] Other ancient authorities add *and fasting*

worldview. See also Mt 25.31–46. **12:** *Restore all things*, God's coming kingdom entailed sweeping restoration of the cosmic order. *Written about the Son of Man*, though no known Jewish traditions claim that a figure of this name will suffer (cf. Dan 7.1–27), apocalyptic texts consistently assume a suffering destiny for those who remain righteous and/or faithful to God in the face of earthly oppressors (Dan 11.33–35; 2 Macc 7). **13:** *Elijah has come,* see 1.6n., 6.15.

9.14–29: Jesus heals a child who had epilepsy (Mt 17.14–20; Lk 9.37–43a). **14:** *Scribes*, see 1.22n. **18:** The details fit common symptoms of epileptic seizures. *Could not*, lit., "were not strong." Typically in Mark, the defeat of evil forces depends on strength (see 1.7; 3.27; 5.4; 14.37). **19:** *Faithless generation*, see 8.12n. In this setting, the phrase may refer to Jesus's disciples, to the father, or to an unspecified group. **23:** *All things . . . believes*, trust in God's kingly power creates a channel for its effective restoration of well-being and wholeness (see 2.5; 5.34; 11.22–23; cf. 6.5–6). **24:** *I believe; help my unbelief*, a prayer that acknowledges the father's ambiguous relationship to faith. **29:** *Prayer*, Mark does not specify whose prayer is effective in this case, though the story mentions only the father's petition for faith (v. 24).

9.30–37: Second passion prediction and discipleship instruction (Mt 17.22–23; 18.1–9; Lk 9.43b–48). See also 8.27–9.1; 10.32–45. **30:** On Jesus's not wanting *anyone to know*, see 1.43–44n. **31:** *Betrayed*, lit., "handed over," a detail not included in the first prediction (8.31; cf. 14.11,18). **32:** Despite the repeated nature of the prediction, the disciples still fail to grasp Jesus's destiny. **33:** *Capernaum*, see 1.21n. **35:** *Last . . . servant*, Jesus

and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." 36 Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

38 John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone[a] casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 Whoever is not against us is for us. 41 For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

42 "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me,[b] it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. 43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell,[c] to the unquenchable fire.[d] 45 And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell.[c,d] 47 And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell,[c] 48 where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

49 "For everyone will be salted with fire.[e] 50 Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?[f] Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

10 He left that place and went to the region of Judea and[g] beyond the Jordan. And crowds again gathered around him; and, as was his custom, he again taught them.

2 Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." 5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart

[a] Other ancient authorities add *who does not follow us*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *in me*
[c] Gk *Gehenna*
[d] Verses 44 and 46 (which are identical with verse 48) are lacking in the best ancient authorities
[e] Other ancient authorities either add or substitute *and every sacrifice will be salted with salt*
[f] Or *how can you restore its saltiness?*
[g] Other ancient authorities lack *and*

redefines the concept of greatness discussed by the disciples (9.34). Cf. 8.34–35. **36:** *Little child*, an illustrative example of true greatness. The ancient world assigned little social value to children. **37:** *In my name*, possible allusion to Mark's community as it carries out Jesus's mission after the resurrection. *One who sent me*, Jesus is a specially designated agent of God's kingdom. Cf. Jn 12.44–45. Similar sayings appear in 10.15; Mt 10.40; 18.5; Lk 9.48; 10.16; 18.17.

9.38–41: An unknown exorcist (Lk 9.49–50; cf. Num 11.27–29). **39:** *Deed of power*, see 5.30; 6.2,14. Jesus's mission establishes a foothold for God's sovereign power; as a result, others wield that restorative power as well. **40–41:** See Mt 10.42; 12.30; Lk 11.23.

9.42–50: Jesus warns of coming judgment (Mt 18.6–9; Lk 17.1–2). **42:** *Little ones*, see 9.36–37. Mark probably expands the term to include society's weaker members. *Great millstone*, used to grind grain and turned by a donkey or mule. **43:** *Cut it off*, a hyperbolic expression. See also 9.45. 47; Mt 5.30. *Hell*, lit., "Gehenna," a valley in Jerusalem associated with pagan rites (see 2 Kings 23.10; Jer 7.31) and used in Jesus's day as a trash heap. Metaphorically understood as a place of eternal punishment. See Mt 5.30; Lk 12.5. **49:** *Salted with fire*, images that combine to signal the coming judgment (see Isa 66.24; 1 Cor 3.13). **50:** See Mt 5.13. **51:** *Peace*, a character trait of the community that reflects God's kingdom come to earth.

10.1–12: Jesus warns about divorce and remarriage (Mt 19.1–9). **1:** *Region of Judea and beyond the Jordan*, perplexing geographical details that do not clearly fit Jesus's transition from Galilee (9.33) to Jerusalem (11.1). Mark probably combines traditional material without knowing the lay of the land. **2:** *Pharisees*, see 2.16n. *Test*, see 8.11; 12.15. **3:** Jesus argues from within Jewish tradition; cf. 2.25; 7.9–10. **4:** *Certificate of dismissal*, see Deut 24.1–4. **5:** *Hardness of heart*, see 3.5n. Those who cast their loyalty with the present evil age are inured, and thus

he wrote this commandment for you. 6 But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,[a] 8 and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

10 Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. 11 He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

13 People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. 14 But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. 15 Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.' " 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money[b] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is[c] to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *and be joined to his wife*

[b] Gk lacks *the money*

[c] Other ancient authorities add *for those who trust in riches*

unreceptive, to God's coming reign. On the role of the *heart*, see 7.19n. **6–7:** Jesus combines Gen 1.27 with Gen 2.24 as a blueprint for the ideal age that will be restored when God's kingdom has dawned. **9:** *Separate*, the prohibition of divorce reflects the harmony commanded in 9.50. Elsewhere, the NT takes a more permissive stance on divorce. Cf. Mt 5.32; 19.9; 1 Cor 7.10–16. **11–12:** Jesus introduces parity between men and women in a world that traditionally restricted women's right to divorce.

10.13–16: Jesus blesses children (Mt 19.13–15; Lk 18.15–17). See also 9.36–37. **13:** *Touch*, see 1.31n. **14:** *Indignant*, Jesus often exhibits visceral emotion when he encounters forces that impede divine care for the afflicted and weak; see 1.41n.; 3.5; 6.34; 9.22; 10.41. **15:** *As a little child*, grammatically ambiguous, the phrase signals either that Jesus commends welcoming little children (see 9.36–37) or sees them as exemplary for welcoming God's kingdom.

10.17–31: Jesus challenges a rich man (Mt 19.16–30; Lk 18.18–30). Mark contrasts the children who welcome God's kingdom (10.14–16) with a rich man who turns away from it. **17:** *Eternal life*, participation in God's coming kingdom; cf. Dan 12.2. **18:** *God alone*, lit., "the one God," a distinctive Jewish view (Deut 6.4). On the question of Jesus's "goodness," cf. Mt 19.17; Jn 8.46; Heb 7.26; 1 Pet 2.22. **19:** *Commandments*, see Ex 20.12–16; Deut 5.16–20. This list prioritizes laws that concern human relationships (cf. Mt 5.21–48) and adds an injunction against defrauding others not found in the Decalogue (but see Ex 20.17; Deut 24.14). **21:** *Sell . . . the poor*, Jesus intensifies traditional Jewish concern for the poor with a radical call to self-sacrifice as prerequisite for discipleship (10.28). **22:** *Shocked . . . grieving*, Mark leaves unspecified the exact basis of the man's grief, though he seems to find Jesus's command too radical to obey. **25:** Jesus reverses conventional associations between wealth and God's favor, stressing instead that wealth constitutes an obstacle to utter dependence on God's power. See also Job 22.23–26; Prov 28.11; Mt 6.24; 1 Tim 6.9–10. **26:** *Saved*, delivered to eternal life and restored to wholeness at

another,[a] "Then who can be saved?" [27] Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

[28] Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." [29] Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news,[b] [30] who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. [31] But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

[32] They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, [33] saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; [34] they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again."

[35] James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." [36] And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" [37] And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." [38] But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" [39] They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; [40] but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

[41] When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. [42] So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. [43] But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. [45] For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

[a] Other ancient authorities read *to him*

[b] Or *gospel*

the last judgment. **27:** A common maxim in the ancient world (cf. 9.23); see also Gen 18.14; Zech 8.6. **29:** See 8.35n. **30:** Jesus's promise combines abundant reward with inevitable persecution. See also 13.9–13. Jesus omits "fathers" from the list repeated from 10.29, perhaps because God is considered the "father" of believers. Cf. 3.32n.; 6.3. **31:** See 9.35; 10.44.

10:32–45: Third passion prediction and discipleship instruction (Mt 20.17–27; Lk 18.31–34). See also 8.27–9.1; 9.30–37. **32:** *Jerusalem*, see 3.22n. *Amazed . . . afraid*, related but distinctive responses to Jesus. On amazement, see 1.27; 10.24; on fear, see 4.40; 6.50; 16.8. **33:** *Gentiles*, included for the first time in the group who will execute Jesus. **34:** *Mock . . . spit . . . flog*, graphic details about Jesus's treatment that appear for the first time here; see 15.15–32. **35:** *James and John*, with Peter, the sons of Zebedee are preeminent among disciples. See 1.19; 5.37n.; 9.2; 14.33. **37:** *In your glory*, the disciples expect that Jesus will take his messianic place in the heavenly throne room (cf. 13.26; Dan 7.13). Their request shows that, as "first" among disciples, they miss Jesus's point in 10.31. **38–39:** *Cup . . . baptism*, images suggestive of entering God's kingdom. The former connotes destiny (cf. 14.24; see also Pss 11.6; 23.5; 116.13; Isa 51.17,22); the latter signals either a final cleansing (cf. 1.4n.) or perhaps death to the present evil age (see Lk 12.15; Rom 6.3–6). **40:** *Prepared*, a passive verb that implies God as sovereign subject who presides over human destiny. **42:** *Recognized as their rulers*, lit., "thought-to-be rulers," implying the provisional nature of earthly power. *Tyrants over*, human power prevails by subjugating people. **43:** *Among you*, the disciples are to wield their power as Jesus does, reflecting a servant-like posture toward others (see Jn 13.1–20). **44:** *Slave of all*, cf. 1 Cor 9.19; 2 Cor 4.5; Gal 5.13. **45:** *Son of Man*, see 2.10n. As Son of Man, Jesus incorporates his followers into his model of servanthood that leads to the world's redemption from the present evil age (see 13.12).

46 They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." 50 So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51 Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher,[a] let me see again." 52 Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

11 When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples 2 and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. 3 If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.' " 4 They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, 5 some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" 6 They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. 7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. 9 Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

11 Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see

[a] Aramaic *Rabbouni*

10.46–52: Jesus restores sight to Bartimaeus (Mt 20.29–34; Lk 18.35–43). The passage serves as a literary transition from the Gospel's central section (8.27–10.45; cf. 8.22–26n.) to Jesus's entry into Jerusalem. **46:** *Jericho*, a town in the Jordan Valley east-northeast of Jerusalem and about a day's journey away. *Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus*, see 3.17n. The name Timaeus probably reminded Mark's audience of Plato's familiar work by that name. Bartimaeus's blindness may imply a critique of philosophical reasoning as the means to clear insight. **47:** *Son of David*, rarely used in Mark, the title links Jesus to Jewish hopes for renewal of the Davidic kingdom (2 Sam 7.4–17; cf. 11.10). Mark probably downplays the title's significance for Jesus because of its military implications (cf. 12.35–37). **52:** *Your faith has made you well*, see 2.5n. *The way*, a term used by early Christians to denote discipleship; see Acts 9.2; 19.9; 24.14.

11.1–15.47: Jesus's destiny in Jerusalem.

11.1–13.37: Jesus in Jerusalem, during Passover. 11.1–11: Jesus's messianic entry (Mt 21.1–11; Lk 19.28–40; Jn 12.12–19). **1**: *Bethphage and Bethany*, towns just east of Jerusalem where Passover pilgrims found shelter; the location of Bethphage is unknown, but Bethany is 2 mi (3.25 km) from the city. *Mount of Olives*, overlooking Jerusalem and linked in Jewish prophecy to God's coming kingdom (Zech 14.4). **2**: *Colt*, associated with God's designated ruler (Zech 9.9; cf. Mt 21.5; Jn 12.15). **3**: *The Lord*, an unusual reference to Jesus in Mark (cf. 5.19n.). **8**: *Cloaks . . . branches*, details associated with royal processions (see 2 Kings 9.13; 1 Macc 13.51; 2 Macc 10.7). **9–10**: The crowd's acclaim, based on Ps 118.25–26, indicates they view him as a coming king. **9**: *Hosanna*, lit., "save now!" The people's hope for deliverance from the Roman occupation is misplaced; their disappointment will, in part, lead to Jesus's death. **10**: *Our ancestor David*, a phrase that further underscores the crowd's political hopes for Jesus's "kingship"; see 10.47–48n. Cf. Mt 21.9; Lk 1.32–33. **11**: Jesus's visit to the impressive Temple structure rebuilt under Herod the Great (37–4 BCE) apparently goes unnoticed.

11.12–25 [26]: Jesus's prophetic indictment of the Temple (Mt 21.12–22; Lk 19.45–48; Jn 2.13–22). **13**: *Season*, the Greek term "kairos" connotes time that carries a divine purpose, rather than simply chronological time.

whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it.

15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; 16 and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer
for all the nations'?

But you have made it a den of robbers." 18 And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. 19 And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples[a] went out of the city.

20 In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21 Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." 22 Jesus answered them, "Have[b] faith in God. 23 Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. 24 So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received[c] it, and it will be yours.

25 "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."[d]

27 Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him 28 and said, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?" 29 Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me." 31 They argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 32 But shall we say, 'Of human origin'?"—they were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet. 33 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

[a] Gk *they*: other ancient authorities read *he*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *"If you have*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *are receiving*
[d] Other ancient authorities add verse 26, *"But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."*

Cf. 1.15. **14:** Jesus's curse seems arbitrary—and thus symbolic—since fruit trees' production depends on the horticultural cycle. **15**: *Drive out*, a verb often associated in Mark with the casting out of demonic forces; see, e.g., 1.34,39; 3.15,22. *Those who were selling*, cf. Zech 14.21. Pilgrims exchanged Roman for Temple currency in the Court of the Gentiles. *Doves*, sacrificial animals (see Lev 1.15; 5.7). **17:** Jesus cites Isa 56.7 and Jer 7.11 in his prophetic indictment of the Temple economy. *Den of robbers*, implicates Temple authorities for profiting at the expense of others. **18**: *Kill him*, lit., "destroy him" (see 3.6). The leaders' malicious intent stems at least partly from Jesus's acclaim among *the whole crowd.* **21:** *Rabbi,* see 9.5n. **22–25:** Jesus's effective curse on the fig tree displays the connection between "faith in God" and access to divine power. **22**: *Faith*, or "trust," in God's sovereign power (1.15); see 2.5n. **23:** *This mountain*, perhaps signaling Mount Zion, linked in Jewish tradition to God's choice of Israel for the renewal of the earth (see, e.g., Isa 2.2–4; 24.23). Roman engineers "moved" mountains to build structures that maintained their occupying power. **25**: Cf. Mt 6.5; Lk 18.11,13. Access to divine power depends on right relationships with God and other people. **[26:]** Reliable manuscripts omit 11.26, which strengthens the claim of 6.25 (see Lk 11.2–4).

11.27–33: Jerusalem leaders question Jesus's authority (Mt 21.23–27; Lk 20.1–8). **27**: *Chief priests, the scribes, and the elders*, see 8.31n. **28**: *Authority*, Jesus's authority has been noted from early in the Gospel (see, e.g., 1.22,27; 2.10). **29–30:** In rabbinical fashion, Jesus answers one question with another; cf. 2.25–26; 10.3. *Baptism of John*, see 1.4–11; 6.14. **32**: *The crowd*, see 11.18n. Since John had stirred hopes for God's coming kingdom, the Jerusalem leaders seem wary about both a possible popular insurgency and the violent response such an uprising would inevitably elicit from Roman officials. **33:** *We do not know*, a safe—and ironic—answer. Cf. 12.24.

12 Then he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. **2** When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. **3** But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. **4** And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. **5** Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. **6** He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' **7** But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' **8** So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. **9** What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. **10** Have you not read this scripture:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;[a]
11 this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes'?"

12 When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

13 Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. **14** And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? **15** Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it." **16** And they brought one. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." **17** Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

18 Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, saying, **19** "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man[b] shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. **20** There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; **21** and the

[a] Or *keystone*
[b] Gk *his brother*

12.1–12: Parable of the wicked tenants (Mt 21.33–46; Lk 20.9–19). **1**: *In parables*, see 3.23n., 4.11. *Vineyard*, an image used in the prophets to address Israel's failures; see Isa 5.1–7; Jer 2.21; Ezek 19.10–14; Hos 10.1. **2**: *Season*, see 11.13n. In Mark, the "season" of God's kingdom is near (1.15). *Slave,* or servant, a term often used for biblical prophets (e.g., Am 3.7; Zech 1.6). **3–5**: Through literary repetition, the parable emphasizes the motif of prophetic rejection (see 2 Chr 36.15–16). **6**: *Beloved son*, see 1.11; 9.7, where the term refers explicitly to Jesus (cf. 15.39). **7**: *Heir . . . inheritance*, recognition of the son's legitimate claim to the property and the tenants' wanton designs on it; cf. Mt 25.34. **9**: *Destroy the tenants*, language connoting triumph over evil (see 1.24; cf. 3.6). *Others*, probably righteous Gentiles, who assume their place in God's coming kingdom (see Mt 25.31–46). **10–11**: An explanation of Jesus's rejection and vindication, perhaps also hinting at the inclusion of the "others" mentioned in 12.9. See Ps 118.22–23, also quoted in Acts 4.11; Eph 2.20; 1 Pet 2.7. **12**: *Feared the crowd*, see 11.18n., 32n.

12.13–34: Jerusalem leaders attempt to ensnare Jesus. 12.13–17: A question about taxes (Mt 22.15–22; Lk 20.20–26). **13**: *Herodians*, see 3.6n. **15**: See 2.8. *Denarius*, see 6.37n. **16**: *Head*, lit., "image." Roman coins featured the head of the emperor. *Title*, lit., "inscription," which read, "Tiberius Caesar, Son of the Divine Augustus, Augustus." **17**: Jesus's ambiguous response leaves his opponents—and readers—to ponder the relationship between political and religious power. See Mt 17.24–27; Rom 13.1–7; 1 Pet 2.13–17. *Amazed*, see 1.22; 5.20.

12.18–27: A question about resurrection (Mt 22.23–33; Lk 20.27–40). **18**: *Sadducees*, a party of the wealthy elite. Since Annas II, high priest in 62 CE, was a Sadducee (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.197–99), his brother-in-law, Caiaphas, the high priest under whom Jesus is executed, probably was as well (see Acts 4.1; 5.17). Josephus says this party denied both the "traditions of the elders" (see 7.3n.) and the end-time resurrection of the dead (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.16). **19**: Deut 25.5–6 stipulates the practice of "levirate marriage" (see also Gen 38.8).

second married the widow[a] and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; 22 none of the seven left children. Last of all the woman herself died. 23 In the resurrection[b] whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her."

24 Jesus said to them, "Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong."

28 One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; 33 and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah[c] is the son of David? 36 David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet."'

37 David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?" And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

38 As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, 39 and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! 40 They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

[a] Gk *her*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *when they rise*
[c] Or *the Christ*

24: *Scriptures . . . power of God*, Jesus challenges both the Sadducees' interpretive approach and their denial of God's coming reign; cf. 12.18n. **25**: *Angels in heaven*, those raised for the final judgment would inhabit spiritual bodies; see 1 Cor 15.35–50. **27**: *Living*, Jesus deflects attention from the Sadducees' feigned interest in the afterlife to highlight God's activity in the present (see also 12.26; Ex 3.6,15–16). **12.28–34: A question about the commandments** (Mt 22.34–40; Lk 10.25–28). **29–30:** Jesus cites the opening of the Shema, Deut 6.4–5, and adds "with all your mind." **31**: Love of God and love of neighbor (Lev 19.18) are often linked; see also Rom 13.9; Gal 5.14; Jas 2.8). **33:** Jesus echoes a common biblical view (see Hos 6.6). **34:** *Not far from the kingdom of God*, possibly in two respects: Jesus thinks God's kingdom is drawing near (1.15; 9.1), and the scribe's answer reveals that he belongs to it.

12.35–40: Jesus challenges the scribes (Mt 22.41–46; Lk 20.41–47). **35**: Jesus turns the questioning on his interrogators. *Son of David*, see 10.47n. Elsewhere, Christian writers emphasize Jesus's Davidic ties (see Mt 1.20; Lk 2.4; Rom 1.3). **36–37**: Jesus cites Ps 110.1 as a proof text to deny the Messiah's Davidic lineage; elsewhere that passage is used of Jesus assuming a heavenly throne after the resurrection (see Acts 2.34–35; 1 Cor 15.25; Heb 1.13). **37**: *Large crowd . . . delight*, see 11.18n. This crowd's response may also reflect misplaced political hopes. **38:** *Long robes*, distinctive attire of religious leaders. Elsewhere this critique is directed at the Pharisees (cf. Mt 23.1–36; Lk 11.37–44). **39:** *Places of honor*, ancient meal practices designated one's status according to seating assignments; see Lk 14.7–11. **40:** The prophets condemn those who take advantage of widows as weaker members of the social order (e.g., Isa 10.1–2; Zech 7.10; Mal 3.5; cf. Ps 94.1–7). *Appearance*, see Mt 6.5–6; 23.5–6.

41 He sat down opposite the treasury,
and watched the crowd putting money into
the treasury. Many rich people put in large
sums. 42 A poor widow came and put in two
small copper coins, which are worth a penny.
43 Then he called his disciples and said to
them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has
put in more than all those who are contrib-
uting to the treasury. 44 For all of them have
contributed out of their abundance; but she
out of her poverty has put in everything she
had, all she had to live on."

13 As he came out of the temple, one
of his disciples said to him, "Look,
Teacher, what large stones and what large
buildings!" 2 Then Jesus asked him, "Do you
see these great buildings? Not one stone will
be left here upon another; all will be thrown
down."

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of
Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James,
John, and Andrew asked him privately, 4 "Tell
us, when will this be, and what will be the
sign that all these things are about to be
accomplished?" 5 Then Jesus began to say to
them, "Beware that no one leads you astray.
6 Many will come in my name and say, 'I am
he!'[a] and they will lead many astray. 7 When
you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not
be alarmed; this must take place, but the end
is still to come. 8 For nation will rise against
nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there
will be earthquakes in various places; there
will be famines. This is but the beginning of
the birth pangs.

9 "As for yourselves, beware; for they will
hand you over to councils; and you will be
beaten in synagogues; and you will stand
before governors and kings because of me,
as a testimony to them. 10 And the good
news[b] must first be proclaimed to all nations.
11 When they bring you to trial and hand you
over, do not worry beforehand about what
you are to say; but say whatever is given you
at that time, for it is not you who speak, but
the Holy Spirit. 12 Brother will betray brother
to death, and a father his child, and children
will rise against parents and have them put to
death; 13 and you will be hated by all because
of my name. But the one who endures to the
end will be saved.

14 "But when you see the desolating
sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let
the reader understand), then those in Judea

[a] Gk *I am*
[b] Gk *gospel*

12.41–44: A widow's lavish gift (Lk 21.1–4). **42:** The story highlights the exemplary devotion of a widow, whose social position is marginal (see 12.40n.). *Two small copper coins*, the Greek calls the coinage a Roman *quadrans*, a tiny fraction of a laborer's daily earnings. **44:** Jesus contrasts giving out of *abundance* with giving out of *poverty*. *Everything she had*, lit., "her whole life"; see 8.35–36; cf. 10.22.

13.1–37: Jesus predicts the Temple's destruction and cataclysmic events to follow (Mt 24.1–44; Lk 21.5–33). Mark uses this teaching to interpret his audience's present reality (see esp. 13.14). **1**: Herod the Great inaugurated a massive expansion of the Temple complex to create the largest sacred space (ca. 35 acres) in the Roman world. **2**: See Jer 26.6; Mic 3.12. Roman soldiers demolished the buildings in 70 CE, but massive stones of part of the western retaining wall of the Temple platform remain a religious site. **3**: *Peter, James, John, and Andrew*, see 1.16–20; 5.37n. **4**: The disciples connect the Temple's destruction to the coming of the kingdom at the end of days. **6**: *I am he*, lit., "I am"; see 6.50n. Cf. 9.39, where Jesus approves of an exorcist using his "name." **8**: *Birth pangs*, a common apocalyptic metaphor for the human suffering associated with the last days (see Isa 13.6–8; Hos 13.13; Rom 8.22; 1 Thess 5.3). Other images in this verse echo passages that anticipate God's redemption (see, e.g., Isa 13.13; 14.30; 19.2; Jer 22.23; Rev 6.8; 11.13; 16.18). **9**: *Yourselves*, lit., "you yourselves," designating both Jesus's companions (13.3) and Mark's audience (13.14). *Hand you over*, see 9.31; 10.33. *Councils . . . synagogues*, Jewish governing bodies and gathering places in Judea and the wider world. **10**: *Good news*, see 1.1n.; 1.14. *Nations*, or "Gentiles," used in Jewish literature to denote non-Jews, and in Roman propaganda of the Empire's conquered peoples. God's reign will be universal, eclipsing religious, ethnic, and political divisions. **11**: *Holy Spirit*, see 1.8. **12**: As in other apocalyptic literature (e.g., 2 Esd 6.24), allegiance to God's kingdom can prove divisive in the context of existing social structures (cf. 3.31–35; Jn 9.18–23; 16.2). **13:** The full establishment of God's kingdom means the *end* of the present evil; see vv. 4,7,8. *Saved*, the destiny of the faithful at judgment day; cf. 10.26n. **14**: *Desolating sacrilege*, allusion to the defilement of the Temple during the Maccabean Era (see

must flee to the mountains; [15] the one on
the housetop must not go down or enter the
house to take anything away; [16] the one in the
field must not turn back to get a coat. [17] Woe
to those who are pregnant and to those who
are nursing infants in those days! [18] Pray that
it may not be in winter. [19] For in those days
there will be suffering, such as has not been
from the beginning of the creation that God
created until now, no, and never will be.
[20] And if the Lord had not cut short those
days, no one would be saved; but for the
sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut
short those days. [21] And if anyone says to you
at that time, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!'[a] or
'Look! There he is!'—do not believe it. [22] False
messiahs[b] and false prophets will appear
and produce signs and omens, to lead astray,
if possible, the elect. [23] But be alert; I have
already told you everything.

[24] "But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
[25] and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be
shaken.
[26] Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming
in clouds' with great power and glory. [27] Then
he will send out the angels, and gather his
elect from the four winds, from the ends of
the earth to the ends of heaven.

[28] "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as
soon as its branch becomes tender and puts
forth its leaves, you know that summer is
near. [29] So also, when you see these things
taking place, you know that he[c] is near, at the
very gates. [30] Truly I tell you, this generation
will not pass away until all these things have
taken place. [31] Heaven and earth will pass
away, but my words will not pass away.

[32] "But about that day or hour no one knows,
neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but
only the Father. [33] Beware, keep alert;[d] for you
do not know when the time will come. [34] It is
like a man going on a journey, when he leaves
home and puts his slaves in charge, each with
his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be
on the watch. [35] Therefore, keep awake—for
you do not know when the master of the house
will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at
cockcrow, or at dawn, [36] or else he may find you
asleep when he comes suddenly. [37] And what I
say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

14 It was two days before the Passover
and the festival of Unleavened Bread.
The chief priests and the scribes were looking

[a] Or *the Christ*
[b] Or *christs*
[c] Or *it*
[d] Other ancient authorities add *and pray*

Dan 7.27; 11.31; 12.11); may also refer to the Zealots' occupation of the Temple during the Jewish War (66–70 CE). *Let the reader understand*, addresses Mark's audience, perhaps to support those who fled the violence in Jerusalem. **18**: *In winter*, when adverse weather makes travel treacherous. **19**: *Suffering*, the Greek term "thlipsis" is used for suffering that has cosmic implications; see vv. 24–25; Dan 12.1; 2 Cor 4.17; Rev 2.9–10; 7.14. **20**: A shorter timeframe curtails the suffering of the faithful. *Elect*, or "chosen," applied in the Hebrew Bible to Israel (see Isa 42.1; 43.20) and in the NT to the church (see Rom 8.33; Eph 1.4–5; 1 Pet 1.2; 2.9; cf. Rom 11.28–29). **21–22**: *Messiah*, see 1.1n.; 8.28; 13.5. Josephus mentions prophets who performed signs during the revolt (*Ant.* 20.97,168–70). **23**: *Be alert*, See 4.24; 8.15,18. Cf. 1 Thess 5.6. **24–25**: See 15.33; Isa 13.10; 34.4; 50.3; Ezek 32.7–8; Joel 2.10,31; Am 8.9. *In those days*, shorthand for the "day of the Lord," when God's kingdom will prevail. **26–27**: *Son of Man coming in clouds*, see 2.10n.; in Dan 7.13–14, this figure assumes a heavenly throne after the beasts have been deposed. *Winds . . . heaven*. The "elect" comprise all who remain loyal to God's reign, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or religious tradition; see v. 20n. **28–31**: See 11.12–14,20–21. **30**: *This generation*, see 8.12n. If literal, it means that God's kingdom will arrive within a few decades (cf. 9.1); if metaphorical, it could denote the present evil age, for as long as it persists. **32–37:** Jesus rejects predicting specific timing but exhorts hearers to readiness; see v. 23; 14.32–42; Rom 13.11–14; 1 Thess 5:1–11. **34**: *Man going on a journey*, like an absentee landlord, God will arrive to see what care the tenants have taken; see 12.1–11; Mt 24.45–51; 25.13–30; Lk 12.35–46; 19.11–27. **35**: *Evening . . . dawn*, the four segments of the night watch. **37**: *To all*, Jesus's message extends beyond his immediate companions; see v. 14n.

14.1–15.27: **Jesus's arrest, trial, and execution** (Mt 26.1–27.66; Lk 22.1–23.56; Jn 13.1–19.42). **14.1–11**: **Preparations for Jesus's arrest** (Mt 26.1–16; Lk 22.1–6). Plans to eliminate Jesus (14.1–2; 14.10–11) frame—and contrast

for a way to arrest Jesus[a] by stealth and kill him; [2] for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

[3] While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,[b] as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. [4] But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? [5] For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii,[c] and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. [6] But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. [7] For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. [8] She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. [9] Truly I tell you, wherever the good news[d] is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

[10] Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. [11] When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

[12] On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" [13] So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, [14] and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' [15] He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." [16] So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

[17] When it was evening, he came with the twelve. [18] And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." [19] They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?" [20] He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread[e] into the bowl[f] with me. [21] For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by

[a] Gk *him*
[b] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases
[c] The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer
[d] Or *gospel*
[e] Gk lacks *bread*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *same bowl*

with—an unnamed woman's sacrificial anointing (14.3–9). **1**: *Passover . . . Unleavened Bread*, celebration of Israel's miraculous deliverance from a foreign overlord; see Ex 12.1–13.16; 2 Chr 35.17. *Chief priests . . . scribes,* see 8.31n. **2**: The influx of pilgrims for a feast celebrating liberation made the dangers of a *riot* acute during Passover (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.105–12). The religious leaders were wary of any popular figure who might foment rebellion. **3**: *Bethany*, see 11.1n. *Simon the leper*, see 1.40n. *Alabaster . . . nard*, in breaking the container the woman gives up a valuable container along with its entire contents. *Nard*, an aromatic oil imported from the Himalayan mountains (see Song 1.12; 4.13–14). The anointing confirms Jesus's status as the "Christ" (lit., "anointed one;" see 1.1n.). **5:** The sum is almost a year's wages for a day laborer. Cf. 6.37. **7:** Jesus affirms both the practice of caring for the poor (see Deut 15.11) and the woman's sacrificial gift. *Not always have me*, see 2.19–20. **8**: *She has done what she could*, lit., "what she had, she did," a stark reminder of the woman's full-scale investment—even "trust"—in Jesus's messianic purposes; cf. 12.41–44. Jewish *burial* rituals include anointing the body with perfume. **9**: *Good news*, see 1.1n., 14. *Whole world*, highlights the universal scope of God's kingdom (see 13.10,27). *In remembrance of her*, cf. Lk 22.19; 1 Cor 11.24, where the phrase similarly highlights Jesus's self-offering. **10**: *Judas Iscariot*, see 3.19. *Betray*, see 9.31; 10.33; 14.11; see also 13.9.

14.12–25: Jesus celebrates the Passover (Mt 26.17–29; cf. Lk 22.7–23). **12**: *First day . . . when the Passover lamb is sacrificed*, inconsistent with the standard practice of slaughtering the animal on 14 Nisan, for the beginning of Passover on 15 Nisan; cf. Jn 18.28; 19.14,31. **16**: *As he had told them*, Mark notes Jesus's prescient instructions to his disciples (cf. 11.2–6). **17**: Jesus's prediction of betrayal is ironic, since "one who is eating with me" typically signals deep friendship. See Ps 41.9; cf. Jn 13.18. **21**: An obscure saying, unknown in Jewish tradition, functions

whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

22 While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. 24 He said to them, "This is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

26 When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters; for it is written,

'I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.'

28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." 29 Peter said to him, "Even though all become deserters, I will not." 30 Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." 31 But he said vehemently, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And all of them said the same.

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. 34 And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." 35 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 He said, "Abba,[b] Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." 37 He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? 38 Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial;[c] the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39 And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. 41 He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

43 Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. 44 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under

[a] Other ancient authorities add *new*
[b] Aramaic for *Father*
[c] Or *into temptation*

as a judgment saying against Judas. See 8.31; 1 Cor 15.3–4. **22–25**: Early Christians celebrated a communal meal commemorating Jesus's death; see 1 Cor 11.23–26. **22**: *My body*, the metaphor refers to both Jesus's own flesh and the "body" of his followers (see 1 Cor 12.12–27; Rom 12.4). **24**: *Blood of the covenant*, which sealed the people's relationship with God (see Ex 24.6–8; Jer 31.31–34). The phrase "for many" echoes 10.45; for a death atoning for sins of the people, see 2 Macc 7.37–38; 4 Macc 6:28–29. **25**: *That day*, See 13.32.

14.26–52: Jesus on the Mount of Olives. **14.26–31**: **Jesus predicts his disciples' desertion** (Mt 26.31–35; Lk 22.31–34; Jn 13.36–38). **27:** See Zech 13.7. *Shepherd . . . sheep*, see 6.34n.; 14.50. **28**: *Galilee*, see 1.9n. Mark's community may have had ties to Galilee. Jesus promises to lead his disciples back to Galilee; see 16.7.

14.32–42: **Jesus grapples with his destiny** (Mt 26.36–46; Lk 22.39–46). **33**: *Peter and James and John*, see 5.37n. *Distressed and agitated*, Jesus experiences visceral emotions as he faces death. **34**: *Keep awake*, cf. 13.33n. **35–36**: Jesus prays to be delivered from the outcome he predicted (see 8.31; 9.31; 10.33–34) but then submits to God's will (see 3.35). *Abba*, Aramaic word for "father." *All things are possible*, see 9.22–23; 10.27. **38:** *Spirit* and *flesh* constituted two oppositional aspects of humans, or contrasts God's spirit with human weakness (1 QH 7.24–25; 12.29–30. **41**: *Hour has come*, see 13.32. Jesus's death signals the dawn of God's kingdom (see 1.14).

14.43–52: **Religious officials detain Jesus** (Mt 26.47–56; Lk 22.47–53; Jn 18.3–12). Ironically, Judas betrays Jesus with a gesture of friendship (see v. 17n.), while Jesus responds calmly to his violent opponents. **43**: *Swords and clubs*, the *crowd*, whose enthusiastic support raised the concern of officials (cf. 11.18,32; 12.12,37), now takes

guard." 45 So when he came, he went up to
him at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed
him. 46 Then they laid hands on him and
arrested him. 47 But one of those who stood
near drew his sword and struck the slave of
the high priest, cutting off his ear. 48 Then
Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with
swords and clubs to arrest me as though I
were a bandit? 49 Day after day I was with you
in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest
me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled." 50 All
of them deserted him and fled.

51 A certain young man was following
him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They
caught hold of him, 52 but he left the linen
cloth and ran off naked.

53 They took Jesus to the high priest; and
all the chief priests, the elders, and the
scribes were assembled. 54 Peter had followed
him at a distance, right into the courtyard of
the high priest; and he was sitting with the
guards, warming himself at the fire. 55 Now
the chief priests and the whole council were
looking for testimony against Jesus to put him
to death; but they found none. 56 For many
gave false testimony against him, and their
testimony did not agree. 57 Some stood up
and gave false testimony against him, saying,
58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this tem-
ple that is made with hands, and in three days
I will build another, not made with hands.' "
59 But even on this point their testimony did
not agree. 60 Then the high priest stood up
before them and asked Jesus, "Have you no
answer? What is it that they testify against
you?" 61 But he was silent and did not answer.
Again the high priest asked him, "Are you
the Messiah,[a] the Son of the Blessed One?"
62 Jesus said, "I am; and

'you will see the Son of Man
seated at the right hand of the Power,'
and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.' "

63 Then the high priest tore his clothes and
said, "Why do we still need witnesses? 64 You
have heard his blasphemy! What is your
decision?" All of them condemned him as de-
serving death. 65 Some began to spit on him,
to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to
him, "Prophesy!" The guards also took him
over and beat him.

66 While Peter was below in the courtyard,
one of the servant-girls of the high priest
came by. 67 When she saw Peter warming
himself, she stared at him and said, "You also
were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth."
68 But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or
understand what you are talking about." And
he went out into the forecourt.[b] Then the
cock crowed.[c] 69 And the servant-girl, on see-
ing him, began again to say to the bystand-
ers, "This man is one of them." 70 But again
he denied it. Then after a little while the
bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you
are one of them; for you are a Galilean." 71 But
he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I

a Or *the Christ*
b Or *gateway*
c Other ancient authorities lack *Then the cock crowed*

up arms against Jesus. *Chief priests, the scribes, and the elders*, see 8.31n. **45:** *Rabbi*, see 9.5n. **47**: *Slave of the high priest*, Caiaphas was high priest from 18 to 36 CE. **48**: *Bandit*, a term also used for armed insurgents. **50**: See Jesus's prediction (14.27). **51–52**: Some early interpreters connected this mysterious naked young man with the angel in the empty tomb (16.5). Others think the young man was the author's way of reading himself into the story.

14.53–65: **Jesus's interrogation by Jewish authorities** (Mt 26.57–68; cf. Lk 22.54–71; Jn 18.15–24). **53**: *High priest*, see 14.47n. *Chief priests, the elders, and the scribes*, see 8.31n. **14.56**: *False testimony*, two corroborating witnesses were required to bring a charge (Num 35.30; Deut 19.15; cf. Mt 18.16). **14.58**: See 11.15–16; 13.1–2. **14.61**: Jesus's silence in the face of false accusations fits scriptural patterns, e.g., in Ps 38.12–14 and Isa 53.7. **14.61:** *Blessed One*, a circumlocution for God. **14.62**: *I am*, see 6.50n. As the Christ, Jesus combines Dan 7.13 with Ps 110.1 to signal the messianic power shift. See 13.26n. **14.64**: *Blasphemy*, incurs the death penalty in biblical law (Lev 24.16). It is not clear how Jesus has profaned God's name. **14.65**: *Prophesy!*, a taunt indicating Jesus's reputation as a prophet. His treatment echoes Isa 53.3–5, where God's servant suffers abuse and scorn.

14.66–72: **Peter's threefold denial** (Mt 26.69–75; Lk 22.54–62; Jn 18.15–18). **14.66**: *Servant-girls of the high priest*, the plot expands to include members of Caiaphas's household (see 14.47,53). **14.68:** *Do not know or understand*, an ironic reply, since the disciples frequently misunderstand Jesus's messianic purposes (see 4.13; 6.52;

do not know this man you are talking about." 72 At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

15 As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. 2 Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." 3 Then the chief priests accused him of many things. 4 Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." 5 But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

6 Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. 7 Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. 8 So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. 9 Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" 10 For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. 12 Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do[a] with the man you call[b] the King of the Jews?" 13 They shouted back, "Crucify him!" 14 Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" 15 So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

16 Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters[c]); and they called together the whole cohort. 17 And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. 18 And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. 20 After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

21 They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. 22 Then they brought

[a] Other ancient authorities read *what should I do*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *the man you call*
[c] Gk *the praetorium*

8.17, 21; 9.32). See also 14.71. **14.72:** See 14.30. Peter's response typifies human emotion throughout the passion story (cf. 14.33–34; 15.34).

15.1–15: Jesus's interrogation by Roman authorities (Mt 27.1–2,11–23; Lk 23.1–5,13–25; Jn 18.28–40). **15.1**: *Morning*, the first in a series of temporal markers (see vv. 25,33,42). *Chief priests . . . council*, Jewish authorities, led by the "chief priests" (see vv.3,10,11,31), decide Jesus's culpability but lack the power to act on it. *Pilate*, Roman prefect of Judea (26–36 CE). See Acts 3.13–14; 13.28. **15.2**: *King of the Jews*, an ironic accusation that Jesus neither confirms nor denies. See 15.9,12,18,26. **15.5**: *No further reply*, Jesus does not respond directly to Pilate's inquiry (cf. 14.61; 15.2). **15.6:** The release of a prisoner during Passover is unattested elsewhere. **15.7:** *Barabbas*, identified with *the insurrection* but not named outside the Gospels. Both the NT (Lk 13.1; Acts 5.36–37) and Josephus mention uprisings against the Roman occupation. **15.10:** In Mark's telling, Pilate sees Jesus as less menacing than Barabbas and concludes that accusations against him stem from *jealousy*. Cf. Mt 27.18–25; Lk 23.4–16; Jn 19.1–16. **15.13–15**: Ironically, the *crowd* that had been enthralled with Jesus's teaching (11.18) now clamors for his execution. Like the Jewish leaders, Pilate aims to *satisfy* them. This depiction of Pilate as a crowd-pleaser does not fit with contemporary reports about his brutal tactics.

15.16–41: Jesus's torture and execution (Mt 27.27–56; Lk 23.26–49; Jn 19.16b–37). **15.16**: *Governor's headquarters . . . cohort*, Mark notes both the Roman torture and its public setting, since a *cohort* included several hundred soldiers. **15.17**: *Purple robe . . . crown*, mocking symbols of Jesus's reputedly royal status; see 10.34. **15.19**: *Struck . . . spat*, details that echo Isa 50.6; cf. 10.34. *Knelt down in homage*, ironic physical posture of worship. Cf. 1.40. **15.21**: *Carry his cross*, the crossbar, not the entire cross; cf. 8.34. *Simon of Cyrene*, a pilgrim from North Africa whose part in the story suggests the wide-reaching impact of Jesus's mission. *Alexander and Rufus*, otherwise unknown figures who may have been familiar to Mark's audience. **15.22**: *Golgotha . . . skull*, located outside the

Jesus[a] to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). 23 And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26 The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." 27 And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left.[b] 29 Those who passed by derided[c] him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 save yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Messiah,[d] the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

33 When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land[e] until three in the afternoon. 34 At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[f] 35 When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." 36 And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." 37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he[g] breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"[h]

40 There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

42 When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a

[a] Gk *him*
[b] Other ancient authorities add verse 28, *And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "And he was counted among the lawless."*
[c] Or *blasphemed*
[d] Or *the Christ*
[e] Or *earth*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *made me a reproach*
[g] Other ancient authorities add *cried out and*
[h] Or *a son of God*

city. Mark again translates the Aramaic name for the Gospel's audience; see 3.17n. **15.23:** *Wine . . . myrrh*, a pain-relieving tonic. **15.24**: *Divided his clothes, casting lots*, details found in Ps 22.18; see also 15.29n., 34n. **15.25**: *Nine o'clock*, see 15.1n. **15.26**: *"The King of the Jews,"* scholars accept the historical likelihood of this detail, since Roman officials often made a deliberate example of those who posed a threat to Caesar. See also 15.2,9,18. **15.27**: Cf. 14.48. **15.29**: *Shaking their heads*, see Ps 22.7. *Destroy the temple*, see 14.58n. **15.30–32**: Since Jewish tradition associated the "Christ" with triumph, not defeat, both the crowd and religious authorities take Jesus's death as proof that he is not *the Messiah, the king of Israel*. *Save yourself*, cf. 8.35; 11.9. For Mark, Jesus's refusal to save himself ironically saves others. *Chief priests . . . scribes*, see 8.31n. *See and believe*, for Mark, authentic faith often precedes clear sight (see 8.11–12; cf. 16.17–18). **15.33**: *Noon*, see 15.1n. *Darkness*, cosmic disturbance associated with the disruption of the earthly scheme. Cf. 13.24–25. **15.34:** *Three o'clock*, see 15.1n. Jesus's last words invoke Ps 22.1, both to express his sense of abandonment (see 14.32–42) and, more subtly, to anticipate the time when all nations will worship God (see Ps 22.27). **15.35**: *Elijah*, see 1.6n.; 9.11–13. **15.36**: *Sour wine*, see Ps 69.21. **15.38**: In the Temple, a curtain set apart the Holy of Holies—the traditional site of God's presence (see Ex 26.31–37)—from the surrounding space. *Torn*, see 1.10n. With Jesus's death, the chasm between heaven and earth has been bridged. **15.39**: *Centurion*, see 3.8; 5.20. In Mark, the first human to call Jesus *God's Son* is a Gentile Roman soldier (cf. 1.11n.; 9.7). *Breathed his last*, lit., "exhaled." **15.40**: *From a distance*, see 14.54. *Mary Magdalene*, see v. 47; 16.1. *Mary . . . Joses*, possibly Jesus's mother (6.3). *Salome*, cf. Mt 27.56. **15.41:** Mark notes that Jesus's band of followers included women (cf. Lk 8.1–3).

15.42–47: Jesus's burial in Joseph's tomb (Mt 27.57–61; Lk 23.50–56; Jn 19.38–42). **15.42**: *Evening*, see 15.1n. According to Jewish law, burial had to be completed prior to sunset on the sabbath. **15.43**: *Joseph of Arimathea*,

respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. 45 When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 Then Joseph[a] bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body,[b] wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body[b] was laid.

16 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." 8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.[c]

THE SHORTER ENDING OF MARK

⟦And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.[d]⟧

[a] Gk *he*

[b] Gk *it*

[c] Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8. One authority concludes the book with the shorter ending; others include the shorter ending and then continue with verses 9-20. In most authorities verses 9-20 follow immediately after verse 8, though in some of these authorities the passage is marked as being doubtful.

[d] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

a prominent *member of the council* whose request for Jesus's body entails both political and religious risk. It is unclear if Joseph thought that Jesus's death related to God's kingdom; on burial as an act of piety, see Tob 1.16–18. **15.46**: Tombs for wealthy families were sometimes cut out of small caves and sealed by a large stone.

16.1–20: Epilogue: Jesus's resurrection and appearance

16.1–8: Women discover an empty tomb (Mt 28.1–10; Lk 24.1–12; Jn 20.1–10). This is the earliest existing ending to Mark (see 16.9–20n.). **1**: The named women correspond to 15.40. Salome appears only in Mark (cf. Mt 28.1; Jn 20.1). *Anoint him*, see 14.8. Besides fulfilling burial obligations, the language reinforces Jesus's messianic status. **3**: *Roll away the stone*, a hewn circular stone that covered the tomb's entrance (see 15.46n.). **5**: Though Mark does not call the *young man* an angel, his clothing suggests this identity (see 9.3n.; cf. Mt 28.2; Lk 24.4). **5–6**: The women's "alarm" grows out of their unmet expectations (9.15; 14.33), even though Jesus had predicted this outcome (8.31; 9.31; 10.34). **7**: *Disciples and Peter*, ancient tradition links Mark's Gospel to Peter (see Introduction; 1.16–18; 14.50,66–72). *Ahead of you to Galilee*, see 14.28n. Cf. Mt 28.16–20; Lk 24.50–53. **8**: *Terror and amazement*, see 4.40n. This verse leaves readers hanging and the command to "tell his disciples" (v. 7) unfulfilled. Interpreters explain the Gospel's abrupt ending differently: some think the story is deliberately unresolved, so that the audience must carry forward the Gospel's message of a risen Christ; others believe the story's original ending had been lost.

The shorter ending: Two different endings appear in ancient manuscripts. The first dates to the fourth century CE at the earliest, occurs in only one known manuscript, and uses language foreign to Mark (e.g., *sacred and imperishable proclamation*).

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK

[9] ⟦Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. [10] She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. [11] But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

[12] After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. [13] And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

[14] Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.[a] [15] And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news[b] to the whole creation. [16] The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. [17] And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; [18] they will pick up snakes in their hands,[c] and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

[19] So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. [20] And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.[d]⟧

[a] Other ancient authorities add, in whole or in part, *And they excused themselves, saying, "This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits. Therefore reveal your righteousness now"—thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, "The term of years of Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was handed over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, that they may inherit the spiritual and imperishable glory of righteousness that is in heaven."*

[b] Or *gospel*

[c] Other ancient authorities lack *in their hands*

[d] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

16.9–20: The longer ending. This ending was probably added sometime in the mid-second century CE to bring Mark's ending into conformity with postresurrection accounts found in Matthew, Luke, and John. **9:** A summary of 16.1–8. *Seven demons*, see Lk 8.2. **11:** See Lk 24.9–11,22–25; Jn 20.19–29. **12–13:** See Lk 24.13–35. **14:** *Sitting at table*, see Lk 24.41–42. *Lack of faith and stubbornness*, recurrent themes in Mark (see 6.6; 9.24; 3.5; 6.52; 8.17; 10.5). **15:** See Mt 28.19; cf. Lk 24.47; Jn 20.21. **16:** See Titus 3.5; 1 Pet 3.21; Jn 3.18. **17–18:** A positive view of *signs* fits John's Gospel (see Jn 2.23; 4.48; 6.30) but not the Synoptic accounts (cf. 8.11–12; 13.22; and parallels). **17:** *Cast out demons*, see 3.15; 6.7; 9.38–39. *Speak in new tongues*, see Acts 2.4–11; 1 Cor 14.2–33. **18:** *Pick up snakes*, Lk 10.19 implies protection from snakes, though handling snakes does not appear elsewhere in the NT. Cf. Acts 28.3–6. *Drink any deadly thing*, unparalleled in the NT. *Lay their hands . . . recover*, see 6.13; Acts 3.1–10; 5.12–16; Jas 5.14–15. **19:** *Taken up*, see Lk 24.51; Acts 1.2,11,22. *Right hand of God*, see 10.37; 14.62. See also Acts 2.33–34; Rom 8.34; Eph 1.20. **20:** The proclamation of the *message* (lit., "word") is consistent with Mark's Gospel (see 1.14; 3.14; 4.3; 6.12; 13.10; 16.15). *With them*, see 3.14. *Confirmed the message by the signs*, see 16.17–18n.; also Acts 4.30; Rom 15.19; Heb 2.3–4.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

NAME AND AUTHORSHIP

The Third Gospel, traditionally called the Gospel according to Luke, is a unique literary and theological contribution to the story of Jesus Christ. By the late second century, the author of the Gospel and its sequel, the Acts of the Apostles, was identified as Luke, a physician who was a traveling companion and co-worker with Paul (Philem 1.24; Col 4.14). At times Luke is further described as a Syrian from Antioch, but practically nothing else is remembered of the writer of the Third Gospel. Scholarly analysis of the Gospel and Acts raises questions about the attribution of these writings to the Luke who was Paul's associate. The strongest argument for identifying Luke the physician as the author of the Gospel and Acts is the obscurity of this figure in the New Testament. Yet, even defenders of the traditional identification recognize difficulties with that connection. Though Luke's familiarity with Judaism is extensive, he seems to have more book-knowledge than practical experience of its particular rituals and beliefs. Similarly, when Luke provides details about Palestinian locations and practices, they exhibit a tendency toward setting the story in an urban environment rather than the predominantly nonurban village culture that Jesus would have known. Above all, Luke never mentions in Acts that Paul wrote letters and only seldom does he use theological themes from the letters of the apostle.

SOURCES

Luke's Gospel employs other earlier writings, especially the Gospel of Mark. That Luke knew and used additional materials, both oral and written, in composing this Gospel is certain, if not demonstrable. In fact, Luke shares a body of material (probably in written form) with the Gospel of Matthew that comprises approximately one-fifth of the overall narrative. Scholars designate this common material as "Q" (German "Quelle," "source"). Whether Luke had additional written sources for episodes and teaching found only in his Gospel—such as the account of Jesus's birth, childhood, certain parables, and materials unique to Luke's account of Jesus's passion and resurrection—is debated, though possible. Luke's concern with acknowledging and using sources is clear from his prologue (1.1–4). (See Introduction to the Gospels, pp. 1379–82.)

DATE AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION

The time and place of the writing of this Gospel are uncertain. Tradition associates Luke's account with both Antioch and Rome (where Acts ends), but no firm tradition specifies a precise time and place of composition. Any major urban center in the Greek-speaking areas of the Roman Empire would be a suitable location for such a document. As for its date, all one can say with certainty is that Luke wrote this account after Mark composed his Gospel; around 85 CE is plausible.

STYLE, CONTENTS, AND STRUCTURE

Luke employs different literary styles. The initial four verses are a single sentence that forms a highly stylized introductory statement typical of ancient historical writings. This formal and refined language was familiar to well-educated Greek-speakers in the first century CE. After this preface, the narrative shifts into a style of Greek reminiscent of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures. This Semitic-influenced form of Greek permeates the stories about the birth of Jesus. The style shifts into a more commonly used form of first-century Greek (called "koinē") for the remainder of the Gospel. In the story, the language varies to suit the locale and characters involved. Luke's appreciation of stylistic variation in narrative communication is apparent from this technique. One could say that the Gospel communicates the universal significance of its story of God's salvation in and through Jesus Christ in the variety of styles used to tell that story. Readers from different religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds would find a stylistic point of entry into the story of Jesus Christ.

Luke tells the same basic story as the other Gospels: Jesus appears, ministers in Galilee, and moves to Judea and Jerusalem where hostility leads to his suffering, death, and resurrection. Yet, Luke's account has a narrative logic and content that distinguish it from other Gospels. The advent of Jesus among Jews, who

observed ancestral traditions, highlights the continuity of Jesus's story with that of Israel and presents it as the fulfillment of his people's hopes. Luke underscores God's compassion as Jesus reaches out to the marginal members of society. Women, the less-than-pious, tax collectors, the poor, the sick, the oppressed, and even prominent Pharisees interact with Jesus. As summarized in Acts, "Jesus of Nazareth . . . went about doing good . . . for God was with him" (Acts 10.38). Jesus's coming and his ministry are the result of God's anointing Jesus with the Holy Spirit. The same spirit of God active in the history of Israel is present in the infancy stories with which the Gospel begins, and reappears in Acts as the church spreads the message of salvation to the world.

Luke has structured the narrative carefully. A prologue (1.1–4) prepares readers for the significance of the story. The infancy and childhood of Jesus is told in a series of scenes that alternate with an account of the origins of John the Baptist so that readers understand the role of both these figures in God's plan of salvation to all humanity (1.5–2.52). Jesus prepares for his ministry through an encounter with John and testing by the devil (3.1–4.13); Jesus ministers in Galilee, provoking controversy, calling disciples, preaching, working miracles, teaching, commissioning ministry by his followers, and showing compassion for the people (4.14–9.50). Jesus and his followers journey to Jerusalem with Jesus providing instruction along the way (9.51–19.27). This section contains such famous parables as the prodigal son and the rich man and Lazarus. Jesus enters Jerusalem, where he starts teaching in the Temple area (19.28–21.38). The gospel concludes with Jesus's Last Supper, crucifixion, and burial (22.1–23.56), and Jesus's empty tomb is found before he appears to the disciples and ascends to heaven (24.1–53).

INTERPRETATION

Initial incidents in the story anticipate later developments in the narrative. Readers will find signals that provoke questions that can be answered only by reading the whole Gospel. In the wake of Luke's presentation of the person and work of Jesus Christ, another dimension of the story communicates Jesus's teaching about what it means to be his follower. Discipleship is closely tied to the primary theme of Jesus's significance. For Luke, one is not a disciple alone, but only in belonging to the people of God who live as citizens of God's kingdom as made known in Jesus Christ.

Luke's account shows Jesus to be "the Lord," God's son who is the universal savior of humanity. Jesus inaugurates a mission to all humankind as the kingdom of God draws near to the ordinary lives of people in Jesus. Luke's version of Jesus's story presents Jesus's coming as the fulfillment of God's promises of salvation. This event inaugurated the final stage of God's dealings with humanity in anticipation of "the day of the Lord." Jesus himself and, in turn, his disciples call people to a new relationship to God and to other human beings.

Marion L. Soards

1 Since many have undertaken to set down
an orderly account of the events that
have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they
were handed on to us by those who from the
beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of
the word, 3 I too decided, after investigating
everything carefully from the very first,[a] to
write an orderly account for you, most excel-
lent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the
truth concerning the things about which you
have been instructed.

5 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there
was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged
to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was
a descendant of Aaron, and her name was
Elizabeth. 6 Both of them were righteous
before God, living blamelessly according to
all the commandments and regulations of
the Lord. 7 But they had no children, because
Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting
on in years.

8 Once when he was serving as priest
before God and his section was on duty, 9 he
was chosen by lot, according to the custom
of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of
the Lord and offer incense. 10 Now at the time
of the incense offering, the whole assembly
of the people was praying outside. 11 Then
there appeared to him an angel of the Lord,
standing at the right side of the altar of
incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was
terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. 13 But
the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid,
Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard.
Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and
you will name him John. 14 You will have joy
and gladness, and many will rejoice at his
birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the
Lord. He must never drink wine or strong
drink; even before his birth he will be filled
with the Holy Spirit. 16 He will turn many of
the people of Israel to the Lord their God.
17 With the spirit and power of Elijah he will
go before him, to turn the hearts of parents
to their children, and the disobedient to the
wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a
people prepared for the Lord." 18 Zechariah
said to the angel, "How will I know that this
is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is
getting on in years." 19 The angel replied, "I
am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God,
and I have been sent to speak to you and
to bring you this good news. 20 But now,
because you did not believe my words,
which will be fulfilled in their time, you will
become mute, unable to speak, until the day
these things occur."

[a] Or *for a long time*

1.1–4: The prologue (Mt 1.1; Mk 1.1). See Acts 1.1–2. John 20.30–31; 21.25 show similar awareness of sources used by the Gospel writers. This prologue resembles the openings of many Greek histories. Accordingly, Luke, acknowledges sources and explains the purpose of his own work. **3:** *Theophilus,* which means "friend of God," may designate any ideal Christian. Or, it may be a specific prominent individual, since *most excellent* is typically used for persons of high status; he might have been the author's patron, who would have the work copied and distributed.

1.5–2.52: The infancy and childhood of Jesus.

1.5–25: The annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist. 5: *In the days of King Herod of Judea* (ruled 37–4 BCE) probably 7–6 BCE (see Mt 2.1,15). *The priestly order of Abijah* was the eighth of twenty-four divisions of priests (1 Chr 24.10) who served in the Jerusalem Temple twice annually. As *a descendant of Aaron,* Israel's first high priest, Elizabeth was also from a priestly family. **5–7:** The mention of Elizabeth, the righteousness of the couple, their childlessness, and advanced age all anticipate the appearance of the angel. The description echoes the Hebrew Bible (Gen 15.3; 16.1; 25.2; 29.31; Judg 13.2–3; 1 Sam 1.2). **6:** The words translated *righteous* and *regulations* share the same stem in Greek ("dikai-"), emphasizing "righteousness" more than "rules." *Commandments* and *regulations* are synonyms. **9:** *Lots* were a sacred means of discerning God's will. The privilege of offering the incense (see Ex 30.7–8) was normally granted only once in a lifetime. **12:** Speechlessness indicates that Zechariah's vision was more than a psychological experience. **13:** The name *John* (Heb "Y[eh]oh[anan") means "The Lord has shown favor." **15:** John is described as a Nazirite; see Num 6.1–4; Judg 13.4–5; 1 Sam 1.11. **16–17:** The language echoes Mal 4.5–6. **17:** *He will go before him,* that is, he will be the forerunner of the messiah (Mal 3.1–4; Mt 11.14); on *Elijah,* see 1 Kings 17–19; 21. **19–20:** The angel's sign invokes a punitive measure, unlike the treatment of Mary (1.34–38). **19:** *Gabriel* is one of two angels named in the Hebrew Bible (Dan 8.16; 9.21). *I stand*

21 Meanwhile the people were waiting for
Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the
sanctuary. 22 When he did come out, he could
not speak to them, and they realized that he
had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept
motioning to them and remained unable to
speak. 23 When his time of service was ended,
he went to his home.

24 After those days his wife Elizabeth con-
ceived, and for five months she remained in
seclusion. She said, 25 "This is what the Lord
has done for me when he looked favorably
on me and took away the disgrace I have
endured among my people."

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was
sent by God to a town in Galilee called Naza-
reth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose
name was Joseph, of the house of David. The
virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to
her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The
Lord is with you."[a] 29 But she was much per-
plexed by his words and pondered what sort
of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said
to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have
found favor with God. 31 And now, you will
conceive in your womb and bear a son, and
you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great,
and will be called the Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give to him the throne
of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the
house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom
there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the
angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"[b]
35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will
come upon you, and the power of the Most
High will overshadow you; therefore the child
to be born[c] will be holy; he will be called Son
of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth
in her old age has also conceived a son; and
this is the sixth month for her who was said
to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible
with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the
servant of the Lord; let it be with me accord-
ing to your word." Then the angel departed
from her.

39 In those days Mary set out and went
with haste to a Judean town in the hill
country, 40 where she entered the house of
Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When
Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child
leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled
with the Holy Spirit 42 and exclaimed with
a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And
why has this happened to me, that the
mother of my Lord comes to me? 44 For as
soon as I heard the sound of your greeting,
the child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And
blessed is she who believed that there would
be[d] a fulfillment of what was spoken to her
by the Lord."

46 And Mary[e] said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my
Savior,
48 for he has looked with favor on the
lowliness of his servant.

[a] Other ancient authorities add *Blessed are you among women*
[b] Gk *I do not know a man*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *of you*
[d] Or *believed, for there will be*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *Elizabeth*

suggests urgency and authority (2.9; Acts 7.56–57). **24:** *In seclusion:* no reason is given. **25:** Sterility was a sign of divine disfavor and therefore a *disgrace* (see Gen 16.2; 25.21; 30.23; 1 Sam 1.1–8; Jer 22.30).

1.26–38: The annunciation of Jesus's birth. 26: *In the sixth month,* after the conception of John. *Nazareth,* a small village in southern Galilee; cf. Jn 1.46. **27:** Emphasizes Mary's status as a *virgin* (see v. 34). *Mary,* Gk "Mariam," from Heb "Miryam" (= English "Miriam") **31:** *Jesus,* Gk "Iesous," from Heb "Yeshuaʿ, a variant spelling of "Yehoshuaʿ (= English "Joshua"), meaning "The Lord has saved" (see Mt 1.21). **32:** *Son of the Most High* implies both divinity (see Sir 4.10) and royal authority (see 2 Sam 7.13–16; cf. Lk 2.35,76; 6.35; 8.28; Acts 7.48; 16.17). **32–33:** Jesus will fulfill the expectation that David's heir will reign eternally; see 2 Sam 7.12–17. **35:** The first occurrence of the title *Son of God* shows his relationship to *the Most High.* **36:** *Elizabeth . . . conceived,* the angel offers Mary corroboration, on which she acts (v. 39).

1.39–56: Mary and Elizabeth. 41: Elizabeth's being *filled with the Holy Spirit* may also acknowledge the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the unborn John *in her womb.* **43:** Prior to his birth Jesus is designated *Lord.* **44:** *Joy* indicates the positive relationship of John the Baptist and Jesus. **46–55:** The first of four canticles or hymns in the infancy narrative. This one is called the "Magnificat" from its first word in the Latin translation; compare the

Surely, from now on all generations will
call me blessed;
49 for the Mighty One has done great things
for me,
and holy is his name.
50 His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
51 He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the
thoughts of their hearts.
52 He has brought down the powerful from
their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
53 he has filled the hungry with good
things,
and sent the rich away empty.
54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
55 according to the promise he made to our
ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants
forever."

56 And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. 60 But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." 61 They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." 62 Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. 63 He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. 66 All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his
people and redeemed them.
69 He has raised up a mighty savior[a] for us
in the house of his servant David,
70 as he spoke through the mouth of his
holy prophets from of old,
71 that we would be saved from our
enemies and from the hand of all
who hate us.
72 Thus he has shown the mercy promised
to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor
Abraham,
to grant us 74 that we, being rescued
from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness
and righteousness
before him all our days.
76 And you, child, will be called the prophet
of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to
prepare his ways,
77 to give knowledge of salvation to his
people
by the forgiveness of their sins.

[a] Gk *a horn of salvation*

prayer of Hannah in 1 Sam 2.1–10, echoed in these verses. Its themes point to prominent themes in the ministry of Jesus. **55:** Gen 17.7; 18.18; 22.17; Mic 7.20.

1.57–80: The birth and naming of John. 58: Here *the Lord* refers to God. **59:** Gen 17.12; Lev 12.3; Lk 2.21. **62:** Zechariah's deafness complements his obvious speechlessness. **65:** *Fear* (rendered "awe" in 5.26) designates humble, reverent recognition of the limits of human understanding and power before God (2.9; 7.16; Acts 2.43,46–47; 5.5,11; 19.17). **66:** Anticipates the appearance of the adult John, 3.1–18. The final clause states Luke's retrospective assessment of John **67–79:** The second hymn, called the "Benedictus." **67:** Zechariah's words are designated *prophecy*. Both David and Abraham are remembered in their special relationships to God. **69:** *A mighty savior,* lit., "a horn of salvation," uses a biblical metaphor for power (Pss 18.2; 75.4–5; 89.17; 112.9; 148.14) and here refers to one who will bring salvation; see Pss 92.10; 132.17. The first occurrence in the Gospel of *salvation,* which comprises God's rescue of humanity from evil and the restoration of the right relationship between God and human beings. **76:** See 3.4. **80:** Cf. 2.52. Approximately thirty years (see 3.23). *In the wilderness,* see 3.4.

78 By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break
upon[a] us,
79 to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of
peace."
80 The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,[b] the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."
13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,[c] praising God and saying,
14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom
he favors!"[d]
15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."
16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *has broken upon*
[b] Or *the Christ*
[c] Gk *army*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *peace, goodwill among people*

2.1–7: The birth of Jesus (Mt 1.18–25). **1:** Censuses of Roman citizens occurred in 28 BCE, 8 BCE, and 14 CE; but this enrollment under Caesar *Augustus* is not attested elsewhere. Caesar *Augustus* (Octavian) ruled 27 BCE–14 CE. His rule marked a time of peace, the "pax Augusta," for which people celebrated him as lord and savior of the world. **2:** *Quirinius* was legate or commissioner of *Augustus* in a war against bandits in Cilicia. According to the Roman historian Tacitus (Annals 3.48), he was a military governor of Syria from 6 to 9 CE, dates inconsistent with 1.5. *City of David called Bethlehem*, see 1 Sam 16.12; Mic 5.2. **5:** "Engaged," more lit., "betrothed," which involved vows, witnesses, and certain payments. **7:** *Firstborn son* indicates nothing about Mary's subsequent childbearing; the word is a technical term referring to the child upon which God laid full claim (Num 3.11–13). *Bands of cloth* were normally used to swaddle or wrap infants. *Manger*, a feeding trough for animals.

2.8–20: Annunciation to shepherds and their visit (cf. Mt 2.1–12). **8:** That the shepherds were *living in the fields* indicates nothing about the season of Jesus's birth. **10:** *For all the people,* an expression of Luke's concern with the universal character of salvation. **11:** Jesus is identified by three primary titles of Christian belief, *Savior, Messiah,* and *Lord* (see Mt 1.21; 16.16; Jn 4.42; Acts 2.36; 5.31; Phil 2.11). The designation of the newborn Jesus as Lord is striking (see 1.43), for that word in Greek ("kyrios") is the term used throughout the LXX to translate the tetragrammaton, God's holy name (Heb "YHWH"). **14:** The third hymn. **19:** See 1.66; 2.51.

21 After eight days had passed, it was time
to circumcise the child; and he was called
Jesus, the name given by the angel before he
was conceived in the womb.
22 When the time came for their purifica-
tion according to the law of Moses, they
brought him up to Jerusalem to present him
to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the
Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designat-
ed as holy to the Lord"), 24 and they offered
a sacrifice according to what is stated in the
law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two
young pigeons."
25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem
whose name was Simeon;[a] this man was
righteous and devout, looking forward to
the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit
rested on him. 26 It had been revealed to him
by the Holy Spirit that he would not see
death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.[b]
27 Guided by the Spirit, Simeon[c] came into the
temple; and when the parents brought in the
child Jesus, to do for him what was custom-
ary under the law, 28 Simeon[d] took him in his
arms and praised God, saying,
29 "Master, now you are dismissing your
servant[e] in peace,
according to your word;
30 for my eyes have seen your salvation,
31 which you have prepared in the
presence of all peoples,
32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."
33 And the child's father and mother were
amazed at what was being said about him.
34 Then Simeon[a] blessed them and said to his
mother Mary, "This child is destined for the
falling and the rising of many in Israel, and
to be a sign that will be opposed 35 so that the
inner thoughts of many will be revealed—
and a sword will pierce your own soul too."
36 There was also a prophet, Anna[f] the
daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.
She was of a great age, having lived with her
husband seven years after her marriage,
37 then as a widow to the age of eighty-four.
She never left the temple but worshiped
there with fasting and prayer night and day.
38 At that moment she came, and began to
praise God and to speak about the child[g] to
all who were looking for the redemption of
Jerusalem.
39 When they had finished everything
required by the law of the Lord, they returned
to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.
40 The child grew and became strong, filled
with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon
him.
41 Now every year his parents went to Jeru-
salem for the festival of the Passover. 42 And
when he was twelve years old, they went up as
usual for the festival. 43 When the festival was
ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus
stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents

[a] Gk *Symeon*
[b] Or *the Lord's Christ*
[c] Gk *In the Spirit, he*
[d] Gk *he*
[e] Gk *slave*
[f] Gk *Hanna*
[g] Gk *him*

2.21–38: Jesus's circumcision and presentation. 21: See 1.59n.; 1.31. **22–24:** Ex 13.2,12,15; Lev 5.11; 12.8. The phrase *their purification* likely refers to the parents, though there was no purification rite for the father. Luke uses this ritual to illustrate the piety and religious observance of Mary and Joseph. **25–38:** *Simeon* and *Anna,* not otherwise known, acclaim Jesus as savior and redeemer. **25–28:** Simeon is the fifth person filled with the Holy Spirit (earlier: John, Mary, Elizabeth, and Zechariah). This anticipates the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2.1–4. **29–35:** The fourth hymn, whose opening words in Latin are "Nunc dimittis." Simeon's song and words to Mary recognize Jesus as the Christ and foretell conflict and agony. **30–31:** See 3.6. **32:** See Isa 49.6; 46.13; Acts 2.21; 10.34–35; 22.21. **33:** Luke calls Joseph the *father* of Jesus (notwithstanding 1.34–35), since he was Mary's husband and Jesus's legal father (cf. Mt 13.55; Lk 2.48; 3.23). **36–38:** Asher was Jacob's eighth son, by Zilpah (Gen 30; 35). Anna is called a prophet, and in the early church she would have been an ideal widow (see 1 Cor 7.8–9).

2.39–40: Jesus's childhood in Nazareth (Mt 2.22–23). **39–40:** These verses echo 1.80 and show Jesus excelling John.

2.41–52: Young Jesus in the Temple. This story of Jesus's boyhood is unique to Luke among the canonical Gospels, though later legendary writings also show interest in this unknown period of Jesus's life. **41:** Ex 23.15;

did not know it. 44 Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents[a] saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." 49 He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"[b] 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. 51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years,[c] and in divine and human favor.

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler[d] of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler[d] of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler[d] of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.
5 Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the

[a] Gk *they*
[b] Or *be about my Father's interests?*
[c] Or *in stature*
[d] Gk *tetrarch*

Deut 16.1–8. **46–47:** Illustrates Jesus's wisdom mentioned in 2.40 and anticipates 20.1–8. **48:** Mary's reprimand of Jesus seems out of place in the overall account. **49:** *My Father's house* recognizes the relationship between Jesus and God and contrasts with Mary's reference to Joseph as "your father" (v. 48). **50:** Mary and Joseph show a remarkable lack of comprehension. **51:** See 2.19. **52:** 1 Sam 2.26; Lk 1.80; 2.40.

3.1–4.13: Jesus's preparation for ministry (Mt 3.1–4.11; Mk 1.2–13).

3.1–6: The appearance of John the Baptist (Mt 3.1–6; Mk 1.2–6). **1:** *Tiberius* Caesar ruled 14–37 CE. Depending on the manner of reckoning years, sometime between 26 and 29 CE. *Pontius Pilate,* a Roman governor (technically a "prefect"), held authority in *Judea,* Samaria, and Idumea 26–36 CE; see 23.1, etc. The remainder of the kingdom of Herod the Great (see 1.5n.) had been divided between his sons *Herod* Antipas who ruled Galilee and Perea (23.6–7) and *Philip* (see map on p. 1444). Another son, Herod Archelaus, had ruled Judea from 4 BCE, but he was banished for incompetence and replaced by a Roman official in 6 CE (see Mt 2.22). *Lysanias* was a Roman tetrarch of *Abilene* ca. 25–30 CE. **2:** *Annas* was high priest 6–15 CE when the Romans deposed him. He was succeeded by relatives; initially by his son, Eleazar; then by his son-in-law *Caiaphas* (18–36 CE), followed by four more sons. Even when out of office, Annas's authority was recognized by the population. **3:** A summary of John's ministry. Proclamation led to *a baptism of repentance,* a symbolic act of cleansing to indicate realignment with the will of God in forgiveness of the one baptized. **4–6:** Isa 40.3–5. **6:** *All flesh* refers to all humanity and emphasizes that God's salvation was universal; see 2.30–32n.; Acts 2.17.

3.7–9: John's call to repentance (Mt 3.7–10). Along with vv. 16–17 these verses recall language of wrath and threat, all indications of the apocalyptic nature of John's proclamation (see Joel 2.1–17; Am 2.4–5; Mic 1.1–7; Zeph 1.14–18; Mal 4.1–6). **8:** The assertion to have *Abraham as . . . ancestor* was a claim to privileged standing with God through birth (see Jn 8.33,39; Rom 2.28–29). **9:** *Fire,* a symbol of judgment (see 3.16; 16.24).

root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,[a] 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with[b] the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. 19 But Herod the ruler,[c] who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;[d] with you I am well pleased."[e]

23 Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work. He was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Heli, 24 son of Matthat, son of Levi, son of Melchi, son of Jannai, son of Joseph, 25 son of Mattathias, son of Amos, son of Nahum, son of Esli, son of Naggai, 26 son of Maath, son of Mattathias, son of Semein, son of Josech, son of Joda, 27 son of Joanan, son of Rhesa, son of Zerubbabel, son

[a] Or *the Christ*
[b] Or *in*
[c] Gk *tetrarch*
[d] Or *my beloved Son*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *You are my Son, today I have begotten you*

3.10–14: John's directions to the crowd. 10: The cry "*What then should we do?*" will be repeated in Acts 2.37. **11:** *Two coats,* lit., "two tunics," usually undergarments. Sharing possessions is a theme of Luke-Acts; see 4.18; 6.30; 10.7,25–37; Acts 2.42–47; 4.32–37.

3.15–18: John's heralding of the messiah (Mt 3.11–12; Mk 1.7–8). **16:** *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire,* a prophecy fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2.1–4). **17:** *Winnowing fork,* a tool used in threshing grain. **18:** John's judgmental message about the coming of the Messiah is *good news*: 4.17–21.

3.19–20: John's imprisonment by Herod. Herod Antipas had divorced the daughter of the Nabatean king to marry his niece, Herodias, who was married to Antipas's brother, Herod Philip. Luke mentions John's imprisonment before Jesus's baptism; cf. Mt 14.3–4; Mk 6.17–18.

3.21–22: The baptism of Jesus (Mt 3.13–17; Mk 1.9–11). **21:** Prayer is a prominent theme in Luke's portrait of Jesus (5.16; 6.12; 9.18,28; 11.1; 22.32,41–46). **22:** See Ps 2.7; Isa 42.1. The *voice* from heaven returns at the Transfiguration (9.35). Here the *voice* addresses Jesus, alone, since *you* is singular in form. The descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove anticipates the more dramatic coming of the Spirit "like the rush of a violent wind" and "tongues, as of fire" at Pentecost (Acts 2.1–4).

3.23–38: The genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1.1–17). Luke traces Jesus's lineage back to Adam (Gen 5.1); linking Jesus's line with God's original creation shows Jesus's humanity and establishes his credentials as the universal savior. **23–38:** The genealogy traced through the line of Joseph includes David (v. 31) and Abraham (v. 34). **23–27:** The persons from *Heli* to *Zerubbabel* are otherwise unknown. For the rest of the genealogy cf. Gen 5.3–32; 11.10–26; Ruth 4.18–22; 1 Chr 1.1–4,24–28; 2.1–15. **23:** *About thirty years old,* a round figure. Many scholars put Jesus's birth at 6 BCE and his death at ca. 30 CE. If these dates are correct, Jesus began his ministry at about thirty-six years of age.

of Shealtiel,[a] son of Neri, [28] son of Melchi, son of Addi, son of Cosam, son of Elmadam, son of Er, [29] son of Joshua, son of Eliezer, son of Jorim, son of Matthat, son of Levi, [30] son of Simeon, son of Judah, son of Joseph, son of Jonam, son of Eliakim, [31] son of Melea, son of Menna, son of Mattatha, son of Nathan, son of David, [32] son of Jesse, son of Obed, son of Boaz, son of Sala,[b] son of Nahshon, [33] son of Amminadab, son of Admin, son of Arni,[c] son of Hezron, son of Perez, son of Judah, [34] son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, son of Terah, son of Nahor, [35] son of Serug, son of Reu, son of Peleg, son of Eber, son of Shelah, [36] son of Cainan, son of Arphaxad, son of Shem, son of Noah, son of Lamech, [37] son of Methuselah, son of Enoch, son of Jared, son of Mahalaleel, son of Cainan, [38] son of Enos, son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God.

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, [2] where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. [3] The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." [4] Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.' "

[5] Then the devil[d] led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. [6] And the devil[d] said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. [7] If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." [8] Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.' "

[9] Then the devil[d] took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, [10] for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning
you,
to protect you,'

[11] and

'On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot
against a stone.' "

[12] Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " [13] When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

[14] Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. [15] He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

[16] When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, [17] and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled

[a] Gk *Salathiel*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *Salmon*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Amminadab, son of Aram*; others vary widely
[d] Gk *he*

4.1–13: The temptation of Jesus (Mt 4.1–11; Mk 1.12–13). **1:** Note the activity of the (Holy) Spirit. Mark's verb "drove [him] out" (Mk 1.12–13) describing the Spirit's action becomes *led* in Luke's gentler phrasing. The order of the temptations differs from Matthew's, but the tests are the same. **2:** Mention of *forty days* as the stay in the "wilderness" recalls Israel's forty years in the wilderness (Deut 8.2; see also Deut 9.9; 1 Kings 19.8). **3,9:** Jesus's identity as *Son of God* is called into question . **4:** Deut 8.3. **8:** Deut 6.13; 10.20. **10–11:** Ps 91.11–12. **12:** Deut 6.16. **13:** *Until an opportune time,* see 22.3,28,53.

4.14–9.50: Jesus's ministry in Galilee (Mt 4.12–18.35; Mk 1.14–9.50).

4.14–15: The beginning of the Galilean ministry (Mt 4.12–17; Mk 1.14–15). **14:** Luke mentions Jesus's fame repeatedly, see v. 37; 5.15; 7.17. Jesus begins his ministry *filled with the power of the Holy Spirit*. **15:** Synagogues, local places of Jewish worship and instruction, were not directly linked with each other nor associated with the Jerusalem Temple; see 4.44.

4.16–30: Jesus in Nazareth (Mt 13.53–58; Mk 6.1–6). Luke has transposed this incident to make it the frontispiece of Jesus's ministry. The parallel in Mark 6.1–6 follows earlier appearances in Galilee; statements in Luke's version seem awkward because Jesus has not yet engaged in the activity to which he refers (v. 23). The details of synagogue worship are the earliest accounts of them. **17:** *The scroll of . . . Isaiah was given to* Jesus by the atten-

the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" 23 He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" 24 And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. 25 But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; 26 yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. 27 There were also many lepers[a] in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. 30 But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

31 He went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching them on the sabbath. 32 They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority. 33 In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 "Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." 35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm. 36 They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, "What kind of utterance is this? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!" 37 And a report about him began to reach every place in the region.

38 After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. 39 Then he stood over

[a] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

dant (v. 20). Scrolls were kept in a special place and were then handed to readers. **18–19:** Isa 61.1; 58.6; 61.2. **22:** The initial reaction to Jesus was positive. **24–27:** Traditions about the prophets (1 Kings 17.8–16; 2 Kings 5.1–14) illustrate that foreigners sometimes received God's aid when Israel did not. **28:** Hostility comes in response to Jesus's references to Gentiles (vv. 24–27), not to his messianic claims (v. 21). **30:** This enigmatic departure may symbolically anticipate the resurrection; see 24.6–7.

4.31–37: Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum (Mt 4.13; 7.28–29; Mk 1.21–28). Demons were imagined as nonmaterial beings, hostile to human welfare and rebellious against God. The Gospels reflect a general sense of helplessness before demonic activity. Jesus is one who can deliver persons from demonic oppression and from Satan himself (see 13.16). **31:** This incident was referred to in 4.23. It is the first of five sabbath healings or exorcisms (4.31,38; 6.6; 13.10; 14.1). *Capernaum* was on the northwest coast of the Lake of Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee), about 20 mi (32 km) from Nazareth. **32:** Jesus produced astonishment; 2.48; 9.43. Luke does not repeat Mark's comment about scribes (see Mk 1.22). **34–36:** The *demon* recognized Jesus's identity, whereas the people were simply amazed; see 4.41. **34:** The demon in the man who was possessed speaks in the plural, *us*, but then changes to the singular, *I*. **36:** The people's remarks do not distinguish between Jesus's teaching and exorcism (cf. v. 32).

4.38–39: The healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law (Mt 8.14–15; Mk 1.29–31). Another "sabbath healing" (see 4.31n.). Simon Peter is more fully introduced in 5.1–11; 6.13–14. **38–39:** *Simon,* a Greek name meaning "flat-nosed," is used as an alternative for the Hebrew "Simeon," which means "(God) has heard" (see Gen 29.33) **39:** The Greek verb meaning *to rebuke* occurs repeatedly. Those rebuked by Jesus form a striking lot: demons (4.35,41), a fever (4.39), nature (8.24), and the disciples (9.21,55).

her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.

40 As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. 41 Demons also came out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.[a]

42 At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them. 43 But he said to them, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." 44 So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.[b]

5 Once while Jesus[c] was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

12 Once, when he was in one of the cities, there was a man covered with leprosy.[d] When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." 13 Then Jesus[c] stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do choose. Be made clean." Immediately the leprosy[d] left him. 14 And he ordered him to tell no one. "Go," he said, "and show yourself to the priest, and, as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing, for a testimony to them." 15 But now more than ever the word about Jesus[e] spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear

[a] Or *the Christ*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *Galilee*
[c] Gk *he*
[d] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases
[e] Gk *him*

4.40–41: Healings and exorcisms at sunset (Mt 8.16–17; Mk 1.32–34). With the sabbath ending at sundown, people began to present their maladies to Jesus. **41:** The recognition by the demons of Jesus as *Son of God* is coupled with the narrator's reminder that Jesus was the Messiah.

4.42–44: Departure and further preaching in Galilee (Mt 4.23; Mk 1.35–39). **43:** Jesus says that he was sent for the purpose of proclaiming the kingdom of God, . Readers infer God behind Jesus's activity. **44:** Outside the Fourth Gospel this is the only reference to an early Judean ministry (implied in Mt 23.37 and Lk 13.34). Here Luke uses *Judea* to refer to the Palestinian region as the land of the Jews.

5.1–11: The great catch of fish (Mt 13.1–3a; 4.18–22; Mk 4.1–2; 1.16–20); cf. Jn 21.4–7. **1:** *Lake of Gennesaret,* Sea of Galilee. Jesus's message as *the word of God* is a complementary description to "the good news of the kingdom of God" (see 4.43). **4:** *Master* as a title for Jesus frequently replaces "Rabbi" and "Teacher" in Mark's account. **8:** *Simon Peter* anticipates 6.14 where Jesus nicknames Simon "Peter." **8:** Peter reacts to Jesus's authority by confessing his sinfulness and addressing Jesus as *Lord*.

5.12–16: The healing of a man with leprosy (Mt 8.1–4; Mk 1.40–45). Biblical descriptions of *leprosy* (Lev 13–14) indicate that the term was a generic reference to skin ailments from psoriasis to true leprosy. **14:** Jesus's touching this man countered the assumption that such contact rendered a person unclean. The healing demon-

him and to be cured of their diseases. 16 But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.

17 One day, while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting near by (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.[a] 18 Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus;[b] 19 but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd[c] in front of Jesus. 20 When he saw their faith, he said, "Friend,[d] your sins are forgiven you." 21 Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, "Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 22 When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? 24 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home." 25 Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. 26 Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."

27 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." 28 And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table[e] with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; 32 I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."

33 Then they said to him, "John's disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink." 34 Jesus said to them, "You cannot make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? 35 The days will

[a] Other ancient authorities read *was present to heal them*
[b] Gk *him*
[c] Gk *into the midst*
[d] Gk *Man*
[e] Gk *reclining*

strates the power of God overcoming both disease and ritual impurity. **16:** Luke refers to Jesus's prayer seven times; see 3.21; 5.16; 6.12; 9.18,28–29; 11.1; 22.41–45.

5.17–26: Healing and forgiveness of sins (Mt 9.1–8; Mk 2.1–12). **17:** The *Pharisees* were a religious movement (a sect within Judaism) that was devoted to exacting observance of the law of Moses. They concerned themselves with both the written law and its interpretation preserved in oral tradition. *The law* is the law of Moses or the Torah. **19:** *Through the tiles* is Luke's adjustment of Mark's story to present a tiled roof rather than the mud-plaster roof through which people "dug" a hole (Mk 2.4). **20:** The connection between forgiveness and healing reflects a belief that sickness resulted from sin (see Ex 34.7; Jn 9.2). The configuration of these factors is striking: while the faith belongs to the men carrying their friend, the paralyzed man's sins are recognized and then forgiven. **21:** *Scribes,* the group called "teachers of the law" at 5.17, were Jewish specialists in the law of Moses. Luke also refers to them as "lawyers" (e.g., 7.30). **21:** Blasphemy was a capital offense; see Lev 24.14–16. **24:** *Son of Man,* Jesus's self-designation can be understood either to refer to Jesus as a human being (see, e.g., Ps 8.4; Ezek 2.1) or to identify Jesus with the apocalyptic figure of Dan 7.13–14, understood to be the coming messiah and deputy of God.

5.27–32: The call of Levi (Mt 9.9–13; Mk 2.13–17). **27:** Tax collectors who worked for the Romans were generally despised by the population. *Levi* is identified by some as Matthew (6.15; cf. Mt 10.3). **32:** A central theme in Luke, repentance occurs three times in Mark, seven in Matthew, but fourteen times in Luke's Gospel and eleven more in Acts.

5.33–39: Debate about fasting (Mt 9.14–17; Mk 2.18–22). **34–35:** Jesus refers to himself as the *bridegroom* and to days *when the bridegroom will be taken away from them* as the time after his death and resurrection.

come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." [36] He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. [37] And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. [38] But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. [39] And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, 'The old is good.' "[a]

6 One sabbath[b] while Jesus[c] was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. [2] But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful[d] on the sabbath?" [3] Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? [4] He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?" [5] Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

[6] On another sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. [7] The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. [8] Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." He got up and stood there. [9] Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?" [10] After looking around at all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was restored. [11] But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

[12] Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. [13] And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: [14] Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, [15] and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, [16] and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

[17] He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of

[a] Other ancient authorities read *better*; others lack verse 39
[b] Other ancient authorities read *On the second first sabbath*
[c] Gk *he*
[d] Other ancient authorities add *to do*

36: *Parable,* memorable word-pictures or stories that communicated the essence of Jesus's message concerning God. **39:** Found only in Luke, this saying is obscure. It may be ironic, indicating that contentment with *the old* prevents openness to the *new.*

6.1–11: Eating and healing on the sabbath (Mt 12.1–14; Mk 2.23–3.6). **2:** Harvesting violated the sabbath rest (Ex 34.21). *Lawful* means "permissible"; in this context permissible according to the law of Moses. **3:** 1 Sam 21.1–6. **4:** Lev 24.5–9. **5:** See 5.24n. **6:** See 4.31n. The right hand was favored (Gen 48.13–22). **9:** Jesus implies that to refuse to do good is to do evil. **11:** The Gk word "anoia" translated "fury" ordinarily means "lack of understanding."

6.12–16: Jesus's selection of the twelve (Mt 10.1–4; Mk 3.13–19a). Other lists of the twelve occur at Mt 10.2–4; Mk 3.16–19; Acts 1.13; while there is variation, Peter is always first and Judas Iscariot last. **13:** "The twelve" (8.1; Acts 6.2; etc.) are a recognized group in early Christianity. Luke designates the *twelve* as *apostles* in a way that equates the two titles. "Apostle" (from the Gk verb "apostellein," "to send") designates a person commissioned to preach the gospel, essentially as a missionary. The number twelve has eschatological significance (see 22.30 and cf. 9.17). **14:** The name "*Peter*" is a nickname, meaning "rock" (cf. Mt 16.13). **15:** Zealots were revolutionaries in the Jewish rebellion against Rome 66–70 CE, but whether this *Simon* was a zealot rebel is debatable since the Zealot party did not exist during Jesus's lifetime. **16:** *Iscariot* probably means "the man from Kerioth" (see Josh 15.25); if so, then this Judas was the only Judean among the twelve.

6.17–49: The Sermon on the Plain (Mt 5–7).

Tyre and Sidon. 18 They had come to hear him
and to be healed of their diseases; and those
who were troubled with unclean spirits were
cured. 19 And all in the crowd were trying to
touch him, for power came out from him and
healed all of them.

20 Then he looked up at his disciples and
said:

"Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.
21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.
"Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.
22 "Blessed are you when people hate you,
and when they exclude you, revile you, and
defame you[a] on account of the Son of Man.
23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for
surely your reward is great in heaven; for that
is what their ancestors did to the prophets.
24 "But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.
25 "Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.
"Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.
26 "Woe to you when all speak well of you,
for that is what their ancestors did to the
false prophets.

27 "But I say to you that listen, Love your
enemies, do good to those who hate you,
28 bless those who curse you, pray for those
who abuse you. 29 If anyone strikes you on the
cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone
who takes away your coat do not withhold
even your shirt. 30 Give to everyone who begs
from you; and if anyone takes away your
goods, do not ask for them again. 31 Do to oth-
ers as you would have them do to you.

32 "If you love those who love you, what
credit is that to you? For even sinners love
those who love them. 33 If you do good to
those who do good to you, what credit is that
to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 If
you lend to those from whom you hope to
receive, what credit is that to you? Even sin-
ners lend to sinners, to receive as much again.
35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend,
expecting nothing in return.[b] Your reward
will be great, and you will be children of the
Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful
and the wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your
Father is merciful.

37 "Do not judge, and you will not be
judged; do not condemn, and you will not be
condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiv-
en; 38 give, and it will be given to you. A good
measure, pressed down, shaken together,
running over, will be put into your lap; for the
measure you give will be the measure you get
back."

39 He also told them a parable: "Can a blind
person guide a blind person? Will not both
fall into a pit? 40 A disciple is not above the
teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified
will be like the teacher. 41 Why do you see
the speck in your neighbor's[c] eye, but do not
notice the log in your own eye? 42 Or how

[a] Gk *cast out your name as evil*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *despairing of no one*
[c] Gk *brother's*

6.17–19: The occasion of the preaching (Mt 4.24–5.2; Mk 3.7–13a). **17:** *Level place*; cf. Mt 5.1. **18:** *Unclean spirits* designates "spirits" opposed to God. "Clean" and "unclean" were religious terms, not sanitary conditions, and were categories of "holiness" or "sanctity." **19:** Luke emphasizes both the throngs from many locales pressing on Jesus and Jesus's miraculous power.

6.20–23: The beatitudes (Mt 5.3–12). The focus is on economic and social conditions, not spiritual states. Some detect hyperbolic dimensions in these verses.

6.24–26: The woes. A point-by-point antithesis to the blessings in vv. 20–23. Again, Jesus's statements refer to actual circumstances. The earthly status of those addressed will be reversed in the divinely determined future. Cf. Mt 23.13–33.

6.27–36: The love of enemies (Mt 5.38–48; 7.12). Jesus demands love and forbids retaliation. **28:** Jesus exemplifies this love on the cross in Luke 23.34. **31:** Luke's version of the "Golden Rule"; cf. Mt 7.12. **34–35:** For Israelite laws concerning loans, see Ex 22.25; Lev 25.36–37; Deut 23.19–20. **35:** The word translated as *wicked* also means "useless" or "worthless." **36:** Cf. Mt 5.48; God's actions and character provide the standard.

6.37–42: On judging others (Mt 7.1–5; 12.36–37; 15.14; Mk 4.24–25). **41–42:** The form of this teaching is hyperbole.

can you say to your neighbor,[a] 'Friend,[a] let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's[b] eye.

43 "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; 44 for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. 45 The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.

46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? 47 I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. 48 That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built.[c] 49 But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house."

7 After Jesus[d] had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. 3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. 4 When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy of having you do this for him, 5 for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us." 6 And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; 7 therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. 8 For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." 9 When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." 10 When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

11 Soon afterwards[e] he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. 12 As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. 13 When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers

[a] Gk *brother*
[b] Gk *brother's*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *founded upon the rock*
[d] Gk *he*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *Next day*

6.43–45: The sources of good and evil (Mt 7.15–20; 12.33–35). Cf. Jas 3.11–12. **45:** *Heart*, for the ancients the heart was an individual's mental and spiritual center.

6.46–49: The wise and the foolish builders (Mt 7.21–27). Cf. Jas 1.22–25. **46:** Perhaps a post-resurrection saying.

7.1–10: The centurion's slave (Mt 8.5–13). This story parallels Peter's conversion of the Gentile centurion Cornelius, who also was generous to the Jews; see Acts 10.1–2. **2:** *Centurion,* an officer in charge of 100 soldiers. This particular centurion was either an employee of Herod Antipas, part of the Roman police force, or an official attached to the customs service. **3:** *Elders,* leaders in the Jewish community. **4–6:** The story includes a play on the word *worthy*. **6:** According to Acts 10.28, the house of a Gentile was considered unclean, so that entering it defiled a Jew (see also *m. Oholot* 18.7). *Lord* in its use here is more likely respectful than theological. **9:** Though Luke lacks the climactic utterance of Mt 8.13, his intent is the same: Jesus accepts a Gentile's faith (4.27; 5.32).

7.11–17: The widow's son at Nain. Cf. 1 Kings 17.17–24; 2 Kings 4.32–37; see Lk 4.25–26. **11:** *Nain,* about 23 mi (37 km) southwest of Capernaum. **12:** Cemeteries were located outside a city. With the death of her *only son,* the widow is utterly destitute. **14–16:** The similarity of Jesus's action to that of Elijah in raising the only son of

stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus[a] gave him to his mother. 16 Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!" 17 This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

18 The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples 19 and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" 20 When the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' " 21 Jesus[b] had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind. 22 And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers[c] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. 23 And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

24 When John's messengers had gone, Jesus[a] began to speak to the crowds about John:[d] "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 What then did you go out to see? Someone[e] dressed in soft robes? Look, those who put on fine clothing and live in luxury are in royal palaces. 26 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.'

28 I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 (And all the people who heard this, including the tax collectors, acknowledged the justice of God,[f] because they had been baptized with John's baptism. 30 But by refusing to be baptized by him, the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves.)

31 "To what then will I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another,

'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not weep.'

33 For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon'; 34 the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' 35 Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus[d] to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. 37 And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having

a Gk *he*
b Gk *He*
c The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases
d Gk *him*
e Or *Why then did you go out? To see someone*
f Or *praised God*

a widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17) elicits a reaction. **17:** This reference to Judea anticipates Jesus's journey to Jerusalem (9.51–19.27) and his last days there (19.28–24.53). See also 4.44n.

7.18–35: Jesus and John the Baptist (Mt 11.2–19). **18:** *John* the Baptist was imprisoned (see 2.9) at Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. **19:** *Lord,* Luke's title for Jesus. *The one who is to come,* the Messiah. **22:** This verse contains phrases from Isa 29.18; 42.18; 26.19; see also Isa 35.5–6; 61.1; Lk 4.18–19. **24–30:** Jesus's statements indicate that John is Jesus's precursor, the messenger of Mal 3.1, identified in Mal 4.5 as Elijah. John is an Elijah-like figure, not Elijah reincarnated. **25:** An ironic statement since John is in a royal jail. **27:** Ex 23.20; Mal 3.1. **28:** A pivotal point arises with the ministries of John and Jesus. **30:** *The Pharisees and the lawyers* are specific individuals, not everyone in their class. **33:** *Demon* possession explains unconventional behavior or inappropriate attitudes. **35:** Personification of "Wisdom" (cf., e.g., Prov 9.1; Wis 6.12) refers to God and God's purposes; thus, Wisdom's *children* are those who do God's will.

7.36–50: Simon the Pharisee, Jesus, and the woman with the ointment (Mt 26.6–13; Mk 14.3–9; Jn 12.1–8). **36:** A positive encounter between Jesus and a Pharisee; cf. 11.37; 14.1. **37–38:** Luke loosens his reserved style to

learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. 38 She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner." 40 Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." 41 "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii,[a] and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus[b] said to him, "You have judged rightly." 44 Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." 48 Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

8 Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, 2 as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them[c] out of their resources.

4 When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: 5 "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. 6 Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. 7 Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. 8 Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

[a] The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *him*

describe the woman's outlandish behavior. **37:** Houses were open to intrusion of this kind (cf. Mk 1.33; 2.2). The story gives no indication of the nature of the woman's sins. **38:** Jesus reclined at the banquet table, stretching out his feet on a couch. Why the woman anointed Jesus's feet rather than his head is unclear. **40:** Simon the Pharisee's name occurs for the first time; the woman remains anonymous; Jesus himself is called *Teacher* for the first time. **44–46:** Jesus's explanation of the woman's actions implicitly reprimands his host. **47–48:** *Hence she has shown great love,* her love proving that her many *sins* had been *forgiven*. Cf. 5.20. **49:** Whether this question is hostile is not apparent. **50:** Cf. 8.48; 17.19; 18.42. The story combines ideas of faith, salvation, forgiveness, and peace.

8.1–3: Jesus's tour and the ministering women. These verses illustrate the itinerant character of Jesus's ministry. His message is "the good news of the kingdom of God"; cf. 4.43. His entourage included an unusual combination of male and female followers. The twelve are recognized as in 4.43, and they are mentioned first, indicating their significance. Given ancient attitudes toward women, the inclusion of Galilean women is remarkable. Many of those mentioned here later follow Jesus to Jerusalem and witness his passion and resurrection; see 23.49. **2:** *Mary, called Magdalene,* apparently from Magdala (Taricheae) on the western coast of the Lake of Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee). She is not the woman in 7.36–50. **3:** Herod's *steward* was probably a domestic administrator. *Others,* i.e., other women.

8.4–8: Parable of the sower (Mt 13.1–9; Mk 4.1–9). The parable invites allegorical interpretation, which follows in 8.11–15. **4:** *Parable* up to this point has referred to similitudes and proverbs; here it means an exemplary narrative.

9 Then his disciples asked him what this
parable meant. 10 He said, "To you it has been
given to know the secrets[a] of the kingdom
of God; but to others I speak[b] in parables, so
that

'looking they may not perceive,
and listening they may not understand.'

11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is
the word of God. 12 The ones on the path are
those who have heard; then the devil comes
and takes away the word from their hearts,
so that they may not believe and be saved.
13 The ones on the rock are those who, when
they hear the word, receive it with joy. But
these have no root; they believe only for a
while and in a time of testing fall away. 14 As
for what fell among the thorns, these are the
ones who hear; but as they go on their way,
they are choked by the cares and riches and
pleasures of life, and their fruit does not ma-
ture. 15 But as for that in the good soil, these
are the ones who, when they hear the word,
hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and
bear fruit with patient endurance.

16 "No one after lighting a lamp hides it
under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it
on a lampstand, so that those who enter may
see the light. 17 For nothing is hidden that will
not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that
will not become known and come to light.
18 Then pay attention to how you listen; for to
those who have, more will be given; and from
those who do not have, even what they seem
to have will be taken away."

19 Then his mother and his brothers
came to him, but they could not reach him
because of the crowd. 20 And he was told,
"Your mother and your brothers are standing
outside, wanting to see you." 21 But he said to
them, "My mother and my brothers are those
who hear the word of God and do it."

22 One day he got into a boat with his dis-
ciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across
to the other side of the lake." So they put out,
23 and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A
windstorm swept down on the lake, and the
boat was filling with water, and they were in
danger. 24 They went to him and woke him
up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perish-
ing!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind
and the raging waves; they ceased, and there
was a calm. 25 He said to them, "Where is your
faith?" They were afraid and amazed, and
said to one another, "Who then is this, that
he commands even the winds and the water,
and they obey him?"

26 Then they arrived at the country of the
Gerasenes,[c] which is opposite Galilee. 27 As

[a] Or *mysteries*
[b] Gk lacks *I speak*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Gadarenes*; others, *Gergesenes*

8.9–10: Jesus's explanation of parables (Mt 13.10–17; Mk 4.1–10). **10:** Paraphrase of Isa 6.9–10. See Mk 4.11; Mt 13.11; Jer 5.21; Ezek 12.2. The statement implies that parables created obscurity while actually revealing a message.

8.11–15: Interpretation of the parable of the sower (Mt 13.18–23; Mk 4.13–20). The words "devil," "saved," and "time of testing" are typical in apocalyptic writings. **11:** As in 5.1 "the word of God" refers to the basic message of believers, rooted in Jesus's ministry, and ultimately God's own word (5.1; 8.11,21; 11.28; and fourteen times in Acts). **15:** The words *honest and good,* spoken of the heart (cf. Mk 7.21–23), echo the classical Greek description of the true gentleman. *Heart*, see 6.45n.

8.16–18: On purposeful action and on obedient listening (Mt 5.15; 10.26; 13.12; Mk 4.21–25).

8.19–21: Jesus's true relatives (Mt 12.46–50; Mk 3.31–35). **19:** *Brothers,* four names are given in Mk 6.3, which also mentions sisters. The early church provided several explanations, usually that they were sons of Joseph by a previous marriage, or that they were cousins, or that they were the natural children of Joseph and Mary. **21:** Luke softens Mark's version of Jesus's reply, not repeating items such as Mk 3.20–21,33, so that the natural family of Jesus is not rejected as Jesus highlights the importance of obedience to God as the criterion for intimacy among Jesus's followers.

8.22–25: Winds and water obey (Mt 8.23–27; Mk 4.35–41). Power over the elements is a divine capacity celebrated in the Psalms (e.g., 107.28–30). **24–25:** Calling Jesus "*Master,*" the disciples are amazed at his authority.

8.26–39: The Gerasene man possessed by demons (Mt 8.28–34; Mk 5.1–20). **26:** *Gerasenes,* the city of Gerasa (modern Jerash) was in central Transjordan; its population was largely non-Jewish. Matthew 8.28 has Gadara,

he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn[a] no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"— 29 for Jesus[b] had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) 30 Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. 31 They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

32 Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons[c] begged Jesus[d] to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. 33 Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

34 When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. 35 Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. 36 Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. 37 Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes[e] asked Jesus[d] to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. 38 The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus[b] sent him away, saying, 39 "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. 41 Just then there came a man named Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house, 42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying.

As he went, the crowds pressed in on him. 43 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians,[f] no one could cure her. 44 She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. 45 Then Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" When all denied it, Peter[g] said, "Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you." 46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had

[a] Other ancient authorities read *a man of the city who had had demons for a long time met him. He wore*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Gk *they*
[d] Gk *him*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *Gadarenes*; others, *Gergesenes*
[f] Other ancient authorities lack *and though she had spent all she had on physicians*
[g] Other ancient authorities add *and those who were with him*

southeast of the Lake of Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee), a setting that better fits the narrative (see map on p. 1503). **28:** The man possessed by demons recognized Jesus's true identity. **30:** Asking for the name of the demon reflects the ancient idea that knowing the name of a supernatural power gave one control over it (see, e.g., Gen 32.29). *Legion,* a division of the Roman army, about five thousand troops; the name suggests a horde of demons (see 11.24–26). **31:** *Abyss,* a place of confinement for demonic forces which are ultimately under God's control (Rev 9.1–11; 11.7; 17.8; 20.1–3). The words attribute judicial authority to Jesus (Mt 7.21–23; 11.20–24). **32:** *Swine,* Jews were prohibited from eating pork (Lev 11.7; Deut 14.8), but the pigs were raised by Gentiles in this and other regions. **35:** The restored man assumes the posture of an ideal disciple; cf. Acts 22.3. **39:** Contrast Jesus's instructions to "declare how much *God* has done for you" with the man's action of "proclaiming throughout the city how much *Jesus* has done for him."

8.40–56: Jairus's daughter and the hemorrhaging woman (Mt 9.18–26; Mk 5.21–43). **41:** *Leader of the synagogue,* one responsible for overseeing the worship and life of the congregation. **42:** Parallel elements incorporate the two stories into a larger whole—e.g., "*daughter*" (vv. 42,48,49) and "*twelve years*" (vv. 42,43). **43:** Cf. Lev 15.25–

gone out from me." [47] When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. [48] He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

[49] While he was still speaking, someone came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer." [50] When Jesus heard this, he replied, "Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved." [51] When he came to the house, he did not allow anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. [52] They were all weeping and wailing for her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." [53] And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. [54] But he took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" [55] Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed them to give her something to eat. [56] Her parents were astounded; but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.

9 Then Jesus[a] called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, [2] and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. [3] He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. [4] Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. [5] Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." [6] They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

[7] Now Herod the ruler[b] heard about all that had taken place, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, [8] by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the ancient prophets had arisen. [9] Herod said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he tried to see him.

[10] On their return the apostles told Jesus[c] all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. [11] When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.

[12] The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place." [13] But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Gk *tetrarch*
[c] Gk *him*

30. The cause of the hemorrhaging is not specified. **48:** *Has made you well,* lit., "has saved you" (cf. 7.50). Both the woman and the girl (v. 50) are "saved." **49:** While engaged in healing, Jesus is nevertheless called *teacher*. **51:** Peter, John, and James receive special recognition twice (8.51; 9.28). **55:** Cf. 1 Kings 17.22.

9.1–6: Commissioning the twelve (Mt 10.1–14; Mk 6.6b–13). Sharing power with the disciples indicates their extension of Jesus's ministry as confirmed by their *authority* over demons and diseases. **2:** The twelve proclaim *the kingdom of God*. **3–4:** These instructions contrast with the practices of Cynic philosophers (see Mk 6.8n.). **3:** The command to *take nothing for* [the] *journey* forces the twelve to rely completely on God. **5:** The act of shaking off dust was a graphic demonstration of renouncing further responsibility for those who did not welcome them; cf. 10.10–12.

9.7–9: Herod's curiosity about Jesus (Mt 14.1–2; Mk 6.14–16). *Herod* Antipas, son of Herod the Great, is called *Herod the ruler*, lit., "Herod the tetrarch"; see 3.1n. Cf. 9.18–19. **9:** *John I beheaded,* see Mk 6.17–29. *Tried to see him,* cf. 23.7–9.

9.10–11: The apostles return and the crowds follow Jesus (Mt 14.12–14; Mk 6.30–34). **10:** *Bethsaida,* located just north of the Lake of Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee).

9.12–17: Feeding of the five thousand (Mt 14.15–21; Mk 6.35–44; Jn 6.5–14). The only miracle found in all four

people." [14] For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each." [15] They did so and made them all sit down. [16] And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. [17] And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

[18] Once when Jesus[a] was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" [19] They answered, "John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen." [20] He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah[b] of God."

[21] He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, [22] saying, "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

[23] Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. [24] For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. [25] What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? [26] Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. [27] But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

[28] Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus[a] took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. [29] And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. [30] Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. [31] They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. [32] Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake,[c] they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. [33] Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,[d] one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Or *The Christ*
[c] Or *but when they were fully awake*
[d] Or *tents*

Gospels. **14:** *Five thousand men*, not counting any women and children. **16:** The language anticipates the account of the Last Supper in 22.17–20.

9.18–20: Peter's confession (Mt 16.13–19; Mk 8.27–29). **19:** The answers to Jesus's question illustrate the variety of expectations (some messianic) among Jews of Jesus's day. *The Messiah of God,* lit., "God's anointed one," a title that typically named a royal Davidic leader who would reconstitute the former political glory of Israel.

9.21–22: Jesus's command to silence and first prediction of his death (Mt 16.20–21; Mk 8.30–31). Jesus's forceful direction to silence probably reflects a desire to prevent misunderstandings of his "messianic" work. Luke's version of this prediction does not have Peter attempt to redirect Jesus's commitments, so that Peter's confession (9.20) retains more force in this version than in Mark's account, where Jesus rebukes him (Mk 8.32–33). **22:** Luke's phrase, *to be raised*, modifies Mark's "to rise" (cf. Mk 8.31). The passive focuses on God as agent.

9.23–27: The requirements of discipleship (Mt 16.24–28; Mk 8.34–9.1). **23:** *Take up their cross daily and follow me,* the Greek is in the singular (lit., "anyone . . . his"), so that the challenge is intensely personal. The qualifier *daily* highlights the ongoing character of discipleship. **26:** Jesus's words anticipate the day of divine judgment. **27:** Jesus's enigmatic statement perhaps refers to the time after the resurrection.

9.28–36: The Transfiguration (Mt 17.1–9; Mk 9.2–10). This account points to an intense religious experience. Unnatural brilliance is associated with mystical experiences elsewhere (Ex 34.29–35; Acts 9.3). **28:** *About eight days,* indicates the passage of a week; in the early church "the eighth day" designated both the Lord's day and the day of Jesus's resurrection, the first day of a new creation. **30:** *Moses and Elijah,* paragons of the faith of Israel: Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the great prophet. **31:** *Departure,* lit., "exodus," referring to Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension. **32:** The disciples' sleepiness suggests that this event transpired at night (cf. 22.45). **33:** Peter's proposal concerning *three dwellings* seeks to preserve the experience. Though Peter acknowledged

knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen;[a] listen to him!" 36 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. 38 Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. 39 Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he[b] shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. 40 I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." 41 Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." 42 While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. 43 And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

While everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples, 44 "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands." 45 But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was concealed from them, so that they could not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

46 An argument arose among them as to which one of them was the greatest. 47 But Jesus, aware of their inner thoughts, took a little child and put it by his side, 48 and said to them, "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest."

49 John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." 50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him; for whoever is not against you is for you."

51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; 53 but they did not receive him, because his face was

[a] Other ancient authorities read *my Beloved*
[b] Or *it*

Jesus's authority as *Master*, his desire for three dwellings could assume that Jesus and Moses and Elijah were equals. **34:** The cloud is reminiscent of Israel's Exodus experience of God; see Ex 13.21–22. **35:** The *voice* of God (see 3.22), and the command, *listen to him,* focus the attention and obedience of the disciples on Jesus above all others.

9.37–43a: Jesus heals an afflicted boy (Mt 17.14–21; Mk 9.14–29). Some scholars conclude that the description refers to epilepsy, but any diagnosis is speculative.

9.43b–45: A second prediction (Mt 17.22–23; Mk 9.30–32). Cf. 9.22; 18.31–33. **44:** A much-abbreviated form of Mark's second prediction (Mk 9.31). See 9.22; 18.31–34; 17.25. **45:** The comment indicates that the Messiah's death was not part of the disciples' Jewish faith, and that spiritual truth must be revealed (see 24.16).

9.46–48: True greatness (Mt 18.1–5; Mk 9.33–37). An acted parable rejecting self-centered ambition. **47:** Receiving the *little child* requires generosity without expectation of gain. **48:** The final clause anticipates later teaching about authority among disciples (18.15–17; 22.24–27).

9.49–50: The unknown exorcist (Mk 9.38–41). Jesus repudiates intolerance, though the statement in 11.23, indicates the necessity of aligning actions with Jesus's values and work.

9.51–19.27: Jesus's journey to Jerusalem with his followers (Mt 19.1–20.34; Mk 10.1–52). Most of this section, which reports the ministry of Jesus in Samaria and Judea, is unique to Luke.

9.51: Jesus's resolve to go to Jerusalem (Mt 19.1–2; Mk 10.1). *To be taken up,* refers to the ascension, but also designates the suffering, death, and resurrection that led to it. *He set his face to go to Jerusalem,* states Jesus's resolve using a Semitic idiom (see Isa 50.7).

9.52–56: Samaritans' rejection of Jesus. 52–53: The Samaritans refused to help pilgrims going to worship at what they regarded as the wrong sanctuary (cf. Jn 4.20). **52:** *Samaritan* is a geographical designation used also for inhabitants of Samaria, originally the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel that fell to the Assyrians in

set toward Jerusalem. 54 When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"[a] 55 But he turned and rebuked them. 56 Then[b] they went on to another village.

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 59 To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 But Jesus[c] said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." 62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy[d] others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. 2 He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' 6 And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. 7 Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. 8 Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; 9 cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'[e] 10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'[f] 12 I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But at the judgment it will

[a] Other ancient authorities add *as Elijah did*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what spirit you are of,* [56]*for the Son of Man has not come to destroy the lives of human beings but to save them." Then*
[c] Gk *he*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *seventy-two*
[e] Or *is at hand for you*
[f] Or *is at hand*

722 BCE. *Samaritan* became a term for persons living between Judea and Galilee who were regarded as a distinct ethnic and religious group. Tensions had existed between Samaritans and Jews since the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon in 538 BCE; see Ezra 4–6. **54:** Echoes 2 Kings 1.10–12 in which Elijah called down fire from heaven on hostile troops. See 9.3–5 for Jesus's instructions for dealing with rejection.

9.57–62: The demands of following Jesus (Mt 8.18–22). Luke presents a collection of sayings emphasizing the necessity of complete commitment of Jesus's followers. **59:** From the statement that follows (v. 60), the man's father was not yet dead; rather, the man used this responsibility to defer commitment to discipleship. **60:** *Let the dead bury their own dead,* suggests that the spiritually dead should be left to bury the physically dead. **61:** See 1 Kings 19.20.

10.1–12: The mission of the seventy (Mt 9.37–38; 10.7–16). **1:** 9.1–5,51–52; Mk 6.7–11. Some manuscripts read "seventy-two," the number of nations in LXX of Gen 10, rather than seventy . **2:** An eschatological saying emphasizing the urgency of the moment (also Mk 4.29; Mt 9.37–38; Jn 4.35). **4:** *Greet no one,* which might cause delay, underscoring the urgency of the mission. **5–6:** *Peace* is the translation of the Heb greeting "Shalom"; cf. 1 Sam 25.6. **7–11.** These directions shift from the villages of Jesus's ministry to the urban settings of Acts. **7:** Deut 24.15. **9–11:** The emphasis on *the kingdom of God* distinguishes these instructions from those at 9.3–5. **10–11:** Cf. 9.5n. **12:** Gen 19.24–28.

10.13–15: Woes to unrepentant cities (Mt 11.20–24). **13:** *Chorazin,* a town 2 mi (3 km) north of Capernaum. *Tyre and Sidon* were Gentile cities on the Mediterranean coast north of Galilee. *Sackcloth and ashes* recalls Nin-

be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. [15] And you, Capernaum,

will you be exalted to heaven?

No, you will be brought down to Hades.

[16] "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

[17] The seventy[a] returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" [18] He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. [19] See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. [20] Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

[21] At that same hour Jesus[b] rejoiced in the Holy Spirit[c] and said, "I thank[d] you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.[e] [22] All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

[23] Then turning to the disciples, Jesus[b] said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! [24] For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."

[25] Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.[f] "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" [26] He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" [27] He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." [28] And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

[29] But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" [30] Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. [31] Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. [32] So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. [33] But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved

[a] Other ancient authorities read *seventy-two*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Other authorities read *in the spirit*
[d] Or *praise*
[e] Or *for so it was well-pleasing in your sight*
[f] Gk *him*

eveh's repentance in Jon 3. **15:** Echoes Isa 14.13–15 (see v. 18). *Hades*, equivalent to Heb "Sheol," the abode of the dead.

10.16: Jesus's interpretation of the mission (Mt 10.40).

10.17–20: Return of the seventy (Mt 11.25–27). **17:** *Even the demons submit to us,* unlike the twelve (9.1), the seventy were not promised this power. **18:** *Satan fall from heaven,* the victory of the seventy over demons presages Satan's ultimate defeat; cf. Isa 14.15; Jn 12.31; Rev 12.7–12. **19:** See Ps 91.13; Mk 16.17–18. **20:** Exorcism in itself is not proof of God's kingdom (11.19). *Written in heaven,* Dan 12.1; Ps 69.28; Ex 32.32.

10.21–22: Jesus's thanksgiving to God (Mt 11.25–27). **21:** *In the Holy Spirit,* which Jesus possessed from conception, readers first hear the content of Jesus's prayer. **22:** Cf. Jn 3.35; 10.14–15; 13.1; 17.25.

10.23–24: Jesus's blessing of the disciples (Mt 13.16–17).

10.25–28: A lawyer's question (Mt 22.34–40; Mk 12.28–34; cf. Lk 18.9–14). **25:** *Lawyer,* an expert in the law of Moses, synonymous with "scribe." *To test* indicates hostility, yet he addresses Jesus as *Teacher*. For *eternal life* (also 10.25; 18.18,30) as a question in Jewish literature, see Dan 12.2; 4 Macc 15.3. **27:** Deut 6.5; Lev 19.18.

10.29–37: Parable of the Good Samaritan. 29: *Justify himself,* to show that he was righteous before God. Jesus's answer expands Lev 19.18. **30:** *Down from Jerusalem to Jericho,* about 18 mi (30 km) with a drop in elevation from 2,500 ft (760 m) above to 820 ft (250 m) below sea level on a road known for brigands. **31–32:** The *priest* was probably returning from service in the Temple, as was the *Levite,* who was entrusted with minor duties in the Temple and its rituals. **33:** A *Samaritan* (see 9.52n.), a foreigner not expected to show sympathy to Jews;

with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii,[a] gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. 40 But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42 there is need of only one thing.[b] Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

11 He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." 2 He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father,[c] hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.[d]
3 Give us each day our daily bread.[e]
4 And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone
indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of
trial."[f]

5 And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; 6 for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' 7 And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

9 "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who

[a] The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer
[b] Other ancient authorities read *few things are necessary, or only one*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Our Father in heaven*
[d] A few ancient authorities read *Your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us.* Other ancient authorities add *Your will be done, on earth as in heaven*
[e] Or *our bread for tomorrow*
[f] Or *us into temptation.* Other ancient authorities add *but rescue us from the evil one* (or *from evil*)

pity is deep compassion, **34:** The *oil* served as a salve (see Isa 1.6) and the *wine* as an antiseptic. **36:** Redefines *neighbor* in terms of how one acts toward those in need.

10.38–42: Martha and Mary. This story affirms the importance of listening to Jesus and gives further details about women among Jesus's followers. Jn 11.1 has a Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus, in Bethany, just east of Jerusalem, but Luke's apparently separate tradition does not mention Lazarus and Jesus has not yet reached Bethany (see 19.29). Luke's emphasis is on the singular importance of discipleship: Mary sat at Jesus's feet (see 8.35; Acts 22.3). **41:** *Distracted*, lit., "cause trouble."

11.1–4: The Lord's Prayer. This prayer appears in a longer and more liturgical form in Mt 6.9–13. The petitions have an eschatological cast, yet the concerns specified relate to daily life. **4:** *Time of trial,* Rev 3.10; see also Lk 22.40, 46.

11.5–8: Teaching about spiritual persistence (Mt 7.7–11). Cf. Lk 18.1–5. **5–8:** This parable encourages persistence in prayer. **8:** *Persistence,* lit., "lack of propriety" or "shamelessness."

11.9–13: A parabolic admonition and assurance concerning prayer (Mt 7.7–11). **9–13:** The promise of *the Holy Spirit* focuses the substance of prayer petitions. Verses 9–10 and vv. 11–13 may have been independent sayings. Verses 9–10 are proverbial, while vv. 11–13 are sayings that argue from lesser to greater.

knocks, the door will be opened. 11 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for[a] a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? 12 Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit[b] to those who ask him!"

14 Now he was casting out a demon that was mute; when the demon had gone out, the one who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed. 15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." 16 Others, to test him, kept demanding from him a sign from heaven. 17 But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house. 18 If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? —for you say that I cast out the demons by Beelzebul. 19 Now if I cast out the demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your exorcists[c] cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. 20 But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. 21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is safe. 22 But when one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his plunder. 23 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

24 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 When it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first."

27 While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!" 28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!"

29 When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. 30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. 31 The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! 32 The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!

[a] Other ancient authorities add *bread, will give a stone; or if your child asks for*

[b] Other ancient authorities read *the Father give the Holy Spirit from heaven*

[c] Gk *sons*

11.14–23: The Beelzebul controversy (Mt 12.22–30; Mk 3.22–27). **15:** *Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons,* Satan (see v. 18); originally a title of the Canaanite god Baal (see 2 Kings 1.2). **16:** The request for a sign, which Luke refers to as a *test,* comes almost immediately after Jesus exorcises a person who was mute. **20:** Cf. Ex 8.19. *Finger* stands for God's power. *The kingdom of God has come to you,* lit., "upon you." This reflects Jesus's understanding of his ministry; its plain sense recognizes the actual presence of the kingdom of God. **21–22:** Jesus casts himself as the *one stronger than he*. **23:** Cf. 9.50. The demands of discipleship do not allow compromises, just as neutrality is not an option in the struggle between Jesus and Beelzebul.

11.24–26: The return of unclean spirits (Mt 12.43–45). Cf. 8.30.

11.27–28: True blessedness. Cf. 8.21.

11.29–32: The sign of Jonah (Mt 12.38–42; 16.4; Mk 8.11–12). **29:** *The sign of Jonah* here may refer to Jonah's punishment for resisting God's plan (Jon 1–2) or to his successful preaching to the Gentiles at Nineveh (v. 32; Jon 3); in Mt 12.40 Jonah's being in the belly of the whale for three days foreshadows Jesus's resurrection on the third day after his death. **31:** 1 Kings 10.1–10; 2 Chr 9.1–9.

33 "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in
a cellar,[a] but on the lampstand so that those
who enter may see the light. 34 Your eye is
the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy,
your whole body is full of light; but if it is
not healthy, your body is full of darkness.
35 Therefore consider whether the light in you
is not darkness. 36 If then your whole body is
full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it
will be as full of light as when a lamp gives
you light with its rays."

37 While he was speaking, a Pharisee invited
him to dine with him; so he went in and took
his place at the table. 38 The Pharisee was
amazed to see that he did not first wash before
dinner. 39 Then the Lord said to him, "Now you
Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of
the dish, but inside you are full of greed and
wickedness. 40 You fools! Did not the one who
made the outside make the inside also? 41 So
give for alms those things that are within; and
see, everything will be clean for you.

42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe
mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and
neglect justice and the love of God; it is these
you ought to have practiced, without neglect-
ing the others. 43 Woe to you Pharisees! For
you love to have the seat of honor in the
synagogues and to be greeted with respect in
the marketplaces. 44 Woe to you! For you are
like unmarked graves, and people walk over
them without realizing it."

45 One of the lawyers answered him,
"Teacher, when you say these things, you
insult us too." 46 And he said, "Woe also to you
lawyers! For you load people with burdens
hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift
a finger to ease them. 47 Woe to you! For you
build the tombs of the prophets whom your
ancestors killed. 48 So you are witnesses and
approve of the deeds of your ancestors; for
they killed them, and you build their tombs.
49 Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I
will send them prophets and apostles, some of
whom they will kill and persecute,' 50 so that
this generation may be charged with the blood
of all the prophets shed since the foundation
of the world, 51 from the blood of Abel to the
blood of Zechariah, who perished between the
altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be
charged against this generation. 52 Woe to you
lawyers! For you have taken away the key of
knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and
you hindered those who were entering."

53 When he went outside, the scribes and
the Pharisees began to be very hostile toward
him and to cross-examine him about many
things, 54 lying in wait for him, to catch him in
something he might say.

12 Meanwhile, when the crowd gathered
by the thousands, so that they tram-
pled on one another, he began to speak first
to his disciples, "Beware of the yeast of the
Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy. 2 Nothing
is covered up that will not be uncovered, and
nothing secret that will not become known.
3 Therefore whatever you have said in the
dark will be heard in the light, and what you
have whispered behind closed doors will be
proclaimed from the housetops.

4 "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those
who kill the body, and after that can do
nothing more. 5 But I will warn you whom to

[a] Other ancient authorities add *or under the bushel basket*

11.33–36: Light and sight (Mt 5.15; 6.22–23; Mk 4.21). **33:** Cf. 8.16. **34–36:** One theory held that the eye produced fire or light, which made sight possible.

11.37–54: Sayings against Pharisees and lawyers (Mt 15.1–9; Mk 7.1–9; Mt 23.1–36, in different order). **37:** Cf. 7.36n.; 14.1. **38:** *Wash before dinner,* ceremonial washing (see Mk 7.1–5). **39–41:** Mt 23.25–26. As God's creation, the inner life is equal in importance to the outer (v. 40); it even exercises a cleansing or corrupting power over the outer (v. 41; Mk 7.23). **41:** *Alms*, charitable gifts for the poor. **42:** *Tithe,* see Deut 14.22–29. *Mint and rue,* herbs of little value. Cf. 10.27. **44:** Graves were marked (Mt 23.27) to prevent defilement through accidental contact (Num 19.16). **47:** *Tombs of the prophets*, honoring the outer memorial without inner repentance. **49:** *The Wisdom of God said,* introducing a quotation without an identifiable source; cf. Jer 7.25–26. **51:** *Abel* is the first person murdered in the Bible (Gen 4.8), and *Zechariah* is murdered in 2 Chr 24.20–22. **52:** Cf. Mt 23.13. **54:** Cf. 6.11; 19.47–48; 20.19–20; 22.2.

12.1: The yeast of the Pharisees (Mt 16.5–6; Mk 8.14–15). **1:** Luke's statement about the crowd is unparalleled. Leaven/yeast was often a symbol of corruption; cf. 1 Cor 5.6–8.

12.2–9: Promise of disclosure and calls to fearless confession (Mt 10.26–33). **5:** *Him who . . . has authority*

fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority[a] to cast into hell.[b] Yes, I tell you, fear him! 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. 7 But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

8 "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; 9 but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. 11 When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how[c] you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say."

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 14 But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15 And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." 16 Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17 And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' 18 Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' 20 But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' 21 So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

22 He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! 25 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?[d] 26 If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;[e] yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 28 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! 29 And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. 30 For it is the nations of the world

[a] Or *power*
[b] Gk *Gehenna*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *or what*
[d] Or *add a cubit to your stature*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *Consider the lilies; they neither spin nor weave*

to cast into hell, God alone. *Hell* is "Gehenna," not Hades as in 10.5; Gehenna was a deep ravine to the south of Jerusalem, alleged site of human sacrifice (2 Kings 23.10), which came to symbolize eternal punishment. **6:** The *penny* (Gk "assarion") was one-sixteenth of a denarius (see 12.59n.). **8–9:** The Son of Man executes eschatological justice. Cf. 9.26; Mk 8.38.

12.10: Blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mt 12.31–32; Mk 3.28–30). Blasphemy *against the Holy Spirit* is attributing the work of God's Spirit to the forces of evil.

12.11–12: Aid from the Holy Spirit: a look to the disciples' future (Mt 10.19–20; Mk 13.11).

12.13–15: Warning against greed. 13: According to Deut 21.17, the oldest son received double the younger's share.

12.16–21: Parable of the rich fool. 19: *Relax, eat, drink, be merry,* see Eccl 8.15. Similar maxims in Tob 7.10; *1 En.* 97.8–9; Euripides; Meander. **20:** Cf. Jer 17.11; Lk 12.33–34. The Greek reads, "Fool! In this night your soul they demand from you." "They" may be a circumlocution for God, but more likely it is "the things" that now own the man.

12.22–32: Anxiety concerning life (Mt 6.25–34). **24:** *Ravens*, as scavengers are unclean birds in the Hebrew Bible (Lev 11.15; Deut 14.14; cf. Job 38.41). **27:** *Lilies*, probably not the white lily (*Lilium candidum*) but anemone or

that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 Instead, strive for his[a] kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

35 "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 36 be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. 38 If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

39 "But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he[b] would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?" 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge of his slaves, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. 44 Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. 45 But if that slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and if he begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in pieces,[c] and put him with the unfaithful. 47 That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. 48 But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.

49 "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! 51 Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! 52 From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; 53 they will be divided:

father against son
and son against father,
mother against daughter
and daughter against mother,
mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law
and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

[a] Other ancient authorities read *God's*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *would have watched and*
[c] Or *cut him off*

another wildflower. Their Gk name, "krinon," resembles the word for "to judge" ("krinō"), a theme in Lk 12. **32:** *Flock* refers to the Messiah's people (Ezek 34.23).

12.33–34: Treasure in heaven (Mt 6.19–21). Cf. Mk 10.21; Lk 18.22; Acts 2.45; 4.32–35.

12.35–48: Sayings on watchfulness and faithfulness (Mt 24.42–51). **35:** *Dressed for action,* lit., "your loins girded"; see Ex 12.11. **36:** *Master* is "Lord" in Greek. **37:** The marriage feast served as an analogy for the messianic banquet (13.29; 14.15; 22.16), . For a master serving the servants, see 17.7–8; cf. Jn 13.3–16; Lk 22.27. **40:** *Son of Man* indicates the eschatological nature of this material. Cf. Mk 13.35; 1 Thess 5.2. **42–47:** *Master* is "Lord" in Greek. **46:** *Cut him in pieces* is figurative language, **47–48:** These verses deal with responsibility, reward, and retribution. **48:** 8.18; 19.26.

12.49–53: The controversial character of Jesus's mission (Mt 10.34–36). **49:** *Fire,* a symbol of judgment (Mt 3.11; 7.19; Mk 9.48; Lk 3.16). **50:** *Baptism,* Jesus's death. **51–53:** These verses are among Jesus's so-called hard sayings. **53:** See Mic 7.6.

54 He also said to the crowds, "When you
see a cloud rising in the west, you immediate-
ly say, 'It is going to rain'; and so it happens.
55 And when you see the south wind blowing,
you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it
happens. 56 You hypocrites! You know how to
interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but
why do you not know how to interpret the
present time?

57 "And why do you not judge for your-
selves what is right? 58 Thus, when you go
with your accuser before a magistrate, on
the way make an effort to settle the case,[a] or
you may be dragged before the judge, and the
judge hand you over to the officer, and the
officer throw you in prison. 59 I tell you, you
will never get out until you have paid the very
last penny."

13 At that very time there were some pres-
ent who told him about the Galileans
whose blood Pilate had mingled with their
sacrifices. 2 He asked them, "Do you think
that because these Galileans suffered in this
way they were worse sinners than all other
Galileans? 3 No, I tell you; but unless you
repent, you will all perish as they did. 4 Or
those eighteen who were killed when the
tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think
that they were worse offenders than all the
others living in Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you; but
unless you repent, you will all perish just as
they did."

6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a
fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came
looking for fruit on it and found none. 7 So
he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three
years I have come looking for fruit on this fig
tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why
should it be wasting the soil?' 8 He replied,
'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig
around it and put manure on it. 9 If it bears
fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you
can cut it down.' "

10 Now he was teaching in one of the
synagogues on the sabbath. 11 And just then
there appeared a woman with a spirit that
had crippled her for eighteen years. She was
bent over and was quite unable to stand up
straight. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her
over and said, "Woman, you are set free from
your ailment." 13 When he laid his hands
on her, immediately she stood up straight
and began praising God. 14 But the leader
of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus
had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the
crowd, "There are six days on which work
ought to be done; come on those days and be
cured, and not on the sabbath day." 15 But the
Lord answered him and said, "You hypo-
crites! Does not each of you on the sabbath
untie his ox or his donkey from the manger,
and lead it away to give it water? 16 And ought
not this woman, a daughter of Abraham
whom Satan bound for eighteen long years,
be set free from this bondage on the sabbath
day?" 17 When he said this, all his opponents
were put to shame; and the entire crowd was
rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he
was doing.

[a] Gk *settle with him*

12.54–56: Interpreting the times (Mt 16.2–3). Winds from the *west* blew off the Mediterranean, those from the *south* off the desert; both are signs of crisis.

12.57–59: Settling with an accuser (Mt 5.25–26). **59:** *Penny,* Greek "lepton," the smallest coin in circulation. There were two lepta to a quadrans ("penny" in Mt 5.26; Mk 12.42), and one hundred twenty-eight to a denarius, the daily wage in Mt 20.2.

13.1–9: Parable of the unfruitful fig tree (cf. Mt 21.18–19; Mk 11.12–14). **1:** Pilate (see 3.1n.) had ordered the killing of some Galileans while they were sacrificing. Pilate's belligerent treatment of Jews is attested in Josephus, *Ant*. 18.3.1–2 and *J.W.* 2.9.2–4. **2:** The reports raised questions about the belief that painful experiences reflected God's judgments (see 5.20n.). **4:** *Siloam,* in the southeast corner of Jerusalem (Isa 8.6; Neh 3.15; Jn 9.7). **6–9:** An oddly placed parable about judgment deferred. **7:** See 3.9.

13.10–17: Healing of a woman who was crippled on the sabbath. A similar sabbath healing follows in 14.1–6; see 4.31n.; cf. 8.43–48. **14:** Ex 20.9–10. Lev 23.3; Deut 5.13–14. **15:** Jesus's speaks to *hypocrites*, not the synagogue leader alone. Jesus uses the law against the leader's interpretation of the law. **16:** Jesus relates the woman's physical disorder to the work of Satan. Enslavement language graphically depicts the human predicament. Such afflictions conflict with God's purpose of salvation (4.18).

18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom
of God like? And to what should I compare it?
19 It is like a mustard seed that someone took
and sowed in the garden; it grew and became
a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in
its branches."
20 And again he said, "To what should I
compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like
yeast that a woman took and mixed in with[a]
three measures of flour until all of it was
leavened."
22 Jesus[b] went through one town and vil-
lage after another, teaching as he made his
way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him,
"Lord, will only a few be saved?" He said to
them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow
door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and
will not be able. 25 When once the owner of
the house has got up and shut the door, and
you begin to stand outside and to knock at
the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then in
reply he will say to you, 'I do not know where
you come from.' 26 Then you will begin to say,
'We ate and drank with you, and you taught
in our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I do not
know where you come from; go away from
me, all you evildoers!' 28 There will be weep-
ing and gnashing of teeth when you see Abra-
ham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets
in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves
thrown out. 29 Then people will come from
east and west, from north and south, and will
eat in the kingdom of God. 30 Indeed, some
are last who will be first, and some are first
who will be last."

31 At that very hour some Pharisees came
and said to him, "Get away from here, for
Herod wants to kill you." 32 He said to them,
"Go and tell that fox for me,[c] 'Listen, I am
casting out demons and performing cures
today and tomorrow, and on the third day I
finish my work. 33 Yet today, tomorrow, and
the next day I must be on my way, because it
is impossible for a prophet to be killed out-
side of Jerusalem.' 34 Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
the city that kills the prophets and stones
those who are sent to it! How often have I
desired to gather your children together as
a hen gathers her brood under her wings,
and you were not willing! 35 See, your house
is left to you. And I tell you, you will not
see me until the time comes when[d] you say,
'Blessed is the one who comes in the name
of the Lord.' "

14 On one occasion when Jesus[e] was
going to the house of a leader of the
Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath,
they were watching him closely. 2 Just then,
in front of him, there was a man who had
dropsy. 3 And Jesus asked the lawyers and
Pharisees, "Is it lawful to cure people on the
sabbath, or not?" 4 But they were silent. So
Jesus[e] took him and healed him, and sent
him away. 5 Then he said to them, "If one of

[a] Gk *hid in*
[b] Gk *He*
[c] Gk lacks *for me*
[d] Other ancient authorities lack *the time comes when*
[e] Gk *he*

13.18–19: Parable of the mustard seed (Mt 13.31–32; Mk 4.30–32). **19:** *Became a tree,* an exaggeration. The last phrase reflects Ps 104.12; Dan 4.12,21.

13.20–21: Parable of the yeast (Mt 13.33). The future grandeur of the kingdom contrasts with the seemingly insignificant start in the ministry of Jesus. **21:** *Three measures,* ca. 63 dry quarts (69 L).

13.22–30: The necessity of discipline for salvation (Mt 7.13–14,22–23; 8.11–12; 19.30; 20.16; Mk 10.31). **24:** Cf. Mt 7.13. **25–27:** The narrow door of v. 24 becomes permanently closed. **27:** Cf. Ps 6.8. **28–29:** The eschatological gathering of all peoples may refer to the Christian mission. **29:** Ps 107.3.

13.31–33: Report and reply concerning Herod. 31: Not all *Pharisees* were hostile to Jesus. *Herod* Antipas, see 3.1n. **32:** *Fox,* paired with the "hen" in v. 34. **33:** *It is impossible . . .,* bitter irony that leads to the ensuing laments (see 13.34–35; 19.41–42).

13.34–35: Jesus's lament over Jerusalem (Mt 23.37–39). Cf. 19.41–44. **34:** See 11.47–51. **35:** *House,* the Temple; see Jer 22.5. *Blessed . . .,* Ps 118.26; see Lk 19.37–38.

14.1–6: Healing of a man with dropsy on the sabbath. Paired with Jesus's healing of the woman who was crippled (13.1–16), **1:** Cf. 7.36n.; 11.37. *They* are Pharisees. **2:** *Dropsy,* swelling from abnormal fluid retention. **3–6:** Jesus questions what is *lawful,* repeatedly leaving opponents speechless (6.6–11; 13.10–17). **5:** The variant reading (see note *a,* on the next page) makes this verse conform to 13.15. Cf. Ex 23.5; Deut 22.4.

you has a child[a] or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?" [6] And they could not reply to this.

[7] When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. [8] "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; [9] and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. [10] But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. [11] For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

[12] He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. [13] But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. [14] And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

[15] One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" [16] Then Jesus[b] said to him, "Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. [17] At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' [18] But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.' [19] Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.' [20] Another said, 'I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.' [21] So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' [22] And the slave said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.' [23] Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. [24] For I tell you,[c] none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.' "

[25] Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, [26] "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. [27] Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. [28] For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? [29] Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, [30] saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' [31] Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes

[a] Other ancient authorities read *a donkey*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] The Greek word for *you* here is plural

14.7–14: Parable on humility. *Parable* refers to a hypothetical situation, the wedding banquet, rather than directly criticizing the guests' behavior. Cultural concerns of honor and shame are in the background of this story. **8:** Prov 25.6–7. **11:** See 13.30; 18.14; Mt 18.4; 23.12. **12–14:** Contrasts social conventions of hospitality and repayment with God's concern for the plight of the poor; cf. 1.53; 6.24–25.

14.15–24: Parable of the great dinner (Mt 22.1–14). **15:** The guest likely considers himself one of those who will share in the kingdom banquet (see 12.37n.). **16–23:** This parable warns against assuming that one will be included without heeding Jesus's teaching. **18–20:** Cf. Deut 20.5–8. **24:** *You* is plural here, whereas the master was speaking to only one servant ("you" singular). Thus, Jesus addresses the guests directly (v. 24) as a reply to the guest in v. 15.

14.25–33: The costs of discipleship (Mt 10.37–38). **26:** *Hate* is hyperbole for rejection of any ties that might take priority over commitment to Jesus (cf. 1QS 1.10). Contrast Mt 10.37. **27:** See Mk 8.34; Lk 9.23. **31–32:** Possibly

against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. 33 So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

34 "Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?[a] 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; they throw it away. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

15 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

3 So he told them this parable: 4 "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

8 "Or what woman having ten silver coins,[b] if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

11 Then Jesus[c] said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with[d] the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'[e] 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get

[a] Or *how can it be used for seasoning?*
[b] Gk *drachmas*, each worth about a day's wage for a laborer
[c] Gk *he*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *filled his stomach with*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *Treat me like one of your hired servants*

alludes to a contemporary event. **33:** See 12.33; 18.22.

14.34–35: Saying about salt (Mt 5.13; Mk 9.49–50). Impurities might have caused ancient salt to lose its properties.

15.1–7: Parable of the lost sheep (Mt 18.12–14). **1–2:** God is shepherd, both of Israel (e.g., Pss 78.52; 80.1; 100.3) and of the individual (Ps 23); for lost sheep, see Ps 119.176; Jer 50.6; Ezek 34.15–16. **6:** Joy at finding the lost links all three parables in ch 15. **7:** Applies the parable to those who criticized Jesus's association with sinners (vv. 1–2).

15.8–10: Parable of the lost coin. 8: The coins are Greek drachmas; see note *b.* **10:** See v. 7n.

15.11–32: Parable of the lost prodigal son. 12: On inheritance, see 12.13n. **15:** *Pigs,* see 8.32n. **22–24:** His place as son is freely restored, though his inheritance is gone; see v. 31. **22:** *Robe,* a festal garment; *ring,* symbol of authority; *sandals,* slaves went barefooted. Cf. Gen 41.42; Zech 3.4. **23:** *Fatted calf,* a luxury; see 1 Sam 28.24; Am 6.4.

the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; [24] for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

[25] "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. [26] He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. [27] He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' [28] Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. [29] But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. [30] But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' [31] Then the father[a] said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. [32] But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

16 Then Jesus[a] said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. [2] So he summoned him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.' [3] Then the manager said to himself, 'What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. [4] I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.' [5] So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' [6] He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.' [7] Then he asked another, 'And how much do you owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill and make it eighty.' [8] And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. [9] And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth[b] so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.[c]

[10] "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. [11] If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth,[b] who will entrust to you the true riches? [12] And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? [13] No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."[b]

[14] The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. [15] So he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God.

[16] "The law and the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Gk *mammon*
[c] Gk *tents*

25–32: Rivalry between brothers is a common biblical theme (see Gen 4.2–8; 25.27–34; 27.1–36; 37.1–4). **25–30:** The elder son's attitude resembles that of the Pharisees and scribes in vv. 1–2.

16.1–9: Parable of the dishonest manager. This enigmatic story ends at v. 8, with Jesus's exposition in v. 9. The steward was dishonest in his squandering his master's goods. His solution may not have been dishonest behavior if the manager was eliminating his own commission from the debtors' bills. He shrewdly uses material goods to win their gratitude. **8:** *His master,* lit., "the lord"; perhaps a reference by Luke to Jesus rather than to the master in the parable. *Children of light,* those who are spiritually enlightened; see Jn 12.36; Eph 5.8; 1 Thess 5.5. **9:** *Wealth,* lit., "mammon," the Greek transliteration of a Semitic word for "money," perhaps originally meaning "that in which one trusts."

16.10–18: A series of sayings. 10–12: The sayings take the form of "from lesser to greater." **11,13:** *Wealth,* see v. 9n. **13:** See Mt 6.24; cf. Deut 6.13. **14–15:** Greed was not a vice typical of Pharisees. **16–17:** Sayings concerning

the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force.[a] 17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped.

18 "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham.[b] The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.[c] 24 He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' 27 He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' 29 Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' 30 He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' "

17 Jesus[d] said to his disciples, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! 2 It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 Be on your guard! If another disciple[e] sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. 4 And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive."

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a[f] mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

[a] Or *everyone is strongly urged to enter it*
[b] Gk *to Abraham's bosom*
[c] Gk *in his bosom*
[d] Gk *He*
[e] Gk *your brother*
[f] Gk *faith as a grain of*

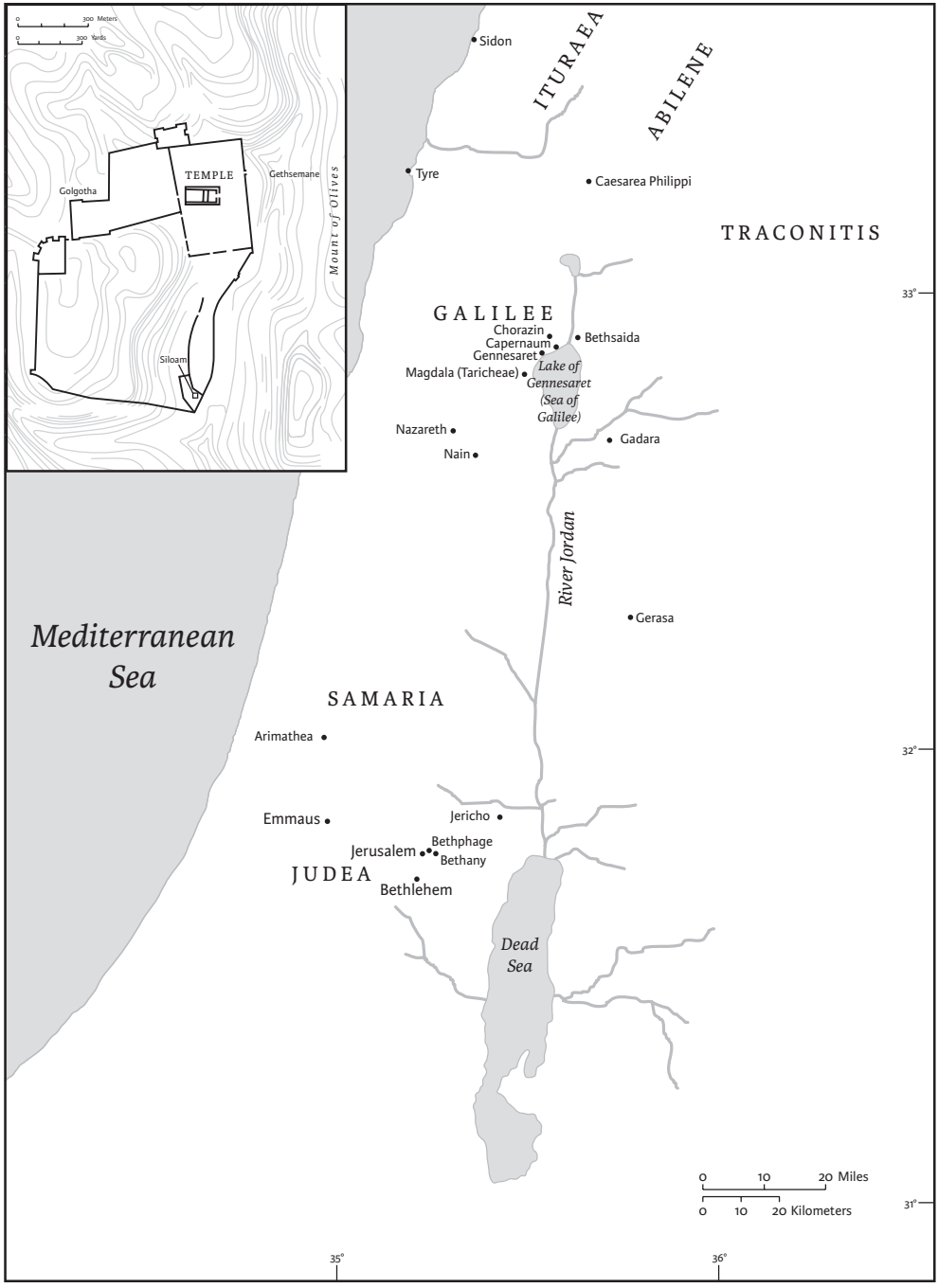
the law (Mt 11.12–13; 5.18; cf. Lk 21.33). **16:** *The law and the prophets,* the first two parts of what became the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible, the Torah or "law" of Moses, and the prophets (the books of Joshua through 2 Kings and Isaiah through Malachi; see the Prologue to Sirach; 2 Macc 15.9; Lk 16.29; 24.27,44). **18:** See Mt 19.9; Mk 10.11–12; 1 Cor 7.10–11. Probably condemns a divorce that occurred to facilitate remarriage. Herod Antipas had done exactly that; see 3.19–20n.

16.19–31: Parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The story illustrates vv. 10–15. **19:** The *rich man,* often called "Dives," Latin for "rich man." *Purple,* very expensive cloth dyed with the liquid from the murex (shellfish), associated with royalty. **20:** Not the Lazarus of Jn 11.1–44. **21–22:** Lazarus's character is irrelevant to the fatal deficiency in the life of the rich man. **22:** *With Abraham,* lit., "Abraham's bosom," a blessed condition in the afterlife; see 13.28–29. **23:** *Hades,* see 10.15n. *By his side,* lit., "in his bosom. **29:** *Moses and the prophets,* see v. 16n. **31:** *Rises from the dead,* referring to Jesus's resurrection (see 9.22).

17.1–2: The peril of causing temptation (Mt 18.6–7; Mk 9.42). The words *you* and *your* are literally *him*, *his*, *he*; Jesus speaks here impersonally of a generic figure, not to someone addressed as *you*. **2:** *Millstone*, stone (used in pairs) to grind grain, often made of basalt and ca. 12–18 in (30–40 cm) in diameter and 2–4 in (5–10 cm) thick. *Little ones* may refer to disciples or to any vulnerable person.

17.3–4: Sayings concerning forgiveness (Mt 18.15,21–22).

17.5–6: Saying concerning faith (Mt 17.19–21). **6:** *The size of a mustard seed,* see Mk 4.31.



The geography of the Gospel of Luke

7 "Who among you would say to your slave
who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and
take your place at the table'? 8 Would you not
rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put
on your apron and serve me while I eat and
drink; later you may eat and drink'? 9 Do you
thank the slave for doing what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done
all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are
worthless slaves; we have done only what we
ought to have done!' "

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus[a] was going
through the region between Samaria and
Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten lepers[b]
approached him. Keeping their distance,
13 they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have
mercy on us!" 14 When he saw them, he said
to them, "Go and show yourselves to the
priests." And as they went, they were made
clean. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that
he was healed, turned back, praising God
with a loud voice. 16 He prostrated himself at
Jesus'[c] feet and thanked him. And he was a
Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten
made clean? But the other nine, where are
they? 18 Was none of them found to return
and give praise to God except this foreigner?"
19 Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your
way; your faith has made you well."

20 Once Jesus[a] was asked by the Pharisees
when the kingdom of God was coming, and he
answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming
with things that can be observed; 21 nor will
they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For,
in fact, the kingdom of God is among[d] you."

22 Then he said to the disciples, "The days
are coming when you will long to see one of
the days of the Son of Man, and you will not
see it. 23 They will say to you, 'Look there!'
or 'Look here!' Do not go, do not set off in
pursuit. 24 For as the lightning flashes and
lights up the sky from one side to the other,
so will the Son of Man be in his day.[e] 25 But
first he must endure much suffering and be
rejected by this generation. 26 Just as it was
in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the
days of the Son of Man. 27 They were eating
and drinking, and marrying and being given
in marriage, until the day Noah entered the
ark, and the flood came and destroyed all of
them. 28 Likewise, just as it was in the days of
Lot: they were eating and drinking, buying
and selling, planting and building, 29 but on
the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire
and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all of
them 30 —it will be like that on the day that
the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day,
anyone on the housetop who has belongings
in the house must not come down to take
them away; and likewise anyone in the field
must not turn back. 32 Remember Lot's wife.
33 Those who try to make their life secure
will lose it, but those who lose their life will
keep it. 34 I tell you, on that night there will
be two in one bed; one will be taken and the
other left. 35 There will be two women grinding meal together; one will be taken and the
other left."[f] 37 Then they asked him, "Where,

[a] Gk *he*
[b] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases
[c] Gk *his*
[d] Or *within*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *in his day*
[f] Other ancient authorities add verse 36, *"Two will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left."*

17.7–10: The obligation to obedience. Cf. 12.35–38.

17.11–19: The cleansing of ten men who had leprosy. (See 5.12–16n.) **12:** Lev 13.45–46. **13:** The only time Jesus is called *Master* by anyone not a disciple. **14:** *Priests,* Lev 13.2–3; 14.2–32. **16:** *Samaritan,* see 9.52n. **17:** *The other nine* were presumably Jews. **18:** The word translated *foreigner* means "another race"; see 7.9n. **19:** Cf. 7.50; 8.48; 18.42. *Made you well,* lit., "saved you."

17.20–21: The coming of the kingdom of God. 20: Cf. 19.11; 21.7; Acts 1.6. **21:** Jesus shifted the emphasis from future expectation to the presence of the kingdom in his ministry; see 11.20.

17.22–37: The day of the Son of Man (Mt 24.17–18,23,26–28,37–41; Mk 13.14–16,19–23). **22:** The mention of the *Son of Man* gives an eschatological hue to this saying while still using "son of man" as Jesus's self-reference. **24:** The coming will be without precursory signs. **25:** See 9.22. **26–27:** Gen 6.5–8; 7.6–24. **28–30:** Gen 18.16–19.28. **31:** *On the housetop,* a flat roof reached by an exterior staircase. **32:** Gen 19.26. **33:** See 9.24. **[36]:** Some manuscripts incorporate Mt 24.20 (see note *f*). **37:** A proverb used to respond to the question repeats Jesus's refusal to answer (v. 23).

Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."

18 Then Jesus[a] told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. [2] He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. [3] In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' [4] For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, [5] yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.' "[b] [6] And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. [7] And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? [8] I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

[9] He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: [10] "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11] The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. [12] I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' [13] But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' [14] I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

[15] People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. [16] But Jesus called for them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. [17] Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."

[18] A certain ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" [19] Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. [20] You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.' " [21] He replied, "I have kept all these since my youth." [22] When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money[c] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." [23] But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich. [24] Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! [25] Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

[a] Gk *he*

[b] Or *so that she may not finally come and slap me in the face*

[c] Gk lacks *the money*

18.1–8: Parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow. 1: *Pray always,* for Luke's audience in view of the delayed parousia. **3:** Cf. Deut 27.19. **5:** *Keeps bothering me,* lit., "gives me a black eye," an image from boxing. **8:** *Comes,* from heaven, in judgment (see Dan 7.13–14).

18.9–14: Parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. 9: *Righteous,* that is, acceptable to God because of their observance of the law. **10:** *Tax collector,* see 5.27n. **11:** *I thank you,* a standard introduction to prayers of thanksgiving (Jdt 8.25; 1 QH 2.20) **12:** *Twice a week,* Mondays and Thursdays (*b. Ta'an.* 12a), not required in the Torah. *A tenth,* a tithe (Lev 27.30–33). **13:** Cf. Ps 51.1. **14:** *Rather than,* lit., "beyond that one," a comparative that does not exclude the Pharisee. See 14.11n.

18.15–17: Jesus and the little children (Mt 19.13–15; Mk 10.13–16). Contrasts humility with the self-righteousness and self-satisfaction of the previous and following stories.

18.18–30: The rich ruler, wealth, and salvation (Mt 19.16–30; Mk 10.17–31). **18:** *Good Teacher,* Jesus insists that goodness belongs to God alone. See 10.25. **20:** The order of the commandments follows the LXX); see Ex 20.12–16; Deut 5.16–20. **22:** *Treasure in heaven,* see 12.33–34. See 14.33. **23:** The ruler does not "go off" as in

[26] Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" [27] He replied, "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God."

[28] Then Peter said, "Look, we have left our homes and followed you." [29] And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, [30] who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life."

[31] Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. [32] For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. [33] After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again." [34] But they understood nothing about all these things; in fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

[35] As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. [36] When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. [37] They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth[a] is passing by." [38] Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" [39] Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" [40] Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, [41] "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again." [42] Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." [43] Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

19 He entered Jericho and was passing through it. [2] A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. [3] He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. [4] So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. [5] When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." [6] So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. [7] All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." [8] Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." [9] Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

[11] As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jeru-

[a] Gk *the Nazorean*

Mk and Mt. **26:** *Who can be saved?* Cf. 13.23. **27:** Note the slightly different wording in Mk 10.27 (par Mt 19.26); cf. Gen 18.14; Job 42.2; Jer 32.17; Lk 1.37. **28:** 5.1–11. **30:** *In this age, and in the age to come,* apocalyptic language contrasting the present evil age and God's kingdom.

18.31–34: Jesus's third prediction of his death (Mt 20.17–19; Mk 10.32–34). Cf. 9.22,44–45; 17.25. The details outline events in chs 22–24. **31:** *Everything that is written . . . by the prophets,* such as Ps 22; Isa 53; Zech 13.7.

18.35–43: Healing of a man who was blind (Mt 20.29–34; Mk 10.46–52). **38–41:** The man calls Jesus *Son of David*, and then *Lord*. **38:** *Son of David,* identifying Jesus with royal messianic expectations. See 1.27,32; 2.4. **42–43:** Cf. Mk 10.52. **42:** See 17.19n.

19.1–10: Zacchaeus's salvation. 1: *Jericho,* northwest of the Dead Sea, was an important customs center. **2:** As *chief tax collector* Zacchaeus had contracted with Roman authorities to collect revenues (lit., "tolls"). People despised toll-collectors for enabling Roman domination (v. 7). **7:** 5.29–30; 15.1–2. **8:** Zacchaeus's response contrasts with that of the ruler in 18.23. *I will give,* a vow demonstrating repentance. *Four times as much,* the amount exceeds the requirements of the law, a payment of principal plus twenty percent (Lev 6.5; Num 5.6–7). **9:** *Salvation, has come* in Jesus's presence and evinces itself in Zacchaeus's transformation. **10:** A summary of Jesus's ministry in the entire Gospel.

19.11–27: Parable of the ten pounds (Mt 25.14–30; Mk 13.34). Verses 12–15, 27 may allude to the journey of Archelaus to Rome in 4 BCE to assure his succession to Herod's throne; his mission was opposed by a delegation

salem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.
12 So he said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to get royal power for himself and then return. 13 He summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them ten pounds,[a] and said to them, 'Do business with these until I come back.' 14 But the citizens of his country hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to rule over us.' 15 When he returned, having received royal power, he ordered these slaves, to whom he had given the money, to be summoned so that he might find out what they had gained by trading.
16 The first came forward and said, 'Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds.' 17 He said to him, 'Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.' 18 Then the second came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made five pounds.' 19 He said to him, 'And you, rule over five cities.' 20 Then the other came, saying, 'Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth, 21 for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' 22 He said to him, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest.' 24 He said to the bystanders, 'Take the pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds.' 25 (And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten pounds!')
26 'I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 27 But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.' "

28 After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here.
31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.' " 32 So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They said, "The Lord needs it." 35 Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.
36 As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 37 As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, 38 saying,

"Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!"

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop."
40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

41 As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 Indeed, the days will come

[a] The mina, rendered here by *pound*, was about three months' wages for a laborer

of leaders from Judea (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.9.4; 17.10). These verses concern authority, opposition, and judgment; vv. 13,15b–26 concern responsible use of that with which one has been entrusted. **11:** 9.51; 13.22; 17.11; 18.31. **13:** *Ten pounds,* lit., "ten minas," golden coins each of which equaled a hundred drachmas (see 15.8n.). **17:** 16.10. **26:** See 8.18.

19.28–21.38: Jesus's ministry in Jerusalem (Mt 21–24; Mk 11–13).

19.28–40: The entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21.1–9; Mk 11.1–10; Jn 12.12–18). **29:** *Bethphage and Bethany,* villages just east of Jerusalem. **30:** Zech. 9.9. **31:** *The Lord* could mean either God or Jesus. **32: See** 22.13. **36:** Cf. 2 Kings 9.13. **35–38:** See Zech 9.9. **38:** *Blessed . . . in the name of the Lord,* Ps 118.26; see Lk 13.35. *Peace in heaven,* see 2.14. Jesus as *king,* will be used in the charges against him (23.2). **39–40:** See Hab 2.11.

19.41–44: Weeping over Jerusalem. See 13.33–34; cf. 23.27–31. These verses may reflect on Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE. **42–44:** *You* and *your* are singular forms, addressing Jerusalem. **43: Cf.** 21.20–24; 21.6; Isa 29.3;

upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. 44 They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God."[a]

45 Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; 46 and he said, "It is written,

'My house shall be a house of prayer';
but you have made it a den of robbers."

47 Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; 48 but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.

20 One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and telling the good news, the chief priests and the scribes came with the elders 2 and said to him, "Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Who is it who gave you this authority?" 3 He answered them, "I will also ask you a question, and you tell me: 4 Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" 5 They discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' 6 But if we say, 'Of human origin,' all the people will stone us; for they are convinced that John was a prophet." 7 So they answered that they did not know where it came from. 8 Then Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

9 He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went to another country for a long time. 10 When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed. 12 And he sent still a third; this one also they wounded and threw out. 13 Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' 14 But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.' 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Heaven forbid!" 17 But he looked at them and said, "What then does this text mean:

'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone'?[b]

18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." 19 When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people.

20 So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. 21 So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you

[a] Gk lacks *from God*
[b] Or *keystone*

Jer 6.6; Ezek 4.2. *Your enemies,* the Roman army. *Ramparts,* part of the siegeworks of an attacking army. **44:** Ps 137.9; Hos 10.14; 13.16. *Children*, the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

19.45–46: Cleansing of the Temple (Mt 21.12–13; Mk 11.15–17; Jn 2.13–17). A display of authority in the Temple, that acts out Mal 3.1–2. **45–46:** This incident may have provoked Jewish authorities to hand Jesus over to the Romans for execution. **45:** *Selling* the prescribed offerings, as in 2.24; Lev 1.14. **46:** Isa 56.7; Jer 7.11.

19.47–48: The religious leaders' hostility toward Jesus (Mk 11.18–19).

20.1–8: Questioning Jesus's authority (Mt 21.23–27; Mk 11.27–33; Jn 2.18–22). **3–4:** Jesus employs a rhetorical technique of undermining an opponent's authority (cf. Mk 10.3) **4:** *The baptism of John*, 3.3–21.

20.9–19: Parable of the vineyard and tenants (Mt 21.33–46; Mk 12.1–12). **9:** Isa 5.1–7. **13:** *Beloved* (see 3.22) identifies the son with Jesus. **15:** Murdering the son outside the vineyard reflects Jesus's crucifixion outside Jerusalem; see Jn 19.17; Heb 13.12; cf. Acts 7.52–53. **17:** Ps 118.22; see Isa 28.16; Acts 4.11. **18:** Isa 8.14–15. **19:** Cf. 19.47. **20.20–26: Paying taxes to the emperor** (Mt 22.15–22; Mk 12.13–17). **20:** *Honest,* lit., "correct according to

are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. 22 Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" 23 But he perceived their craftiness and said to them, 24 "Show me a denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?" They said, "The emperor's." 25 He said to them, "Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." 26 And they were not able in the presence of the people to trap him by what he said; and being amazed by his answer, they became silent.

27 Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him 28 and asked him a question, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man[a] shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; 30 then the second 31 and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. 32 Finally the woman also died. 33 In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her."

34 Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; 35 but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. 36 Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. 37 And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38 Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive." 39 Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." 40 For they no longer dared to ask him another question.

41 Then he said to them, "How can they say that the Messiah[b] is David's son? 42 For David himself says in the book of Psalms,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
43 until I make your enemies your
footstool."'

44 David thus calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?"

45 In the hearing of all the people he said to the[c] disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets. 47 They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

21 He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; 2 he also saw a poor widow put in two small

a Gk *his brother*
b Or *the Christ*
c Other ancient authorities read *his*

the law," i.e., "righteous" (also used of false pretense in Mt 23.28). **22–25:** A falsified version of this incident lies behind the charge against Jesus before Pilate in 23.2. **24:** *Denarius,* a silver coin with the emperor's image and inscription "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus." Coins minted for Judea did not employ such images.

20.27–40: Question concerning resurrection (Mt 22.23–33; Mk 12.18–27). **27:** *Sadducees,* a party of wealthy Judean elite that included some high priests and whose interpretations of Torah differed from those of the Pharisees (cf. Acts 4.1–2; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.17). **27:** Sadducees rejected ideas of resurrection and afterlife not found in the Torah (Acts 23.8; Josephus, *J.W.* 2.164) **28:** See Deut 25.5–10; Gen 38.8. **34–36:** Bodily resurrection does not replicate the conditions of mortal human life. **37:** Ex 3.6. Jesus refutes the Sadducees by citing scripture traditionally believed to have been written by Moses. **39:** Some scribes, like some Pharisees (see 7.36n.) are not hostile to Jesus.

20.41–44: A question about David's son (Mt 22.41–46; Mk 12.35–37a). **42–43:** Ps 110.1. The first mentioned *Lord* is God, and the second is the Messiah. **44:** David was traditionally viewed as author of the Psalms. Ps 110 is frequently cited in the NT; see, e.g., Acts 2.34–35; 1 Cor 15.25; Heb 1.13.

20.45–47: Warning concerning the scribes (Mt 23.1–36; Mk 12.37b–40). **46:** See 11.43. **47:** The practice referred to as *devouring widow's houses* is unknown.

21.1–4: The widow's offering (Mk 12.41–44). **1:** *The treasury* refers to one of thirteen receptacles shaped like inverted trumpets in the Temple's "court of the women" **2:** The *copper coin* (Gk "lepton") was of little monetary value (see 12.59n.)

copper coins. 3 He said, "Truly I tell you, this
poor widow has put in more than all of them;
4 for all of them have contributed out of their
abundance, but she out of her poverty has
put in all she had to live on."

5 When some were speaking about the
temple, how it was adorned with beautiful
stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said,
6 "As for these things that you see, the days
will come when not one stone will be left
upon another; all will be thrown down."

7 They asked him, "Teacher, when will this
be, and what will be the sign that this is about
to take place?" 8 And he said, "Beware that
you are not led astray; for many will come in
my name and say, 'I am he!'[a] and, 'The time is
near!'[b] Do not go after them.

9 "When you hear of wars and insurrec-
tions, do not be terrified; for these things
must take place first, but the end will not
follow immediately." 10 Then he said to
them, "Nation will rise against nation, and
kingdom against kingdom; 11 there will be
great earthquakes, and in various places
famines and plagues; and there will be
dreadful portents and great signs from
heaven.

12 "But before all this occurs, they will
arrest you and persecute you; they will hand
you over to synagogues and prisons, and
you will be brought before kings and gover-
nors because of my name. 13 This will give
you an opportunity to testify. 14 So make up
your minds not to prepare your defense in
advance; 15 for I will give you words[c] and a
wisdom that none of your opponents will be
able to withstand or contradict. 16 You will be
betrayed even by parents and brothers, by
relatives and friends; and they will put some
of you to death. 17 You will be hated by all
because of my name. 18 But not a hair of your
head will perish. 19 By your endurance you
will gain your souls.

20 "When you see Jerusalem surrounded
by armies, then know that its desolation has
come near.[d] 21 Then those in Judea must flee
to the mountains, and those inside the city
must leave it, and those out in the country
must not enter it; 22 for these are days of
vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is
written. 23 Woe to those who are pregnant
and to those who are nursing infants in
those days! For there will be great distress
on the earth and wrath against this people;
24 they will fall by the edge of the sword and
be taken away as captives among all na-
tions; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by
the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles
are fulfilled.

25 "There will be signs in the sun, the
moon, and the stars, and on the earth dis-
tress among nations confused by the roaring
of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint
from fear and foreboding of what is coming
upon the world, for the powers of the heav-
ens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see 'the
Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power
and great glory. 28 Now when these things
begin to take place, stand up and raise your
heads, because your redemption is drawing
near."

[a] Gk *I am*
[b] Or *at hand*
[c] Gk *a mouth*
[d] Or *is at hand*

21.5–6: Foretelling the destruction of the Temple (Mt 24.1–2; Mk 13.1–2). Luke's version of the eschatological discourse in Mk 13 extends the time span between Jesus's day and the end time. **6:** See 19.44n.

21.7–11: Sayings about end-time signs (Mt 24.3–8; Mk 13.3–8). **7:** 17.20; Acts 1.6. **10: See** 2 Chr 15.6; Isa 19.2.

21.12–19: Foretelling the persecution of the disciples (Mt 24.9–14; Mk 13.9–13). **14–15:** 12.11–12. Anticipates the theme of divine assistance in Acts (e.g., 5.19–20; 12.6–11; 16.25–34). **18:** See 12.7; Acts 27.34; 1 Sam 14.45.

21.20–24: The desolation of Jerusalem (Mt 24.15–22; Mk 13.14–20). See 19.41–44n. **20–22:** 19.41–44; 23.28–31; 17.31. **22:** Cf. Isa 63.4; Jer 5.29; Hos 9.7. **24:** Isa 63.18; Dan 8.13. *The times of the Gentiles* may imply a divinely imposed limit on Roman dominance, or the extension of salvation to all nations (20.16).

21.25–28: The coming of the Son of Man (Mt 24.29–31; Mk 13.24–27). **25–27:** See Joel 3.3–4; Isa 24.19 (LXX); Pss 65.7; 46.3; 89.9; Wis 5.22; Jon 1.15. **25:** Isa 13.10; Joel 2.10; Zeph 1.15. **26:** Cf. Isa 34.4. *The powers of the heavens,* the celestial bodies (v. 25). **27:** See Dan 7.13–14.

29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at
the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as
they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves
and know that summer is already near. 31 So
also, when you see these things taking place,
you know that the kingdom of God is near.
32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not
pass away until all things have taken place.
33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my
words will not pass away.

34 "Be on guard so that your hearts are not
weighed down with dissipation and drunk-
enness and the worries of this life, and that
day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like
a trap. For it will come upon all who live on
the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all
times, praying that you may have the strength
to escape all these things that will take place,
and to stand before the Son of Man."

37 Every day he was teaching in the temple,
and at night he would go out and spend the
night on the Mount of Olives, as it was called.
38 And all the people would get up early in the
morning to listen to him in the temple.

22 Now the festival of Unleavened Bread,
which is called the Passover, was near.
2 The chief priests and the scribes were look-
ing for a way to put Jesus[a] to death, for they
were afraid of the people.

3 Then Satan entered into Judas called
Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; 4 he went
away and conferred with the chief priests and
officers of the temple police about how he
might betray him to them. 5 They were greatly
pleased and agreed to give him money. 6 So he
consented and began to look for an oppor-
tunity to betray him to them when no crowd
was present.

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread,
on which the Passover lamb had to be sacri-
ficed. 8 So Jesus[b] sent Peter and John, saying,
"Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that
we may eat it." 9 They asked him, "Where do
you want us to make preparations for it?"
10 "Listen," he said to them, "when you have
entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water
will meet you; follow him into the house he
enters 11 and say to the owner of the house,
'The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest
room, where I may eat the Passover with my
disciples?" ' 12 He will show you a large room
upstairs, already furnished. Make prepara-
tions for us there." 13 So they went and found
everything as he had told them; and they
prepared the Passover meal.

14 When the hour came, he took his place
at the table, and the apostles with him. 15 He
said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat
this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for
I tell you, I will not eat it[c] until it is fulfilled
in the kingdom of God." 17 Then he took a
cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take
this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for

[a] Gk *him*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *never eat it again*

21.29–33: The lesson of the fig tree (Mt 24.32–36; Mk 13.28–32). **32:** Cf. 9.27. **33:** 16.17.

21.34–36: Admonition to alertness (cf. Mt 24.43–51; 25.13; Mk 13.33–37). **34–36:** 12.35–48. **34:** 8.14; 12.22; 1 Thess 5.6–7. **36:** 2 Cor 5.10.

21.37–38: Summary concerning Jesus's ministry in Jerusalem. 37: *Mount of Olives,* key locale in the passion narrative (22.39, 47–53). **38:** Jn 8.1–11 appears after this verse in some manuscripts; see Jn 8.11, note *b.*

22.1–23.56: The Last Supper and Jesus's trials, death, and burial: The passion narrative (Mt 26–27; Mk 14–15; Jn 13–19).

22.1–6: The deadly conspiracy against Jesus. 1–2: Mt 26.2–5; Mk 14.1–2; Jn 11.47–53. **3–6:** Mt 26.14–16; Mk 14.10–11; Jn 13.2. **3:** The entry of *Satan* into *Judas* (see 6.16n.) reintroduces the theme from 4.13. On Judas as *one of the twelve,* see 6.16; 22.47. **4:** *Chief priests . . .,* see 19.47n. **5:** Mk 14.11.

22.7–13: Preparations for the Passover (Mt 26.17–19; Mk 14.12–16; Jn 13.1). **7:** Passover eve; see Ex 12.18–20; Deut 16.5–8. **10:** *A man carrying a jar of water,* which was women's work, would be easily noticeable. **12:** The *large room upstairs* was on the second floor, served by an outside staircase; such rooms could be rented to pilgrims.

22.14–20: The Last Supper (Mt 26.26–29; Mk 14.22–25; cf. Jn 6.51–58). **14:** *The hour,* of the meal, after sundown. **16:** This meal anticipates the meal celebrating God's kingdom (12.37n.; 13.28–29; 14.15; 22.28–30). **17:** Several prayers over the cup of wine might be offered during the meal (see v. 20). Luke's order of events suggests

I tell you that from now on I will not drink
of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of
God comes." 19 Then he took a loaf of bread,
and when he had given thanks, he broke it
and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body,
which is given for you. Do this in remem-
brance of me." 20 And he did the same with
the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that
is poured out for you is the new covenant in
my blood.[a] 21 But see, the one who betrays
me is with me, and his hand is on the table.
22 For the Son of Man is going as it has been
determined, but woe to that one by whom he
is betrayed!" 23 Then they began to ask one
another which one of them it could be who
would do this.

24 A dispute also arose among them as to
which one of them was to be regarded as the
greatest. 25 But he said to them, "The kings of
the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in
authority over them are called benefactors.
26 But not so with you; rather the greatest
among you must become like the youngest,
and the leader like one who serves. 27 For
who is greater, the one who is at the table
or the one who serves? Is it not the one at
the table? But I am among you as one who
serves.

28 "You are those who have stood by me in
my trials; 29 and I confer on you, just as my
Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, 30 so
that you may eat and drink at my table in my
kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging
the twelve tribes of Israel.

31 "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has de-
manded[b] to sift all of you like wheat, 32 but I
have prayed for you that your own faith may
not fail; and you, when once you have turned
back, strengthen your brothers." 33 And he
said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you
to prison and to death!" 34 Jesus[c] said, "I tell
you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day,
until you have denied three times that you
know me."

35 He said to them, "When I sent you out
without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack
anything?" They said, "No, not a thing." 36 He
said to them, "But now, the one who has a
purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And
the one who has no sword must sell his cloak
and buy one. 37 For I tell you, this scripture
must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted
among the lawless'; and indeed what is writ-
ten about me is being fulfilled." 38 They said,
"Lord, look, here are two swords." He replied,
"It is enough."

39 He came out and went, as was his cus-
tom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples
followed him. 40 When he reached the place,
he said to them, "Pray that you may not come
into the time of trial."[d] 41 Then he withdrew
from them about a stone's throw, knelt down,
and prayed, 42 "Father, if you are willing,
remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but
yours be done." ⟦43 Then an angel from heaven

[a] Other ancient authorities lack, in whole or in part, verses 19b-20 *(which is given . . . in my blood)*
[b] Or *has obtained permission*
[c] Gk *He*
[d] Or *into temptation*

variation among early Christians in the way they observed the "Lord's supper." Including a cup before the bread, as well as the usual cup afterward, is unique. Jesus transformed a Jewish ritual meal (Passover) into one that associates participants with his death and victory. **19:** The action is commemorative; cf. Deut 16.3; 1 Cor 11.23–26.

22.21–23: The foretelling of the betrayal (Mt 26.21–25; Mk 14.18–21; Jn 13.21–30). **21:** Ps 41.9; Jn 13.21–30. **22:** *Has been determined,* the theological passive indicates that all the events which follow belong to God's plan of salvation.

22.24–30: True discipleship (Mt 20.24–28; Mk 10.41–45). This section and the two that follow (21.31–34,35–38) form a brief farewell discourse delivered by Jesus. **24:** Jn 13.3–16. **25:** *Benefactors,* a title often used for gods, kings, and Roman emperors. **27:** See 12.37n. **30:** Mt 19.28; Ps 122.4–5.

22.31–34: The foretelling of Peter's denial (Mt 26.30–35; Mk 14.26–31; Jn 13.36–38). **31:** *Satan has demanded,* cf. Job 1.6–12. **32:** *You* in the singular (contrast v. 31). **34:** See vv. 54–62.

22.35–38: Sayings about the coming crisis. 35: See 10.4; cf. 9.3. **36:** Contrast the lack of provisions during Jesus's ministry, 9.3; 10.4. **37:** Isa 53.12. **38:** Against armed resistance; see vv. 49–50.

22.39–46: Jesus's prayer on the Mount of Olives (Mt 26.36–46; Mk 14.32–42; Jn 18.1–2). **40:** *Time of trial,* see 11.4n.; 22.40. **42:** *Cup,* that which is allotted by God, whether blessing (Pss 16.5; 116.13) or judgment (Isa 51.17;

appeared to him and gave him strength. 44 In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]][a] 45 When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, 46 and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."[b]

47 While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; 48 but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" 49 When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" 50 Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? 53 When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!"

54 Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. 55 When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. 56 Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." 57 But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." 58 A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" 59 Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. 61 The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." 62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

63 Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; 64 they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?" 65 They kept heaping many other insults on him.

66 When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. 67 They said, "If you are the Messiah,[c] tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 and if I question you, you will not answer. 69 But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." 70 All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." 71 Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"

[a] Other ancient authorities lack verses 43 and 44
[b] Or *into temptation*
[c] Or *the Christ*

Lam 4.21). **43–44:** Important early manuscripts lack these verses, which were known in the second century (Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 103.8).

22.47–53: The betrayal and arrest of Jesus (Mt 26.47–56; Mk 14.43–52; Jn 18.2–12). **52:** Cf. Isa 53.12; Luke substitutes *temple police* for "scribes" (Mk 14.43), justifying the armed response in v. 49. The word translated *bandit* can also mean "insurrectionist." **53:** *Power of darkness,* the eschatological upsurge of evil; see 4.13; 22.3.

22.54–62: Peter's denials (Mt 26.69–75; Mk 14.66–72; Jn 18.12–18,25–27). **59:** *A Galilean,* according to Mt 26.73 because of Peter's accent. **60–61:** Jesus's prophecy is fulfilled (see 22.34). Jesus's turning to face Peter is a detail found only in Luke.

22.63–65: The mockery of Jesus (Mt 26.67–68; 27.27–31a; Mk 14.65; 15.16–20a; Jn 18.22–24). Here Jesus is mocked by guards before any formal proceedings against him rather than as one already condemned as in the other Gospels.

22.66–71: Jesus before the council (Mt 27.1; 26.59–65; Mk 15.1; 14.55–63; Jn 18.13–14,19–23). **66:** *Council,* Gk "synedrion," Sanhedrin. **67:** *If you are the Messiah, tell us,* becomes an element of the charges before Pilate in 23.2. **69:** Cf. Mk 14.61–62; see Ps 110.1; Dan 7.13. Jesus claims divine vindication and even a share in divine rule. **71:** From what follows in 23.1–2, it seems here that Jesus's adversaries conclude that he is guilty of sedition.

23 Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus[a] before Pilate. [2] They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king."[b] [3] Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." [4] Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." [5] But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."

[6] When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. [7] And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. [8] When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. [9] He questioned him at some length, but Jesus[c] gave him no answer. [10] The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. [11] Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. [12] That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

[13] Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, [14] and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. [15] Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. [16] I will therefore have him flogged and release him."[d]

[18] Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" [19] (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) [20] Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; [21] but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" [22] A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." [23] But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. [24] So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. [25] He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

[26] As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. [27] A great

[a] Gk *him*
[b] Or *is an anointed king*
[c] Gk *he*
[d] Here, or after verse 19, other ancient authorities add verse 17, *Now he was obliged to release someone for them at the festival*

23.1–5: Jesus before Pilate (Mt 27.1–14; Mk 15.1–5; Jn 18.28–38). **1:** *Pilate,* see 3.1n. **2–3:** Mention of *king* draws Pilate's attention. **2:** Cf. 19.38; 20.25; see Acts 24.5. The charge is phrased to sound like treason. **3:** *You say so,* cf. 22.70. Jesus cannot deny that he is "Son of God" and "messiah/king," but he is not guilty as charged. **4:** 23.14,22,41; Jn 19.4,6; Acts 13.28. Pilate refused to take religious ideas in a political sense. Here, and later, Pilate sought to free Jesus but then yielded to pressures. **5:** *Teaching,* specifically the *perverting* of v. 2.

23.6–12: Jesus before Herod. An episode found only in Luke. Herod Antipas (see 3.1n.) had arrested (3.19–20) and beheaded (9.9) John the Baptist. **8:** Luke describes Herod Antipas as more curious than hostile toward Jesus; see 9.9; Acts 4.27–28. **9:** *No answer,* cf. Mt 27.12 ; Mk 15.5. **11:** *Elegant robe,* an expression of scorn; cf. Jn 19.2–3. **12:** An enmity not recorded elsewhere.

23.13–16 [17]: Pilate's declaration of Jesus's innocence. 14: Vv. 4,22,41. **15:** Pilate interprets Herod Antipas's actions as evidence of innocence. **16:** Cf. Jn 19.12–14. **[17]:** See Mk 15.6n.

23.18–25: The sentencing of Jesus to death (Mt 27.15–26; Mk 15.6–15; Jn 18.39–40; 19.16; see Acts 3.13–14). **18:** The *Barabbas* incident is recounted in greater detail in the other Gospels. **24:** Luke's depiction of Pilate is that of a failure of Roman justice.

23.26–31: On the way to the cross (Mt 27.31b–32; Mk 15.20b–21; Jn 19.17a). **26:** The main actors are the Roman soldiers (v. 36), despite the ambiguous *they*. *Cyrene,* in Libya. *The cross,* i.e., the horizontal crossbeam. **27:**

number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. 28 But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' 30 Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' 31 For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

32 Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. 33 When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus[a] there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ⟦ 34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."⟧[b] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. 35 And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah[c] of God, his chosen one!" 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" 38 There was also an inscription over him,[d] "This is the King of the Jews."

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding[e] him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah?[c] Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into[f] your kingdom." 43 He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land[g] until three in the afternoon, 45 while the sun's light failed;[h] and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. 47 When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly

[a] Gk *him*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack the sentence *Then Jesus . . . what they are doing*
[c] Or *the Christ*
[d] Other ancient authorities add *written in Greek and Latin and Hebrew* (that is, *Aramaic*)
[e] Or *blaspheming*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *in*
[g] Or *earth*
[h] Or *the sun was eclipsed.* Other ancient authorities read *the sun was darkened*

Here *beating their breasts* indicates mourning, not repentance (cf. 18.3; 23.48). **28–32:** 21.23–24; 19.41–44. **30:** See Hos 10.8. **31:** Cf. Prov 11.31. This proverb may mean either that if the innocent Jesus meets such a fate, then a worse fate awaits the guilty Jerusalem, or that if such takes place with Jesus present and active, what will happen when he is no longer present?

23.32: Two criminals with Jesus. The Gk word for *criminals* (lit., "evildoers") gives no indication of the nature of the crime(s) committed.

23.33–38: The scene of the crucifixion (Mt 27.33–43; Mk 15.22–32a; Jn 19.17b–27). **33:** *The Skull,* its Aramaic name, Golgotha, occurs in the other Gospels. **34:** See textual note *a;* cf. Acts 7.60. See Ps 22.18. **35:** Luke distinguishes *the people* (who were watching) from *the leaders* (who were scoffing). **36:** See Ps 69.20–21. *Sour wine* was cheap, ordinary wine. **37–38:** The charge, *the King of the Jews*, was at the center of the events connected with the execution of Jesus.

23.39–43: The exchange between Jesus and the two criminals (Mt 27.44; Mk 15.32b). **41:** Repeated recognition of Jesus's innocence (see vv. 4,14,22). **42:** The criminal's appeal may be based on the charge against Jesus (vv. 2,3,38); Jesus promises more than he asked, intimating that God's kingly power is a present reality, not merely a future one. **43:** *Paradise,* originally a term for the garden of Eden (Gen 2.8–10), was used for the place of the righteous dead prior to the resurrection; cf. 16.22.

23.44–48: The death of Jesus (Mt 27.45–54; Mk 15.33–39; Jn 19.28–30). **45:** *The sun's light failed,* the translation is uncertain; see Am 8.9; Joel 2.31. *The curtain* (see Ex 26.31–35) was torn at or immediately after Jesus's death in Mk 15.38. **46:** Ps 31.5. **47:** The centurion (see 7.2n.) declares Jesus to be "righteous" rather than merely

this man was innocent."[a] 48 And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. 49 But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

50 Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, 51 had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. 54 It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning.[b] 55 The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. 56 Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in, they did not find the body.[c] 4 While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. 5 The women[d] were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men[e] said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.[f] 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." 8 Then they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.[g]

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles[h] from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and

[a] Or *righteous*
[b] Gk *was dawning*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *of the Lord Jesus*
[d] Gk *They*
[e] Gk *but they*
[f] Other ancient authorities lack *He is not here, but has risen*
[g] Other ancient authorities lack verse 12
[h] Gk *sixty stadia;* other ancient authorities read *a hundred sixty stadia*

innocent;. see Acts 3.14; 22.14. **48:** The cause of this popular agitation is not clear (Zech 12.10), though compare 18.13–14.

23.49: Jesus's acquaintances at the crucifixion (Mt 27.55–56; Mk 15.40–41; Jn 19.25–27). See 23.55; cf. 8.1–3; 24.10; Ps 38.11. *All* can indicate a large number of persons; cf. 3.21.

23.50–54: The burial of Jesus (Mt 27.57–60; Mk 15.42–46; Jn 19.38–42). **50:** *The council,* see 22.66n. **51:** Joseph's expectation would have inclined him toward Jesus sympathetically. **54:** *The sabbath* began at sundown. Luke, with Gentile readers in mind, indicates the urgency of the burial in Jewish custom (see Ex 12.16; 20.10).

23.55–56: Women at the burial (Mt 27.61; Mk 15.47–16.1). **55:** Cf. 24.10. **56:** *Spices and ointments* were applied to the corpse; see Mk 16.1; Jn 19.40.

24.1–53: The empty tomb and the resurrection (Mt 28.1–10,16–20; Mk 16.1–8; Jn 20–21).

24.1–12: The women at the tomb (Mt 28.1–8; Mk 16.1–8; Jn 20.1–13). **2:** The stone is not an issue in Luke's account; cf. Mt 28.2; Mk 16.3–4. **4:** The *two men* wear clothing that identifies them as angels (see v. 23), as do their sudden appearance and supernatural knowledge (vv. 5–7). **6:** 9.22; 13.32–33. *You* here suggests that Jesus's disciples as a group often included others in addition to the "Twelve." **10:** 8.1–3; Jn 19.25; 20.2. **12:** This verse, though appearing in many ancient manuscripts, may be an addition to the original text of Luke based on Jn 20.3–10; see 24.24.

24.13–35: The Emmaus incident. 13: *Seven miles,* lit., "sixty stadia"; a stadium was approximately 600 ft

went with them, [16] but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. [17] And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.[a] [18] Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" [19] He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth,[b] who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, [20] and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. [21] But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.[c] Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. [22] Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, [23] and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. [24] Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." [25] Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! [26] Was it not necessary that the Messiah[d] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" [27] Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

[28] As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. [29] But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. [30] When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. [31] Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. [32] They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us[e] while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" [33] That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. [34] They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" [35] Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

[36] While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."[f] [37] They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. [38] He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? [39] Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." [40] And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.[g] [41] While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" [42] They gave him a piece of broiled fish, [43] and he took it and ate in their presence.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *walk along, looking sad?"*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *Jesus the Nazorean*
[c] Or *to set Israel free*
[d] Or *the Christ*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *within us*
[f] Other ancient authorities lack *and said to them, "Peace be with you."*
[g] Other ancient authorities lack verse 40

(180 m). The location of Emmaus is uncertain. **16:** Inability to recognize Jesus is typical of initial reactions in resurrection stories (cf. 24.37). **18:** *Cleopas* is otherwise unknown. **19:** 7.16; 13.33; Acts 3.22; 10.38. **20:** Early Christian memory faults *the chief priests and leaders* for their having *handed him over* to the Romans. **22–24:** See vv. 1–12. **26:** *Necessary* in God's plan (see 7.30; Acts 2.23; 13.36; 20.27). **27:** *Moses . . . the prophets,* see 16.16n.; 24.44; Acts 28.23. **30:** *Took, blessed,* and *broke,* echo the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper (22.19) and the multiplication of the loaves (9.16). **31:** The comings and goings of the risen Jesus are not explained (see 24.31,36,51). **34:** 1 Cor 15.5. Peter's experience is not described. **35:** *Breaking of the bread,* see Acts 2.42; 20.7; 1 Cor 10.16.

24.36–43: Jesus's appearance to his disciples (Jn 20.19–23). See 1 Cor 15.5. Their experience of Jesus, affirmed in v. 36, is tentatively interpreted in v. 37 as an encounter with the dead, but this explanation is rejected in v. 39. **38–41:** Doubts and disbelief are features of other NT resurrection stories; cf. Mt 28.17; Jn 20.25. **39–40:** Cf. Jn 20.25,27. **42:** *Broiled fish,* cf. Jn 21.9–13.

44 Then he said to them, "These are my
words that I spoke to you while I was still
with you—that everything written about me
in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the
psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened
their minds to understand the scriptures,
46 and he said to them, "Thus it is written,
that the Messiah[a] is to suffer and to rise from
the dead on the third day, 47 and that repen-
tance and forgiveness of sins is to be pro-
claimed in his name to all nations, beginning
from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses[b] of these
things. 49 And see, I am sending upon you
what my Father promised; so stay here in the
city until you have been clothed with power
from on high."

50 Then he led them out as far as Beth-
any, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed
them. 51 While he was blessing them, he
withdrew from them and was carried up
into heaven.[c] 52 And they worshiped him,
and[d] returned to Jerusalem with great joy;
53 and they were continually in the temple
blessing God.[e]

[a] Or *the Christ*
[b] Or *nations. Beginning from Jerusalem* [48]*you are witnesses*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *and was carried up into heaven*
[d] Other ancient authorities lack *worshiped him, and*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

24.44–53: Jesus's final words and withdrawal into heaven (cf. the longer ending of Mark: Mk 16.15,19). **44:** Vv. 26–27; Acts 28.23. see 16.16n. The Psalms were important in early Christian interpretation of Jesus's mission, esp. in messianic reflection. **46:** Hos 6.2; cf. 1 Cor 15.3–4. **47:** Acts 1.4–8; 5.31; 10.43; 13.38; 26.18. **48:** Acts 1.8. **49:** *Power from on high,* the words allude to the energy of the Spirit of God referred to in Joel 2.28–32 (cf. Acts 2.1–21). The new age has begun, but its power is not yet fully realized. **50:** *Bethany,* see 19.29n. **51:** Acts 1.9–11. **52–53:** Acts 1.12–14; 2.46–47.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

AUTHORSHIP, PROVENANCE, AND DATE OF COMPOSITION

The Gospel of John relates the story of Jesus as one in which the Word made flesh is sent into the world "from above" to bring life to those who believe in him (1.1–18). The narrative world of the Gospel involves sharp contrasts—above and below, light and dark, spirit and flesh, not of this world/of this world, children of God and children of the devil. It is a world that God loves (3.16), but one that will hate his Son and those who come to believe in him (15.18–25). The Gospel soars with language of love and bites with sharp words of opposition between Jesus and his opponents. Even after centuries of study, readers are still discovering nuances in the symbolic language of this complex Gospel.

Like the other Gospels, this one never names an author. Since at least the late second century CE, tradition has attributed the authorship of the Gospel to Jesus's disciple, John the son of Zebedee, who purportedly wrote the Gospel in Ephesus. Doubts about the accuracy of this tradition have existed since antiquity. Eusebius mentions a different figure, John "the Elder," living in Ephesus (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.3). The conclusion to the Gospel (21.24) points to the memories of the "disciple whom Jesus loved" as a source of its traditions. But the narrative never identifies this figure, although if the "other disciple" in 18.16 is a reference to this same disciple, it may suggest that he is from Jerusalem rather than Galilee. Today most scholars think that Johannine traditions stem from an unidentified follower of Jesus, not one of the twelve disciples. This anonymous disciple developed a group of followers, a "Johannine school," who were responsible for writing down his witness. This figure was idealized in the community, as the model believer who is called the "beloved disciple" in the Gospel narrative (19.25–27).

Dating the Gospel is complicated by theories that the Gospel was composed in several stages. Scholars generally date the final form of the Gospel to around 90–100 CE. A small papyrus fragment known as P52 (Rylands Library Papyrus 3.457), which contains verses from Jn 18, was initially dated at around 130 CE, which would mean that the Gospel must have been written by the end of the first century. More recently that date has been moved to later in the second century. Furthermore, references to John begin to proliferate in Christian writers only in the second half of the second century. The Gospel was likely written sometime in the late first century or early second century CE. But some scholars continue to argue for an earlier first-century date, at least for an earlier form of the Gospel.

Ephesus continues to be the lead contender for the author's location. Not only does tradition situate it there, but another writing associated with the Johannine corpus, the book of Revelation, is directed toward an audience in Asia Minor (Rev 1.4). Other suggestions include Palestine (especially for those looking for an early provenance) and Alexandria (because the Gospel was popular with Gnostic thinkers living in Egypt).

LITERARY HISTORY

Scholars confront three main puzzles in trying to discern the stages of composition in the Gospel of John. First, what is the relationship between this Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels? Second, apart from the Synoptic Gospels as potential sources, are there other discernible sources behind the Gospel? Third, was the Gospel composed in several stages at different points in the life of a particular "Johannine" community?

For much of the twentieth century, the distinctiveness of the Gospel led scholars to argue that the author did not know any of the Synoptic Gospels but employed an independent source of oral and written traditions which had some overlap with "Synoptic-like" traditions, especially Mark and Luke. More recently, scholars have argued that the evangelist knew one or more of the Synoptic Gospels, but chose to present the story of Jesus in a different form. The Gospel employs elements of the dramatic form to focus attention on the identity of Jesus as God's Son, "the one coming into the world" (1.9; 11.27). Thus the author departs from the narrative form of the other Gospels which depict Jesus as God's anointed Messiah who announces the coming kingdom of God.

Apart from the author's knowledge of written Gospels, the author may also have incorporated a source designated by scholars as the "signs source" (or *sēmeia*, Gk for "signs"). The Gospel uses the term "signs" for miracles performed by Jesus, and two of them, which are numbered, frame an early section of the narrative (2.11; 4.54). Different assessments of signs appear in the narrative: sometimes they are regarded positively as

the basis of faith (2.11; 2.23); at other times seeking signs draws criticism (4.48). Such differences could result from the incorporation of a distinct signs source.

Many scholars think that the Gospel was written in stages, over several decades. In 21.20–23, for instance, we find confusion regarding the death of the Beloved Disciple prior to the second coming of Jesus. That clarification suggests that ch 21 stems from a revision of the Gospel at a later period in the life of the community. Similarly, chs 15–17 may belong to that addition, given the apparent break in the narrative at 14.31. The Johannine letters, which share vocabulary and images related to the Gospel, point to further crisis which split the community, although whether this crisis occurred before or after the writing of the Gospel is debated. Some interpreters reject the entire construct of a "Johannine community," since no external evidence exists for such a community in Ephesus. Moreover, what appear to be awkward textual breaks can be explained as literary devices that were common to Greek drama (see 14.31n.).

STRUCTURE AND LITERARY STYLE

The narrative divides into two main sections. Chapters 1–12 describe Jesus's time in the world during which he performs signs to disclose the true nature of his identity to those who believe. At 13.1, Jesus tells his disciples that his time to return to the Father has come, beginning the second part of Gospel. The remaining chapters include Jesus's farewell meal with the disciples where he prepares them for his departure (13–17), followed by the passion and resurrection narrative (18–20), and an epilogue (21). In addition to relating Jesus's signs, the first part describes increasing conflict between Jesus and his opponents, culminating in the final plan to put Jesus to death (11.53). This decision comes following the raising of Lazarus, which itself points ahead to Jesus's death and resurrection. So also does Mary's anointing of Jesus in Bethany, which anticipates his burial (12.7–8). Thus, chs 11–12 provide the transition from the first half of the Gospel, focusing on Jesus coming into the world and his ministry, to the second part, focused on his glorification and ascent to the Father.

The Gospel contains many distinctive traditions and literary features. For example, the narrative presents Jesus in extended dialogues with other characters along with lengthy discourses about his identity and purpose. Often these exchanges lead to misunderstanding on the part of his conversation partners. See, for example, the scenes with Nicodemus, (3.1–21) and the Samaritan Woman (4.1–42), where Jesus uses words with double meanings that create confusion. Likewise, Jesus's discourses employ symbolic imagery to describe Jesus's identity. That language leads to questions and protests from listeners. Another literary device is the use of "I am" statements. The Johannine Jesus uses the phrase to define himself by way of objects from everyday life such as bread (6.35), light (8.12), door (10.7), good shepherd (10.11), and true vine (15.1). In some cases, the phrase is used more abstractly. Jesus instructs his listener that he is the resurrection (11.25), the way, the truth, and the life (14.6). All of these statements point to the life-giving qualities of the divine savior. In several cases the phrase is used without a direct object (8.28,58), echoing the "I am" theophany of Exodus, where God reveals his name using the first-person form of the verb to be (Ex 3.14). This focus on the identity of Jesus appears also in the Gospel's distinctive description of Jesus's wondrous acts as "signs." In the Synoptic tradition, Jesus's miracles point to the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. In this Gospel, the signs reveal Jesus's glory and bring people to belief in him.

Irony also appears regularly as a literary device, where characters unknowingly convey theological truths about Jesus. Two prime examples are Caiaphas's declaration about Jesus's death for "the people" (11.49–52), and Pilate's question "What is truth?" as he stands before Jesus who has proclaimed himself as the truth (18.38).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND INTERPRETATION

As early as Clement of Alexandria's statement that "John wrote a spiritual gospel" (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7) readers have tended to assume that the Gospel is less historical than the Synoptic Gospels. While assessing the historicity of any Gospel tradition is always complicated, at least some details in John may be closer to the historical context of Jesus than those in the Synoptic accounts. For example, John's narrative has Jesus engaged in a ministry of at least three years compared to the single year in the other Gospels. In John, Jesus attends multiple festivals in Jerusalem, including three annual Passover festivals (2.13; 6.4; 11.55). An active ministry of several years makes more sense in providing time necessary to gather followers and attract the negative attention of Roman leaders. The Gospel of John is also the only one that directly addresses the historical reality of living under Roman occupation (11.48). Other differences in chronology are more difficult to assess. For

instance, the Gospel does not have Jesus sharing a Passover meal with the disciples as in the Synoptic Gospels; instead, Jesus's last meal is on the day before Passover. Theological motivations can explain both versions of the timing. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is the Lamb of God crucified on the day before Passover, the same day that the Passover lambs are slaughtered. In the Synoptic Gospels, the Last Supper is a Passover meal that is transformed into a Eucharistic meal.

Determining the historical circumstances in which the Gospel was written poses other difficult questions. From a Christian perspective, the Gospel of John offers a rich tapestry of symbolic language that presents Jesus as the image and revelation of God in the world. One who knows Jesus, knows God (1.18; 14.9), and one who follows the commandment of Jesus to love others in the community will abide in God's love and have complete joy (15.10). Believers have been granted eternal life and promised a place with the Father and the Son (3.16; 8.51; 14.1–3). But all of this positive imagery is accompanied by its opposite. One who does not believe has already been condemned (3.18). One who does not abide in Jesus "is thrown away like a branch" to wither and burn (15.6). If believers have eternal life, sinners (those who do not believe) will die in their sins (8.24).

This starkly drawn picture may seem clear enough until one confronts the fact that the Gospel regularly labels these nonbelievers as *hoi Ioudaioi*, "the Jews." Indeed, a major challenge of understanding the historical context of the Gospel is how to make sense of a narrative that features Jesus in close connection with Jewish traditions and rituals (shown though regular references to the ancestral figures of Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, as well as frequent attendance at Jewish festivals), and also in heated conflict with a group called "the Jews." Historically, Jesus and all of his disciples were Jewish, so it seems puzzling to hear John's Jesus declare that unbelieving children of Abraham are offspring of the devil (8.39–44). Scholars debate even how to translate the phrase *hoi Ioudaioi*, since it clearly cannot refer to all Jewish people. Because the Gospel also contrasts a positive response to Jesus in the rural region of Galilee with the increasing hostility of Judeans in Jerusalem, some favor "the Judeans" as the translation of *hoi Ioudaioi*. Especially given the legacy of violent anti-Semitism in Western history, the problem of translation is a serious one.

One theory about the historical context of the Gospel popular in the late twentieth century explained the hostile use of "the Jews" as the reaction to a formal expulsion of Christ- believers from Jewish synagogues. The theory rested on the Gospel's use of the Gk term *aposynagogos* (lit.,"out from the synagogue"). It appears three times in the Gospel (9.22; 12.42; 16.2), but nowhere else in ancient Greek literature. In recent years, the notion of a formal expulsion from the synagogue as the historical background for the Gospel has been disproven, since it assumed that a benediction from a later period in Jewish liturgy represented a curse against Jesus's followers. The synagogue expulsion theory also fails to account for evidence from the Gospel narrative. For example, 12.11 refers to voluntary departure from the synagogue rather than expulsion. In some places, "the Jews" is used in neutral ways, as in references to the festival of the Jews that Jesus attends (5.1), or the Jews who gather with Mary and Martha to comfort them (11.19). Indeed, one should also note that Mary and Martha, clearly intimate associates with Jesus, are still associating with the Jews—they have not been "put out of the synagogue." In other places, the expression "the Jews" is a variation on the negative group opposed to Jesus, "unbelievers" or even "the world." Generally, when Gospel writers refer to "the Jews" in antagonistic ways, they have religious authorities in mind.

Consequently, some scholars think that references to being driven out of the synagogue may be included in the Gospel to prevent Jesus-believers who had left the synagogue from returning to it again (see 1 Jn 2.19). In this sense, a more accurate description of the circumstances reflected by the rhetoric of the Gospel would see the heated rhetoric flowing both ways. That is, the followers of Jesus may have opted out of the local synagogue in anger over bitter disagreements about the identity of Jesus. These references to being "put out" may reveal little more than the frustrations, anger and pain between otherwise closely interrelated groups. One purpose of the Gospel may have been to reassure and shore up the belief of the community, in light of these tense circumstances (see 20.31, note *b*).

Colleen Conway

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the
Word was with God, and the Word was
God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All
things came into being through him, and
without him not one thing came into being.
What has come into being [4] in him was life,[a]
and the life was the light of all people. [5] The
light shines in the darkness, and the darkness
did not overcome it.

[6] There was a man sent from God, whose
name was John. [7] He came as a witness to
testify to the light, so that all might believe
through him. [8] He himself was not the light,
but he came to testify to the light. [9] The true
light, which enlightens everyone, was coming
into the world.[b]

[10] He was in the world, and the world came
into being through him; yet the world did not
know him. [11] He came to what was his own,[c] and
his own people did not accept him. [12] But to all
who received him, who believed in his name, he
gave power to become children of God, [13] who
were born, not of blood or of the will of the
flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

[14] And the Word became flesh and lived
among us, and we have seen his glory, the
glory as of a father's only son,[d] full of grace
and truth. [15] (John testified to him and cried
out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who
comes after me ranks ahead of me because
he was before me.' ") [16] From his fullness we
have all received, grace upon grace. [17] The law
indeed was given through Moses; grace and
truth came through Jesus Christ. [18] No one
has ever seen God. It is God the only Son,[e]
who is close to the Father's heart,[f] who has
made him known.

[a] Or [3]*through him. And without him not one thing came into being that has come into being.* [4]*In him was life*

[b] Or *He was the true light that enlightens everyone coming into the world*

[c] Or *to his own home*

[d] Or *the Father's only Son*

[e] Other ancient authorities read *It is an only Son, God,* or *It is the only Son*

[f] Gk *bosom*

1–12: Jesus in the world.

1.1–18: The prologue introduces the major themes of the Gospel: the identity of Jesus as an eternal and pre-existent divine agent sent into the world by God, his rejection by many of his own people, and his acceptance by some, who thereby can become children of God. **1:** *In the beginning* (Gen 1.1) affirms the primordial aspect of *the Word* (Gk *logos*). *Logos* is multivalent. In Jewish tradition *logos* represents God's Wisdom, a creative agent that eternally coexisted with God (Prov 8.27–30; Ps 33.6; Wis 9.1; Sir 43.26). By the first century, God's Wisdom was often equated with Torah. First-century CE Stoic philosophy used *logos* to reference the ordering, rational principle of the cosmos. **2–4:** The Gk pronouns translated *he* and *him* could also be rendered *it*, referring to the *logos*. **3:** *Was with God . . . was God,* poetic expression of the relationship between the divine *logos* and God. It anticipates language of unity with distinction that will describe the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Gospel (5.19,30; 10.30; 14.9). **4–5:** *Light* and *life* point forward to Jesus's self-definition in the Gospel (8.18; 11.25). In Genesis, the light shined in the primordial darkness. Here the language suggests a combative struggle between light and dark forces, where light prevails. **6–8:** Introduction of John, who is not referred to as "the Baptist" in this Gospel. His role is to witness to Jesus (see 1.35–36). Here and elsewhere in the Gospel, the insistence that John is not the Messiah suggests a historic rivalry between followers of John and Jesus (see 1.20,30; 3.22–30; 4.1). **9:** *True light,* cf. Wis 7.26,29. "True" suggests an authentic identity that surpasses earlier expressions of Wisdom (see also 6.32; 15.1). *Which enlightens everyone*, perhaps alluding to Isa 49.6, but in any case suggesting that the gift of light is available for all. **10–11:** Both *the world* and *his own* either did not recognize or rejected the light. *His own* may be all of humanity or the Jewish people. **12–13:** The prior statement is immediately qualified. There are some who accepted, believed and were given the opportunity for relationship with God, which was not dependent on human birth or particular bloodlines. **14:** *Lived,* lit., "pitched a tent," like God's Wisdom (Sir 24.8), or God's presence in the desert tabernacle (Ex 40.34). In the wilderness only Moses was permitted to see God's *glory,* at which point God announces his grace and mercy (Ex 33.18–19). Jesus conveys the glory of God, along with God's grace and truth. *Flesh* and *glory* will be major themes in the Gospel (3.5–7; 6.51–58,63; 13.31–32; 17.1–5). **15:** Concerns about John's priority over Jesus are answered by John (see 1.6–8n.). **17:** Recognition of Moses's role as lawgiver, alongside the place of Jesus as the revealer. **18:** *Close to the father's heart* (lit., "toward the breast"), connoting Jesus's intimate and abiding relationship with God; cf. 13.23.

19 This is the testimony given by John when
the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jeru-
salem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He con-
fessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I
am not the Messiah."[a] 21 And they asked him,
"What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am
not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered,
"No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you?
Let us have an answer for those who sent us.
What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the
wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,' "

as the prophet Isaiah said.

24 Now they had been sent from the Phari-
sees. 25 They asked him, "Why then are you
baptizing if you are neither the Messiah,[a] nor
Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26 John answered
them, "I baptize with water. Among you
stands one whom you do not know, 27 the one
who is coming after me; I am not worthy to
untie the thong of his sandal." 28 This took
place in Bethany across the Jordan where
John was baptizing.

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming
toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb
of God who takes away the sin of the world!
30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a
man who ranks ahead of me because he was
before me.' 31 I myself did not know him; but
I came baptizing with water for this reason,
that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 And
John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending
from heaven like a dove, and it remained on
him. 33 I myself did not know him, but the one
who sent me to baptize with water said to me,
'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and
remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy
Spirit.' 34 And I myself have seen and have
testified that this is the Son of God."[b]

35 The next day John again was standing
with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched
Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is
the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard
him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 When
Jesus turned and saw them following, he said
to them, "What are you looking for?" They
said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means
Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 He said
to them, "Come and see." They came and saw
where he was staying, and they remained
with him that day. It was about four o'clock
in the afternoon. 40 One of the two who heard
John speak and followed him was Andrew,
Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his
brother Simon and said to him, "We have
found the Messiah" (which is translated
Anointed[c]). 42 He brought Simon[d] to Jesus,
who looked at him and said, "You are Simon
son of John. You are to be called Cephas"
(which is translated Peter[e]).

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to
Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Fol-
low me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida,
the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found

[a] Or *the Christ*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *is God's chosen one*
[c] Or *Christ*
[d] Gk *him*
[e] From the word for *rock* in Aramaic (*kepha*) and Greek (*petra*), respectively

1.19–35: John's witness of Jesus and the gathering of disciples. On John, cf. Mt 3.1–17; Mk 1.2–11; Lk 3.1–22. **19:** *The Jews sent priests and Levites*, all three designations represent religious authorities affiliated with the Jerusalem Temple. **20:** A negative "confession" that addresses confusion over potentially competing movements (see 1.6–8n.). **21:** Reflects a tradition about Elijah's return before the day of judgment (2 Kings 2.11; Mal 4.5). **23:** Reinterpretation of Isa 40.3 to refer to the coming Messiah. **27:** *Untie . . . his sandal,* typically a slave's duty. **28:** *Bethany across the Jordan*, uncertain location, but different from the Bethany in Judea (11.1,18). **29:** *Lamb of God* alludes to the Passover lamb, a symbol of liberation and God's saving acts (Ex 12; cf. Jn 19.36n.). Here the designation is the first of a list of titles and descriptions applied to Jesus in this opening chapter (1.36,38,41,49,51). **29:** *Was before me*, alludes to Jesus as the incarnate preexistent Word described in the prologue. **31:** In the Synoptic Gospels, John baptizes for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 3.6; Mk 1.4; Lk 3.3). Here, it is for the revelation of Jesus. **32:** The actual baptism of Jesus is not described. **35–37:** *Lamb of God,* see 1.29n. Only in this Gospel do Jesus's first two disciples come from among John's followers. **40:** One of the two unnamed disciples with John is now identified, but the other remains anonymous. Perhaps this is the first glimpse in the narrative of the disciple whom Jesus loved (see 13.23; 19.26; 20.2; 21.7,20). **42:** *Cephas*, see note *d*. **44:** *Bethsaida,* a city on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. **45–46:** Witnessing to others about Jesus establishes a pattern for the rest of the

Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." [46] Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." [47] When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" [48] Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." [49] Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" [50] Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." [51] And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you,[a] you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. [2] Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. [3] When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." [4] And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." [5] His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." [6] Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. [7] Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. [8] He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. [9] When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom [10] and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." [11] Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

[12] After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.

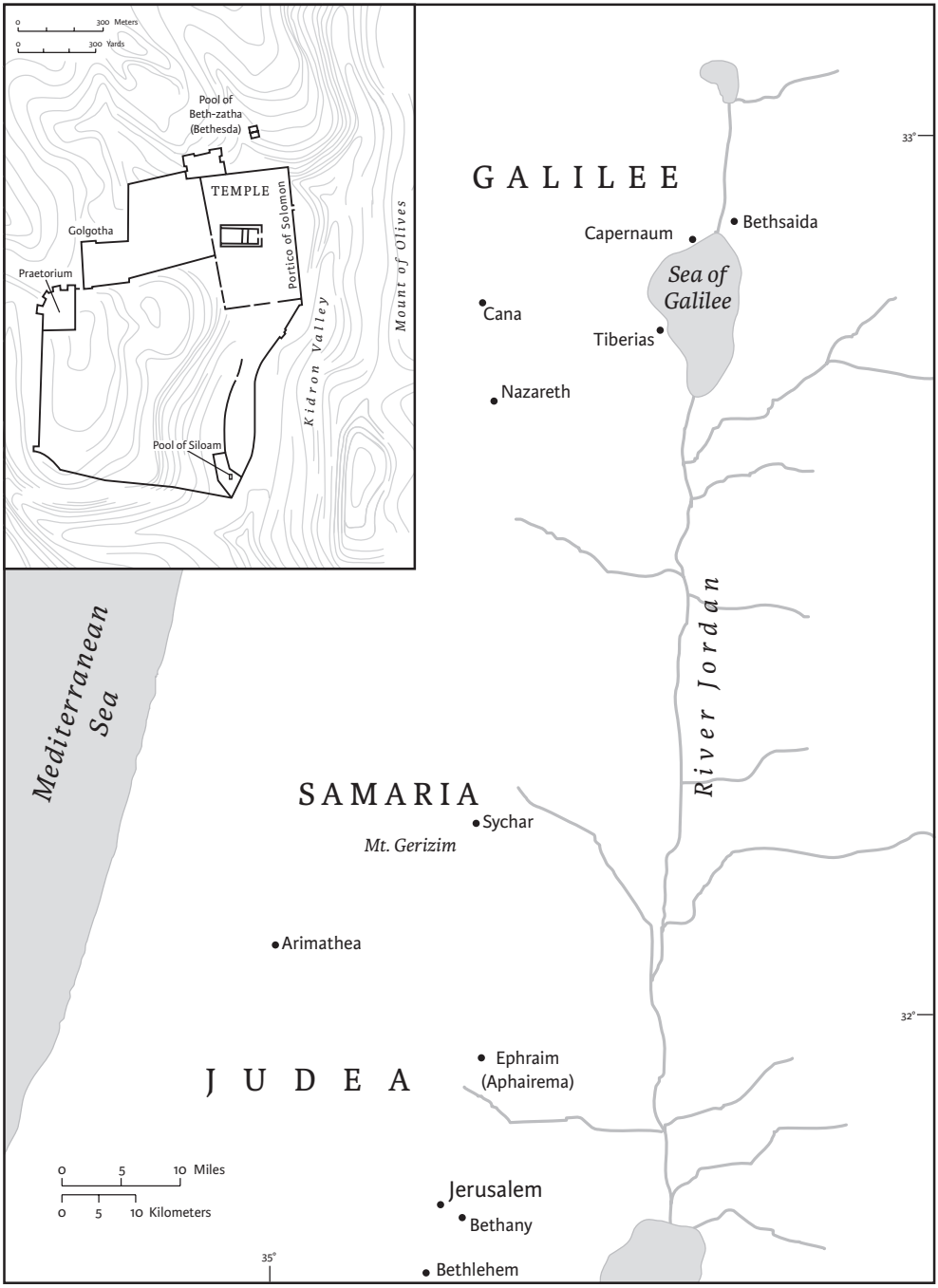
[13] The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. [14] In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. [15] Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. [16] He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making

[a] Both instances of the Greek word for *you* in this verse are plural

narrative (4.29; 20.18). This Gospel does not have a birth story, but the tradition of Jesus's parentage is familiar to the audience; see 6.42. *Nazareth*, a small village in southern Galilee. **47–51:** Praise of Nathaniel as an Israelite with *no deceit* perhaps refers to Jacob (who was deceitful), given the allusion to Jacob's vision that follows (Gen 28.12). *Son of Man*, after the series of titles attributed to Jesus, he refers to himself with this designation. While the phrase can simply mean a mortal as in Ezekiel (e.g., 2.1), here it connotes an eschatological figure sent by God (see Dan 7.13–14; Mk 13.26; 14.62 and par.; cf. *1 En.* 71.14).

2.1–12: Wedding at Cana. 1: *On the third day*, temporal reference is unclear, perhaps symbolic rather than literal (see 1.29,35,43 that add up to four days). Jesus's promise of "greater things" (1.50) is soon fulfilled. *Cana,* a small town in central Galilee, about 8 mi (14 km) north of Nazareth. The mother of Jesus is never referred to by name in John. **4:** An unusual way of addressing one's mother, *woman* links the mother of Jesus to other women in the Gospel; see 4.21; 20.15. *What concern* . . . a literal translation of a Hebrew expression that typically signals a refusal (Judg 11.12; 2 Kings 3.13; 2 Chr 35.21). Jesus refers repeatedly to his *hour,* the time of his death, and also of his glorification (7.30; 8.20; 12.23; 13.1; 17.1). **5:** Jesus's mother anticipates Jesus's actions. **6:** The large amount of water signals the extravagance of the sign that follows. **11:** The author relates Jesus's signs which point to his identity. The disciples witness the glory of Jesus, recalling the words of the prologue (1.14). **12:** *Capernaum*, a city on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

2.13–22: Jesus and the Jerusalem Temple. Cf. Mt 21.12–13; Mk 11.15–18; Lk 19.45–46. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus's actions in the Temple occur at the beginning of the passion narrative and precipitate his death; here the episode occurs early in Jesus's ministry. **13:** The first of three annual Passover festivals that Jesus attends (6.4; 11.55). **14–16:** Selling animals for sacrifices in the Temple was common practice. *Money changers,* Roman



The geography of the Gospel of John.

my Father's house a marketplace!" 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18 The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

23 When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. 24 But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people 25 and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

3 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus[a] by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." 3 Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."[b] 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.[c] 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You[d] must be born from above.'[e] 8 The wind[c] blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

11 "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you[f] do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.[g] 14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in

[a] Gk *him*
[b] Or *born anew*
[c] The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*
[d] The Greek word for *you* here is plural
[e] Or *anew*
[f] The Greek word for *you* here and in verse 12 is plural
[g] Other ancient authorities add *who is in heaven*

currency needed to be exchanged for Jewish coinage to pay the Temple tax. Jesus critiques the practice itself, rather than corruption as in the Synoptic versions (cf. Mk 11.17 and par.). Only this Gospel describes Jesus wielding *a whip of cords* as the supervisor of the market in an ancient city would have done. **17:** Memories of the tradition are shaped by scripture and Jesus's death (Ps 69.9). **18:** The demand for a *sign* is a hostile challenge to Jesus's authority. **19:** Symbolic prediction of Jesus's death and resurrection. **20:** Jesus's comment is misunderstood, a regular occurrence in the Gospel. **22:** Jesus's words have a place alongside scripture in the disciples' memory. **20:** Herod the Great began a major expansion to the Temple complex in 20 BCE, making it the largest sacred space in the Roman world. **22:** The Temple was already destroyed at the time the Gospel was written. Jesus's words suggest that he is the replacement for the Temple.

3.1–21: Jesus speaks with Nicodemus. 1–2: The introduction emphasizes the authoritative status of Nicodemus. A *Pharisee*, during Jesus's lifetime, this group may have had some popular appeal as people devoted to maintaining obedience to God. They did not, however, have any political power. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the Pharisees emerged as a dominant group within Judaism with more political power. In this Gospel, they typically represent opposition to Jesus, and the author uses the term interchangeably with "the Jews" (cf. 8.13,33; 9.13–23; see Introduction). Coming *by night* is symbolically associated with darkness (1.5; 8.12; 12.35,46; 20.1). **3–4:** The Gk word *anōthen* has a double meaning, which leads to confusion; see note *b*. **5–9:** Jesus again uses wordplay (see note *c*) to describe the status of the believer, leading again to confusion on the part of Nicodemus. **10:** The question is sarcastic, undercutting Nicodemus's authority. **13:** *Son of Man*, see 2.51n. **14:** Looking at a bronze *serpent* saved the Israelites from death in the wilderness (Num 21.8–9). *Lifted up* is a

the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, [15] that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.[a]

[16] "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

[17] "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. [18] Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. [19] And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. [20] For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. [21] But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."[a]

[22] After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized. [23] John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was abundant there; and people kept coming and were being baptized [24]—John, of course, had not yet been thrown into prison.

[25] Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and a Jew.[b] [26] They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him." [27] John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. [28] You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah,[c] but I have been sent ahead of him.' [29] He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. [30] He must increase, but I must decrease."[d]

[31] The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things. The one who comes from heaven is above all. [32] He testifies to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony. [33] Whoever has accepted his testimony has certified[e] this, that God is true. [34] He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. [35] The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. [36] Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath.

4 Now when Jesus[f] learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" [2]—although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— [3] he left Judea and started back to Galilee. [4] But he had

[a] Some interpreters hold that the quotation concludes with verse 15
[b] Other ancient authorities read *the Jews*
[c] Or *the Christ*
[d] Some interpreters hold that the quotation continues through verse 36
[e] Gk *set a seal to*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*

reference to Jesus's crucifixion which is also his glorification (see 8.28; 12.32–34). **16–17:** The Son acts as God's agent of salvation. **18–20:** Self-condemnation through lack of belief. *Light . . . into the world,* see 1.9.

3.22–36: John's testimony continues. 23: The precise locations in Transjordan of Aenon and Salim are uncertain. **24:** See Mk 6.14–29. **25:** *Purification* refers to ritual cleansing. **27–28:** John rejects the idea of a competing movement with Jesus. See 1.20. **29:** *Bride,* marriage metaphors are frequently used for the relationship between God and God's people (Isa 54.5–8; 62.4–5; Jer. 2.2; Hos 2.16–20; 2 Cor 11.2; Eph 5.25–30; Rev 19.6–8; 21.9–10). Jesus is the bridegroom whose presence brings joy (see 15.11; 16.22; 17.13). **31–35:** Jesus is the heavenly agent sent by God, John is the earthly witness. **36:** Central claims of the Gospel regarding belief and unbelief in Jesus. Eternal life is granted in the present to the believer. *God's wrath*, typically associated with the day of judgment.

4.1–42: Jesus speaks with the Samaritan Woman. 4: *Samaria* was located between Judea to the south and Galilee to the north. Samaritans and Jews differed over religious practices, although both groups considered

to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)[a] 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you[b] say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." 26 Jesus said to her, "I am he,[c] the one who is speaking to you."

27 Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" 28 Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 29 "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah,[d] can he?" 30 They left the city and were on their way to him.

[a] Other ancient authorities lack this sentence
[b] The Greek word for *you* here and in verses 21 and 22 is plural
[c] Gk *I am*
[d] Or *the Christ*

the Torah as scripture. **5–6:** Jacob's well is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible but is traditionally located near ancient Shechem, where Jacob purchased land (Gen 33.19; see also Josh 24.32). **6–7:** Meeting women at a *well* is a common scriptural motif (Gen 24.10–27; 29.1–12; Ex 2.16–21). *Noon* contrasts with Nicodemus's night meeting (3.2). **7–8:** Explanation of Jewish/Samaritan relationships suggests a Gentile readership. **10:** *Living water* refers literally to flowing water and figuratively to the life-giving power of Jesus. **11:** Like Nicodemus, the woman misunderstands by adopting a literal meaning of *living water* (flowing water) rather than Jesus's figurative use **13:** Jesus suggests that his gift surpasses that of Jacob. **16–18:** Ancient Mediterranean women did not have control over marriage arrangements. The reason for multiple husbands is unexplained, but does not necessarily imply promiscuity. **19–20:** The woman recognizes Jesus's insight and raises a theological question. *This mountain* is Mount Gerizim, once the location of the Samaritan temple. **21–22:** Jesus reorients worship away from both Temple traditions, though still maintains the privileged place of his own Jewish tradition. **23:** *Hour is coming . . . here.* The distinction between future and present reality is collapsed with the presence of Jesus (cf. 5.25). **26:** *I am* (see note *c*) implying a theophany as in Ex 3.14; Isa 41.4; 43.10; 46.4. This is the first announcement by Jesus himself of his identity as Messiah. **29:** Not a full confession of faith, but an effective witness because the people go to Jesus. **27:** Men did not typically speak with women in public. **29:** *Come and see,* the woman invites

31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging
him, "Rabbi, eat something." 32 But he said to
them, "I have food to eat that you do not know
about." 33 So the disciples said to one another,
"Surely no one has brought him something to
eat?" 34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the
will of him who sent me and to complete his
work. 35 Do you not say, 'Four months more,
then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look
around you, and see how the fields are ripe for
harvesting. 36 The reaper is already receiving[a]
wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so
that sower and reaper may rejoice together.
37 For here the saying holds true, 'One sows
and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to reap that for
which you did not labor. Others have labored,
and you have entered into their labor."
39 Many Samaritans from that city believed
in him because of the woman's testimony,
"He told me everything I have ever done."
40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they
asked him to stay with them; and he stayed
there two days. 41 And many more believed
because of his word. 42 They said to the
woman, "It is no longer because of what you
said that we believe, for we have heard for
ourselves, and we know that this is truly the
Savior of the world."
43 When the two days were over, he went
from that place to Galilee 44 (for Jesus himself
had testified that a prophet has no honor in
the prophet's own country). 45 When he came
to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since
they had seen all that he had done in Jerusa-
lem at the festival; for they too had gone to
the festival.
46 Then he came again to Cana in Galilee
where he had changed the water into wine.
Now there was a royal official whose son lay
ill in Capernaum. 47 When he heard that Jesus
had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and
begged him to come down and heal his son,
for he was at the point of death. 48 Then Jesus
said to him, "Unless you[b] see signs and won-
ders you will not believe." 49 The official said
to him, "Sir, come down before my little boy
dies." 50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will
live." The man believed the word that Jesus
spoke to him and started on his way. 51 As he
was going down, his slaves met him and told
him that his child was alive. 52 So he asked
them the hour when he began to recover,
and they said to him, "Yesterday at one in the
afternoon the fever left him." 53 The father re-
alized that this was the hour when Jesus had
said to him, "Your son will live." So he himself
believed, along with his whole household.
54 Now this was the second sign that Jesus did
after coming from Judea to Galilee.

5 After this there was a festival of the Jews,
and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
2 Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate
there is a pool, called in Hebrew[c] Beth-zatha,[d]
which has five porticoes. 3 In these lay many
invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.[e] 5 One

[a] Or *35…the fields are already ripe for harvesting.* *36The reaper is receiving*

[b] Both instances of the Greek word for *you* in this verse are plural

[c] That is, *Aramaic*

[d] Other ancient authorities read *Bethesda*, others *Bethsaida*

[e] Other ancient authorities add, wholly or in part, *waiting for the stirring of the water; 4for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made well from whatever disease that person had.*

her townsfolk to witness using the same words as Philip to gather disciples (1.46). **31–33:** Another example of confusion between literal and figurative language. This time the disciples misunderstand Jesus (see 3.3–19; 4.13–15). **35, 37:** The proverbial sayings are not found elsewhere. **38:** *Others* may include the Samaritan woman. **39:** The woman's testimony instills belief. **42:** *Savior of the world*, the belief of the Samaritans signals Jesus's saving significance beyond the Jewish people.

4.43–54: Travels and a second sign in Cana of Galilee. 44: See Mt 13.57; Mk 6.4; Lk 4.24. **45:** Jesus is welcomed in the region of Galilee, in contrast to the hostility he will experience from "the Jews" when in Judea. **46–54:** Jesus performs a long-distance healing of a royal official's son. This *second sign* results in belief as did the first sign in Cana (2.11). See the similar healing of a Roman centurion's son in Mt 8.5–13; Lk 7.1–20.

5.1–18: Sabbath controversy in Jerusalem. This story parallels the healing and resulting controversy in 9.1–41. **2:** A pool with five porticoes has been excavated north of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. **5–6:** References

man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" 7 The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." 9 At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, "It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat." 11 But he answered them, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.' " 12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take it up and walk'?" 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in[a] the crowd that was there. 14 Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you." 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working." 18 For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

19 Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father[b] does, the Son does likewise. 20 The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. 21 Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. 22 The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. 24 Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.

25 "Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; 27 and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

30 "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. 32 There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. 33 You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. 34 Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these

[a] Or *had left because of*
[b] Gk *that one*

to the length of illness emphasize the severity of the illness and make the healing more impressive. **9b.** *Now that day was the Sabbath* turns the successful healing story into a controversy story. **10–13:** The accusation of Sabbath violation shifts from the man to Jesus. **14:** Though illness was typically thought to be punishment for sin, it is unclear whether this is Jesus's intention. The statement may foreshadow the man's response to the healing. **15–16:** The man functions as an informant, increasing the opposition against Jesus. (Cf. the response of the healed man in 9.24–34.) **17–18:** Jesus's defense results in an additional charge of blasphemy.

5:19–47 Jesus defends himself against accusations. 19–20: God grants Jesus authority; Jesus does not claim it himself. **21:** Jesus's power over death will be demonstrated in 11.38–44. **25–29:** *Son of Man,* see 1.51n. The eschatological age is already present in the person of Jesus, who has been given authority to judge by God. This is a rare reference to doing good or evil in the Gospel, where the typical measure is one of belief vs. unbelief in Jesus. **31–38:** Jesus's defense continues with the calling of witnesses that can testify on his behalf: John, the

things so that you may be saved. 35 He was
a burning and shining lamp, and you were
willing to rejoice for a while in his light. 36 But
I have a testimony greater than John's. The
works that the Father has given me to com-
plete, the very works that I am doing, testify
on my behalf that the Father has sent me.
37 And the Father who sent me has himself
testified on my behalf. You have never heard
his voice or seen his form, 38 and you do not
have his word abiding in you, because you do
not believe him whom he has sent.

39 "You search the scriptures because you
think that in them you have eternal life; and
it is they that testify on my behalf. 40 Yet
you refuse to come to me to have life. 41 I do
not accept glory from human beings. 42 But
I know that you do not have the love of God
in[a] you. 43 I have come in my Father's name,
and you do not accept me; if another comes
in his own name, you will accept him. 44 How
can you believe when you accept glory from
one another and do not seek the glory that
comes from the one who alone is God? 45 Do
not think that I will accuse you before the
Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you
have set your hope. 46 If you believed Moses,
you would believe me, for he wrote about me.
47 But if you do not believe what he wrote,
how will you believe what I say?"

6 After this Jesus went to the other side of
the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of
Tiberias.[b] 2 A large crowd kept following him,
because they saw the signs that he was doing
for the sick. 3 Jesus went up the mountain and
sat down there with his disciples. 4 Now the
Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.
5 When he looked up and saw a large crowd
coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip,
"Where are we to buy bread for these people
to eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he him-
self knew what he was going to do. 7 Philip
answered him, "Six months' wages[c] would
not buy enough bread for each of them to get
a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon
Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy
here who has five barley loaves and two fish.
But what are they among so many people?"
10 Jesus said, "Make the people sit down."
Now there was a great deal of grass in the
place; so they[d] sat down, about five thousand
in all. 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, and when
he had given thanks, he distributed them
to those who were seated; so also the fish,
as much as they wanted. 12 When they were
satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the
fragments left over, so that nothing may be
lost." 13 So they gathered them up, and from
the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by
those who had eaten, they filled twelve bas-
kets. 14 When the people saw the sign that he
had done, they began to say, "This is indeed
the prophet who is to come into the world."

15 When Jesus realized that they were
about to come and take him by force to make
him king, he withdrew again to the mountain
by himself.

[a] Or *among*
[b] Gk *of Galilee of Tiberias*
[c] Gk *Two hundred denarii*; the denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer
[d] Gk *the men*

works that Jesus does, and the Father. **39–47:** Scripture also serves as a witness to Jesus. Moses was traditionally considered to be the author of the Torah.

6.1–15: Another sign: feeding the five thousand. The only miracle story found in all four Gospels; see Mt 14.13–21; Mk 6.32–44; Lk 9.10–17. In this Gospel, the sign leads to conflict and division. **1:** *To the other side . . . Sea of Tiberias*. The reference to this sea crossing is puzzling given Jesus's location in Jerusalem in the preceding narrative. Such geographical disparities likely did not concern the ancient author or audience. The alternative name for the Sea of Galilee comes from the city of Tiberias located on its southwest shore. Named in honor of the emperor, the city was established as the capital of the region in 24 CE, thus calling attention to the Roman imperial rule of the area. **2:** *Going up the mountain* alludes to the Moses tradition (Ex 19.3; etc.), continuing the theme of the relationship between Jesus and Moses that begins in 5.45–46, and setting the stage for the discourse to follow. **4:** *Passover of the Jews*, the second Passover festival mentioned in the narrative; see 2.13. **6:** Unlike Moses, Jesus knows how he will supply food (cf. Num 11.13). **14–15:** In first-century Judaism, Moses was regarded as both prophet and king. Deut 18.15–22 relates an expectation that God will raise up a prophet like Moses.

16 When evening came, his disciples went
down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started
across the sea to Capernaum. It was now
dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.
18 The sea became rough because a strong
wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed
about three or four miles,[a] they saw Jesus
walking on the sea and coming near the
boat, and they were terrified. 20 But he said to
them, "It is I;[b] do not be afraid." 21 Then they
wanted to take him into the boat, and im-
mediately the boat reached the land toward
which they were going.

22 The next day the crowd that had stayed
on the other side of the sea saw that there
had been only one boat there. They also saw
that Jesus had not got into the boat with his
disciples, but that his disciples had gone
away alone. 23 Then some boats from Tiberias
came near the place where they had eaten the
bread after the Lord had given thanks.[c] 24 So
when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor
his disciples were there, they themselves got
into the boats and went to Capernaum look-
ing for Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side
of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when
did you come here?" 26 Jesus answered them,
"Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me,
not because you saw signs, but because you
ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for
the food that perishes, but for the food that
endures for eternal life, which the Son of
Man will give you. For it is on him that God
the Father has set his seal." 28 Then they said
to him, "What must we do to perform the
works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This
is the work of God, that you believe in him
whom he has sent." 30 So they said to him,
"What sign are you going to give us then, so
that we may see it and believe you? What
work are you performing? 31 Our ancestors ate
the manna in the wilderness; as it is written,
'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' "
32 Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell
you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread
from heaven, but it is my Father who gives
you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the
bread of God is that which[d] comes down from
heaven and gives life to the world." 34 They
said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of
life. Whoever comes to me will never be hun-
gry, and whoever believes in me will never be
thirsty. 36 But I said to you that you have seen
me and yet do not believe. 37 Everything that
the Father gives me will come to me, and any-
one who comes to me I will never drive away;
38 for I have come down from heaven, not to
do my own will, but the will of him who sent
me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent
me, that I should lose nothing of all that he
has given me, but raise it up on the last day.
40 This is indeed the will of my Father, that all
who see the Son and believe in him may have
eternal life; and I will raise them up on the
last day."

41 Then the Jews began to complain about
him because he said, "I am the bread that
came down from heaven." 42 They were
saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph,
whose father and mother we know? How

[a] Gk *about twenty-five or thirty stadia*
[b] Gk *I am*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *after the Lord had given thanks*
[d] Or *he who*

6.16–21: Jesus walks on the sea. Cf. Mt 14.22–27; Mk 6.45–51). **20:** *It is I,* lit., "I am," words of divine revelation; see 4.26n.

6.22–40: Jesus, the bread from heaven. 24: *Capernaum,* see 2.12n. **26:** Their concern is for material benefits. **27:** *Food that endures*, see 4.32–34. *Son of Man,* see 1.51n. **28–29:** Belief in Jesus as God's divine agent is always central in John (see 5.24; 9.35–35; 11.25–27.). Cf. Mt 25.31–46. **30:** *Give us this bread*, characteristic misunderstanding of Jesus's words, see 4.15,33. **31–32:** *He gave them bread from heaven,* see Ex 16.4–5; Ps 78.24. **35:** Recalls similar language about God's Wisdom and surpasses it (see Prov 9.5; Sir 24.21). **39–40:** *Lose nothing,* see 17.12; 18.9. *On the last day*, the Gospel includes references to a traditional Jewish understanding of resurrection on the last day (see 5.28–29; 28 11.24), and a "realized eschatology" where the resurrection is present in the person of Jesus (5.25; 11.25–26).

6.41–71: Complaints and dissension. 41: As the response to Jesus becomes more hostile, his interlocutors are referred to as *the Jews*. Echoes of the Exodus narrative continue as the Jews *complain*; see Ex 16.2; Num 11.1.

can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" [43] Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. [44] No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. [45] It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. [46] Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. [47] Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. [48] I am the bread of life. [49] Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. [50] This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. [51] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

[52] The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" [53] So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. [54] Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; [55] for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. [56] Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. [57] Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. [58] This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." [59] He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

[60] When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" [61] But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, "Does this offend you? [62] Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? [63] It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. [64] But among you there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. [65] And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."

[66] Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. [67] So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" [68] Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. [69] We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."[a] [70] Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil." [71] He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot,[b] for he, though one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

7 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish[c] to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. [2] Now the Jewish festival of Booths[d] was near. [3] So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples also may see the works you are

[a] Other ancient authorities read *the Christ, the Son of the living God*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *Judas Iscariot son of Simon;* others, *Judas son of Simon from Karyot* (Kerioth)
[c] Other ancient authorities read *was not at liberty*
[d] Or *Tabernacles*

45: Isa 54.13. **46:** See 1.18. **48–50:** Jesus establishes his superiority to Moses. **51–58:** A much debated passage that may have allusions to the Eucharist; see 13.21–30n. Others read it in the context of ancient Greek hero cults that feature language about the consumption of a god. **60:** *Difficult*, that is, offensive. Jewish dietary laws forbid the consumption of blood (Lev 17.3; Deut 12.16,23–25). **64, 71:** *Betray him,* see 13.2,11.

7.1–13 Jesus's clandestine return to Jerusalem. 1: *The Jews,* the religious authorities had already plotted Jesus's death. See 5.18. **2:** *Festival of Booths*, also called Tabernacles, a seven-day fall festival giving thanks for the harvest and commemorating the Exodus from Egypt (Lev 23.39–43; Deut 16.13–15). One of the three pilgrimage festivals to the Temple, it featured water libations as well as lighting of great lights (*m. Sukkah* 5.2–3). **3–5:** *Not even . . . his brothers believed.* Mk 3.21,32–35 relates a similar tradition of tension between Jesus and his

doing; [4] for no one who wants[a] to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." [5] (For not even his brothers believed in him.) [6] Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. [7] The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify against it that its works are evil. [8] Go to the festival yourselves. I am not[b] going to this festival, for my time has not yet fully come." [9] After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

[10] But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were[c] in secret. [11] The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, "Where is he?" [12] And there was considerable complaining about him among the crowds. While some were saying, "He is a good man," others were saying, "No, he is deceiving the crowd." [13] Yet no one would speak openly about him for fear of the Jews.

[14] About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. [15] The Jews were astonished at it, saying, "How does this man have such learning,[d] when he has never been taught?" [16] Then Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. [17] Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. [18] Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him.

[19] "Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?" [20] The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?" [21] Jesus answered them, "I performed one work, and all of you are astonished. [22] Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the sabbath. [23] If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man's whole body on the sabbath? [24] Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

[25] Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill? [26] And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah?[e] [27] Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah[e] comes, no one will know where he is from." [28] Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. [29] I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me." [30] Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come. [31] Yet many in the crowd believed in him and were saying, "When the Messiah[e] comes, will he do more signs than this man has done?"[f]

[32] The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering such things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent temple police to arrest him. [33] Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little while longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. [34] You will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come." [35] The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that

[a] Other ancient authorities read *wants it*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *yet*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *as it were*
[d] Or *this man know his letters*
[e] Or *the Christ*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *is doing*

family. **6–9:** Jesus's *time,* cf. "my hour" in 2.4; 7.30; 8.20; 13.1. **10–13:** *The crowd* illustrates the division caused by Jesus's presence (1.10–13). Some of the crowd is hostile to Jesus, and some defend him. (See 6.22–34; 7.40–44).

7.14–52: Teaching and opposition in Jerusalem. 15: The question is motivated by suspicion, not admiration. **16–18:** Jesus defends himself by establishing the source of his knowledge—it is from God. **19:** It is Jesus's turn to accuse. **20:** *Demon*, meaning that Jesus is possessed, an ancient explanation for mental illness (see Mk 3.21–22). **22:** *Moses gave you circumcision,* see Gen 17.9–14; Moses was believed to be the author of the Torah. **23–24:** *Healed . . . on the Sabbath*, 5.1–9. **25–27:** A tradition about the mysterious origins of the Messiah (2 Esd 13.26; *1 En.* 48.6), cf. 7.40–42. **28:** The comment is sarcastic given the repeated statements of uncertainty about Jesus's origins (8.14; 9.29; 19.9). **30:** Jesus's preordained *hour* of death and glorification cannot be altered. **33–36:** Jesus's enig-

we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? 36 What does he mean by saying, 'You will search for me and you will not find me' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"

37 On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, 38 and let the one who believes in me drink. As[a] the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart[b] shall flow rivers of living water.' " 39 Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit,[c] because Jesus was not yet glorified.

40 When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, "This is really the prophet." 41 Others said, "This is the Messiah."[d] But some asked, "Surely the Messiah[d] does not come from Galilee, does he? 42 Has not the scripture said that the Messiah[d] is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?" 43 So there was a division in the crowd because of him. 44 Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

45 Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not arrest him?" 46 The police answered, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" 47 Then the Pharisees replied, "Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? 48 Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? 49 But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed." 50 Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus[e] before, and who was one of them, asked, 51 "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?" 52 They replied, "Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee."

8 ⟦ 53 Then each of them went home, 1 while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. 3 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, 4 they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. 5 Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6 They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground.[f] 9 When they heard

[a] Or *come to me and drink.* 38 *The one who believes in me, as*
[b] Gk *out of his belly*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *for as yet the Spirit* (others, *Holy Spirit*) *had not been given*
[d] Or *the Christ*
[e] Gk *him*
[f] Other ancient authorities add *the sins of each of them*

matic language typically produces divided opinions in his audience. The Gospel's typical irony has characters speak truth without knowing it, since Jesus's death will draw *the Greeks* to him (12.20,32). "The Greeks" may mean either Gentiles or Greek-speaking Jews in the Diaspora (*the Dispersion*). **37–39: A**ccording to rabbinic tradition, the festival's rituals included a water libation ceremony in which water was brought from the pool of Siloam and poured on the altar (*m. Sukkah* 4.9–10). Jesus transfers the water imagery to the spiritual benefits of belief in him. **38:** Not an exact quote of scripture, but see Prov 18.4; Isa 44.3; 58.11. **40–42:** Traditionally, the Messiah was to be a Davidic descendent (2 Sam 7.12–12; Pss 89.3–4; 132.11–12) from Bethlehem in Judea (Micah 5.2; see 1.46); but see vv. 25–27n. **50–51:** *Nicodemus,* see 3.1–10. Nicodemus's relationship to Jesus is ambiguous, neither fully supportive nor hostile (see also 19.39). **52:** The tension between *Galilee* and Judea reflects rural/urban tensions. See 4.45n.

8.1–11: Jesus refuses to condemn. This story is not part of the major manuscript tradition for the Gospel, and is likely a later addition. **3:** *Scribes,* another group of Jewish religious authorities, are mentioned only here in John. **6–8:** The significant point may be not what Jesus was writing but that he was writing; literacy in the ancient world granted status. Writing *with his finger* may be an allusion to Ex 31.18; cf. 32.15–16.

it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. 10 Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, sir."[a] And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."]][b]

12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." 13 Then the Pharisees said to him, "You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not valid." 14 Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. 15 You judge by human standards;[c] I judge no one. 16 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is valid; for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father[d] who sent me. 17 In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid. 18 I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf." 19 Then they said to him, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." 20 He spoke these words while he was teaching in the treasury of the temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

21 Again he said to them, "I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." 22 Then the Jews said, "Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" 23 He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he."[e] 25 They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Why do I speak to you at all?[f] 26 I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." 27 They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he,[e] and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. 29 And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him." 30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

31 Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." 33 They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

34 Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place

[a] Or *Lord*
[b] The most ancient authorities lack 7.53—8.11; other authorities add the passage here or after 7.36 or after 21.25 or after Luke 21.38, with variations of text; some mark the passage as doubtful.
[c] Gk *according to the flesh*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *he*
[e] Gk *I am*
[f] Or *What I have told you from the beginning*

8.12–20: Jesus's defense continues. 12: *Light of the world.* See 1.9. **13:** The rest of the chapter employs linguistic patterns of juridical argument. The Pharisees challenge the legal validity of Jesus's defense. **17–18:** *In your law,* Deut 19.15 requires two or three witnesses. Jesus names two: his Father and himself. **20:** Jesus's *hour* determines when he will lay down his life (see 10.18).

21–30: Jesus predicts his death. 22–25: Typical pattern of misunderstanding. The question of Jesus's origins, destination and identity are key themes in the Gospel. **28:** *Lifted up,* see 3.14n. *I am he,* lit., "I am"; Jesus's death and glorification will reveal his divine identity (see 4.26n; 18.5–6). **28–30:** Here the claim to speak only what the Father has taught him leads some of the Jews to believe.

8.31–59: Contest over claims on ancient authority: Jesus and Abraham. 31–32: In spite of the note that some believed, Jesus's conditional comment suggests that the hostility has not abated. **33:** *Never been slaves,* cf. the

there forever. 36 So if the Son makes you free,
you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are
descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an
opportunity to kill me, because there is no
place in you for my word. 38 I declare what I
have seen in the Father's presence; as for you,
you should do what you have heard from the
Father."[a]

39 They answered him, "Abraham is our
father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abra-
ham's children, you would be doing[b] what
Abraham did, 40 but now you are trying to kill
me, a man who has told you the truth that I
heard from God. This is not what Abraham
did. 41 You are indeed doing what your father
does." They said to him, "We are not ille-
gitimate children; we have one father, God
himself." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were
your Father, you would love me, for I came
from God and now I am here. I did not come
on my own, but he sent me. 43 Why do you
not understand what I say? It is because you
cannot accept my word. 44 You are from your
father the devil, and you choose to do your
father's desires. He was a murderer from the
beginning and does not stand in the truth,
because there is no truth in him. When he
lies, he speaks according to his own nature,
for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But
because I tell the truth, you do not believe
me. 46 Which of you convicts me of sin? If I
tell the truth, why do you not believe me?
47 Whoever is from God hears the words of
God. The reason you do not hear them is that
you are not from God."

48 The Jews answered him, "Are we not
right in saying that you are a Samaritan and
have a demon?" 49 Jesus answered, "I do not
have a demon; but I honor my Father, and
you dishonor me. 50 Yet I do not seek my
own glory; there is one who seeks it and he
is the judge. 51 Very truly, I tell you, whoever
keeps my word will never see death." 52 The
Jews said to him, "Now we know that you
have a demon. Abraham died, and so did
the prophets; yet you say, 'Whoever keeps
my word will never taste death.' 53 Are you
greater than our father Abraham, who died?
The prophets also died. Who do you claim
to be?" 54 Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself,
my glory is nothing. It is my Father who
glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our
God,' 55 though you do not know him. But I
know him; if I would say that I do not know
him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know
him and I keep his word. 56 Your ancestor
Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day;
he saw it and was glad." 57 Then the Jews said
to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and
have you seen Abraham?"[c] 58 Jesus said to
them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham
was, I am." 59 So they picked up stones to
throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went
out of the temple.

9 As he walked along, he saw a man blind
from birth. 2 His disciples asked him,
"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents,
that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered,
"Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he
was born blind so that God's works might be
revealed in him. 4 We[d] must work the works of
him who sent me[e] while it is day; night is com-
ing when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in
the world, I am the light of the world." 6 When
he had said this, he spat on the ground and
made mud with the saliva and spread the mud
on the man's eyes, 7 saying to him, "Go, wash in
the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then
he went and washed and came back able to

[a] Other ancient authorities read *you do what you have heard from your father*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *If you are Abraham's children, then do*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *has Abraham seen you?*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *I*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *us*

frequent calls to remember the history of slavery in Egypt (Deut 6.20–21; 15.12–15; 16.12; 24.17–22). **37:** See 5.18; 7.1. **44:** This harsh rhetoric probably reflects intra-Jewish conflict at the time the Gospel was written (see Introduction and cf. 1 Jn 3.8–11). **48:** *Samaritan,* probably meaning an outsider. *Demon,* see 7.20n. **56:** *Abraham rejoiced.* The claim is not grounded in a scriptural tradition from Genesis. **58:** *I am,* see 4.26n.

9.1–12: A second Sabbath healing and controversy. 2: Cf. v. 34 and 5.14n. **6:** *Saliva,* cf. Mk 8.23. **7:** *Siloam,* an ancient pool in Jerusalem fed by the Gihon Spring (2 Kings 20.20). *Sent* echoes the identity of Jesus as one sent by God.

see. 8 The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." 10 But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." 12 They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. 17 So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

18 The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight 19 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus[a] to be the Messiah[b] would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." 25 He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26 They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" 28 Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." 30 The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"[c] 36 He answered, "And who is he, sir?[d] Tell me, so that I may believe in him." 37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." 38 He said, "Lord,[d] I believe." And he worshiped him. 39 Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." 40 Some of the Pharisees

[a] Gk *him*
[b] Or *the Christ*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *the Son of God*
[d] *Sir* and *Lord* translate the same Greek word

9.13–34: Testimony for and against Jesus. 22: Reference to expulsions from the synagogue in the Gospel of John reflect tensions at the time the Gospel was written, rather than during the life of Jesus. The Gk word *aposynagogos*, lit., "out of the synagogue," is not found in any other ancient Greek text (see also 12.42; 16.2). Most scholars now agree that the term does not refer to a formal procedure taken against followers of Jesus in the first century. This term belongs in the same category as the heightened agonistic rhetoric against "the Jews" in 8.12–59. (See further Introduction.)

9.35–41: Belief and unbelief. 35–38: Unlike the man healed in 5.1–15, this man confesses belief in Jesus. **35:** *Son of Man,* see 1.51n. **39:** *Judgment* is based on one's response to Jesus. See 3.17–21. **40:** An ironic question posed by Jesus's opponents. The man born blind has come to the light, the Pharisees remain in darkness.

near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

10 "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." 6 Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

7 So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes[a] it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

19 Again the Jews were divided because of these words. 20 Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?" 21 Others were saying, "These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

22 At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. 24 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah,[b] tell us plainly." 25 Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; 26 but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.[c] 30 The Father and I are one."

31 The Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus replied, "I have shown you many

[a] Other ancient authorities read *has taken*
[b] Or *the Christ*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand*

10.1–18: Discourse on the good shepherd. 1–6: *Figure of speech*, the Gk term ("paroimia") refers to a proverbial or metaphorical statement. John does not use the Gk term for parable ("parabolē") for Jesus's teaching, but these verses come closest to the parables found in the Synoptic Gospels. See also 16.25. Here the metaphorical language involves a gate (1–2) and a shepherd (3–4). **7–9:** Interpretation of the figure of the gate. Jesus allows access to God. **10–18:** Interpretation of the figure of the shepherd. **10:** The *shepherd* is a frequent metaphor for God's care of Israel (Ezek 34.11–23; Isa 40.11; Pss 23.1–4; 78.52–53; 95.7). **11:** *Lays down his life,* Jesus's death is voluntary, making it noble rather than humiliating. **13:** A critique of the religious authorities; cf. Ezek 34.1–10. **16:** A reference to Gentile believers (17.20–23). **17:** Alludes to the crucifixion and resurrection.

10.19–42: Division among the Jews continues. 20: *Demon,* see 7.20n. **22–24:** *Dedication,* Hanukkah (see 1 Macc 4.36–59). The fourth festival in the Gospel that Jesus attends. *Portico of Solomon*, a colonnade

good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" 33 The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God." 34 Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law,[a] 'I said, you are gods'? 35 If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods'—and the scripture cannot be annulled— 36 can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'? 37 If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. 38 But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand[b] that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." 39 Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands.

40 He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there. 41 Many came to him, and they were saying, "John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." 42 And many believed in him there.

11 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters sent a message to Jesus,[c] "Lord, he whom you love is ill." 4 But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." 5 Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, 6 after having heard that Lazarus[d] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

7 Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. 10 But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." 11 After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." 12 The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." 13 Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. 14 Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15 For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Thomas, who was called the Twin,[e] said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus[d] had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles[f] away, 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I

[a] Other ancient authorities read *in the law*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *and understand*; others read *and believe*
[c] Gk *him*
[d] Gk *he*
[e] Gk *Didymus*
[f] Gk *fifteen stadia*

constructed as part of Herod's Temple construction. **34:** *Written in your law*, meaning the Jewish scriptures in general; the quotation is from Ps 82.6. **40:** *Across the Jordan,* see 3.23.

11.1–44: Dialogue with Martha and Mary and the raising of Lazarus. 2: Mary is known in the tradition for anointing Jesus (12.1–11). Another, probably different pair of sisters named Mary and Martha appear in Lk 10.38–42. **4:** Like the man born blind, Lazarus's illness is for God's glory (9.3). **11–15:** A familiar pattern of Jesus's language leading to misunderstanding. "Sleep" is a frequent euphemism for death; see Ps 13.3; Acts 7.60, note *b*; 1 Cor 15,6, note *c*; 1 Thess 4,13, note *d*. **19:** Here *the Jews* is used in a neutral way. **24:** Martha shares widespread

am the resurrection and the life.[a] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" [27] She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,[b] the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

[28] When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." [29] And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. [30] Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. [31] The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. [32] When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." [33] When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. [34] He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." [35] Jesus began to weep. [36] So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" [37] But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

[38] Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. [39] Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." [40] Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" [41] So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. [42] I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." [43] When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" [44] The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

[45] Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. [46] But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. [47] So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. [48] If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place[c] and our nation." [49] But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! [50] You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." [51] He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, [52] and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. [53] So from that day on they planned to put him to death.

[54] Jesus therefore no longer walked about openly among the Jews, but went from there to a town called Ephraim in the region near the wilderness; and he remained there with the disciples.

[55] Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. [56] They were looking for Jesus and were asking one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? Surely he

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *and the life*
[b] Or *the Christ*
[c] Or *our temple*; Greek *our place*

Jewish belief in resurrection on the day of judgment (see Dan 12.2; 2 Macc 7.9). Her confession anticipates the stated purpose of the Gospel (20.31). In the Synoptic Gospels, it is Peter who confesses that Jesus is the Messiah (Mk 8.29). **36–37:** The different responses to Jesus anticipate different responses to the raising of Lazarus (see 11.45–46). **38–44:** The meaning of the sign has been made clear before it occurs. The actual narration is brief.

11.45–53: Continued plotting against Jesus. 48: *The Romans will . . . destroy,* an accurate description of the fear that comes from living under Roman occupation. *Our place* possibly refers to all of Jerusalem. The Romans destroyed the Temple in August 70 CE. **49–52:** Caiaphas unknowingly "prophesies" the truth about Jesus's death. **54:** *Ephraim,* also called Aphairema, was about 12 mi (20 km) north of Jerusalem.

will not come to the festival, will he?" 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus[a] was should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

12 Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 2 There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. 3 Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them[b] with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii[c] and the money given to the poor?" 6 (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) 7 Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it[d] so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. 8 You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

9 When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, 11 since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

12 The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name
of the Lord—
the King of Israel!"

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

15 "Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.
Look, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!"

16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. 17 So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify.[e] 18 It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. 19 The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Gk *his feet*
[c] Three hundred denarii would be nearly a year's wages for a laborer
[d] Gk lacks *She bought it*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *with him began to testify that he had called . . . from the dead*

12.1–11: Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus (cf. Mk 14.3–9). **1:** *Lazarus*, see 11.1–4. **3:** The Roman pound was 12 oz (327 gm). *Nard*, an aromatic oil imported from the Himalayan mountains (see Song 1.12; 4.13–14). Jewish burial rituals include anointing the body with perfume. **7:** Jesus's defense of Mary suggests that her anointing foreshadows his death.

12.12–36a: Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem for his third and final Passover there. 12–15: Cf. Mt 21.1–9; Mk 11.1–10; Lk 19.28–38. **13:** Ps. 118.26. **14:** Zeph 3.16; Zech 9.9. **16:** *These things had been written of him*, the scriptures are reinterpreted after the death of Jesus. **19–20:** The arrival of the Greeks coinciding with *the world has gone after him* may refer to the mission to the Gentiles that takes place after Jesus's death (see 7.35–36). **23:** *The hour has come* accounts for Jesus's public entry into Jerusalem compared to his secrecy earlier (cf. 7.6–10). **25:** Cf. Mt 10.39; Mk

27 "Now my soul is troubled. And what
should I say—'Father, save me from this
hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have
come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your
name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I
have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."
29 The crowd standing there heard it and said
that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel
has spoken to him." 30 Jesus answered, "This
voice has come for your sake, not for mine.
31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the
ruler of this world will be driven out. 32 And I,
when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw
all people[a] to myself." 33 He said this to indi-
cate the kind of death he was to die. 34 The
crowd answered him, "We have heard from
the law that the Messiah[b] remains forever.
How can you say that the Son of Man must be
lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" 35 Jesus
said to them, "The light is with you for a little
longer. Walk while you have the light, so that
the darkness may not overtake you. If you
walk in the darkness, you do not know where
you are going. 36 While you have the light,
believe in the light, so that you may become
children of light."

After Jesus had said this, he departed and
hid from them. 37 Although he had performed
so many signs in their presence, they did not
believe in him. 38 This was to fulfill the word
spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

"Lord, who has believed our message,
and to whom has the arm of the Lord
been revealed?"

39 And so they could not believe, because
Isaiah also said,

40 "He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their heart,
so that they might not look with their eyes,
and understand with their heart and
turn—
and I would heal them."

41 Isaiah said this because[c] he saw his glory
and spoke about him. 42 Nevertheless many,
even of the authorities, believed in him. But
because of the Pharisees they did not confess
it, for fear that they would be put out of the
synagogue; 43 for they loved human glory
more than the glory that comes from God.

44 Then Jesus cried aloud: "Whoever
believes in me believes not in me but in him
who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees
him who sent me. 46 I have come as light into
the world, so that everyone who believes in
me should not remain in the darkness. 47 I do
not judge anyone who hears my words and
does not keep them, for I came not to judge
the world, but to save the world. 48 The one
who rejects me and does not receive my word
has a judge; on the last day the word that I
have spoken will serve as judge, 49 for I have
not spoken on my own, but the Father who
sent me has himself given me a command-
ment about what to say and what to speak.
50 And I know that his commandment is
eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak
just as the Father has told me."

13 Now before the festival of the Pass-
over, Jesus knew that his hour had
come to depart from this world and go to
the Father. Having loved his own who were
in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The
devil had already put it into the heart of

[a] Other ancient authorities read *all things*
[b] Or *the Christ*
[c] Other ancient witnesses read *when*

8.35; Lk 9.24. **27:** *Save me from this hour*, perhaps reflecting traditions where Jesus asks God to "remove this cup" (cf. Mk 14.34–35; see also Jn 18.11). **31:** *Ruler of this world*, Satan, but for the Gospel's first-century audience the phrase would also call to mind the Roman emperor; see 14.30; 16.11. **34:** *From the law,* perhaps a reference to Ps 89.36. **35–36:** *Light,* see 8.12.

12.36b–43. The narrator comments on Jesus's earthly mission. 38: Isa 53.1. **40:** Isa 6.10. **42:** Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus may represent two of these authorities; see 19.38–39. *Put out of the synagogue,* see 9.22n. and Introduction.

12.44–50: Summary of Jesus's teaching. 44: *Jesus cried aloud,* as though from offstage, one of the dramatic conventions employed in the Gospel. The verses repeat the central themes of the Gospel and conclude the first part of the narrative (see Introduction).

13–20: Jesus returns to the Father.

13.1–20: Jesus preparing for his departure. 1–3: The turning point in the Gospel when Jesus's descent into

Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper [3] Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, [4] got up from the table,[a] took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. [5] Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. [6] He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" [7] Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." [8] Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." [9] Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" [10] Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet,[b] but is entirely clean. And you[c] are clean, though not all of you." [11] For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

[12] After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? [13] You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. [14] So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. [15] For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. [16] Very truly, I tell you, servants[d] are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. [17] If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. [18] I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread[e] has lifted his heel against me.' [19] I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am he.[f] [20] Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."

[21] After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me." [22] The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. [23] One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; [24] Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. [25] So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" [26] Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish."[g] So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot.[h] [27] After he received the piece of bread,[i] Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do." [28] Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. [29] Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the festival"; or, that he should give

[a] Gk *from supper*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *except for the feet*
[c] The Greek word for *you* here is plural
[d] Gk *slaves*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *ate bread with me*
[f] Gk *I am*
[g] Gk *dipped it*
[h] Other ancient authorities read *Judas Iscariot son of Simon*; others, *Judas son of Simon from Karyot* (Kerioth)
[i] Gk *After the piece of bread*

the world shifts toward the ascent back to the father. **4–8:** Only this Gospel has Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Common hospitality included an opportunity to wash the dust from one's feet, but the washing itself was typically the task of a slave or a disciple of a teacher. *Wrapped himself with a towel*, donning the attire of a slave. **12–17:** The foot-washing is interpreted as humble service. **18:** Ps 41.9. **19:** *I am he,* see 4.26n.

13:21–30: Jesus's betrayer. John's version of the meal does not include the words of institution which became part of the Eucharistic liturgy (but see 6.51–58 for the Johannine version). Their absence raises questions about the degree of John's interest in the sacraments. **23:** The first appearance of the mysterious "Beloved Disciple" (see 1.40n. and Introduction). *Reclining next to him*, lit., "on his breast," the same language used for intimacy between the Son and Father in 1.18. **28:** The claim that *no one knew* is puzzling given the exchange between Peter and the Beloved Disciple in 13.24. It may indicate that the Beloved Disciple was inserted into

something to the poor. 30 So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32 If God has been glorified in him,[a] God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33 Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' 34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward." 37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe[b] in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?[c] 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going."[d] 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you know me, you will know[e] my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. 12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If in my name you ask me[f] for anything, I will do it.

15 "If you love me, you will keep[g] my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,[h] to be with you forever. 17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *If God has been glorified in him*
[b] Or *You believe*
[c] Or *If it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *Where I am going you know, and the way you know*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *If you had known me, you would have known*
[f] Other ancient authorities lack *me*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *me, keep*
[h] Or *Helper*

the scene as an ideal figure (cf. Mk 14.17–21 and par.). **30:** *Night*, the term carries negative connotations in the Gospel (cf. 3.2,9; 9.4).

13.31–16.33: Jesus's parting words to the disciples. 13.33: See 7.33–34. **34:** *A new commandment . . . love one another*, suggests an internally focused community; cf. Mt 5.44; Lk 6.26. The commandment is repeated in 15.12–17. **36–38:** *Lay down my life,* although Peter uses the words of Jesus (10.11,15,17), he will falter under pressure (18.15–18,25–27). *You will follow afterward*, see 21.18–19.

14.1–31: Jesus instructs and comforts his disciples. 5: Though Thomas and Philip also misunderstand Jesus's symbolic language, they ask questions from a position of belief rather than unbelief. **10:** *I do not speak on my own,* a claim Jesus made earlier in the Gospel to defend himself against accusations (7.17; 8.28). Here it is to instruct. **16:** *The Advocate,* Gk "paraklētos" ("paraclete"), designating one who comes to another's aid as a patron

him, because he abides with you, and he will be in[a] you.

18 "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25 "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate,[b] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. 28 You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. 30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; 31 but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes[c] to make it bear more fruit. 3 You have already been cleansed[c] by the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become[d] my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my

[a] Or *among*
[b] Or *Helper*
[c] The same Greek root refers to pruning and cleansing
[d] Or *be*

or intercessor. Latin translators understood it in the legal sense as an advocate. **26:** Elsewhere in the Gospel, references to what the disciples remember serve as evidence for the truth of Jesus's words (2.17–22). **30:** *Ruler of this world,* see 12.31n. **31:** *Rise, let us be on our way*. Seemingly the conclusion to the discourse, but Jesus continues addressing the disciples in chs 15–16, and then prays in ch 17. Only at 18.1 do they actually go somewhere. Some interpreters think that chs 15–17 were added to an earlier version of the Gospel. Others draw a parallel to the literary technique of extending a last testament in Greek literature.

15.1–11: Jesus the true vine. 1–3: Vine is a common metaphor for Israel in the Hebrew Bible, with God in the role as a vinedresser disappointed with the fruit (Ps 80.8–16; Isa 5.1–7; Jer 2.21; Ezek 15.1–6; 17.5–10; 19.10–14; cf. Mk 12.1–12). *Pruning* and *cleansing,* see note *c*. **5–11:** Jesus describes the relationship between the Father, Jesus and the disciples. *Abiding* includes bearing fruit and keeping commandments.

15.12–17: The love commandment repeated (see 13.34). **13:** *Lay down one's life*, the same language Peter used in the context of the love commandment (13.37). **14:** Friendship in the ancient Greco-Roman world was a relationship defined by duties and obligations, more than affection.

friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants[a] any longer, because the servant[b] does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

18 "If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If you belonged to the world,[c] the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'Servants[d] are not greater than their master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. 21 But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 It was to fulfill the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.'

26 "When the Advocate[e] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27 You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

16 "I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. 3 And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me. 4 But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them.

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. 5 But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate[e] will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about[f] sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 about sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11 about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

[a] Gk *slaves*
[b] Gk *slave*
[c] Gk *were of the world*
[d] Gk *Slaves*
[e] Or *Helper*
[f] Or *convict the world of*

15.18–16.4a: Sharing in persecution. 15.18–19: *If the world hates you,* such language of alienation leads some scholars to posit a sectarian community behind the Gospel tradition. Cf. Mt 10.16–23 for similar predictions of persecutions. **20:** See 13.16. The disciples' status means they will experience persecutions as their master has. **25:** Pss 35.19; 69.4. **16.2:** *Put you out of the synagogues,* see 9.22n. and Introduction.

16.4b–15: The role of the Advocate (see 14.16). Here the role of the Advocate is primarily as a legal defender who proves the truth of Jesus's identity and mission. **5:** *None of you ask me,* but see 14.5. Another indication that these chapters may have been added between chs 14 and 18. **11:** *Ruler of this world,* see 12.31n.

16 "A little while, and you will no longer see
me, and again a little while, and you will see
me." 17 Then some of his disciples said to one
another, "What does he mean by saying to
us, 'A little while, and you will no longer see
me, and again a little while, and you will see
me'; and 'Because I am going to the Father'?"
18 They said, "What does he mean by this 'a lit-
tle while'? We do not know what he is talking
about." 19 Jesus knew that they wanted to ask
him, so he said to them, "Are you discussing
among yourselves what I meant when I said,
'A little while, and you will no longer see me,
and again a little while, and you will see me'?
20 Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and
mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will
have pain, but your pain will turn into joy.
21 When a woman is in labor, she has pain, be-
cause her hour has come. But when her child
is born, she no longer remembers the anguish
because of the joy of having brought a human
being into the world. 22 So you have pain now;
but I will see you again, and your hearts will
rejoice, and no one will take your joy from
you. 23 On that day you will ask nothing of
me.[a] Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything
of the Father in my name, he will give it to
you.[b] 24 Until now you have not asked for any-
thing in my name. Ask and you will receive, so
that your joy may be complete.

25 "I have said these things to you in figures
of speech. The hour is coming when I will no
longer speak to you in figures, but will tell
you plainly of the Father. 26 On that day you
will ask in my name. I do not say to you that
I will ask the Father on your behalf; 27 for the
Father himself loves you, because you have
loved me and have believed that I came from
God.[c] 28 I came from the Father and have
come into the world; again, I am leaving the
world and am going to the Father."

29 His disciples said, "Yes, now you are
speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech!
30 Now we know that you know all things, and
do not need to have anyone question you;
by this we believe that you came from God."
31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?
32 The hour is coming, indeed it has come,
when you will be scattered, each one to his
home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am
not alone because the Father is with me. 33 I
have said this to you, so that in me you may
have peace. In the world you face persecu-
tion. But take courage; I have conquered the
world!"

17 After Jesus had spoken these words, he
looked up to heaven and said, "Father,
the hour has come; glorify your Son so that
the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have
given him authority over all people,[d] to give
eternal life to all whom you have given him.
3 And this is eternal life, that they may know
you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ
whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth
by finishing the work that you gave me to
do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own
presence with the glory that I had in your
presence before the world existed.

6 "I have made your name known to those
whom you gave me from the world. They
were yours, and you gave them to me, and
they have kept your word. 7 Now they know
that everything you have given me is from
you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have
given to them, and they have received them
and know in truth that I came from you; and
they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am
asking on their behalf; I am not asking on
behalf of the world, but on behalf of those
whom you gave me, because they are yours.

[a] Or *will ask me no question*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *Father, he will give it to you in my name*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *the Father*
[d] Gk *flesh*

16.16–25: Suffering and joy of the disciples. 20–22: Ancient Greek writers often employed metaphors of childbirth; see also Rom 8.19–22. Here it refers to the productive pain the disciples will experience before the joy of being in Jesus's presence again. **23–24:** Jesus's instructions for petitionary prayer; cf. Mt 21.22; Mk 11.24.

16.25–33: Jesus speaks plainly about his departure. 25: *Figures of speech,* see 10.1–6 n. Here refers to metaphorical speech such as in 16.21–22. **32:** *To his own home,* see 20.10. *I am not alone,* cf. Mk 15.34.

17.1–26: Jesus's prayer of petition for his followers. 1–3: A summary of the Gospel's major themes recalling the Prologue; eternal life is available to those who accept Jesus as one sent by God. *The hour has come,* see 12.23n. **5:** Recalls Jesus as preexistent Word (1.1–3,14). **9:** Continues the theme of alienation from the world

10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and
I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am
no longer in the world, but they are in the
world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father,
protect them in your name that you have
given me, so that they may be one, as we are
one. 12 While I was with them, I protected
them in your name that[a] you have given me. I
guarded them, and not one of them was lost
except the one destined to be lost,[b] so that
the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I
am coming to you, and I speak these things in
the world so that they may have my joy made
complete in themselves.[c] 14 I have given them
your word, and the world has hated them
because they do not belong to the world, just
as I do not belong to the world. 15 I am not
asking you to take them out of the world, but
I ask you to protect them from the evil one.[d]
16 They do not belong to the world, just as I
do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify them
in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you have
sent me into the world, so I have sent them
into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify
myself, so that they also may be sanctified in
truth.

20 "I ask not only on behalf of these, but
also on behalf of those who will believe in
me through their word, 21 that they may all
be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am
in you, may they also be in us,[e] so that the
world may believe that you have sent me.
22 The glory that you have given me I have
given them, so that they may be one, as we
are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they
may become completely one, so that the
world may know that you have sent me and
have loved them even as you have loved me.
24 Father, I desire that those also, whom you
have given me, may be with me where I am,
to see my glory, which you have given me
because you loved me before the foundation
of the world.

25 "Righteous Father, the world does not
know you, but I know you; and these know
that you have sent me. 26 I made your name
known to them, and I will make it known, so
that the love with which you have loved me
may be in them, and I in them."

18 After Jesus had spoken these words,
he went out with his disciples across
the Kidron valley to a place where there was
a garden, which he and his disciples entered.
2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew
the place, because Jesus often met there with
his disciples. 3 So Judas brought a detach-
ment of soldiers together with police from
the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they
came there with lanterns and torches and
weapons. 4 Then Jesus, knowing all that was
to happen to him, came forward and asked
them, "Whom are you looking for?" 5 They
answered, "Jesus of Nazareth."[f] Jesus replied,
"I am he."[g] Judas, who betrayed him, was
standing with them. 6 When Jesus[h] said to
them, "I am he,"[g] they stepped back and fell
to the ground. 7 Again he asked them, "Whom
are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of
Nazareth."[f] 8 Jesus answered, "I told you that I

[a] Other ancient authorities read *protected in your name those whom*
[b] Gk *except the son of destruction*
[c] Or *among themselves*
[d] Or *from evil*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *be one in us*
[f] Gk *the Nazorean*
[g] Gk *I am*
[h] Gk *he*

(14.17–19,31; 15.18–19; 16.8). **10–11:** Emphasis on mutuality and unity among the believers. **15:** *The evil one* is Satan, but see note *d*. **16–18:** *I have sent them into the world.* The relationship between the disciples and the world is hostile (see 15.18–10). This Gospel does not narrate a missionary journey by disciples during Jesus's ministry (cf. Mk 6.6–13 and par.) nor is there a "great commission" as in Mt 28.19–20 (cf. Lk 24.47). **20–24:** Jesus's prayer of petition extends to the world which remains the object of God's love (3.16).

18.1–12: Jesus is arrested. Cf. Mt 26.35–46; Mk 14.32–52; Lk 22.40–53. **1:** *Kidron Valley*, between the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. The *garden* is named Gethsemane in the Synoptic Gospels. Here there is no anguish on Jesus's part since he freely enters into his hour (12.27–28). **3:** *Detachment* a sizeable group of Roman soldiers as though anticipating armed resistance (see v. 10). Judas brings both Roman and Jewish authorities. *Lanterns, torches and weapons*. Johannine irony has Jesus's opposition come in the dark to arrest the light of the world (8.12). **4:** Jesus controls his own destiny. **5–6:** *I am*, words of divine revelation; thus,

am he.[a] So if you are looking for me, let these men go." [9] This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." [10] Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. [11] Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

[12] So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. [13] First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. [14] Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

[15] Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, [16] but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. [17] The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." [18] Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

[19] Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. [20] Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. [21] Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." [22] When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" [23] Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" [24] Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

[25] Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." [26] One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" [27] Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

[28] Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters.[b] It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters,[b] so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. [29] So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" [30] They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." [31] Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted

[a] Gk *I am*
[b] Gk *the praetorium*

the soldiers are overcome and fall to the ground (cf. 4.26n. and note *c*). **9:** For similar predictions see 6.39; 10.28; 17.12. **10:** *Malchus*, identified by name only in this Gospel. **11:** Armed resistance suggests struggle for an earthly reign (see 18.36). *Drink the cup*, a metaphor for judgment and death (see, e.g., Isa 51.17; Jer 25.15–17; Ezek 23.32–34). Jesus's question, as in 12.27, emphasizes his noble acceptance of his fate (cf. Mk 10.38–39 and par.).

18.13–27: Informal questioning before the Jewish authorities. Cf. Mt 26.57–75; Mk 14.53–72; Lk 22.34–71. John's Gospel does not include a trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin as in the Synoptics. **13:** *Annas,* though deposed as high priest by the Romans in 15 CE, was succeeded by five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas, indicating a powerful family which maintained considerable influence with Roman authorities. **14:** See 11.49–50. **15–18:** The first of two scenes interwoven with Jesus's trial before Jewish authorities in which Peter explicitly denies his discipleship. **17:** Peter's fearful *I am not* contrasts poignantly with Jesus's "I am" of 18.5. **27:** *The cock crowed,* see 13.38.

18.28–19.16a: Jesus and Pilate. Cf. Mt 26.1–2,11–31; Mk 15.2–20; Lk 23.1–5,13–25. The trial before Pilate follows conventions of ancient Greek drama as Pilate alternates between scenes on the inside and outside. **28:** *Pilate's headquarters,* the official Jerusalem residence of Pilate, the governor of Judea appointed by Rome from 26 CE to 36 CE. The Praetorium (see note *b*) was located on the west side of Jerusalem. **29–31:** Pilate's words

to put anyone to death." [32] (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

[33] Then Pilate entered the headquarters[a] again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" [34] Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" [35] Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" [36] Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." [37] Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." [38] Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. [39] But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" [40] They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit.

19 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. [2] And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. [3] They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. [4] Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." [5] So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" [6] When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." [7] The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

[8] Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. [9] He entered his headquarters[a] again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. [10] Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" [11] Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." [12] From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

[13] When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat[b] on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew[c] Gabbatha. [14] Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" [15] They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate

[a] Gk *the praetorium*
[b] Or *seated him*
[c] That is, *Aramaic*

highlight the powerlessness of the Jewish authorities under Roman occupation. **32:** *The kind of death he was to die* alludes to crucifixion which only the Romans had the power to inflict; cf. 3.14; 8.28; 12.32. **35:** Pilate's sarcastic question may be ironic since the Roman governor will do the bidding of the Jewish authorities. **36:** Jesus has continually described himself in otherworldly terms. *My followers would be fighting*, see 18.10–11. **38:** An ironic question to ask of the one who describes himself as the *truth* (14.16). **39:** The custom of releasing a prisoner on Passover is unattested outside the New Testament. **40:** *Bandit,* Gk "lēstēs," which can also mean a political insurrectionist. **19:1** *Flogged*, even though Pilate finds no case against him (18.38b; 19.4,6). **5–6:** The mock coronation of Jesus seems deliberatively provocative as does Pilate's taunt that the Jews crucify Jesus themselves (see 18.31b). **12:** The Jews respond with threats of political blackmail, accusing Pilate of misconduct before higher authorities. **13:** *Sat,* or "seated him" (see note *b*), in which case Pilate is contributing to the mock coronation scene. *Gabbatha* occurs only here and likely means "the elevated (place)" in Aramaic. **14:** The lambs for the Passover were slaughtered on the day of preparation. **15:** *No king but the emperor*, the Jews demand for Jesus's life leads tragically to their rejection of the reign of God.

asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." 16 Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; 17 and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew[a] is called Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth,[b] the King of the Jews." 20 Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew,[a] in Latin, and in Greek. 21 Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.' " 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." 23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. 24 So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

"They divided my clothes among
themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

25 And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

28 After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

31 Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. 32 Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. 35 (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows[c] that he

[a] That is, *Aramaic*
[b] Gk *the Nazorean*
[c] Or *there is one who knows*

19:16b–37. Jesus is crucified. Cf. Mt. 27.32–50; Mk 15.22–37; Lk 23.26–49. **17:** *Carrying the cross by himself*, in contrast to the Synoptic versions where Simon of Cyrene is made to carry it . **19–22:** Irony continues as Pilate's instructions for the trilingual placard, no doubt given to further antagonize the Jews, enables anyone who passes by to learn about Jesus's divine kingship. **23–24:** The *seamless tunic* was an undergarment. The quotation is from Ps 22.18. **25b** In this Gospel, the women are near the cross, rather than watching "from afar" as in the Synoptic accounts. **25:** Tradition varies over the naming of the women at the cross. While Jesus's mother is not named (also the case in 2.1), she is accompanied by two Marys. It is not clear if her sister is also unnamed or whether she is the wife of Clopas. **26–27:** A further indication of the special status of the disciple whom Jesus loved (see 1.40 n. and Introduction): he is given care over Jesus's mother and becomes a member of the family (see 13.23n.). **28:** Jesus's thirst fulfills Ps 69.21. **29:** In Ex 12.21–22, a branch of hyssop (a wild shrub) was dipped in the blood of the Passover lambs to mark the doors of the Hebrews for protection from death. **30:** *Finished* indicates both the end of Jesus life and the completion of his earthly mission. He lays down his own life (10.18). **31–33:** *Day of Preparation,* see 9.14n. Breaking the legs made it impossible to push the body up to forestall the death by asphyxiation that crucifixion entailed. **34:** *Blood and water* are symbolic, perhaps of the slaughtered Passover lamb (see 1.29,36), and the living water of eternal life (4.13–14; 7.37–38). Some scholars see here a reference to the Eucharistic meal and to baptism. **35:** *He who saw this*. Not the writer, but the source of the tradition,

tells the truth.) [36] These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." [37] And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

[38] After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. [39] Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. [40] They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. [41] Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. [42] And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. [2] So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." [3] Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. [4] The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. [5] He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. [6] Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, [7] and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. [8] Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; [9] for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. [10] Then the disciples returned to their homes.

[11] But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look[a] into the tomb; [12] and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. [13] They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." [14] When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. [15] Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." [16] Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew,[b] "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). [17] Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to

[a] Gk lacks *to look*
[b] That is, *Aramaic*

the Beloved Disciple (21.24). **36:** Ex 12.46 and Num 9.12 of the Passover lamb, see also Ps 34.20; cf. Jn 1.29n. **37:** Zech 12.10.

19.38–42: The burial of Jesus. Cf. Mt. 27.57–61; Mk 15.42–47; Lk 23.50–56. **38:** *Fear of the Jews,* cf. 7.13; 12.42; and Introduction. **39:** Nicodemus (3.2–10) brings an excessive amount of burial spices. **40–42:** The details indicate an honorable burial.

20:1–18 Empty tomb and resurrection appearance to Mary. Cf. Mt 28; Mk 16; Lk 24. **1:** *First day*, Sunday. In this Gospel, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb alone. **2:** *The other disciple*, see 1.40n. and Introduction. **3–10:** The footrace and arrival at the tomb indicate a negotiated competition between Peter and the Beloved Disciple in which each gets an opportunity to be first (see 13.23–25; 21.20–22). **8–10:** The anticlimactic return to their homes and failure to understand *the scripture, that he must rise from the dead* suggests that only the disciple *saw and believed* Mary's claim that the tomb was empty (cf. Lk 24.8–11). Or, if the statement refers to resurrection belief, it points to a literary motif of idealizing the Beloved Disciple apart from the narrative events. **14–16:** The scene resembles other recognition scenes in ancient Greek literature. Mary recognizes Jesus when he calls her by name (see 10.3). *Rabbouni* a variant of "rabbi" (1.38; 3.2; 11.28; 13.13). **17:** *Do not hold on to me,* lit., "Don't touch

my God and your God.'" [18] Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

[19] When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." [20] After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [21] Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." [22] When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. [23] If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

[24] But Thomas (who was called the Twin[a]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. [25] So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

[26] A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." [27] Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." [28] Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" [29] Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

[30] Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. [31] But these are written so that you may come to believe[b] that Jesus is the Messiah,[c] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

21 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. [2] Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,[a] Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. [3] Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

[4] Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. [5] Jesus said to them, "Children,

[a] Gk *Didymus*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *may continue to believe*
[c] Or *the Christ*

me," perhaps because Jesus is in a liminal state before returning to the Father. **18:** Only Mary is witness to Jesus's revelation. Like the Samaritan woman, she witnesses to others about Jesus.

20.19–29: Resurrection appearances to other disciples. **19:** *Fear of the Jews,* cf. 9.22; 12.42 and Introduction. *Peace be with you* a traditional Jewish greeting (see Tob 12.17) that takes on additional significance in the Gospel given earlier words of Jesus (14.27; 16.33). **20:** Another recognition scene, this time with the disciples (see 20.14–16n). Jesus's *hands . . . feet* bearing the wounds of crucifixion are the means of recognition. **21:** The disciples follow Jesus's model of being agents sent into the world (see 17.18). **22:** *Breathed on them,* cf. Gen 2.7. *Receive the Holy Spirit* (cf. 14.15–17,25–26; 15.26) **23:** Perhaps related to the tradition in Mt 16.19; 18.18. Alternatively, because in the Greek text *sins* does not appear in the second half of the statement, the intent could be to emphasize forgiveness and holding on to community members (as in 17.12; 18.9). **24–29:** The episode is unique to John's Gospel. Thomas played an equally skeptical role earlier in the narrative (11.16; 14.5). **30:** Commonly held to be the original conclusion of the book (see 21.1–25n). *Did many other signs*, perhaps indicative of the use of an earlier "signs" source. **31:** *You may come to believe,* "you" is plural. The alternative manuscript tradition (see note *b*) suggests that the purpose of the Gospel is to strengthen the faith of existing believers.

21:1–25. Epilogue. Most scholars see this chapter as a later addition to the Gospel. Because all existing manuscripts contain this final chapter and the chapter shares the same style as the rest of the Gospel, some scholars see the concluding scenes as written by the same author. In either case, the chapter resolves issues related to Peter and the Beloved Disciple. **1:** *Sea of Tiberias,* in Galilee (see 6.1n.). **3:** *Simon Peter . . . fishing.* John's

you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." 6 He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards[a] off.

9 When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" 23 So the rumor spread in the community[b] that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"[c]

24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. 25 But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

[a] Gk *two hundred cubits*
[b] Gk *among the brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *what is that to you*

Gospel did not describe Peter as a fisherman earlier (cf. Mk 1.16–20; Mt 4.18–22; Lk 5.1–10). **6–8:** Another recognition scene (see 20.14–16,20). The sign of abundance reveals the presence of *the Lord* to the Beloved Disciple (see 1.40n. and Introduction) who communicates it to Peter. Compare the similar signs of abundance of wine (2.6–10), bread (6.5–13), and life (10.10). **11:** *A hundred fifty-three,* the symbolic significance of the number is unclear. Perhaps inclusion of the detail is intended to authenticate the witness (see 21.24). **14:** *The third time,* see 20.19–23,26–29. **15–17:** Three questions to confirm Peter's loyalty and reverse his three denials of discipleship (18.17,25–27). *Feed my lambs* suggests Peter's carrying on of Jesus's role as the good shepherd (10.11). **18–19:** Like Jesus, Peter's role as shepherd will include laying down his life. His death will glorify God as the death of Jesus did (12.16,23,28; 13.31–32). **20–23:** The exchange suggests a rivalry between the Peter and the Beloved Disciple (cf. 20.3–10). **24:** *The disciple who is testifying* likely refers to the Beloved Disciple, distinct from the actual writer. Note the first person "we" to refer to his testimony, as well as the implication that the disciple has already died (v. 23). **25:** Second conclusion to the Gospel (see 20:30–31). *Books that would be written,* a conventional ending; see Eccl 12.12.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

NAME

The anonymous author of the third Gospel and its sequel, the Acts of the Apostles, supplied no titles for these works. By the end of the second century CE this author was thought to be Luke, and his second volume was referred to as "Acts" in the sense of the "activities" or "deeds" of the apostles. As a descriptive title, however, Acts of the Apostles is a misnomer, since Peter is the only one of the twelve apostles whose deeds and speeches are recounted in detail. Paul, the subject of the second half of the book, refers to himself as an "apostle" in his letters but is not presented as such by Luke. Nevertheless, the title does capture an important concept of the book, namely, that the twelve apostles collectively assured the early church's continuity with Jesus. In Luke's view they did so because they had been witnesses to everything that happened during Jesus's ministry, as well as to his resurrection (Acts 1.21–22; 10.39–41).

LOCATION IN CANON

Acts is the fifth book of the New Testament, immediately following the four Gospels. Although modern interpreters now understand Luke-Acts as a unified literary work in two parts, in the canonical arrangement the Gospel of John interrupts that sequence so that the first four books of the New Testament form the fourfold Gospel. Moreover, Luke's two works never appear sequentially in any ancient manuscript, reflecting the same tendency to group the Gospels together. Consequently, in its canonical position, Acts connects the four Gospels to the collection of letters that follow, and its narrative focus, first on Peter and then on Paul, makes it an appropriate transition from the accounts about Jesus to the "apostolic" writings (Pauline letters and other authoritative writings, attributed to members of the twelve).

AUTHORSHIP

Although Acts nowhere identifies its author, by the end of the second century it was argued, as Irenaeus (ca. 180 CE) does, that Luke was the obvious candidate, and that attribution remains conventional today. This identification was based on the reference to a "Luke" in Philemon 24 and in two other letters attributed to Paul (Col 4.14; 2 Tim 4.11), in conjunction with passages in Acts in which the author seems to present himself as a traveling companion of Paul. Irenaeus pointed to these passages (Acts 16.10–17; 20.5–15; 21.1–18; 27.1–28.16), in which the text shifts from third-person to first-person plural narration, as proof that Luke had been Paul's inseparable collaborator (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.14.1). Many modern scholars challenge the assumption that the "we" passages demonstrate personal familiarity with Paul. In fact, Luke's larger narrative construction results in a presentation of Paul that is inconsistent with biographical and theological details in Paul's own letters. For example, Luke's denying Paul the formal status of "apostle" is almost unimaginable for an actual companion of Paul. In his letters Paul repeatedly claims to be one divinely called to be an apostle (e.g., Rom 1.1; 1 Cor 1.1; Gal 1.1), and he recognizes the existence of other apostles besides the twelve (1 Cor 15.5–7). Luke's reluctance to use this term for Paul is connected to his view that only the twelve, who had been present with Jesus throughout his public activity (Acts 1.21–22), were apostles. This construction disqualifies Paul, even if Acts itself retains an echo of this contested status (14.4,14).

Although there is good reason to doubt that the evangelist Luke was a companion of Paul, it is clear that Luke greatly admired Paul and viewed his missionary career as decisive for establishing Christianity in Asia Minor and Greece. Indeed, Luke's portrayal suggests that Paul's fame and influence extended from Jerusalem to Rome. Luke was likely someone from the Pauline mission area who, several generations after Paul, addressed issues facing Christians who found themselves in circumstances quite different from those addressed by Paul himself. Precisely where Luke carried out this task is uncertain. Ancient tradition placed him in Antioch, but his obvious respect for Paul and the Pauline tradition might indicate that he was connected with one of the major cities of the Pauline mission around the Aegean Sea, such as Ephesus or Philippi.

DATE

According to its opening words, Acts was written after Luke's Gospel, which scholarly consensus dates to 85–95 CE (though some arguments have been advanced for an early second-century date). The considerations

on the relation between Luke and Paul just reviewed support a late first- or early second-century date. Discrepancies between the undisputed Pauline letters and the narrative about Paul in Acts (including Luke's restriction of the title "apostle" to the twelve) have long been recognized, and a temporal gap between letters written in the 50s CE and Acts written forty to fifty years later does much to clarify the situation. At the end of the first century Paul's image was undergoing revision (as is shown by the Pastoral Epistles; see 1 and 2 Tim; Titus, pp. 1725–44). For example, Luke does not hesitate to portray Paul as subject to Jewish law; this depiction is consistent with Luke's emphasis on the continuity between the history of Israel and of the church. Moreover, according to Luke it was not Paul's theological arguments but the conversion of Cornelius through Peter, ratified by the apostolic council (Acts 10.1–11.18), that established that Gentile Christians were not required to observe the law of Moses in its entirety. Such contradictions arise because Acts preserves an image of Paul from a period many decades after his death, and because Luke's rhetorical presentation addresses new issues for Christians of his day who lived in changed circumstances (e.g., the inclusion of the Gentiles was the major issue for Paul, while for Luke it is the retention of Jewish believers in community with them). Thus Paul's role in Acts is dictated not primarily by actual biographical details but rather by the needs of Luke's theology and the social circumstances of his readers.

LITERARY HISTORY

Luke gives no information about the sources upon which the narrative presented in Acts is based. He appears to have relied on a mixture of traditional information uncovered by his own investigation (see Lk 1.3) and his imagination about how the founding events unfolded in Jerusalem and reverberated throughout the Mediterranean world. Like most Greek historians, whom Luke imitates in part, Luke supplemented his narrative with speeches appropriate to significant occasions. These speeches, which amount to nearly one-third of the total text, are Luke's own literary creations, inserted into the narrative to instruct the reader by making explicit the theological implications of the narrative. They also serve to demonstrate Luke's view of the unity of the earliest Christian preaching (i.e., Peter and Paul preach the same message), even as they present Luke's own interpretation of the "events" (Lk 1.1) surrounding the emergence of the church. Scholars have attempted to identify traditional material and sources behind Luke's account in Acts, but no consensus has emerged from these efforts. To the extent that Luke did use preexisting sources and traditions, his rewriting of them leaves few clues about what they were. While scholars previously have made much of Luke's apparent lack of use of Paul's letters, some now believe that Luke in fact was familiar with at least a selection of them. It may be that Luke used Paul's letters in a way most appropriate to his narrative genre: not by quoting them but by more generally incorporating their information as an aid in fashioning his picture of Paul and the early church.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The book of Acts tells a dramatic story of the birth and expansion of the church from the time of the ascension of Jesus until the arrival of Paul in Rome. The plot line of Acts begins with Jesus's ascent to heaven. The narrative first portrays the life and dynamic growth of the early community in Jerusalem, energized by the Spirit and led by Peter and the other apostles up through the martyrdom of Stephen (chs 1–7). The persecution initiated with Stephen's death results in missionary activity outside Jerusalem highlighted by approaches to non-Jews by Philip (ch 8). After narrating the conversion of Saul (ch 9), Luke presents Peter as the individual through whom God establishes the inclusion of the Gentiles (10.1–11.18). Next, the early missionary tour of Barnabas and Saul/Paul on behalf of Antioch is narrated (11.19–14.28), along with a story about Peter's miraculous escape from death (ch 12). The center of the book recounts the apostolic council's approval of the acceptance of Gentile believers and the limited application of Jewish ritual practices to them in the so-called apostolic decree (ch 15). Then Paul's further missionary travels are depicted in Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Miletus, Caesarea, and Jerusalem (15.36–21.26). Finally, the book recounts Paul's arrest, imprisonment, and trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea, and his transfer to Rome (21.27–28.31), closing with the uplifting image of Paul, while under house arrest, preaching and teaching without hindrance in the capital city of the empire.

INTERPRETATION

Written from the perspective of the late first or early second century CE, Acts is the only document from the earliest Christian period to offers a narrative sequel to the accounts of Jesus's words and deeds found in

the Gospels. Its author had already produced his Gospel (Acts 1.1–2). His purpose in writing a second volume was more than a matter of antiquarian interest, although Acts can be compared with Hellenistic historical monographs. This account was intended to give Christians of his day an unshakable confidence in their future through an instructive survey of their past. In carrying out that overarching purpose, Acts addresses social and theological problems brought about by the church's relationship to its Jewish heritage and its Greco-Roman cultural and political environment. Luke sought to clarify both how the church was faithful to the God of the Jewish scriptures and how Christianity was not incompatible with the civic order and morality of the cities of the Roman Empire. Luke devotes half of the narrative to Paul, constructing for Christians of the era after Paul an image of this important figure consistent with the stance taken on Jewish and Roman concerns in the book. Beginning with Irenaeus and especially with Eusebius (d. ca. 339 CE), Christian readers drew on Acts more strictly as a historical account or for information useful for solving later theological problems, no longer observing how in Acts Luke specifically addressed the situation of his original audience with a rhetorical presentation. Moreover, such later uses were aided and abetted by the later canonical arrangement of Luke's works, which gives no indication that his two books were to be read as an interrelated pair. Thus, for most readers ancient and modern, Acts has been viewed not as a supplement to Luke's Gospel in particular, as its introduction suggests, but to the Gospels in general.

For Luke, who was likely a Gentile Christian (though a few scholars contend that he was a Diaspora Jew), God's promises made to the ancient people of God required the church to stand in continuity with Israel. But since most Jews did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, and since the increasingly Gentile Christian community ceased to observe Jewish ritual, this historical continuity had been called into question. Luke responds to this development by depicting the earliest Christians as faithful Jews in Jerusalem until persecution pushed them out. Then, by means of multiple elaborations of the Cornelius episode (10.1–48; 11.1–18; 15.7–9) and of the story of Paul's conversion (9.1–19; 22.4–16; 26.9–18), he demonstrates that the entrance of Gentiles into the church was nothing less than an act of God, and so by definition in continuity with Israel's history. It is highly significant, however, that Luke's ideal Gentile convert is one who continues to practice some elements of Jewish piety (10.2), and that Gentile Christians are urged to adhere to conduct that would permit association with Jews (15.20). Luke's portrayal of Paul's visits to synagogues and his Jewish lifestyle serve to reinforce this maintaining of continuity with Jewish roots. All of these rhetorical moves have implications for the composition of Luke's audience, which one might reasonably expect to have been a mixed Jewish-Gentile group, even if the former were in the minority.

Apart from any value Acts has as history, it is an important example of early Christian theology. Luke develops the idea of the church as a historical entity with its own distinctive era. Moreover, the earliest church, by being confined to Jerusalem, was set apart from the church of Luke's day. The ideal and unrepeatable structures of the early community resulted from the presence of the twelve apostles and eyewitnesses. Luke's concern to highlight the continuity between Israel and the church is expressed by the continued observance of Jewish practices in the early period, implicitly in contrast to Luke's later situation. The gap between Luke's generation and the earlier time is bridged by the endorsement of the Gentile mission in the deliberations of the apostolic council and the promulgation of the apostolic decree (15.20,29; 21.25). The latter pronouncement may have been of practical value for Luke's community by creating the conditions necessary to allow table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Luke's portrayal of Christianity's close ties to Judaism and thus as possessing a venerable heritage (24.14) also bolsters his appeal to Roman officials not to concern themselves with internal religious disputes (25.19,20). Acts portrays influential Romans expressing interest in Christianity (13.12; 19.31), or at least concluding that it posed no threat to the state (18.15; 19.37; 23.29; 25.25; 26.32). In this way Luke demonstrates the nonsubversive nature of the church, possibly in an effort to convince elites of his own day that their membership in the Christian community was not incompatible with their status as Roman citizens. Luke's argument is designed for internal consumption; it was neither intended to persuade non-Christians nor would it have been likely to do so.

Narrative elements promoting continuity within the church itself are the descriptions of the church's proclamation and teaching about Jesus and the constant presence of the Spirit as the prime mover at crucial junctures in early Christian history (e.g., 8.29; 10.19; 16.6–7). Yet in Acts it is God who occupies the dominant place. Jesus is described as a man whom God legitimated by mighty works, wonders, and signs (2.22). Interpretation

of Jesus's death as atoning occurs only once in an expression taken over from earlier tradition (20.28). The focal point of salvation is the resurrection, which is viewed as the turning point of history. The combination of all of these features allows Luke to portray the successful expansion of the early Christian mission throughout the Roman Empire under the direction of the Spirit according to the purpose of God.

Christopher R. Matthews

1 In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning [2] until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. [3] After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. [4] While staying[a] with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; [5] for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with[b] the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

[6] So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" [7] He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. [8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." [9] When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. [10] While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. [11] They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

[12] Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. [13] When they had entered the city, they went to the

[a] Or *eating*
[b] Or *by*

1.1–14: Introduction and summary. The author (hereafter, "Luke") summarizes information from *the first book,* the Gospel of Luke. **1:** *Theophilus,* "dear to God"; perhaps a patron sponsoring publication of the two books (note the respectful address "most excellent" in Lk 1.3), or symbolic for any ideal reader. An opening dedication and reference to previous work is a common pattern in ancient literature. **3:** Examples of the *many convincing proofs* are given in Lk 24.13–53. *Appearing to them during forty days,* note that Lk 24.50–53 seems to place the ascension on Easter; *forty,* a symbolic number in the Bible frequently used for important transitions (e.g., Gen 7.12; Ex 24.18; Num 14.23), and here parallels the beginning of Jesus's ministry (Lk 4.2). *Kingdom of God* stands for the Christian proclamation (8.12; 19.8; 20.25) and indicates continuity with the teaching of Jesus (Lk 4.43; 8.1; 9.2,11). **4:** The Gk word translated *staying* means "to eat at the same table with" (see note *a*) and likely refers to Lk 24.30,31,35,41–43. *Promise of the Father,* that is, the Spirit; see Lk 11.13; 24.49. The promise is fulfilled in Acts 2.1–4 (see 2.33). *Jerusalem,* Luke locates all of the significant founding events in this holy city; the other Gospels report resurrection appearances in Galilee. **5:** *John* the Baptist, Lk 3.1–20. The *Holy Spirit* is one of the major characters of Acts. **6–11:** The ascension, cf. Lk 24.44–51. **6:** The apostles suppose that Jesus intends to *restore the kingdom to Israel* (Lk 22.28–30) and reestablish the dominion once enjoyed by David (Lk 1.32). **7:** The nationalistic tenor of the question is deflected. **8:** The theme of the apostles as *witnesses* (Lk 24.48) recurs often (1.22; 2.32; 3.15; 5.32; 10.39,41; 13.31). *Jerusalem . . . Judea . . . Samaria . . . the ends of the earth,* the progress of the mission is given in geographical terms (8.38n.). **9:** Elsewhere in the New Testament the ascension is found only in Lk 24.51 (cf. Mk 16.19). **10:** *Two men in white robes,* angels (24.4; Jn 20.12); in Lk 9.30 the two men are Moses and Elijah. There are other parallels between Luke's Transfiguration account (Lk 9.28–36) and the ascension scene. **11:** *Will come in the same way,* note the cloud in v. 9; Lk 21.27; cf. Mk 14.62; Dan 7.13. **12:** *Olivet,* the Mount of Olives is just east of Jerusalem. *A sabbath day's journey,* about 3,000 ft. (1,000 m.), the distance permissible for an observant Jew to walk on the sabbath (*b. Eruv. 51a*) without breaking the command not to leave one's "place" on the sabbath (Ex 6.29). **13:** The same list as in Lk 6.14–16, but in a different order (and without Judas

room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of[a] James. 14 All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers[b] (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, 16 "Friends,[c] the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus— 17 for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong,[d] he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms,

'Let his homestead become desolate,
and let there be no one to live in it';

and

'Let another take his position of overseer.'

21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." 23 So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. 24 Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place[e] in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

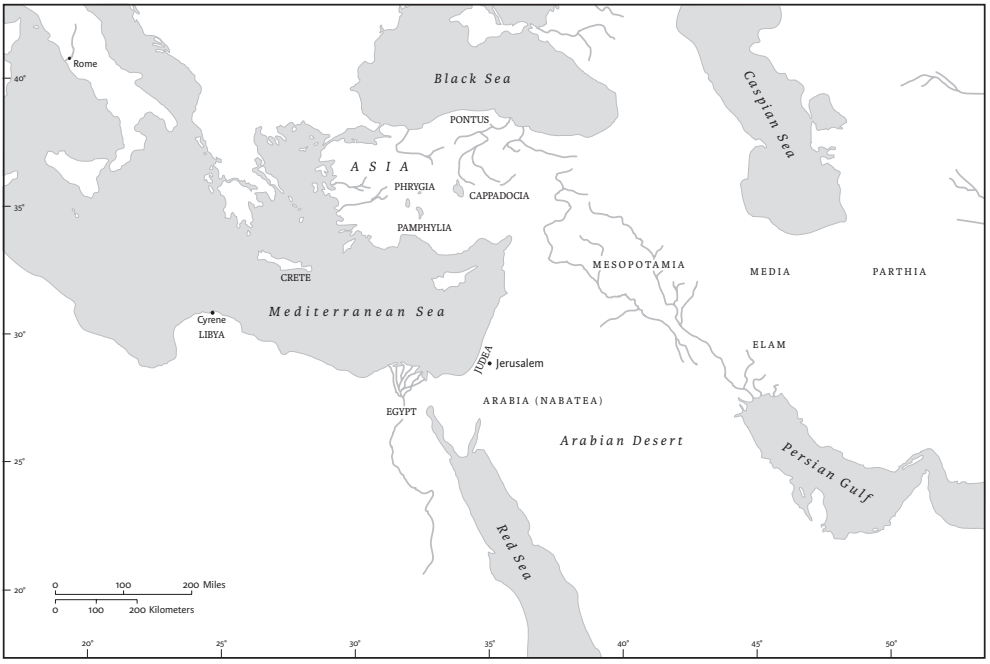
2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

[a] Or *the brother of*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Gk *Men, brothers*
[d] Or *swelling up*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *the share*

Iscariot). **14:** Jesus's family is incorporated into the church. *Brothers,* see Mt 13.55; Mk 6.3; James later appears as the leader of the Jerusalem church (12.17; 15.13; 21.18; Gal 2.9, 12).

1.15–26: The restoration of the twelve. The selection of Matthias restores the number of apostles to twelve, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. **16:** *Through David,* in the psalms quoted in v. 20; King David was traditionally viewed as the author of the Psalms. *Judas,* see Lk 22.3–6,47–48. **17:** *Us,* the twelve apostles. **18:** Compare the gruesome death of Herod Agrippa in 12.23. According to Mt 27.5, Judas hanged himself. **19:** *Their language,* Aramaic, a language closely related to Hebrew; the information is clearly for Luke's Gk readers, not Peter's Aramaic-speaking audience. **20:** Scripture foresaw the situation (Ps 69.25) and dictates a course of action (Ps 109.8). In Acts, citations from the Hebrew Bible are based on the Gk version, the Septuagint. **21:** The requirements stipulated here explain why Paul does not qualify as an apostle in Acts. **22:** *The baptism of John* (Lk 3.1–21) marks the beginning of Jesus's ministry (10.37). To *become a witness . . . to* Jesus's *resurrection* in Acts means to become one of the twelve apostles, who function in a special sense as witnesses (v. 8; 2.32). **23:** Nothing else is known about Joseph and Matthias. **24:** *Know . . . heart,* see Lk 9.47; Acts 15.8. **26:** *Cast lots,* allowing the "Lord" (v. 24; Jesus, or perhaps God) to choose. Lots were widely used in the ancient world for religious and social decisions and are often mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Lev 16.8; 1 Sam 10.20–21; 1 Chr 25.8).

2.1–41: The day of Pentecost. The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Lev 23.15–21), the spring wheat harvest, falls fifty days after Passover. In Jewish tradition the law was given at Mt. Sinai on this day. **1–13:** The coming of the Holy Spirit. **2:** *Rush of a violent wind,* perhaps an allusion to Gen 1.2 ("while a mighty wind swept over the face of the waters" [alternate version]), though this and other features here are typical of theophanies—manifestations of God (Ex 19.16–19; 1 Kings 19.11; Isa 66.15). **3:** John the Baptist had predicted a baptism "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Lk 3.16; Mt 3.11; cf. Mk 1.8; Jn 1.33). **4:** This baptism (1.5) or filling with the Spirit is clearly



2.9–11: The native lands of Pentecost pilgrims.

[5] Now there were devout Jews from every
nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.
[6] And at this sound the crowd gathered and
was bewildered, because each one heard
them speaking in the native language of
each. [7] Amazed and astonished, they asked,
"Are not all these who are speaking Galile-
ans? [8] And how is it that we hear, each of
us, in our own native language? [9] Parthians,
Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopo-
tamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and
Asia, [10] Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and
the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and
visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,
[11] Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages
we hear them speaking about God's deeds
of power." [12] All were amazed and perplexed,
saying to one another, "What does this
mean?" [13] But others sneered and said, "They
are filled with new wine."

[14] But Peter, standing with the eleven,
raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of
Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be
known to you, and listen to what I say. [15] In-
deed, these are not drunk, as you suppose,
for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.
[16] No, this is what was spoken through the
prophet Joel:

[17] 'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall
prophesy,

foundational for Acts but is not referred to elsewhere in the New Testament (but cf. Jn 20.22). **5:** *Devout Jews from every nation,* emphasizing the universal character of the Pentecost event. **6:** The *other languages* (v. 4) are foreign languages, not the "tongues" of 1 Cor 14.1–33. Perhaps the author thinks of a reversal of the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel (Gen 11.1–9). **9–11:** The list of countries and races, generally moving from east to west, suggests universal participation in the Pentecost event. **10:** *Proselytes,* full converts to Judaism. **13:** *Filled with new wine,* i.e., drunk (v. 15). **14–36:** Peter's sermon. Like other Hellenistic historians Luke provides characters with speeches appropriate to their circumstances. These may use traditional material but also convey Luke's viewpoint. The speeches use the same biblical style reminiscent of the Septuagint in which Luke has written the early chapters of Acts. **14:** *Peter* remains the spokesman for the twelve apostles (1.15); individualized actions by the others are not portrayed in Acts. **16:** The event is interpreted as a fulfillment of scripture. **17:** *In the last days*

and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.
18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.
19 And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
20 The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

22 "You that are Israelites,[a] listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth,[b] a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— 23 this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. 24 But God raised him up, having freed him from death,[c] because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. 25 For David says concerning him,

'I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will live in hope.
27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.
28 You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

29 "Fellow Israelites,[d] I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Foreseeing this, David[e] spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah,[f] saying,

'He was not abandoned to Hades,
nor did his flesh experience corruption.'

32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at[g] the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
35 until I make your enemies your footstool."'

36 Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah,[h] this Jesus whom you crucified."

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers,[d] what should we do?" 38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus

[a] Gk *Men, Israelites*
[b] Gk *the Nazorean*
[c] Gk *the pains of death*
[d] Gk *Men, brothers*
[e] Gk *he*
[f] Or *the Christ*
[g] Or *by*
[h] Or *Christ*

is added to the beginning of the quotation of Joel 2.28–32. **22:** *A man,* Luke does not think of the incarnation of a divine being. *Deeds of power, wonders, and signs,* biblical language (e.g., Deut 4.34; 6.22; 26.8) used often in Acts. **23:** The crucifixion of Jesus by Jews and Gentiles was part of a *plan,* see Lk 22.22; 24.26; Acts 4.27–28. **25:** Ps 16.8–11. *David,* see 1.16n. **29:** *His tomb,* see, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 7.392–94. **30:** 2 Sam 7.12–13; Ps 132.11. **31:** *The Messiah* is assumed to come from the line of *David* (cf. Rom 1.3). **32:** *Witnesses,* see 1.22n. **33:** *Exalted,* a reference to the ascension. *The promise,* see 1.4n. **34–35:** Ps 110.1, like Ps 16.8–11 (vv. 25,31), here also refers not to *David* but to Jesus. It was widely used in early Christian thought about Jesus (Mk 12.36; 1 Cor 15.25; Heb 1.13). **36:** *Made him both Lord and Messiah,* apparently at the resurrection. This "adoptionist" Christology appears to conflict with Luke's account of Jesus's baptism (Lk 3.21–22); see 10.38n. Such tensions in Acts may indicate the use of sources with contrasting viewpoints. **37–41:** The call to repentance. **37:** Lk 3.10. **38:** Here the gift of the *Spirit*

Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and
you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
39 For the promise is for you, for your chil-
dren, and for all who are far away, everyone
whom the Lord our God calls to him." 40 And
he testified with many other arguments and
exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves
from this corrupt generation." 41 So those
who welcomed his message were baptized,
and that day about three thousand persons
were added. 42 They devoted themselves to
the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the
breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 Awe came upon everyone, because many
wonders and signs were being done by the
apostles. 44 All who believed were together
and had all things in common; 45 they would
sell their possessions and goods and distribute
the proceeds[a] to all, as any had need. 46 Day
by day, as they spent much time together in
the temple, they broke bread at home[b] and
ate their food with glad and generous[c] hearts,
47 praising God and having the goodwill of all
the people. And day by day the Lord added to
their number those who were being saved.

3 One day Peter and John were going up to
the temple at the hour of prayer, at three
o'clock in the afternoon. 2 And a man lame
from birth was being carried in. People would
lay him daily at the gate of the temple called
the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for
alms from those entering the temple. 3 When
he saw Peter and John about to go into the
temple, he asked them for alms. 4 Peter
looked intently at him, as did John, and said,
"Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention on
them, expecting to receive something from
them. 6 But Peter said, "I have no silver or
gold, but what I have I give you; in the name
of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,[d] stand up and
walk." 7 And he took him by the right hand
and raised him up; and immediately his feet
and ankles were made strong. 8 Jumping up,
he stood and began to walk, and he entered
the temple with them, walking and leaping
and praising God. 9 All the people saw him
walking and praising God, 10 and they recog-
nized him as the one who used to sit and ask
for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple;
and they were filled with wonder and amaze-
ment at what had happened to him.

11 While he clung to Peter and John, all the
people ran together to them in the portico

[a] Gk *them*
[b] Or *from house to house*
[c] Or *sincere*
[d] Gk *the Nazorean*

follows baptism, but there is variety elsewhere (8.16; 10.44; 18.26; 19.5–6). **39:** Isa 57.19; Joel 2.32. *All who are far away,* the universal nature of the church is clear from the beginning (cf. Lk 2.32). **41:** *Three thousand persons were added,* illustrating the phenomenal success of Peter's speech.

2.42–47: Life in the first Christian community. (The terms "Christian" and "Christianity" are used here for convenience, but strictly speaking are inaccurate for the time portrayed in the narrative; Luke knows the term "Christians" but does not adopt it as his own designation for believers; see 9.2n.; 11.25–26n.) **42:** *The breaking of bread* (see v. 46) describes both a common Christian meal (e.g., 20.7,11) and the Lord's Supper (27.33–38; cf. 1 Cor 11.17–34). **43–47:** Luke portrays life in the early Jerusalem community as a golden age, to provide a moral lesson for his own readers. **43:** By performing *wonders and signs* the apostles fulfill Joel's prophecy (2.19) and imitate Jesus (2.22). **44–45:** The ideal use of possessions and money illustrates the proper response to the preaching of Jesus on this subject in the Gospel (see Lk 6.20; 12.13–21,33–34; 14.12–24,33). For community of goods in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see 1QS 1.11–12; cf. Josephus, *J.W.* 2.122 on the Essenes. **46:** Members of the growing Christian group are simultaneously devout Jews who remain close to *the temple.*

3.1–10: Peter's healing miracle in the Temple. An illustration of the apostles' "wonders and signs" (2.43). **1:** The apostles center their activity in *the temple* (see 2.46) and so imitate Jesus's practice in Jerusalem (note the distinctive portrayal in Lk 20–21). *John* appears here and elsewhere with *Peter* but with no individualized role. *Three o'clock in the afternoon,* when sacrifice was offered with prayer (Ex 29.39; Lev 6.20; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.65). **2:** *The Beautiful Gate,* perhaps the Nicanor Gate of Corinthian bronze on the east side of the Temple; see Josephus, *J.W.* 5.201. **6:** *The name* is an important concept in Acts (v. 16; 2.21,38), as 4.7–12 will underline (see also 4.17,18,30; 10.43; 19.13).

3.11–26: Peter's explanation. In a second sermon Peter links Jesus with the patriarchs and Moses. **11:** *Solomon's Portico,* a colonnade located by Josephus (*J.W.* 5.185; *Ant.* 20.221) on the east side of the Temple.

called Solomon's Portico, utterly astonished.
12 When Peter saw it, he addressed the people,
"You Israelites,[a] why do you wonder at this,
or why do you stare at us, as though by our
own power or piety we had made him walk?
13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and
the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors
has glorified his servant[b] Jesus, whom you
handed over and rejected in the presence of
Pilate, though he had decided to release him.
14 But you rejected the Holy and Righteous
One and asked to have a murderer given
to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life,
whom God raised from the dead. To this we
are witnesses. 16 And by faith in his name,
his name itself has made this man strong,
whom you see and know; and the faith that
is through Jesus[c] has given him this perfect
health in the presence of all of you.

17 "And now, friends,[d] I know that you act-
ed in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 In
this way God fulfilled what he had foretold
through all the prophets, that his Messiah[e]
would suffer. 19 Repent therefore, and turn to
God so that your sins may be wiped out, 20 so
that times of refreshing may come from the
presence of the Lord, and that he may send
the Messiah[f] appointed for you, that is, Jesus,
21 who must remain in heaven until the time
of universal restoration that God announced
long ago through his holy prophets. 22 Moses
said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you
from your own people[d] a prophet like me. You
must listen to whatever he tells you. 23 And
it will be that everyone who does not listen
to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of
the people.' 24 And all the prophets, as many
as have spoken, from Samuel and those after
him, also predicted these days. 25 You are
the descendants of the prophets and of the
covenant that God gave to your ancestors,
saying to Abraham, 'And in your descendants
all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'
26 When God raised up his servant,[b] he sent
him first to you, to bless you by turning each
of you from your wicked ways."

4 While Peter and John[g] were speaking to
the people, the priests, the captain of the
temple, and the Sadducees came to them,
2 much annoyed because they were teach-
ing the people and proclaiming that in Jesus
there is the resurrection of the dead. 3 So they
arrested them and put them in custody until
the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But
many of those who heard the word believed;
and they numbered about five thousand.

5 The next day their rulers, elders, and
scribes assembled in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas
the high priest, Caiaphas, John,[h] and Alex-
ander, and all who were of the high-priestly
family. 7 When they had made the prisoners[i]
stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what

[a] Gk *Men, Israelites*
[b] Or *child*
[c] Gk *him*
[d] Gk *brothers*
[e] Or *his Christ*
[f] Or *the Christ*
[g] Gk *While they*
[h] Other ancient authorities read *Jonathan*
[i] Gk *them*

13: The word *servant* recalls Isa 52.13 and the suffering servant of the Lord (4.27; 8.30–35). *Pilate,* Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, who sentenced Jesus to death (Lk 3.1; 23.24). Roman responsibility for the death of Jesus is downplayed here as in Lk 23.4,14–16,20–25; contrast Acts 4.27. **14:** *A murderer,* Barabbas (Lk 23.18–19). **15:** *Author,* the Gk word can mean "pioneer" or "founder" (of a new city); in 5.31 it is translated "Leader" (cf. Heb 2.10; 12.2). The testimony of the *witnesses* is again emphasized (1.22n.). **16:** *Name,* see v. 6n. **17:** *You acted in ignorance,* mitigating the guilt emphasized in vv. 13–15 (see 4.10). Compare 14.16 and 17.30. **18:** The necessity that the *Messiah would suffer* was *foretold,* see Lk 24.25–27,46; Acts 17.2–3; 26.22–23. Recall the "plan" of 2.23. **19:** Lk 3.3. **22:** 7.37. Jesus is successor of Moses (Deut 18.15) as well as David. **23:** Deut 18.19; Lev 23.29. **24:** *These days,* i.e., the last days (2.17). **25:** Gen 12.3; 18.18; 22.18. **26:** *First to you,* implying the later mission to the Gentiles.

4.1–22: Arrest and release of Peter and John. The first of many incidents in which the apostles defend the faith before the authorities. **1–2:** *Captain of the temple,* the officer in charge of the temple police. *Sadducees,* a circle composed of priestly and lay nobility who according to Luke denied the *resurrection of the dead* (23.6–8). **3:** It was not legal to hold a judicial inquiry at night. **4:** *Five thousand,* the rapid growth of the community of believers continues (see 2.41). This is a recurrent theme in Acts, typically occurring in the face of opposition. **5–6:** Perhaps the *rulers* are priests; with the *elders* and *scribes* they made up the Sanhedrin, or council (v. 15), of

power or by what name did you do this?"
8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said
to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if
we are questioned today because of a good
deed done to someone who was sick and are
asked how this man has been healed, 10 let it
be known to all of you, and to all the people
of Israel, that this man is standing before you
in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of
Nazareth,[a] whom you crucified, whom God
raised from the dead. 11 This Jesus[b] is
'the stone that was rejected by you, the
builders;
it has become the cornerstone.'[c]
12 There is salvation in no one else, for there
is no other name under heaven given among
mortals by which we must be saved."
13 Now when they saw the boldness of
Peter and John and realized that they were
uneducated and ordinary men, they were
amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus. 14 When they saw the man who
had been cured standing beside them, they
had nothing to say in opposition. 15 So they
ordered them to leave the council while
they discussed the matter with one another.
16 They said, "What will we do with them? For
it is obvious to all who live in Jerusalem that a
notable sign has been done through them; we
cannot deny it. 17 But to keep it from spreading further among the people, let us warn
them to speak no more to anyone in this
name." 18 So they called them and ordered
them not to speak or teach at all in the name
of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them,
"Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to
you rather than to God, you must judge; 20 for
we cannot keep from speaking about what
we have seen and heard." 21 After threatening
them again, they let them go, finding no way
to punish them because of the people, for all
of them praised God for what had happened.
22 For the man on whom this sign of healing
had been performed was more than forty
years old.
23 After they were released, they went to
their friends[d] and reported what the chief
priests and the elders had said to them.
24 When they heard it, they raised their voices
together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord,
who made the heaven and the earth, the
sea, and everything in them, 25 it is you who
said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor
David, your servant:[e]
'Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples imagine vain things?
26 The kings of the earth took their stand,
and the rulers have gathered together
against the Lord and against his
Messiah.'[f]
27 For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples
of Israel, gathered together against your holy
servant[e] Jesus, whom you anointed, 28 to do
whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. 29 And now, Lord, look
at their threats, and grant to your servants[g]
to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while
you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs
and wonders are performed through the
name of your holy servant[h] Jesus." 31 When

[a] Gk *the Nazorean*
[b] Gk *This*
[c] Or *keystone*
[d] Gk *their own*
[e] Or *child*
[f] Or *his Christ*
[g] Gk *slaves*
[h] Or *child*

which *the high priest* was head. *Annas* held this office from 6–15 CE; *Caiaphas* was his son-in-law (Jn 18.13) and became high priest in 18 CE (Lk 3.2); *John* may be Jonathan, the son of Annas who succeeded Caiaphas in 37 CE. **8–12:** A condensed version of the speeches in chs 2, 3, 10, and 13. The scene in v. 8 represents the fulfillment of Jesus's promise in Lk 12.12; compare the prediction of Lk 21.15. **11:** Ps 118.22 was popular in Christian arguments (Mt 21.42; Mk 12.10; Lk 20.17; 1 Pet 2.7). **12:** *No other name* underlines the answer (v. 10) to the question posed (v. 7) about the name; see 3.6,16; 4.17,18,30. **13:** *Boldness,* this word and its cognates are used often in Acts and connote frank and courageous speech (e.g., 9.27–28; 13.46; 18.26). *Uneducated and ordinary men,* lacking legal training. **19:** The reply here and in 5.29 is reminiscent of Socrates's famous words (Plato, *Apology* 29d).

4.23–31: Prayer of the community. 24: Ps 146.6. **25–26:** Ps 2.1–2. **27:** *Servant,* see 3.13n.; the same term is used of David in v. 25. *Herod,* Herod Antipas, Lk 3.1n.; 23.12. *Pontius Pilate,* see 3.13n. **28:** See 2.23n.; 3.18. **29:** *Look at their threats,* a prayer to be shielded from harm. **31:** *The place . . . was shaken,* indicating that the prayer was heard (cf. 16.25–26).

they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

32 Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. 33 With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. 35 They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"). 37 He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

5 But a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property; 2 with his wife's knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 "Ananias," Peter asked, "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us[a] but to God!" 5 Now when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard of it. 6 The young men came and wrapped up his body,[b] then carried him out and buried him.

7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you and your husband sold the land for such and such a price." And she said, "Yes, that was the price." 9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And great fear seized the whole church and all who heard of these things.

12 Now many signs and wonders were done among the people through the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. 13 None of the rest dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. 14 Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, great numbers of both men and women, 15 so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he came by. 16 A great number of people would also gather from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

[a] Gk *to men*

[b] Meaning of Gk uncertain

4.32–5.11: The sharing of goods. 4.32–35: The ideal handling of possessions in the early Jerusalem community (see 2.44–45n.). **36–37:** *Levite,* a member of the priestly tribe of Levi. *Barnabas,* who later appears as Paul's missionary companion in 13.1–14.28 (cf. 1 Cor 9.6), embodies the response of the ideal believer. **5.1–11:** The negative example of *Ananias* and *Sapphira.* Compare the story of Achan in Josh 7. **3:** *Satan,* Lk 22.3. The apostles, or perhaps the church, represent *the Holy Spirit;* cf. 9.4; 15.28. **4:** The property was at Ananias's *disposal* (although this contradicts 4.32,34) until he pretended to dedicate all his goods. **11:** *Church,* used here for the first time in Acts, designates the entire congregation of believers, which is still restricted to Jerusalem. Elsewhere it means either local communities in Jerusalem (8.1,3; 11.22; 12.5; 15.4,22; 18.22), Antioch (11.26; 13.1; 14.27; 15.3), Ephesus (20.17), and other places (14.23; 15.41; 16.5), or, occasionally, the universal body of all believers (20.28).

5.12–16: Signs and wonders. 12: *Solomon's Portico,* see 3.11n. **13:** *None of the rest,* i.e., nonbelievers; the Christians now stand out as a clearly defined group. **16:** Compare Mk 1.32–34.

17 Then the high priest took action; he and
all who were with him (that is, the sect of the
Sadducees), being filled with jealousy, 18 ar-
rested the apostles and put them in the public
prison. 19 But during the night an angel of the
Lord opened the prison doors, brought them
out, and said, 20 "Go, stand in the temple and
tell the people the whole message about this
life." 21 When they heard this, they entered
the temple at daybreak and went on with
their teaching.

When the high priest and those with him
arrived, they called together the council and
the whole body of the elders of Israel, and
sent to the prison to have them brought.
22 But when the temple police went there,
they did not find them in the prison; so they
returned and reported, 23 "We found the
prison securely locked and the guards stand-
ing at the doors, but when we opened them,
we found no one inside." 24 Now when the
captain of the temple and the chief priests
heard these words, they were perplexed
about them, wondering what might be going
on. 25 Then someone arrived and announced,
"Look, the men whom you put in prison
are standing in the temple and teaching the
people!" 26 Then the captain went with the
temple police and brought them, but without
violence, for they were afraid of being stoned
by the people.

27 When they had brought them, they had
them stand before the council. The high
priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We gave
you strict orders not to teach in this name,[a]
yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your
teaching and you are determined to bring this
man's blood on us." 29 But Peter and the apos-
tles answered, "We must obey God rather
than any human authority.[b] 30 The God of
our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had
killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted
him at his right hand as Leader and Savior
that he might give repentance to Israel and
forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to
these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom
God has given to those who obey him."

33 When they heard this, they were en-
raged and wanted to kill them. 34 But a Phari-
see in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher
of the law, respected by all the people, stood
up and ordered the men to be put outside
for a short time. 35 Then he said to them,
"Fellow Israelites,[c] consider carefully what
you propose to do to these men. 36 For some
time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be
somebody, and a number of men, about four
hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and
all who followed him were dispersed and
disappeared. 37 After him Judas the Galilean
rose up at the time of the census and got
people to follow him; he also perished, and
all who followed him were scattered. 38 So in
the present case, I tell you, keep away from
these men and let them alone; because if
this plan or this undertaking is of human
origin, it will fail; 39 but if it is of God, you
will not be able to overthrow them—in that
case you may even be found fighting against
God!"

They were convinced by him, 40 and when
they had called in the apostles, they had
them flogged. Then they ordered them not
to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them
go. 41 As they left the council, they rejoiced
that they were considered worthy to suffer
dishonor for the sake of the name. 42 And

[a] Other ancient authorities read *Did we not give you strict orders not to teach in this name?*
[b] Gk *than men*
[c] Gk *Men, Israelites*

5.17–42: Second arrest of the apostles. The motif of obeying God rather than human beings is played out again before the council (cf. ch 4). **19:** *An angel . . . opened the prison doors,* see 12.6–11; cf. 16.25–26. **21:** *Body of the elders,* another word for *council* or Sanhedrin. **29:** See 4.19n. **30:** The reference to the *tree* (cross; 10.39; 13.29) recalls Deut 21.22–23, but it is not developed; cf. Gal 3.13. **31:** A concise summary of the theology of Acts. *Leader,* the same Gk word is translated "Author" in 3.15. *Savior,* a term widely used in the Hellenistic world (e.g., 11.19n.). **34:** *A Pharisee* (see 15.5n.), the famous Rabban *Gamaliel,* the Elder, later identified as Paul's teacher (22.3). **36–37:** The historical order of the figures referred to is reversed. *Theudas,* according to Josephus (*Ant.* 20.97–98), raised his revolt (ca. 44–46 CE) some years after Gamaliel's speech. *Judas the Galilean,* a revolutionary leader who in 6 or 7 CE opposed the imposition of new taxes following *the census* of Quirinius (Lk 2.2). **40:** *Had them flogged,* to reinforce the warning.

every day in the temple and at home[a] they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.[b]

6 Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. [2] And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables.[c] [3] Therefore, friends,[d] select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, [4] while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." [5] What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. [6] They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

[7] The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

[8] Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. [9] Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. [10] But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit[e] with which he spoke. [11] Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." [12] They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. [13] They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; [14] for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth[f] will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." [15] And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

7 Then the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?" [2] And Stephen replied: "Brothers[g] and fathers, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he

[a] Or *from house to house*
[b] Or *the Christ*
[c] Or *keep accounts*
[d] Gk *brothers*
[e] Or *spirit*
[f] Gk *the Nazorean*
[g] Gk *Men, brothers*

6.1–7: Choice of the seven. The seven are identified as the first deacons by later tradition but hold no ecclesiastical office here. **1:** *The Hellenists,* Greek-speaking Jewish Christians; the *Hebrews,* Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians. **2:** *The twelve* is used to designate the apostles only here in Acts. *To wait on tables,* i.e., to feed the hungry. **5:** *Stephen, Philip,* and the other names are Greek. *Proselyte,* a Gentile convert to Judaism, implying that the others were born Jews. **6:** *Laid . . . hands,* a ritual of consecration and appointment; see Num 8.10; 27.23; Acts 13.3; 1 Tim 4.14; 2 Tim 1.6. **7:** Not all *priests* are hostile. Throughout Acts the partial success of the Christian movement among Jews is reported (21.20n.; 28.24).

6.8–8.1a: Preaching and martyrdom of Stephen. Elements of Stephen's trial and death reflect the passion of Jesus. **6.8:** Stephen does *wonders and signs* like the apostles (2.43; 4.30; 5.12). **9:** Diaspora Jews *argued with Stephen. Freedmen,* former slaves, either Jews or proselytes; an inscription found in Jerusalem possibly refers to this *synagogue. Cyrenians,* from Cyrene in northern Africa (see 11.20n.). *Cilicia,* the southeastern portion of Asia Minor, which Acts identifies as Paul's home (21.39; 22.3; cf. 23.34). *Asia,* the Roman province of that name in western Asia Minor. **10:** A fulfillment of Jesus's prediction in Lk 21.15. **13:** *False witnesses,* cf. Mk 14.55–57. **14:** *Jesus . . . will destroy this place,* Mk 14.58; Lk 21.6; Jn 2.19. The *change* in *customs* reported by Mk 7.15,19 is not recorded in Lk. These charges had not been made in the earlier examinations of the apostles. **7.2–50:** Stephen's speech contains some thirty citations from the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint), which was the Bible of the early Christians. Accordingly, Stephen makes reference to *Abraham* (v. 2), *Joseph* (v. 9), *Moses* (v. 20), and

lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, 'Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you.' 4 Then he left the country of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God had him move from there to this country in which you are now living. 5 He did not give him any of it as a heritage, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as his possession and to his descendants after him, even though he had no child. 6 And God spoke in these terms, that his descendants would be resident aliens in a country belonging to others, who would enslave them and mistreat them during four hundred years. 7 'But I will judge the nation that they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.' 8 Then he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham[a] became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

9 "The patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him, 10 and rescued him from all his afflictions, and enabled him to win favor and to show wisdom when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. 11 Now there came a famine throughout Egypt and Canaan, and great suffering, and our ancestors could find no food. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there on their first visit. 13 On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. 14 Then Joseph sent and invited his father Jacob and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five in all; 15 so Jacob went down to Egypt. He himself died there as well as our ancestors, 16 and their bodies[b] were brought back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

17 "But as the time drew near for the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to Abraham, our people in Egypt increased and multiplied 18 until another king who had not known Joseph ruled over Egypt. 19 He dealt craftily with our race and forced our ancestors to abandon their infants so that they would die. 20 At this time Moses was born, and he was beautiful before God. For three months he was brought up in his father's house; 21 and when he was abandoned, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. 22 So Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds.

23 "When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his relatives, the Israelites.[c] 24 When he saw one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. 25 He supposed that his kinsfolk would understand that God through him was rescuing them, but they did not understand. 26 The next day he came to some of them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you wrong each other?' 27 But the man who was wronging his neighbor pushed Moses[d] aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' 29 When he heard this, Moses fled and became a resident alien in the land of Midian. There he became the father of two sons.

30 "Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush. 31 When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight; and as he approached to look, there

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Gk *they*
[c] Gk *his brothers, the sons of Israel*
[d] Gk *him*

others (cf. 13.16–24; Heb 11.4–40). **3:** Gen 12.1; according to Gen 11.31 Abraham was already in Haran (against v. 2). **5:** Gen 12.7; 13.15; 17.8; 48.4. **6–7:** *Four hundred years,* see Gen 15.13–14; cf. Ex 12.40. **8:** Gen 17.10–13. **9:** Gen 37. **10–16:** Gen 39–50. **14:** *Seventy-five,* according to the Septuagint of Gen 46.27; Ex 1.5. **16:** *Shechem,* but according to Gen 50.13 Jacob was buried at Hebron. *Abraham,* but according to Gen 33.19 and Josh 24.32 it was Jacob who bought the tomb at Shechem, where Joseph was buried. **17–19:** Ex 1–2. **20–22:** Ex 2.1–10. **20:** The importance of *Moses* is stressed by the amount of space devoted to him in the following verses. **23–29:** Ex 2.11–22. **29:** *Midian,* northwestern Arabia, on the east coast of the Gulf of Aqaba (Eilat). **30–34:** Ex 3.1–10. **30:** In Ex 3.1 the mountain

came the voice of the Lord: 32 'I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Moses began to tremble and did not dare to look. 33 Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. 34 I have surely seen the mistreatment of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to rescue them. Come now, I will send you to Egypt.'

35 "It was this Moses whom they rejected when they said, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' and whom God now sent as both ruler and liberator through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36 He led them out, having performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. 37 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up a prophet for you from your own people[a] as he raised me up.' 38 He is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living oracles to give to us. 39 Our ancestors were unwilling to obey him; instead, they pushed him aside, and in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, 40 saying to Aaron, 'Make gods for us who will lead the way for us; as for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.' 41 At that time they made a calf, offered a sacrifice to the idol, and reveled in the works of their hands. 42 But God turned away from them and handed them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

'Did you offer to me slain victims and sacrifices
forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?
43 No; you took along the tent of Moloch,
and the star of your god Rephan,
the images that you made to worship;
so I will remove you beyond Babylon.'

44 "Our ancestors had the tent of testimony in the wilderness, as God[b] directed when he spoke to Moses, ordering him to make it according to the pattern he had seen. 45 Our ancestors in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our ancestors. And it was there until the time of David, 46 who found favor with God and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob.[c] 47 But it was Solomon who built a house for him. 48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands;[d] as the prophet says,

49 'Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house will you build for me,
says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?
50 Did not my hand make all these things?'

51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. 52 Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. 53 You are the ones that received

[a] Gk *your brothers*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *for the God of Jacob*
[d] Gk *with hands*

is Horeb, not *Sinai.* **35:** Ex 2.14. **37:** *A prophet,* Deut 18.15; see 3.22. **38:** In the Hebrew Bible God, not an *angel,* speaks to Moses and gives him the law (*living oracles*); cf. v. 53. **40:** Ex 32.1. **42–43:** Am 5.25–27 is quoted to support the charge of idolatry raised in vv. 40–42. The *book of the* (twelve minor) *prophets* (Hosea through Malachi) was thought of as a unit. **42:** *The host of heaven,* the stars (2 Kings 17.16), which are associated with various supernatural beings. **43:** *Moloch,* a deity to whom children were offered as sacrifices (Jer 32.35). *Rephan,* an astral deity (Saturn). **44:** *The tent of testimony,* the tabernacle (Ex 27.21), is brought forward in the following verses as preferable to the Temple; compare the "true tent" of Heb 8.1–5. **45:** Josh 3.7–4.18. **46:** Ps 132.5; cf. 2 Sam 7.1–2. **47:** 1 Kings 6. **48:** Since *made with human hands* is language associated with idolatry in the Hebrew Bible (see Ps 115.4; Isa 2.8), its application to the Temple would be offensive to a Jewish audience. Cf. 17.24–25. **49–50:** Isa 66.1–2. **51:** *Stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears,* biblical language of reproach, see Ex 33.3,5; Lev 26.41; Jer 9.26; cf. Rom 2.29. **52:** The question is hyperbolic but recalls Lk 11.47–48. **53:** *The law,* being *ordained by angels* (cf. v. 38) is considered valid (Heb 2.2); Paul used this Jewish tradition to argue that the law is secondary

the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it."

54 When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen.[a] 55 But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" 57 But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. 58 Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.[b] **8** 1 And Saul approved of their killing him.

That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him. 3 But Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison.

4 Now those who were scattered went from place to place, proclaiming the word. 5 Philip went down to the city[c] of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah[d] to them. 6 The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did, 7 for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured. 8 So there was great joy in that city.

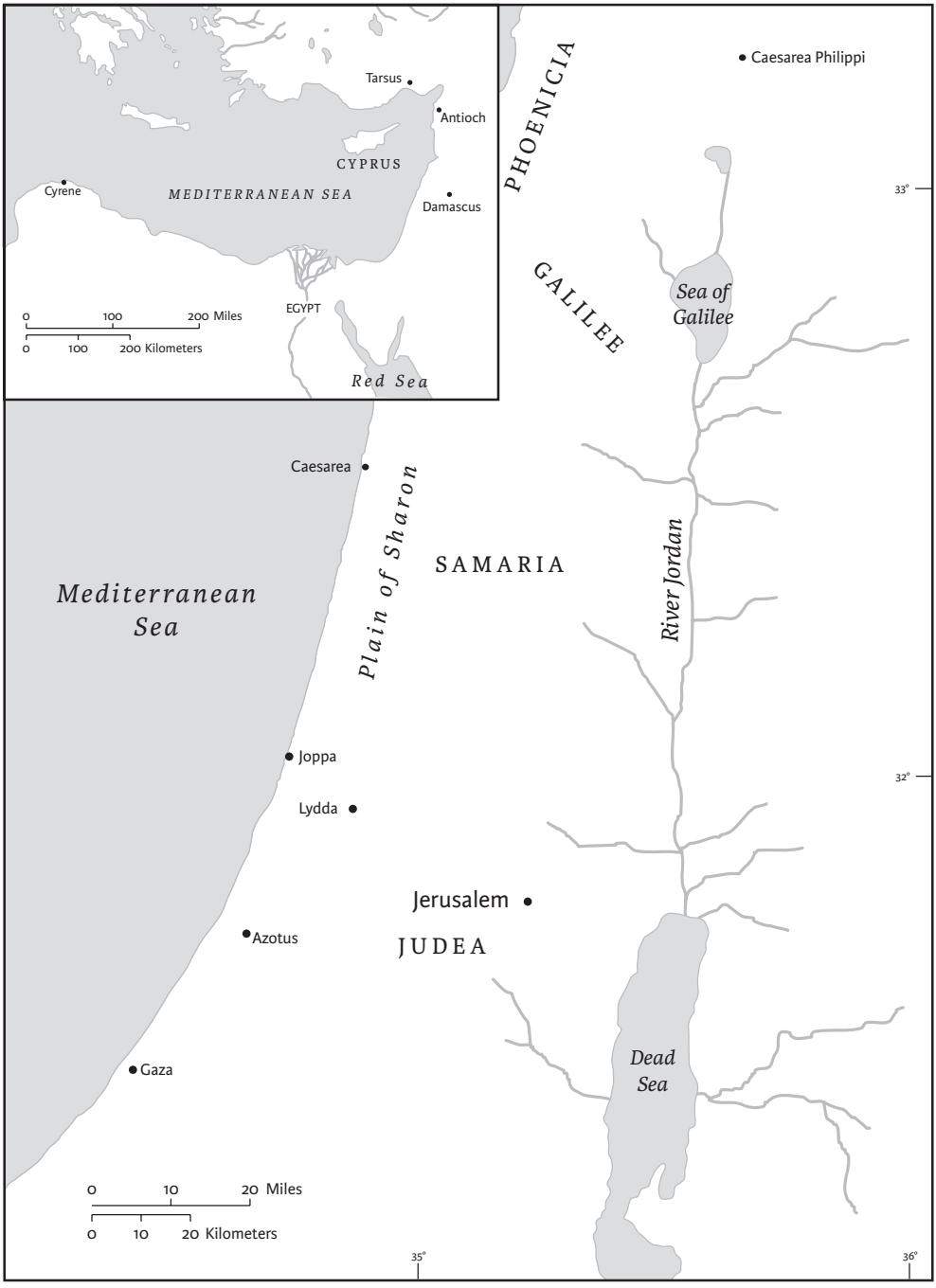
9 Now a certain man named Simon had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great. 10 All of them, from the least to the greatest, listened to him eagerly, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." 11 And they listened eagerly to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed. After being baptized, he stayed constantly with Philip and was amazed when he saw the signs and great miracles that took place.

14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit 16 (for as yet the

[a] Gk *him*
[b] Gk *fell asleep*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *a city*
[d] Or *the Christ*

(Gal 3.19). **54–58a:** Here Stephen is described as the victim of a lynching. **55–56:** Lk 22.69. *Son of Man* in the Gospels can denote Jesus as the glorified heavenly judge; elsewhere in the New Testament the term is found only in Rev 1.13; 14.14. **58b–8.1:** The presence of *witnesses,* who were legally required to cast the first stones at the offender (Deut 17.7), suggests not a lynching but a judicial execution. **58b:** *Saul,* Luke's dramatic introduction of Paul. His presence may have been suggested by 1 Cor 15.9 and Gal 1.13 but is not confirmed by these references. **59:** Lk 23.46. **60:** See Lk 23.34n.

8.1b–40: Spread of the gospel to Samaria and beyond. Christianity now reaches non-Jewish regions. **1:** *Except the apostles,* although unrealistic, it is important for Luke that the apostles remain in *Jerusalem. Samaria,* between Galilee to the north and Judea to the south, was inhabited by remnants of the northern tribes who worshiped the Lord God and used the Pentateuch. Jews despised them (2 Kings 17.24–41; cf. Mt 10.5). **3:** *Saul was ravaging the church,* 9.1–2; cf. Gal 1.13. **4:** Ironically, severe persecution leads to *proclaiming the word* in new places. **5:** *Philip,* one of the seven mentioned in 6.5, is now active as an evangelist (21.8). Second-century references to this individual identify him as one of the twelve apostles with the same name (Lk 6.14), but according to the idealized account of Acts the apostles remain in Jerusalem during this period. **9:** Acts repeatedly distinguishes between *magic* and Christian signs (see 13.6–12; 19.13–20). **12:** Philip breaks religious barriers and fulfills the expectations about Samaritans generated by Luke's Gospel (Lk 10.30–37; 17.11–19) and the promise of 1.8. **14:** *Jerusalem* is represented as coordinating the ever-growing church (see 11.1,22). **16–17:** *Spirit had not come,*



Chs 8–11: Sites of early Christian missionary activities

Spirit had not come[a] upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). 17 Then Peter and John[b] laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money! 21 You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness." 24 Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you[c] have said may happen to me."

25 Now after Peter and John[d] had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south[e] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.
33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth."

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"[f] 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip[g] baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he

[a] Gk *fallen*
[b] Gk *they*
[c] The Greek word for *you* and the verb *pray* are plural
[d] Gk *after they*
[e] Or *go at noon*
[f] Other ancient authorities add all or most of verse 37, *And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."*
[g] Gk *he*

see 2.38. *Laid . . . hands,* see 6.6n. **18–24:** The medieval term "simony" (buying church offices) is derived from this account. **27:** *An Ethiopian,* see Ps 68.31; Zeph 3.10. *The Candace* was the title of the *queen of the Ethiopians.* Although *he had come to Jerusalem to worship, a eunuch* could not have become a proselyte (Deut 23.1). The passage may envisage fulfillment of Isa 56.3–5. **28:** *He was reading* aloud to himself (as was customary in antiquity); hence Philip *heard him* (v. 30). **32–33:** Isa 53.7–8; see Acts 3.13n. **35:** Cf. Lk 24.27. **38:** As in the case of the Samaritans, the baptism of an Ethiopian eunuch breaks social and ritual barriers (v. 12n.). Since in the ancient Mediterranean world Ethiopia was often considered to be located at the "ends of the earth" (e.g., Homer, *Od.* 1.22–23; Herodotus 3.25), this conversion fulfills the prediction of 1.8. **39:** *The Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away,* cf. 1 Kings 18.12; 2 Kings 2.16. **40:** *Philip*'s evangelizing journey proceeds along the Mediterranean coast from Gaza (v. 26) through *Azotus* (ancient Ashdod, ca. 23 mi [37 km] north-northeast of Gaza) to *Caesarea* (ca. 55 mi [90 km] farther north). Caesarea was an important seaport and the headquarters of the Roman governor; see 10.1; 21.8.

proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

9 Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest [2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. [3] Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. [4] He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" [5] He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. [6] But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." [7] The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. [8] Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. [9] For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

[10] Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." [11] The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, [12] and he has seen in a vision[a] a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." [13] But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; [14] and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." [15] But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; [16] I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." [17] So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul[b] and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." [18] And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, [19] and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, [20] and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." [21] All who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem among those who invoked this name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" [22] Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus[c] was the Messiah.[d]

[23] After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, [24] but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *in a vision*
[b] Gk *him*
[c] Gk *that this*
[d] Or *the Christ*

9.1–19a: The conversion/call of Saul of Tarsus. Slightly different versions are found in 22.4–16; 26.9–18; Paul's own account is in Gal 1.13–17; see 1 Cor 15.8. Key narratives in Acts are stressed by repetition. **1–2:** Acts connects Paul with Jerusalem (7.58; 9.13,26), although Paul claimed he was unknown by sight in Judea (Gal 1.22–23). **2:** *The Way* seems to be Luke's term for Christianity (18.25–26; 19.9,23; 22.4; 24.14,22), but its origin is uncertain. The closest parallels can be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls; cf. Isa 40.3. **3–9:** The passage incorporates various features of theophanies (e.g., 2 Macc 3; Acts 2.2n.) and stories of the call of prophets (e.g., Isa 6.1–13). **4–5:** In persecuting the disciples, he persecuted *Jesus* (cf. Mt 25.40). **10:** *Ananias,* evidently one of the leaders of the believers at *Damascus* (see 22.12). Acts does not record how or when Christians first arrived in Damascus. **11:** *The street called Straight,* the principal east-west thoroughfare in Roman Damascus. *Tarsus,* see v. 30n. **13:** *Saints,* holy ones, i.e., Christians as sanctified by their faith (see 26.18). **15:** Saul, like the prophets, was chosen for a special purpose (Jer 1.5; Gal 1.15). **17:** *Laid his hands,* see 6.6n.

9.19b–31: Saul's preaching in Damascus and first visit to Jerusalem. 20: *Immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues,* this will be the consistent pattern followed by Paul in Acts; according to Paul himself, he went immediately to Arabia (Gal 1.17). *Son of God* occurs only here in Acts; cf. Gal 1.15–16. **24–25: According to** 2 Cor 11.32–33

day and night so that they might kill him;
25 but his disciples took him by night and let
him down through an opening in the wall,[a]
lowering him in a basket.

26 When he had come to Jerusalem, he
attempted to join the disciples; and they were
all afraid of him, for they did not believe that
he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him,
brought him to the apostles, and described
for them how on the road he had seen the
Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in
Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name
of Jesus. 28 So he went in and out among them
in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name
of the Lord. 29 He spoke and argued with the
Hellenists; but they were attempting to kill
him. 30 When the believers[b] learned of it, they
brought him down to Caesarea and sent him
off to Tarsus.

31 Meanwhile the church throughout Judea,
Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built
up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the
comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in
numbers.

32 Now as Peter went here and there among
all the believers,[c] he came down also to the
saints living in Lydda. 33 There he found a
man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden
for eight years, for he was paralyzed. 34 Peter
said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you;
get up and make your bed!" And immediately
he got up. 35 And all the residents of Lydda
and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple
whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is
Dorcas.[d] She was devoted to good works and
acts of charity. 37 At that time she became ill
and died. When they had washed her, they
laid her in a room upstairs. 38 Since Lydda
was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard
that Peter was there, sent two men to him
with the request, "Please come to us with-
out delay." 39 So Peter got up and went with
them; and when he arrived, they took him
to the room upstairs. All the widows stood
beside him, weeping and showing tunics and
other clothing that Dorcas had made while
she was with them. 40 Peter put all of them
outside, and then he knelt down and prayed.
He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get
up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing
Peter, she sat up. 41 He gave her his hand and
helped her up. Then calling the saints and
widows, he showed her to be alive. 42 This
became known throughout Joppa, and many
believed in the Lord. 43 Meanwhile he stayed
in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon,
a tanner.

10 In Caesarea there was a man named
Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian

[a] Gk *through the wall*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Gk *all of them*
[d] The name Tabitha in Aramaic and the name Dorcas in Greek mean *a gazelle*

Paul flees the governor of Damascus appointed by Aretas IV, king of the Nabateans. **26:** See vv. 1–2n. In Gal 1.18 Paul states that his first visit to Jerusalem was three years after his conversion. Luke associates Paul with Jerusalem from the beginning. **27–28:** *Barnabas* (see 4.36–37) intercedes with the *apostles* on Paul's behalf. Paul himself (Gal 1.18–19) claimed to have seen only Peter and James, the Lord's brother (not considered an apostle in Acts). **29:** Paul, from the Diaspora himself, contends with the *Hellenists,* namely, Stephen's Greek-speaking Jewish opponents (6.9–14). **30:** *Tarsus,* Paul's home city according to 21.39 and 22.3 (see 11.25; cf. Gal 1.21), was in Cilicia on the southern coast of Asia Minor. **31:** The familiar note of growth. The persecution of 8.1 has apparently passed. Here *church* moves beyond its usual meaning of a local community (see 5.11n.) to believers spread over a larger geographical area.

9.32–43: Peter in Lydda and Joppa. 32: *Lydda,* northwest of Jerusalem between Azotus and Caesarea (see 8.40n.), about 11 mi (17 km) southeast of Joppa (v. 36). There are already *believers* in both places, perhaps the result of Philip's activity (8.40). **34: Cf.** Lk 5.24–25. **35:** *Sharon,* the coastal plain between Joppa and Caesarea. **36–42:** Cf. Lk 8.41–42,49–56 (Mk 5.22–24,35–43); 2 Kings 4.33. **36:** *Joppa,* modern Jaffa, on the coast in the Plain of Sharon, ca. 30 mi (50 km) south of Caesarea. **39:** *Widows,* see 6.1; cf. 1 Tim 5.3–16. **43:** Peter's lodging with *a tanner,* who would be ritually unclean, may suggest preparation for his encounter with Cornelius.

10.1–48: The conversion of Cornelius. This key narrative in which the inclusion of Gentiles is directed by God is essentially repeated in 11.1–18 and referred to in significant terms at 15.7–9. Luke ascribes to Peter the

Cohort, as it was called. 2 He was a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God. 3 One afternoon at about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius." 4 He stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" He answered, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. 5 Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter; 6 he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside." 7 When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him, 8 and after telling them everything, he sent them to Joppa.

9 About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." 15 The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." 16 This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.

17 Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. 18 They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. 19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three[a] men are searching for you. 20 Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them." 21 So Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?" 22 They answered, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." 23 So Peter[b] invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers[c] from Joppa accompanied him. 24 The following day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshiped him. 26 But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up; I am only a mortal." 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; 28 and he said to them,

[a] One ancient authority reads *two*; others lack the word
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Gk *brothers*

honor of converting the first Gentile; but recall the Ethiopian (8.26–39) and see 11.19–21. **1:** *Caesarea,* see 8.40n. *A centurion,* an officer in the Roman army. Luke may want to show that Roman citizenship was compatible with Christianity (13.7n.; 16.37–38n.; 18.14–15n.; 22.25–29n.; 23.27–30n.; 25.8n.). On "friendly" centurions, see 27.3,43. **2:** Cornelius was *devout* and *feared God,* i.e., worshiped the Jewish God (see v. 22); although he had not adopted the Jewish religion (i.e., undergone circumcision), he practiced the characteristic acts of Jewish piety: almsgiving and prayer. The similar profile of the centurion in Lk 7.1–10 shows that Luke is particularly interested in Gentiles who practice Jewish piety (v. 35); this stance may represent that the Christian audience for whom Luke writes consider themselves in some sense "Jewish." **3:** *About three o'clock,* the time of afternoon prayer (3.1). Angels often appear in Acts in service of the divine will. **7:** *A devout soldier,* suggests that those with Cornelius share his piety (see 16.15n.,33). **9:** *Noon,* the usual Roman time for luncheon. **14:** *Profane,* only some animals might be eaten (Lev 11). **15:** In Mk 7.14–19 Jesus declared all foods clean, but this statement is not included in Luke's Gospel and Peter seems unaware of it. Some conditions regarding food will still apply at 15.20,29. **16:** *Three times,* for emphasis and warning. **19–20:** The *Spirit*'s message obliquely refers to Cornelius's vision and is reminiscent of the coordinated visions of Ananias and Paul in ch 9. **23:** *Invited them in,* Peter is willing to associate with Gentiles. **28:** *You yourselves know,* the audience is aware that association with Gentiles can be a cause

"You yourselves know that it is unlawful for
a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile;
but God has shown me that I should not call
anyone profane or unclean. 29 So when I was
sent for, I came without objection. Now may I
ask why you sent for me?"

30 Cornelius replied, "Four days ago at this
very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in
my house when suddenly a man in dazzling
clothes stood before me. 31 He said, 'Cor-
nelius, your prayer has been heard and your
alms have been remembered before God.
32 Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon,
who is called Peter; he is staying in the home
of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' 33 Therefore I
sent for you immediately, and you have been
kind enough to come. So now all of us are
here in the presence of God to listen to all
that the Lord has commanded you to say."

34 Then Peter began to speak to them: "I
truly understand that God shows no partial-
ity, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears
him and does what is right is acceptable to
him. 36 You know the message he sent to the
people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus
Christ—he is Lord of all. 37 That message
spread throughout Judea, beginning in Gali-
lee after the baptism that John announced:
38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with
the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went
about doing good and healing all who were
oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.
39 We are witnesses to all that he did both
in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to
death by hanging him on a tree; 40 but God
raised him on the third day and allowed him
to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us
who were chosen by God as witnesses, and
who ate and drank with him after he rose
from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach
to the people and to testify that he is the one
ordained by God as judge of the living and
the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him
that everyone who believes in him receives
forgiveness of sins through his name."

44 While Peter was still speaking, the Holy
Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. 45 The
circumcised believers who had come with
Peter were astounded that the gift of the
Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the
Gentiles, 46 for they heard them speaking in
tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said,
47 "Can anyone withhold the water for baptiz-
ing these people who have received the Holy
Spirit just as we have?" 48 So he ordered them
to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
Then they invited him to stay for several
days.

11 Now the apostles and the believers[a] who
were in Judea heard that the Gentiles
had also accepted the word of God. 2 So when
Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised
believers[b] criticized him, 3 saying, "Why did
you go to uncircumcised men and eat with
them?" 4 Then Peter began to explain it to
them, step by step, saying, 5 "I was in the city
of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vi-
sion. There was something like a large sheet
coming down from heaven, being lowered
by its four corners; and it came close to me.
6 As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed
animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds
of the air. 7 I also heard a voice saying to me,

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk lacks *believers*

of defilement for Jews (the centurion in Lk 7.6–7 seems to be sensitive to this). *But God has shown me,* Peter now understands the vision about food (vv. 11–17) to refer allegorically to people (i.e., defilement is no longer an issue). **34:** *No partiality,* lit., "God is no respecter of persons"; cf. Rom 2.10–11. **36–43:** A synopsis of Luke's Gospel. **36:** *Lord of all,* both Jews and Gentiles. **38:** *God anointed Jesus,* seems to refer to the baptism at Lk 3.22 (see also Lk 4.14); but note Lk 2.11; Acts 2.36n.; 3.20. **39:** *We are witnesses,* also v. 41, see 1.8n.; 1.21–22; *tree,* 5.30n. **41:** Jesus was seen only by those *chosen* (Lk 24.48; Acts 1.8,22). *Ate and drank with him,* 1.4n.; Lk 24.30–31,41–43. **42:** *Judge,* 17.31. **43:** *All the prophets,* Lk 24.25–27,44–47; *forgiveness of sins,* Lk 24.47; Acts 2.38; 13.26,39; *through his name,* 3.6. **44–48:** The *circumcised believers* knew by the *speaking in tongues* (2.4–11) that *the Holy Spirit* fell upon *the Gentiles* before baptism (see 2.38n.).

11.1–18: Peter's defense. The Jerusalem church requires an explanation for the baptism of Gentiles. **1:** News of the new development reaches Jerusalem, cf. 8.14; 11.22. **2:** Up to this point all believers were *circumcised* (see note *b*; at 10.45 the text says "circumcised believers," but the meaning is the same, as v. 18 makes clear). **3:** The question is framed in terms of association with Gentiles, not their entry into the church; cf. Gal 2.12. **4–17:** *Peter*

'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' [8] But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' [9] But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' [10] This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. [11] At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. [12] The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us.[a] These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. [13] He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; [14] he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' [15] And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. [16] And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' [17] If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" [18] When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

[19] Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they spoke the word to no one except Jews. [20] But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists[b] also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. [21] The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord. [22] News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. [23] When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; [24] for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord. [25] Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, [26] and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with[c] the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians."

[27] At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. [28] One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the

[a] Or *not to hesitate*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *Greeks*
[c] Or *were guests of*

answers by retelling 10.1–48 in abbreviated fashion. **12:** *Not to make a distinction,* clarifies "go . . . without hesitation" in 10.20. *Six,* replaces "some" in 10.23. **14:** Unlike 10.33, here it is made clear that Cornelius is expecting a *message* of salvation (4.12). **15:** See 2.1–4. **16:** See 1.5n. **17–18:** The "Gentile Pentecost" (v. 15; 10.47; 15.8) was an act of *God.* Although the issue of Gentile inclusion seems to be decisively settled, controversy will resurface in ch 15.

11.19–26: Mission to the Greeks in Antioch. The narrative now rejoins the mission initiated by the *persecution* following Stephen's death (8.1,4). **19:** *Antioch* on the Orontes River, capital of the Roman province of Syria, which included Galilee and Judea, and according to Josephus (*J.W.* 3.29), the third largest city (after Rome and Alexandria) in the Roman Empire. **20:** *Cyrene,* a great North African city (2.10; 6.9; 13.1; Lk 23.26), had a large Jewish colony. *Hellenists* (unlike 6.1 and 9.29) here apparently refers to non-Jewish, Greek-speaking residents of *Antioch.* **22–24:** *Barnabas* came from Cyprus (4.36), and there were Cypriots in Antioch (v. 20). He investigates and expresses approval over the latest developments on behalf of *Jerusalem* (cf. 8.14–17; 11.1–18). Compare his description (v. 24) with that of Stephen (6.5). **25–26:** *Saul* was in *Tarsus* (9.30), cf. Gal 1.21. An extended collaboration with Barnabas is initiated (see Gal 2.1,9,13; 1 Cor 9.6). *Christians,* a Latin word meaning "partisans of Christ," perhaps at first a term of reproach. It occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only at 26.28 and 1 Pet 4.16. It appears to be a term gaining currency in Luke's day that has been retrojected into the time portrayed by the narrative.

11.27–30: Antioch aids Jerusalem. 27: *Prophets* (13.1; 15.32) were numerous in the early church and in Acts characterize the last days (2.17–18). Here they predict the future (see 21.10). **28:** *Agabus,* 21.10–11. The *famine*

reign of Claudius. 29 The disciples determined
that according to their ability, each would
send relief to the believers[a] living in Judea;
30 this they did, sending it to the elders by
Barnabas and Saul.

12 About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged
to the church. 2 He had James, the brother
of John, killed with the sword. 3 After he saw
that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival
of Unleavened Bread.) 4 When he had seized
him, he put him in prison and handed him
over to four squads of soldiers to guard him,
intending to bring him out to the people after
the Passover. 5 While Peter was kept in prison,
the church prayed fervently to God for him.

6 The very night before Herod was going to
bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains,
was sleeping between two soldiers, while
guards in front of the door were keeping
watch over the prison. 7 Suddenly an angel
of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the
cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke
him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains
fell off his wrists. 8 The angel said to him,
"Fasten your belt and put on your sandals."
He did so. Then he said to him, "Wrap your
cloak around you and follow me." 9 Peter[b]
went out and followed him; he did not realize
that what was happening with the angel's
help was real; he thought he was seeing a
vision. 10 After they had passed the first and
the second guard, they came before the iron
gate leading into the city. It opened for them
of its own accord, and they went outside and
walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. 11 Then Peter came to himself and
said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent
his angel and rescued me from the hands of
Herod and from all that the Jewish people
were expecting."

12 As soon as he realized this, he went to
the house of Mary, the mother of John whose
other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. 13 When he knocked
at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came
to answer. 14 On recognizing Peter's voice, she
was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the
gate, she ran in and announced that Peter
was standing at the gate. 15 They said to her,
"You are out of your mind!" But she insisted
that it was so. They said, "It is his angel."
16 Meanwhile Peter continued knocking; and
when they opened the gate, they saw him and
were amazed. 17 He motioned to them with
his hand to be silent, and described for them
how the Lord had brought him out of the
prison. And he added, "Tell this to James and
to the believers."[a] Then he left and went to
another place.

18 When morning came, there was no small
commotion among the soldiers over what
had become of Peter. 19 When Herod had
searched for him and could not find him, he

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *He*

probably occurred in 47 CE; it was not worldwide (see Josephus, *Ant.* 20.51–53,101). The Roman emperor *Claudius* ruled 41–54 CE. **29:** The *relief* operation resembles the arrangements for Paul's collection (20.4n.; 1 Cor 16.2; 2 Cor 9.7); the days of selling all (2.44–45; 4.32–35) are gone. **30:** *Elders,* as Christian leaders are first mentioned here ("old men" in 2.17 translates the same Greek word); their emergence may reflect synagogue practice. According to Gal 2.1–10, Paul's second visit to Jerusalem coincided with the discussion narrated in Acts 15.1–29.

12.1–19: Persecution touches the apostles. 1: *Herod* Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, nephew of Herod Antipas (4.27; 13.1; the Herod of Luke's Gospel), was made king of Judea by Claudius in 41 CE. **2:** An apostle, *James* the son of Zebedee, is martyred. No replacement is made (cf. 1.15–26). **3:** *Peter,* like Jesus, is arrested at Passover season (v. 4), *the festival of Unleavened Bread* (v. 3). **4:** *Four squads of soldiers,* emphasizes the impossibility of escape (similarly v. 6). **6–11:** Cf. 5.17–23; 16.23–28. Miraculous escapes were a staple of ancient literature. **6:** *Bring him out,* for execution. **12:** *John . . . Mark* is connected with Peter elsewhere (1 Pet 5.13), and tradition credited him with authoring the second Gospel as Peter's interpreter (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15; 5.8.3). In 12.25–13.13 he travels with Paul and Barnabas. According to Col 4.10 he was Barnabas's cousin (see also Philem 24; 2 Tim 4.11). **13:** *Outer gate,* a significant house is suggested. **15:** A person's guardian *angel* (Mt 18.10) was thought to resemble the person protected. **17:** *James,* the brother of Jesus next in age (1.14n.), soon emerges as the leader of the Jerusalem church (15.13; see Gal 1.19; 2.12). Peter goes to *another place,* appearing one last time at the Jerusalem council (15.7–11).

examined the guards and ordered them to be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

20 Now Herod[a] was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. So they came to him in a body; and after winning over Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for a reconciliation, because their country depended on the king's country for food. 21 On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat on the platform, and delivered a public address to them. 22 The people kept shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a mortal!" 23 And immediately, because he had not given the glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

24 But the word of God continued to advance and gain adherents. 25 Then after completing their mission Barnabas and Saul returned to[b] Jerusalem and brought with them John, whose other name was Mark.

13 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler,[c] and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

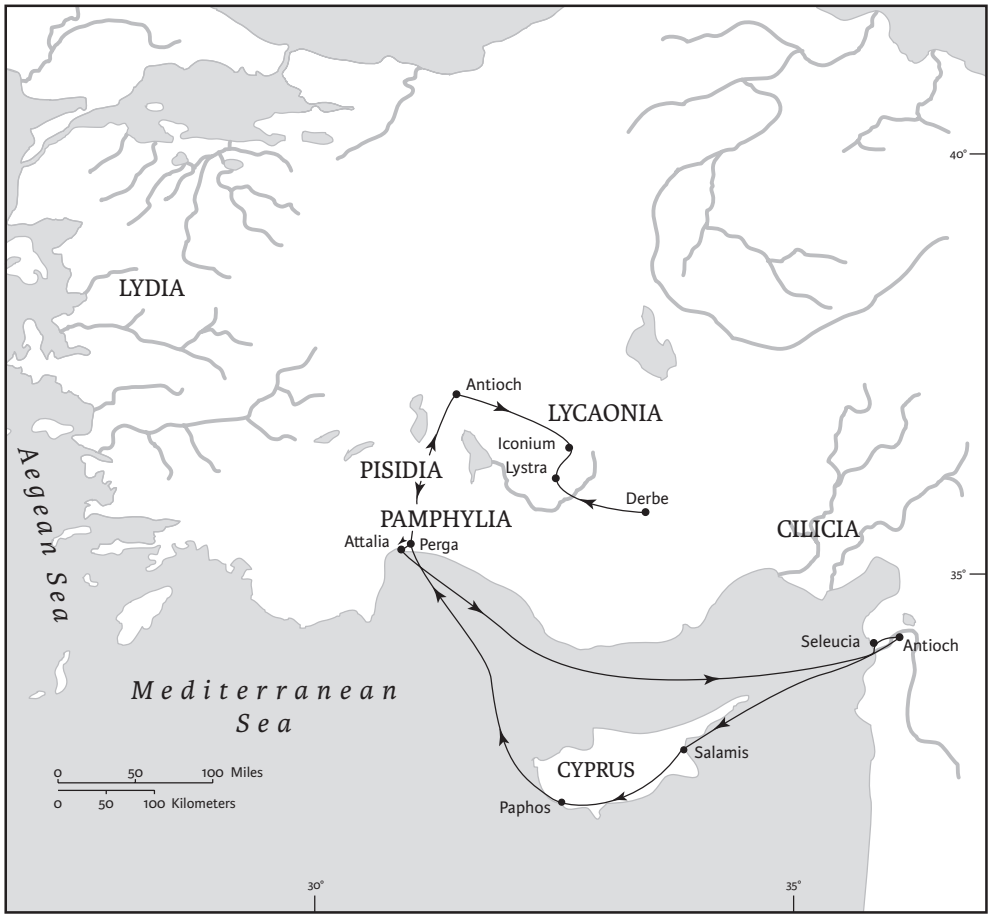
4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John also to assist them. 6 When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they met a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-Jesus. 7 He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But the magician Elymas (for that is the translation of his name) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? 11 And now listen—the hand of the Lord is against you, and you will be blind for a while, unable to see the sun." Immediately

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *from*
[c] Gk *tetrarch*

12.20–23: Death of Herod Agrippa. Josephus (*Ant.* 19.343–53) gives a somewhat similar account in which, after flatterers address Herod as a god, he is stricken by a fatal disease and dies after five days of pain—but he acknowledges the false title and accepts his fate. **23:** Herod's death in 44 CE occurred before the probable date of the famine mentioned at 11.28. *Died,* the Gk word here is used elsewhere in the New Testament only to describe the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (5.5,10).

12.24–13.3: Commission at Antioch. 12.24: The attack on the church's leaders fails to stem growth. **25:** *Barnabas and Saul returned* from *Jerusalem* to Antioch (see note *b*) after the relief visit (11.29–30). **13.1:** *Prophets and teachers* were important leaders in the early church (see 11.27n.; 1 Cor 12.28; Eph 4.11). *Manaen,* Gk form of Heb *Menahem*. *Herod the ruler,* Herod Antipas (4.27; Lk 3.19; 8.3; 9.7,9; 13.31; 23.7–15), not Herod Agrippa (12.1n.). **2:** As is usual in Acts *the Holy Spirit* initiates new developments. *Set apart,* cf. Rom 1.1; Gal 1.15. **3:** *Laid . . . hands,* see 6.6n.

13.4–12: Cyprus. 4: *Seleucia* Pieria, Antioch's seaport, about 12 mi (20 km) west at the mouth of the Orontes River. **5:** *Salamis,* important port and former capital city at the eastern end of Cyprus. *Synagogues,* there was a large Jewish population on Cyprus. According to Acts, Paul regularly begins mission work in a new place in the local synagogue (13.14; 14.1; 17.1,10,17; 18.4,19; 19.8; see 9.20n.; cf. Rom 1.16). *John,* see 12.12n. According to 11.19, missionaries had previously reached the island. **6:** *Paphos,* capital of Cyprus, located in the extreme west. *Magician,* see 8.9n. *Bar-Jesus,* "son of Jesus [or Joshua]." **7:** The island was a senatorial province ruled by a *proconsul. Sergius Paulus,* another Roman official favorable to Christianity (see 10.1n.). **8:** *Elymas* does not mean "Bar-Jesus." **9:** *Saul* was his Jewish name, used up to this point to stress his origin; *Paul* was his Roman name, the one he was generally known by, and is used from now on in Acts as missionary activity aims at both Jews and Gentiles. **10–11:** Compare Peter's rebuke of Simon (8.20–24).



Chs 13–14: First missionary journey of Paul

mist and darkness came over him, and he went about groping for someone to lead him by the hand. [12] When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

[13] Then Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem; [14] but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. [15] After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it." [16] So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak:

"You Israelites,[a] and others who fear God, listen. [17] The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the peo-

[a] Gk *Men, Israelites*

13.13–52: Journey to Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium. The focus now clearly shifts to Paul as his first work in inner Asia Minor is depicted. **13:** *Perga* is inland 8 mi (13 km) from Attalia (14.25), main seaport of *Pamphylia,* a small province south of the Taurus mountains, between Cilicia and Lycia. *John . . . left,* v. 5; see 15.38. **14:** *Antioch in Pisidia,* about 100 mi (160 km) north of Perga. *Synagogue,* v. 5n. **15:** One lesson each from *the law and the prophets* was customary. **16:** *Gesture,* an orator's move. *Others who fear God,* here and v. 26 is probably equivalent to "devout converts" to Judaism in v. 43 (where "convert" is the Gk word for proselyte; see 6.5n.). **17–25:** The survey of biblical history emphasizes the theme of fulfillment in the latter part of the speech (vv. 23,27,29,32,33). **18:**

ple great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. 18 For about forty years he put up with[a] them in the wilderness. 19 After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance 20 for about four hundred fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. 21 Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. 22 When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, 'I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.' 23 Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised; 24 before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John was finishing his work, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals[b] on his feet.'

26 "My brothers, you descendants of Abraham's family, and others who fear God, to us[c] the message of this salvation has been sent. 27 Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. 28 Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. 29 When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead; 31 and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. 32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm,

'You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.'

34 As to his raising him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

'I will give you the holy promises made to David.'

35 Therefore he has also said in another psalm,

'You will not let your Holy One experience corruption.'

36 For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died,[d] was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption; 37 but he whom God raised up experienced no corruption. 38 Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; 39 by this Jesus[e] everyone who believes is set free from all those sins[f] from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. 40 Beware, therefore, that what the prophets said does not happen to you:

[a] Other ancient authorities read *cared for*
[b] Gk *untie the sandals*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *you*
[d] Gk *fell asleep*
[e] Gk *this*
[f] Gk *all*

Context requires the reading *he put up with them in the wilderness* with Deut 1.31 (note *a*). **19:** *Seven nations,* Deut 7.1; Josh 3.10; 24.11. **20:** *Four hundred fifty years* from the entrance into Canaan to the building of the Temple may be an approximation. *Samuel,* 1 Sam 4.1. **21:** 1 Sam 8.5; 9.15–17. **22:** Ps 89.20; 1 Sam 13.14. **23:** *Posterity,* see Lk 3.31. *Savior,* see 5.31n. For the promise, see 2 Sam 7.12. **24:** Lk 3.3. **25:** The Baptist's emphatic denial here (cf. Lk 3.16; Mk 1.7; Mt 3.11; Jn 1.20) may be aimed at those who continued to be his disciples (18.25; 19.3). **26:** *Salvation,* 4.12; in vv. 38–39 it is forgiveness of sins (2.38; 10.43; Lk 24.47). **26–41:** For argument and style compare Peter's speeches in 2.14–36; 3.12–26; 10.34–43. **27:** *Did not recognize . . . or understand,* see 3.17. **28:** *No cause,* Lk 23.4,14–15,22,47. *Pilate,* 3.13n. **29:** *Tree,* 5.30n. **30:** The resurrection is the heart of the gospel in Acts (3.15; 4.10; 10.40. 13.37). **31:** *Witnesses,* 1.8n. **33:** Ps 2.7. *Raising Jesus,* here in the sense of bringing him on the scene (in contrast to v. 34; cf. 3.22,26). **34:** Isa 55.3. **35:** Ps 16.10 (see Acts 2.27). **38:** *Forgiveness of sins,* v. 26n. **39:** *Set free,* lit. "justified"; the only reference to justification by faith in Acts fittingly appears on Paul's lips even if the sense is not fully that found

41 'Look, you scoffers!
Be amazed and perish,
for in your days I am doing a work,
a work that you will never believe, even
if someone tells you.' "
42 As Paul and Barnabas[a] were going out,
the people urged them to speak about these
things again the next sabbath. 43 When the
meeting of the synagogue broke up, many
Jews and devout converts to Judaism fol-
lowed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them
and urged them to continue in the grace of
God.
44 The next sabbath almost the whole
city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.[b]
45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they
were filled with jealousy; and blaspheming,
they contradicted what was spoken by Paul.
46 Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out
boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the
word of God should be spoken first to you.
Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be
unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning
to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has com-
manded us, saying,
'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles,
so that you may bring salvation to the
ends of the earth.' "
48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were
glad and praised the word of the Lord; and as
many as had been destined for eternal life be-
came believers. 49 Thus the word of the Lord
spread throughout the region. 50 But the Jews
incited the devout women of high standing
and the leading men of the city, and stirred
up persecution against Paul and Barnabas,
and drove them out of their region. 51 So
they shook the dust off their feet in protest
against them, and went to Iconium. 52 And
the disciples were filled with joy and with the
Holy Spirit.

14 The same thing occurred in Iconium,
where Paul and Barnabas[a] went into
the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a
way that a great number of both Jews and
Greeks became believers. 2 But the unbe-
lieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and
poisoned their minds against the brothers.
3 So they remained for a long time, speak-
ing boldly for the Lord, who testified to
the word of his grace by granting signs and
wonders to be done through them. 4 But
the residents of the city were divided; some
sided with the Jews, and some with the
apostles. 5 And when an attempt was made
by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers,
to mistreat them and to stone them, 6 the
apostles[a] learned of it and fled to Lystra and
Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the sur-
rounding country; 7 and there they contin-
ued proclaiming the good news.
8 In Lystra there was a man sitting who
could not use his feet and had never walked,
for he had been crippled from birth. 9 He
listened to Paul as he was speaking. And
Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that
he had faith to be healed, 10 said in a loud
voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And the

[a] Gk *they*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *God*

in Paul's letters. **41:** Hab 1.5. **43:** *Devout converts to Judaism,* see v. 16n. 45: At the level of Luke's audience, *the Jews,* here and at other places in the narrative, may stand for "Jewish Christians" who opposed the relaxation of ritual practices promoted by Pauline and Lukan Christianity. **46:** The same dramatic announcement of turning to the *Gentiles* occurs in 18.5–6; 28.25–28. *Spoke out boldly,* 14.3; 18.26; 19.8; 26.26; see 4.13n. **47:** Isa 49.6; cf. Lk 2.32. **49:** A typical summary that makes it clear that Acts claims to be only a partial report of the spread of Christianity; cf. 9.10n. **50:** The scene depicted here (see 2 Tim 3.11) is repeated in subsequent accounts (see 14.2,19; 17.5,13). **51:** *They shook the dust off* (18.6) to show that their responsibility ended (Lk 9.5; 10.11; Mt 10.14). *Iconium,* modern Konya, ca. 75 mi (120 km) southeast of Antioch.

14.1–28: Ministry in the Iconium region and return to Antioch. 1: In spite of the announcement of 13.46, *Paul and Barnabas* again start at the *Jewish synagogue.* **2:** 13.50n. **4:** *The Jews,* see 13.45n. The Gk word *apostles* is used of Paul and Barnabas in Acts only here and in v. 14. Since the term otherwise is limited to the twelve, here the meaning may be "apostles (i.e., emissaries) of the church of Antioch," the church that sent them (13.2–3). **6:** *Lystra,* according to 16.1 the home of Timothy, was a Roman colony 24 mi (40 km) south-southwest of Iconium. *Derbe,* another town in Lycaonia 60 mi (96 km) southeast of Lystra. **7:** In Acts persecution always leads to new opportunities. **8–18:** Cf. 3.1–8. In this and other episodes in Acts Paul's words and actions parallel those of Peter

man[a] sprang up and began to walk. 11 When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city,[b] brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. 14 When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, 15 "Friends,[c] why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; 17 yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good—giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy." 18 Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

19 But Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. Then they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. 20 But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went into the city. The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 After they had proclaimed the good news to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch. 22 There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God." 23 And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

24 Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. 25 When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work[d] that they had completed. 27 When they arrived, they called the church together and related all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles. 28 And they stayed there with the disciples for some time.

15 Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. 3 So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Or *The priest of Zeus-Outside-the-City*
[c] Gk *Men*
[d] Or *committed in the grace of God to the work*

earlier. **11–12:** According to a myth of this region, the gods *Zeus* and *Hermes* visited Baucis and Philemon *in human form* and rewarded their hospitality (Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* 8.618–724). Paul, *the chief speaker,* was hailed as the messenger of the gods, not the chief god. **14:** *Apostles,* see 14.4n. *Tore their clothes,* a sign of horror and dismay at what they looked upon as blasphemy (cf. Mk 14.63). **15–17:** Cf. 17.22–31; 1 Thess 1.9–10. Paul (v. 15), like Peter (10.26), rejects worship of himself. **19:** 13.50n. Paul tells of receiving a stoning in 2 Cor 11.25; see 2 Tim 3.11. **20:** Perhaps a miraculous recovery. **23:** In Acts, Paul's churches are ruled by *elders* (cf. 20.17). Their presence may reflect conditions in Luke's day read back into the earlier period (see 15.2n.). The word is not used in Paul's own letters (but see 1 Tim 4.14; 5.17; Titus 1.5). See 11.30n. **25:** *Attalia,* the seaport of Perga (13.13n.). **26:** *Antioch,* their starting point for the *work* (13.2) now *completed.*

15.1–35: Jerusalem affirms the admission of Gentiles. 1: *Certain individuals,* cf. v. 5, Pharisees; Gal 2.4, "false believers." *Unless you are circumcised* and "keep the law" (v. 5), reopens issues seemingly settled with the approval of the "circumcised believers" (11.2n.,18) in 11.1–18. If the right of Gentile admission to the church was confirmed in ch 11, the present discussion may raise the issue of the conditions that might nevertheless apply. **2:** *Were appointed,* in Gal 2.2 Paul says he went "by revelation" (Gal 2.2). *Elders* (11.30n.; 14.23n.) now appear with the *apostles* (vv. 4,6,22,23; 16.4n.) as leaders of the Jerusalem church under James (vv. 13,19). Peter is the

great joy to all the believers.[a] 4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses."

6 The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. 7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers,[b] you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. 8 And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; 9 and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. 10 Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? 11 On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

12 The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 After they finished speaking, James replied, "My brothers,[b] listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. 15 This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written,

16 'After this I will return,
and I will rebuild the dwelling of David,
which has fallen;
from its ruins I will rebuild it,
and I will set it up,
17 so that all other peoples may seek the
Lord—
even all the Gentiles over whom my
name has been called.
Thus says the Lord, who has been
making these things 18 known
from long ago.'[c]

19 Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, 20 but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled[d] and from blood. 21 For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues."

22 Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *Men, brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *things.* [18]*Known to God from of old are all his works.*
[d] Other ancient authorities lack *and from whatever has been strangled*

only apostle named; the others function as a corporate symbol as they have throughout. **5:** In Acts *Pharisees* are portrayed as *believers* (26.5) or tolerant of Christianity (5.34), often in sharp contrast to Sadducees (4.1–2; 5.17; 23.6–9). **7–9:** Peter's second summary (see 11.1–18) of the events narrated in 10.1–48. *I should be the one,* contrast Gal 2.7–8. **10:** The *yoke* is that of the law (Lk 11.46); Paul's view (Rom 7.12; Phil 3.6) is different. **11:** Peter's words echo Paul's language (Rom 3.24). **12:** 14.27; 15.4. The contentious debate reported in Gal 2 is passed over in silence in Acts. **13:** *James,* see 12.17n. **14:** *Simeon,* the Semitic form of Peter's given name, emphasizing connections with Judaism even as the church is becoming a mixed group (v. 19) of Jews and Gentiles (see 14.1; 17.4,11–12; 18.4,8; 19.10). **16–18:** Am 9.11–12; Jer 12.15; Isa 45.21. **20:** *Things polluted by idols,* i.e., food sacrificed to them—prohibiting by extension idolatry itself (note Paul's more liberal stance in 1 Cor 10.27–29). *Whatever has been strangled,* i.e., meat not ritually butchered, which may mean the same thing as *blood,* although the latter could mean murder. Suggested backgrounds for the items included in the "apostolic decree" include the so-called Noachian precepts (regulations to be observed by all peoples; see Gen 9.4–6) and the regulations for Gentiles living among Jews in Lev 17–18. The list may have a more practical function (avoid non-kosher food and *fornication*) or stipulate matters beyond compromise (idolatry, murder, and incest). **21:** *Moses,* selections from the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), traditionally thought to have been written by Moses, *read aloud* in weekly Jewish services. The necessity of the decree (v. 20) is explained in terms of the pervasiveness of Jewish practices, which continued to be observed by Jewish Christians (cf. 21.20–25). **22:** *Silas* may be the Silvanus of

Chs 15–18: Second missionary journey of Paul

to choose men from among their members[a] and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, [23] with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers[b] of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. [24] Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds,[c] [25] we have decided unanimously to choose representatives[d] and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, [26] who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. [27] We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. [28] For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: [29] that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled[e] and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

[30] So they were sent off and went down to Antioch. When they gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. [31] When its members[f] read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. [32] Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers.[b] [33] After they had been there for some time, they were sent off in peace by the believers[b] to those who had sent them.[g] [35] But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and there, with many

[a] Gk *from among them*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *saying, 'You must be circumcised and keep the law'*
[d] Gk *men*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *and from what is strangled*
[f] Gk *When they*
[g] Other ancient authorities add verse 34, *But it seemed good to Silas to remain there*

2 Cor 1.19; 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1. He becomes a missionary companion of Paul at 15.40. **28:** *To the Holy Spirit and to us,* see 5.3n. *No further burden than these essentials,* cf. Gal 2.10. **32:** *Prophets,* 13.1n. **35:** 11.26; 14.28.

others, they taught and proclaimed the word of the Lord.

36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us return and visit the believers[a] in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. 39 The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. 40 But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers[a] commending him to the grace of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

16 Paul[b] went on also to Derbe and to Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the believers[a] in Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they went from town to town, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily.

6 They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; 8 so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *He*

15.36–16.5: Paul revisits the churches of the previous mission. 15.37–38: *John called Mark . . . had deserted,* see 12.12n.; 13.13. **39:** Compare the *disagreement* here over John *Mark* with the report in Gal 2.11–13 that Barnabas disagreed with Paul over the legitimacy of Jews and Gentiles eating together. According to Acts, this problem had already been dealt with in 10.1–11.18, although the apostolic decree (15.20,29) may have been intended to make such meals acceptable for Jewish Christians. Barnabas and Mark revisit *Cyprus* (13.4–12), which had been omitted on the return journey to Antioch described in 14.24–26. **40:** *Paul* now sets out as an "independent" missionary, accompanied by *Silas* (v. 22). Paul's ties with Antioch may have been strained at this point (see Gal 2.11–14). **16.1:** *Derbe and . . . Lystra,* 14.6n. *Timothy* (17.14–15; 18.5; 19.22; 20.4) was a more important companion of Paul than the picture in Acts suggests (see Rom 16.21; 1 Cor 16.10; 2 Cor 1.1,19; Phil 1.1; 1 Thess 1.1); he is referred to as Paul's "child in the Lord" at 1 Cor 4.17. The pseudonymous letters 1 and 2 Timothy are ostensibly addressed to him. Timothy's mother (see 2 Tim 1.5) is said to be *Jewish,* while his *father was a Greek.* **3:** That *Paul . . . had him circumcised* seems unimaginable in view of passages such as 1 Cor 7.18 and Gal 5.2. Paul stresses in Gal 2.3 that Titus "was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek." Timothy's case might be different because his mother was Jewish (v. 1), yet the principle of matrilineal descent (the ethnicity of the child is determined by the mother) does not appear to have been in effect at this time. Luke may have allowed his theme of Paul's faithfulness to the law in all respects (21.23–24; 22.3) to color the narrative here and refute the charge raised in 21.21 in advance. *Because of the Jews,* see 13.45n. **4:** *The decisions,* the apostolic decree of 15.20. *The apostles* are mentioned here for the last time—their era is now over.

16.6–10: Directed by the Spirit through Asia Minor to Troas. Journey through the interior to the Aegean Sea. **6:** *The region* is probably the country northwest of Iconium where both Phrygians and Galatians lived. *Asia,* the Roman province of that name in western Asia Minor (6.9). **7:** *Opposite Mysia,* a northwestern part of the province of Asia; *Bithynia* was to its east. *Spirit of Jesus,* equivalent to the Holy Spirit in v. 6. **8:** *Troas,* on the western coast of Mysia. **9:** *Macedonia,* a Roman province in Europe including the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroea. **10:** The "we" passages (16.10–17; 20.5–15; 21.1–18; 27.1–28.16; see Introduction) begin here and bring additional vividness to the story.

11 We set sail from Troas and took a straight
course to Samothrace, the following day to
Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, which
is a leading city of the district[a] of Macedonia
and a Roman colony. We remained in this city
for some days. 13 On the sabbath day we went
outside the gate by the river, where we sup-
posed there was a place of prayer; and we sat
down and spoke to the women who had gath-
ered there. 14 A certain woman named Lydia, a
worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was
from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in pur-
ple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen
eagerly to what was said by Paul. 15 When she
and her household were baptized, she urged
us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faith-
ful to the Lord, come and stay at my home."
And she prevailed upon us.

16 One day, as we were going to the place
of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit
of divination and brought her owners a great
deal of money by fortune-telling. 17 While
she followed Paul and us, she would cry out,
"These men are slaves of the Most High God,
who proclaim to you[b] a way of salvation."
18 She kept doing this for many days. But Paul,
very much annoyed, turned and said to the
spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ
to come out of her." And it came out that very
hour.

19 But when her owners saw that their hope
of making money was gone, they seized Paul
and Silas and dragged them into the market-
place before the authorities. 20 When they
had brought them before the magistrates,
they said, "These men are disturbing our city;
they are Jews 21 and are advocating customs
that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt
or observe." 22 The crowd joined in attacking
them, and the magistrates had them stripped
of their clothing and ordered them to be beat-
en with rods. 23 After they had given them a
severe flogging, they threw them into prison
and ordered the jailer to keep them securely.
24 Following these instructions, he put them
in the innermost cell and fastened their feet
in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were
praying and singing hymns to God, and the
prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly
there was an earthquake, so violent that the
foundations of the prison were shaken; and
immediately all the doors were opened and
everyone's chains were unfastened. 27 When
the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors
wide open, he drew his sword and was about
to kill himself, since he supposed that the
prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted in
a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we
are all here." 29 The jailer[c] called for lights,

[a] Other authorities read *a city of the first district*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *to us*
[c] Gk *He*

16.11–40: Paul and Silas in Philippi. 11: *Samothrace,* an island in the northern Aegean, midway between Troas and *Neapolis,* the seaport of Philippi. **12:** *Philippi* was *a leading city,* but not the capital, *of Macedonia.* It was populated by discharged soldiers who received grants of land and enjoyed the special civic rights that pertained to a *Roman colony* (freedom from taxation; Roman legal procedures). **13:** The Gk word normally rendered "prayer" in the New Testament can also mean *a place of prayer,* as here, which may or may not imply a building (synagogue). *By the river,* some evidence suggests that Diaspora synagogues were frequently located near water. As usual in Acts, Paul seeks out the Jewish community in a new place. **14:** *Worshiper of God,* the same word is used to describe proselytes in 13.43 but is applied to "women of high standing" in 13.50 in contradistinction to Jews. The term might simply describe *Lydia* as pious or suggest that she is attracted to Judaism. *Thyatira* (Rev 2.18–29), a city of Lydia, a region in western Asia Minor, was a center for the dyeing industry. **15:** *She and her household were baptized,* dependents followed the head of the household in religious matters (v. 31; 10.2; 1 Cor 1.16). **17:** In Lk 8.28 the Gerasene demoniac identifies Jesus as Son of *the Most High God.* The epithet is common for God in the Psalms of the Septuagint. The "we" passage (v. 10n.) stops here and resumes at 20.5. **19:** Acts frowns on *making money* by magical or supernatural means (see 8.18–24; 19.25n.). **20:** *Magistrates,* Gk "generals"; here probably not a military but a civic term (apparently to be distinguished from the "authorities," v. 19). **21:** It was *not lawful* for Jews to make converts of *Romans.* **22–23:** Cf. 2 Cor 11.23–25 ("imprisonments . . . floggings . . . beaten with rods"). **24:** The familiar motif of apparently escape-proof security (5.19–20; 12.6). **26:** *An earthquake,* here a supernatural event (see 4.31). *Doors* open and bonds are loosened for Dionysus in Euripides' *Bacchae* 447–48; see also Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.669–71. See 12.6–11n. **27:** *Drew his sword,* a Roman

and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 They spoke the word of the Lord[a] to him and to all who were in his house. 33 At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. 34 He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

35 When morning came, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." 36 And the jailer reported the message to Paul, saying, "The magistrates sent word to let you go; therefore come out now and go in peace." 37 But Paul replied, "They have beaten us in public, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves." 38 The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; 39 so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. 40 After leaving the prison they went to Lydia's home; and when they had seen and encouraged the brothers and sisters[b] there, they departed.

17 After Paul and Silas[c] had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah[d] to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This is the Messiah,[d] Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you." 4 Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5 But the Jews became jealous, and with the help of some ruffians in the marketplaces they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. While they were searching for Paul and Silas to bring them out to the assembly, they attacked Jason's house. 6 When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some believers[b] before the city authorities,[e] shouting, "These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus." 8 The people and the city officials were disturbed when they heard this, 9 and after they had taken bail from Jason and the others, they let them go.

10 That very night the believers[b] sent Paul and Silas off to Beroea; and when they arrived, they went to the Jewish synagogue. 11 These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the mes-

[a] Other ancient authorities read *word of God*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Gk *they*
[d] Or *the Christ*
[e] Gk *politarchs*

jailer whose prisoner escaped was liable to forfeit his life (cf. 12.19; 27.42). **30:** The question is elicited by the supernatural circumstances. **33:** The entire household is *baptized* (v. 15). **35:** *Police,* lictors, officials who enforced the decisions of a magistrate. **37–38:** With dramatic flair the reader suddenly learns that both *Paul* and Silas are *Roman citizens* protected by law against scourging (22.25; contrast 2 Cor 11.23–25). This surprising increase in Paul's credentials strongly endorses the theme of the compatibility of Christianity with Roman life (see 10.1n.; 13.7n.).

17.1–15: From Thessalonica to Athens. Paul founds churches in Thessalonica and Beroea. **1:** *Amphipolis and Apollonia* were on the Via Egnatia between Philippi and *Thessalonica* (modern Saloniki), capital of the second district of Macedonia. **2:** *His custom,* the pattern of starting a new mission in a synagogue (vv. 1,10,17) is explicitly stated (see 13.5n.; 14.1n.). **3:** See 3.18n. **4:** *Devout Greeks,* see 16.14n. *Leading women,* v. 12; contrast 13.50. **5:** *Jealous,* 13.45. On the typical nature of the scene, see 13.50n.; cf. 1 Thess 2.14–16. **6–7:** *City authorities,* i.e., politarchs, a Macedonian title for non-Roman magistrates. Serious charges of activities that threaten Roman order are made; cf. Lk 23.2. **9:** *Had taken bail from Jason,* had made him financially and legally responsible for future good behavior. **10:** *Beroea,* a city of Macedonia, 36 mi (58 km) west-southwest of Thessalonica. **11–12:** *Jews* and

sage very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed, including not a few Greek women and men of high standing. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Beroea as well, they came there too, to stir up and incite the crowds. 14 Then the believers[a] immediately sent Paul away to the coast, but Silas and Timothy remained behind. 15 Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and after receiving instructions to have Silas and Timothy join him as soon as possible, they left him.

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace[b] every day with those who happened to be there. 18 Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities." (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) 19 So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means." 21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

22 Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. 23 For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. 26 From one ancestor[c] he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27 so that they would search for God[d] and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. 28 For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said,

'For we too are his offspring.'

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Or *civic center*; Gk *agora*
[c] Gk *From one*; other ancient authorities read *From one blood*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*

Gentiles believe (15.14n.). *Greek women and men of high standing,* Christianity is attracting people with status (16.37–38n.). **14:** *To the coast,* where he would take a ship to Athens (v. 15).

17.16–34: Paul at Athens. Paul is portrayed as the first Christian philosopher, using Stoic and Jewish arguments. **16:** *Waiting . . . in Athens,* cf. 1 Thess 3.1–2. *Full of idols,* v. 22; cf. 1 Thess 1.9. **18:** *Epicurean and Stoic philosophers,* recognizable tenets from both groups are incorporated into Paul's speech in vv. 22–31. *Babbler,* a term of disparagement; the Gk word literally refers to birds "picking up seeds," and of persons "one who makes a living by picking up scraps" (here implied: "of learning"). *Jesus and* Anastasis (the Gk word for *resurrection*) are mistaken for two *foreign divinities.* **19:** *Took him,* could either imply arrest or friendly escort, and *Areopagus* could refer either to arraignment before the Council of the Areopagus (essentially the chief Roman court in Athens) or the Areopagus hill west of the Acropolis. The request *"May we know . . . ?"* suggests a more relaxed setting for discussion, though allusions to Socrates before the Areopagus court are surely intended (see v. 34). **21:** The curiosity of *the Athenians* was proverbial. **22–31:** Contrast the approach to Gentiles attributed to Paul in this speech with Rom 1.18–31. **22:** *Extremely religious,* can be taken in a good or bad sense. It connects to "idols" in v. 16 and leads to v. 23. **23:** *To an unknown god,* such an inscription has not been found in Athens to date; the plural form is attested. The scene intends to illustrate the anxiety of the "extremely religious" (v. 22) lest the honor due to any deity be inadvertently omitted and gives Paul an opening to *proclaim* the Christian message. **24–25:** *God* as the creator (14.15) is an idea common to Jews (Gen 1.1) and Greeks (e.g., Plato, *Timaeus*). *Shrines made by human hands,* 7.48n. **26:** *From one ancestor,* Adam. **27:** God created "all nations" (v. 26) to *search for God* (cf. 14.17). That God was near to all people was a Stoic belief. **28:** Although the first quotation is sometimes attributed to

29 Since we are God's offspring, we ought not
to think that the deity is like gold, or silver,
or stone, an image formed by the art and
imagination of mortals. 30 While God has
overlooked the times of human ignorance,
now he commands all people everywhere to
repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which
he will have the world judged in righteous-
ness by a man whom he has appointed, and
of this he has given assurance to all by raising
him from the dead."

32 When they heard of the resurrection
of the dead, some scoffed; but others said,
"We will hear you again about this." 33 At that
point Paul left them. 34 But some of them
joined him and became believers, includ-
ing Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman
named Damaris, and others with them.

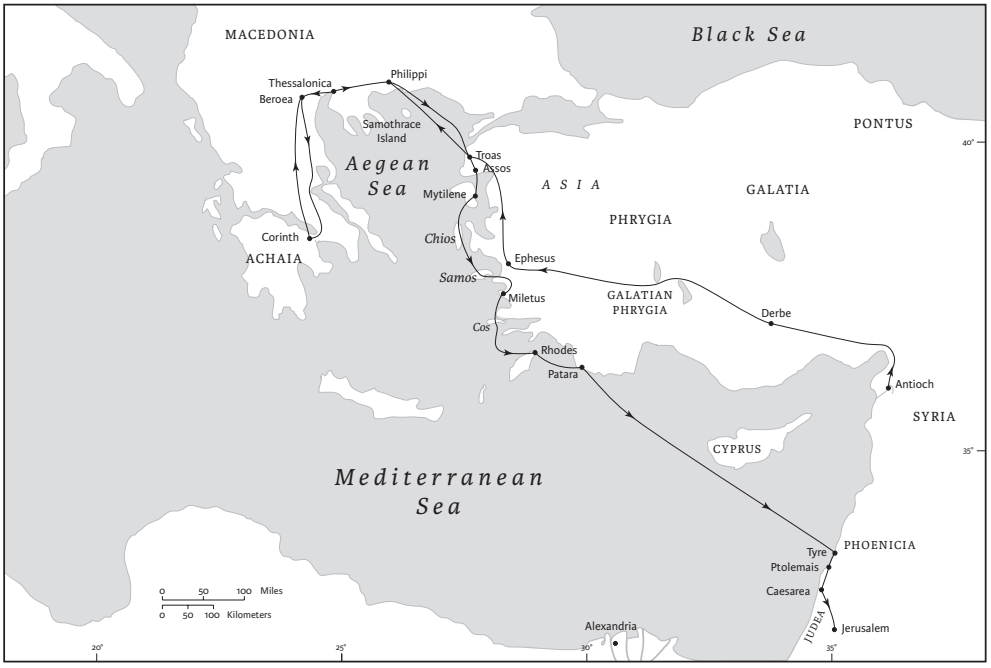
18 After this Paul[a] left Athens and went to
Corinth. 2 There he found a Jew named
Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently
come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, be-
cause Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave
Rome. Paul[b] went to see them, 3 and, because
he was of the same trade, he stayed with
them, and they worked together—by trade
they were tentmakers. 4 Every sabbath he
would argue in the synagogue and would try
to convince Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from
Macedonia, Paul was occupied with pro-
claiming the word,[c] testifying to the Jews that
the Messiah[d] was Jesus. 6 When they opposed
and reviled him, in protest he shook the dust
from his clothes[e] and said to them, "Your
blood be on your own heads! I am innocent.
From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 Then
he left the synagogue[f] and went to the house
of a man named Titius[g] Justus, a worshiper of
God; his house was next door to the syna-
gogue. 8 Crispus, the official of the synagogue,
became a believer in the Lord, together with
all his household; and many of the Corinthi-
ans who heard Paul became believers and
were baptized. 9 One night the Lord said to
Paul in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak
and do not be silent; 10 for I am with you,
and no one will lay a hand on you to harm
you, for there are many in this city who are
my people." 11 He stayed there a year and six

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Gk *He*
[c] Gk *with the word*
[d] Or *the Christ*
[e] Gk *reviled him, he shook out his clothes*
[f] Gk *left there*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *Titus*

Epimenides, its language is probably to be associated with Posidonius (based on Plato); the second quotation is from Aratus (*Phaenomena* 5), a Greek poet of Cilicia educated as a Stoic. In Paul's usage the original pantheistic sense of both "quotations" is reinterpreted. **30:** *Ignorance,* cf. 14.16. **31:** That the *world* will be *judged* (10.42) . . . *by a man,* i.e., Jesus (2.22,36), *appointed* by God has been guaranteed by the resurrection. **32:** *Some scoffed,* Greek thought made no provision for resurrection of the body (e.g., Aeschylus, *Eumenides,* 647–648; cf. 1 Cor 15.12,35), *but others* were intrigued. **34:** The conversion of *Dionysius,* a member of the Areopagus court, contributes to the theme of rulers attracted to Christianity. The note about *Damaris* conforms to a pattern found in both the Gospel (e.g., Lk 15.3–10) and Acts (e.g., 5.1–11) of juxtaposing characters of both genders.

18.1–17: Paul in Corinth. See 1 Cor 1–4 for Paul's own account. **1:** *Corinth,* the old city was famous but was razed in 146 BCE by the Romans. It was refounded as a colony in 44 BCE by Julius Caesar, became the capital of the senatorial province of Achaia in 27 BCE, and quickly emerged as an important commercial center owing to its location on the isthmus linking the Peloponnesus to mainland Greece with neighboring seaports to the east and west. **2:** *Pontus,* a Roman province of Asia Minor on the Black Sea. An edict issued by the emperor *Claudius* (see Suetonius, *Claudius* 25) expelling the *Jews* from *Rome* can probably be dated to 49 CE; this verse might suggest that the expulsion targeted Jews proselytizing on behalf of Christ (see 13.35n.). *Aquila* and *Priscilla* (or Prisca) worked with Paul, according to Rom 16.3–5. The fact that a church met in their house (Rom 16.5; 1 Cor 16.19) suggests that they were wealthy. In the epistles (including 2 Tim 4.19) their names appear in reverse order. **3:** *Same trade . . . tentmakers,* see 20.34. *He stayed with them,* possibly "lodged with them." **4:** *Synagogue,* 13.5n.; *Jews and Greeks,* 15.14n. **6:** 13.46n.,51n. *Your blood . . . ,* 2 Sam 1.16; Mt 27.25. **7:** *Worshiper of God,* 16.14n. **8:** *Crispus,* his baptism by Paul is mentioned as an exceptional case in 1 Cor 1.14. The conversion of the *official of the synagogue* (i.e., president; see 13.15) and his *household* (16.15n.) illustrates the continued success of Paul's mission among Jews (in spite of v. 6) in addition to Gentiles (*many of the Corinthians . . . became believers*). **9–10:** Cf. Isa 41.10; 43.5;



Chs 18–21: Third missionary journey of Paul

months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal. 13 They said, "This man is persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to the law." 14 Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of crime or serious villainy, I would be justified in accepting the complaint of you Jews; 15 but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I do not wish to be a judge of these matters." 16 And he dismissed them from the tribunal.

17 Then all of them[a] seized Sosthenes, the official of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of these things.

18 After staying there for a considerable time, Paul said farewell to the believers[b] and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut, for he was under a vow. 19 When they reached Ephesus, he left them there, but first he himself went into the synagogue and had a discussion with the Jews. 20 When they asked

[a] Other ancient authorities read *all the Greeks*
[b] Gk *brothers*

Jer 1.8.**12:** L. Junius *Gallio,* older brother of the Roman philosopher Seneca, *proconsul of Achaia* about 52 CE. The dating of Gallio's proconsulship is crucial for chronological reconstructions of Paul's career. *The Jews,* see 13.45n. **13:** *The law,* could mean the Jewish law (as Gallio takes it in v. 15) or Roman law, i.e., charges of sedition similar to the complaints raised in 16.21 and 17.7 (the latter would make more sense to present before a proconsul). **14–15:** *Gallio* again voices one of the subthemes of the book: Christianity is not a cause of concern for Rome. Roman representatives tend to be either outwardly favorable, such as Cornelius (ch 10) and Sergius Paulus (13.7–12, or at worst indifferent to Christianity, suggesting that it need not be viewed as incompatible with Rome (see 10.1n.). **17:** *Sosthenes* may be the one mentioned in 1 Cor 1.1, but the name is common.

18.18–23: End of the second missionary journey and beginning of the third. Paul returns to Antioch and goes back to Asia Minor. **18:** Paul *had his hair cut* as a temporary nazirite *vow* (21.23–24; Num 6.1–21), but the rule was to cut the hair off at the end of the vow. *Cenchreae,* the eastern port of Corinth (Rom 16.1). **19:** *Ephesus,* on

him to stay longer, he declined; 21 but on taking leave of them, he said, "I[a] will return to you, if God wills." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem[b] and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. 23 After spending some time there he departed and went from place to place through the region of Galatia[c] and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

24 Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately. 27 And when he wished to cross over to Achaia, the believers[d] encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. On his arrival he greatly helped those who through grace had become believers, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Messiah[e] is Jesus.

19 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. 2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." 4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— 7 altogether there were about twelve of them.

8 He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. 9 When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.[f] 10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

11 God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 12 so that when the handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, their diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them. 13 Then some itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus

[a] Other ancient authorities read *I must at all costs keep the approaching festival in Jerusalem, but I*
[b] Gk *went up*
[c] Gk *the Galatian region*
[d] Gk *brothers*
[e] Or *the Christ*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *of a certain Tyrannus, from eleven o'clock in the morning to four in the afternoon*

the Aegean coast, was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. **22:** *Caesarea,* see 8.40n. *Jerusalem* still appears as the mother church. *Antioch,* see 11.19n. **23:** *The region of Galatia and Phrygia,* see 16.6n.

18.24–28: Apollos in Ephesus. **25:** *The Way,* see 9.2n. Although he *taught accurately,* he had not received Christian baptism (13.25n.). **26:** *Speak boldly,* 13.46n. It is not disclosed in what sense things were *explained . . . more accurately.* **27–28:** For Apollos's activity in Corinth, see 1 Cor 1.12; 3.1–9,21–23.

19.1–41: Paul's long ministry in Ephesus. Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians during the period of more than two years (v. 10; cf. 20.31) portrayed here. **1:** *The interior regions* of Asia Minor (18.23). *Disciples* elsewhere in Acts means Christians. **2:** All who read the Jewish scriptures would know of *a Holy Spirit* (Ps 51.11; Isa 63.10,11). The reference may be to outward signs of the Spirit's presence (v. 6; 10.44–48n.). **3:** *John's baptism,* 13.25n. **5–6:** See 6.6n.; 8.17. **8:** *Synagogue,* 13.5n. *Kingdom of God,* 1.3n. **9:** *The Way,* v. 23; see 9.2n. *Tyrannus,* perhaps a local philosopher; the name appears in inscriptions in Ephesus. The hours mentioned in note *a* suggest the building was available to Paul during siesta time. **10:** During Paul's stay of *two years . . . all the residents of Asia* heard the word (note the churches of Rev 2–3). The mixed character of the audience (*Jews and Greeks*) continues to be noted (15.14n.). **12:** Compare 5.15; on parallels between Peter and Paul, see 14.8–18n. **13:** For *Jewish exorcists,* see

whom Paul proclaims." 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. 15 But the evil spirit said to them in reply, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered them all, and so overpowered them that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. 17 When this became known to all residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, everyone was awestruck; and the name of the Lord Jesus was praised. 18 Also many of those who became believers confessed and disclosed their practices. 19 A number of those who practiced magic collected their books and burned them publicly; when the value of these books[a] was calculated, it was found to come to fifty thousand silver coins. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

21 Now after these things had been accomplished, Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, "After I have gone there, I must also see Rome." 22 So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he himself stayed for some time longer in Asia.

23 About that time no little disturbance broke out concerning the Way. 24 A man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the artisans. 25 These he gathered together, with the workers of the same trade, and said, "Men, you know that we get our wealth from this business. 26 You also see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost the whole of Asia this Paul has persuaded and drawn away a considerable number of people by saying that gods made with hands are not gods. 27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be scorned, and she will be deprived of her majesty that brought all Asia and the world to worship her."

28 When they heard this, they were enraged and shouted, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 The city was filled with the confusion; and people[b] rushed together to the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's travel companions. 30 Paul wished to go into the crowd, but the disciples would not let him; 31 even some officials of the province of Asia,[c] who were friendly to him, sent him a message urging him not to venture into the theater. 32 Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing, some another; for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd gave instructions to Alexander, whom the Jews had pushed forward. And Alexander motioned for silence and tried to make a defense before the people. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours all of them shouted in unison, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 35 But when the

[a] Gk *them*
[b] Gk *they*
[c] Gk *some of the Asiarchs*

Lk 11.19. For use of the *name* outside the circle of Jesus, see Mk 9.38–39. **14:** *Sceva,* a high priest by this name is not known. **15–16:** The story makes it clear that the name (v. 17; 3.6n.) does not belong to the realm of magic. On a number of occasions Acts attempts to distinguish Christian miracle working from the activities of religious charlatans and profiteers (8.18–24; 13.6–12; 16.16–19). **19:** Ephesus was such a noted center of *magic* that magical books were often called "Ephesian Scripts." **21:** *Must . . . see Rome,* 23.11; 27.24; cf. Rom 1.13–15; 15.22–29. **22:** A city treasurer named *Erastus* is mentioned at Rom 16.23; the city of his office is not named, but the letter to the Romans was likely written in Corinth; the name also appears at 2 Tim 4.20. A Corinthian inscription mentions a Roman official (an aedile) by this name. **24:** *Shrines,* apparently miniature temples for use in religious ceremonies or as souvenirs or amulets. *Artemis,* chief divinity of Ephesus; her temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. **25:** *Wealth,* the story joins others in which gain by religious means is criticized (see vv. 15–16n.). **26:** See 17.24. **29:** The *theater* has been excavated and could seat at least 24,000. *Gaius and Aristarchus,* see 20.4n. **31:** *Asiarchs* (in note *c*) held office in a league of the cities of Asia and promoted the worship of the emperor. They were *friendly to* Paul and so portray again the favorable disposition of high officials toward Christianity. Such acceptance by high-status individuals suggested to Luke's readers that social respectability was not beyond their grasp (16.37–38n.). **35:** *Temple keeper,* a designation assumed by Asiatic cities that had built a

town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Citizens of Ephesus, who is there that does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper of the great Artemis and of the statue that fell from heaven?[a] 36 Since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. 37 You have brought these men here who are neither temple robbers nor blasphemers of our[b] goddess. 38 If therefore Demetrius and the artisans with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges there against one another. 39 If there is anything further[c] you want to know, it must be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." 41 When he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

20 After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples; and after encouraging them and saying farewell, he left for Macedonia. 2 When he had gone through those regions and had given the believers[d] much encouragement, he came to Greece, 3 where he stayed for three months. He was about to set sail for Syria when a plot was made against him by the Jews, and so he decided to return through Macedonia. 4 He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Beroea, by Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, by Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia. 5 They went ahead and were waiting for us in Troas; 6 but we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we joined them in Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

7 On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were meeting. 9 A young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead. 10 But Paul went down, and bending over him took him in his arms, and said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." 11 Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left. 12 Meanwhile they had taken the boy away alive and were not a little comforted.

13 We went ahead to the ship and set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul on board there; for he had made this arrangement, intending to go by land himself. 14 When he met us in Assos, we took him on board and went

[a] Meaning of Gk uncertain
[b] Other ancient authorities read *your*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *about other matters*
[d] Gk *given them*

temple in honor of their patron god or the emperor. *The statue that fell from heaven,* apparently a meteorite. **36–40:** An argument that Christians were entitled to due process and that the actions taken thus far were unwarranted is put into the mouth of the town clerk.

20.1–6: The last visit to Greece. 2: *Through those regions,* revisiting the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Beroea (see 19.21). **3:** *Three months,* at Corinth (see 2 Cor 12.14; 13.1; the problems evident in 2 Corinthians are not mentioned). *A plot . . . by the Jews,* 9.24; 20.19; 23.12. **4:** Paul's companions seem to be local representatives of churches that have contributed to the collection for Jerusalem organized by Paul (see 11.29n.) who are traveling with him to deliver it (Rom 15.25–29; 1 Cor 16.3–4). Apart from 24.17 there is no hint of this major project of Paul's in Acts. *Sopater,* perhaps the Sosipater of Rom 16.21. *Aristarchus,* 19.29; 27.2 (Col 4.10; Philem 24). A *Gaius* from Macedonia is mentioned in 19.29 (cf. Rom 16.23; 1 Cor 1.14), but Derbe is in the same region as *Timothy*'s home (Lystra, see 16.1). *Tychicus,* Eph 6.21; Col 4.7; 2 Tim 4.12; Titus 3.12. *Trophimus,* 2 Tim 4.20. **5:** The "we" passages (16.10n.) resume here at Philippi, the city where the previous passage ended (16.17). **6:** *Days of Unleavened Bread,* 12.3n.

20.7–38: The raising of Eutychus and the speech to the Ephesian elders. 7: *The first day of the week,* Sunday. *Break bread,* see 2.42n.; 27.36–37. **9:** *Eutychus,* a not uncommon name meaning "fortunate." *Three floors,* a tenement-style building is pictured. **10:** An understated miraculous resurrection (cf. 14.19–20). **13:** *Assos,* a port town on the coast, southwest of Troas, opposite the northern end of the island of Lesbos. **14:** *Mitylene,* capital

to Mitylene. 15 We sailed from there, and on the following day we arrived opposite Chios. The next day we touched at Samos, and[a] the day after that we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; he was eager to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

17 From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. 18 When they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears, enduring the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. 20 I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21 as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus. 22 And now, as a captive to the Spirit,[b] I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. 24 But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace.

25 "And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again. 26 Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God[c] that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.[d] 29 I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. 34 You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. 35 In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

36 When he had finished speaking, he knelt down with them all and prayed. 37 There was much weeping among them all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, 38 grieving especially because of what he had said, that they would not see him again. Then they brought him to the ship.

[a] Other ancient authorities add *after remaining at Trogyllium*
[b] Or *And now, bound in the spirit*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *of the Lord*
[d] Or *with his own blood*; Gk *with the blood of his Own*

city of Lesbos. **15:** *Chios,* an island south of Lesbos. *Samos,* an island southwest of Chios. *Miletus,* an important port on the western coast of Asia Minor at the mouth of the Meander River. The "we" passages resume again at 21.1. **16:** *Sail past Ephesus,* while on route from Chios to Samos. *Pentecost,* see 2.1–41n. **17:** *Elders,* 14.23n. **18–35:** Paul's "farewell" address, the only speech in Acts explicitly addressed to Christians. It reviews Paul's accomplishments as depicted in Acts and looks forward to paint a picture of the church in Luke's day. **21:** Paul's mission has been consistently portrayed as directed to both *Jews and Greeks.* **24–25:** *Finish my course . . . testify,* a premonition of martyrdom (2 Tim 4.6). **27:** *Purpose of God,* cf. 2.23; 4.28; 5.38–39; 13.36. **28:** *Overseers* (Gk "episkopoi"), used to designate officials in secular institutions; here it indicates those described as elders in v. 17. *Shepherd,* an image for leadership both in the Hebrew Bible (Jer 3.15; 23.1–4; Ezek 34.1–24) and in nonbiblical writings that also appears in the New Testament (Jn 21.15–17; Eph 4.11, "pastors"). In 1 Pet 5.1–4 elders are exhorted to "tend the flock of God." *With his own blood* (note *d*), understanding Jesus as a representative of God. *Church* has universal overtones; see 5.11n. Elsewhere in Luke-Acts, emphasis is placed on the resurrection, not the redemptive death of Christ. **29–30:** Mt 7.15; Mk 13.22. **34:** 18.3; 1 Cor 9.1–18. **35:** A saying of *Jesus* not found in the Gospels.

21 When we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara.[a] [2] When we found a ship bound for Phoenicia, we went on board and set sail. [3] We came in sight of Cyprus; and leaving it on our left, we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, because the ship was to unload its cargo there. [4] We looked up the disciples and stayed there for seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. [5] When our days there were ended, we left and proceeded on our journey; and all of them, with wives and children, escorted us outside the city. There we knelt down on the beach and prayed [6] and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

[7] When we had finished[b] the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we greeted the believers[c] and stayed with them for one day. [8] The next day we left and came to Caesarea; and we went into the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven, and stayed with him. [9] He had four unmarried daughters[d] who had the gift of prophecy. [10] While we were staying there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. [11] He came to us and took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' " [12] When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. [13] Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." [14] Since he would not be persuaded, we remained silent except to say, "The Lord's will be done."

[15] After these days we got ready and started to go up to Jerusalem. [16] Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came along and brought us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to stay.

[17] When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us warmly. [18] The next day Paul went with us to visit James; and all the elders were present. [19] After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. [20] When they heard it, they praised God. Then they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. [21] They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. [22] What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. [23] So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. [24] Join these men, go through the rite of purification with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself observe

[a] Other ancient authorities add *and Myra*
[b] Or *continued*
[c] Gk *brothers*
[d] Gk *four daughters, virgins,*

21.1–16: Journey to Jerusalem. 1: The "we" passages (16.10n.) resume. *Cos,* an island off the southwestern coast of Asia Minor. **4:** V. 12; 20.23. **7:** *Ptolemais,* a port town in Phoenicia (modern Akko, near Haifa), 22 mi (35 km) south of Tyre. **8:** *Philip the evangelist* (8.5n.) had arrived in *Caesarea* (8.40n.) some time before. *One of the seven,* see 6.1–7. **9:** Philip's *daughters* became important figures in the church traditions of Hierapolis and Ephesus. **10–11:** *Agabus* (11.28), like Hebrew prophets (1 Kings 11.29–32; Isa 20.2–6), performs a symbolic act. The prediction is not strictly fulfilled in the chapters that follow. **12:** V. 4. **14:** Paul appears as a heroic figure, cf. Lk 22.42. **16:** *An early disciple,* note Christianity in connection with *Cyprus* at 4.36; 11.19–20; 13.4–12.

21.17–26: Paul's observance of Jewish tradition. 17–20: The *Jerusalem* church accepts Paul and his accomplishments as complementary to their own in a harmonious portrait of unity (cf. Gal 2). **18:** *James,* see 12.17n.; *the elders,* 11.30n. The "we" passage stops here. **20:** *Thousands of believers,* Acts represents the success of Christianity among *Jews* as phenomenal (cf. 6.7). *Zealous for the law,* see 11.2n.; 15.1n., 15.5n.; cf. Gal 2. **21:** *Moses,* see 15.21n. The charge has been anticipated (16.3n.). The informants are not identified (see v. 28). **23–24:** Paul can demonstrate his faithfulness to the law by undergoing *purification* for uncleanness with some others and paying the

and guard the law. 25 But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled[a] and from fornication." 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having purified himself, he entered the temple with them, making public the completion of the days of purification when the sacrifice would be made for each of them.

27 When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, who had seen him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd. They seized him, 28 shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place; more than that, he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." 29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. 30 Then all the city was aroused, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. 31 While they were trying to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 Immediately he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. When they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the tribune came, arrested him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; he inquired who he was and what he had done. 34 Some in the crowd shouted one thing, some another; and as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. 35 When Paul[b] came to the steps, the violence of the mob was so great that he had to be carried by the soldiers. 36 The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Away with him!"

37 Just as Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, "May I say something to you?" The tribune[c] replied, "Do you know Greek? 38 Then you are not the Egyptian who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?" 39 Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city; I beg you, let me speak to the people." 40 When he had given him permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the people for silence; and when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew[d] language, saying:

22 "Brothers and fathers, listen to the defense that I now make before you."

2 When they heard him addressing them in Hebrew,[d] they became even more quiet. Then he said:

3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *and from what is strangled*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Gk *He*
[d] That is, *Aramaic*

expenses upon their release from a nazirite *vow* (18.18n.). **25:** He is told of the decree (15.20, 29) as though he had not heard of it (see 16.4); Paul's letters never mention the decree.

21.27–40: Uproar in the Temple and arrest of Paul. Seized after a disturbance in the Temple, Paul begins his defense. **28:** It was a capital offense for non-Jews to pass beyond the Court of the Gentiles; an inscription stating this has been discovered (cf. Josephus, *J.W.* 5.193–94; 6.125–26). **29:** *Trophimus,* 20.4; 2 Tim 4.20. **31:** A military *tribune* commanded a *cohort* (a detachment of 1,000 men); this would have been stationed in the citadel Antonia, which had access to the Temple courtyard (see Josephus, *J.W.* 5.244). The tribune's name was Claudius Lysias (23.26). **33:** Paul's case came into the hands of Roman, not Jewish, authorities. **36:** *Away with him,* 22.22; cf. Lk 23.18. **38:** The question in Greek may be: "Are you not the Egyptian?" Concerning *the Egyptian,* a pseudo-messiah who, with thousands of followers, had planned to take Jerusalem from the Romans, see Josephus, *J.W.* 2.261–63 (which puts the number at about 30,000); *Ant.* 20.169–72. **39:** *Paul* gives assurances that he is not the Egyptian. *Tarsus,* 9.30n.

22.1–29: Defense in the Temple and Roman custody. 1: *Defense* is the principal theme of the next chapters (24.10; 25.8,16; 26.1–2). It has a clear function at the level of the narrative and also allows Luke to endorse Paul for readers who may have had questions about him. **3:** *Brought up,* educated. *Gamaliel,* see 5.34n. *Zealous,* 21.20;

law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. 4 I persecuted this Way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I went there in order to bind those who were there and to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment.

6 "While I was on my way and approaching Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' 8 I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' Then he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth[a] whom you are persecuting.' 9 Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 10 I asked, 'What am I to do, Lord?' The Lord said to me, 'Get up and go to Damascus; there you will be told everything that has been assigned to you to do.' 11 Since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, those who were with me took my hand and led me to Damascus.

12 "A certain Ananias, who was a devout man according to the law and well spoken of by all the Jews living there, 13 came to me; and standing beside me, he said, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight!' In that very hour I regained my sight and saw him. 14 Then he said, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice; 15 for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.'

17 "After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and saw Jesus[b] saying to me, 'Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' 19 And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20 And while the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing by, approving and keeping the coats of those who killed him.' 21 Then he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' "

22 Up to this point they listened to him, but then they shouted, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live." 23 And while they were shouting, throwing off their cloaks, and tossing dust into the air, 24 the tribune directed that he was to be brought into the barracks, and ordered him to be examined by flogging, to find out the reason for this outcry against him. 25 But when they had tied him up with thongs,[c] Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who is uncondemned?" 26 When the centurion heard that, he went to the tribune and said to him, "What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen." 27 The tribune came and asked Paul,[b] "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." 28 The tribune answered, "It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship." Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." 29 Immediately those who were about to examine him drew back from him; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

[a] Gk *the Nazorean*
[b] Gk *him*
[c] Or *up for the lashes*

in Gal 1.14 as a self-description of Paul. **4–21:** Cf. 9.1–18; 26.9–18. **9:** In 9.7 the companions heard the voice but saw no one. **14–15:** What Ananias says here is roughly parallel to what the Lord tells him in 9.15. **17–21:** The report of the vision is not given in the other conversion accounts. Paul's commission to the Gentiles is significantly located in the *temple.* **20:** See 7.58. **24:** *Examined by flogging* to determine the truth of the matter (2 Cor 11.23). **25–29:** That Paul is *a Roman citizen* is disclosed at the last moment; see 16.37–38n. In the early part of the emperor Claudius's reign *citizenship* was often purchased for *a large sum.* The scene increases Paul's status for readers of Acts and reinforces the theme of the compatibility of Christianity and Roman life; nowhere in Paul's letters is it stated that he was a Roman citizen.

30 Since he wanted to find out what Paul[a]
was being accused of by the Jews, the next
day he released him and ordered the chief
priests and the entire council to meet. He
brought Paul down and had him stand before
them.

23 While Paul was looking intently at the
council he said, "Brothers,[b] up to this
day I have lived my life with a clear con-
science before God." 2 Then the high priest
Ananias ordered those standing near him to
strike him on the mouth. 3 At this Paul said to
him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed
wall! Are you sitting there to judge me ac-
cording to the law, and yet in violation of
the law you order me to be struck?" 4 Those
standing nearby said, "Do you dare to insult
God's high priest?" 5 And Paul said, "I did not
realize, brothers, that he was high priest; for
it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a
leader of your people.' "

6 When Paul noticed that some were Sad-
ducees and others were Pharisees, he called
out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee,
a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning
the hope of the resurrection[c] of the dead."
7 When he said this, a dissension began be-
tween the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and
the assembly was divided. 8 (The Sadducees
say that there is no resurrection, or angel,
or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all
three.) 9 Then a great clamor arose, and cer-
tain scribes of the Pharisees' group stood up
and contended, "We find nothing wrong with
this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spo-
ken to him?" 10 When the dissension became
violent, the tribune, fearing that they would
tear Paul to pieces, ordered the soldiers to go
down, take him by force, and bring him into
the barracks.

11 That night the Lord stood near him and
said, "Keep up your courage! For just as you
have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you
must bear witness also in Rome."

12 In the morning the Jews joined in a
conspiracy and bound themselves by an
oath neither to eat nor drink until they had
killed Paul. 13 There were more than forty who
joined in this conspiracy. 14 They went to the
chief priests and elders and said, "We have
strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste
no food until we have killed Paul. 15 Now then,
you and the council must notify the tribune
to bring him down to you, on the pretext that
you want to make a more thorough examina-
tion of his case. And we are ready to do away
with him before he arrives."

16 Now the son of Paul's sister heard about
the ambush; so he went and gained en-
trance to the barracks and told Paul. 17 Paul
called one of the centurions and said, "Take
this young man to the tribune, for he has
something to report to him." 18 So he took
him, brought him to the tribune, and said,
"The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to
bring this young man to you; he has some-
thing to tell you." 19 The tribune took him
by the hand, drew him aside privately, and
asked, "What is it that you have to report to
me?" 20 He answered, "The Jews have agreed
to ask you to bring Paul down to the coun-
cil tomorrow, as though they were going to
inquire more thoroughly into his case. 21 But
do not be persuaded by them, for more than
forty of their men are lying in ambush for
him. They have bound themselves by an oath

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Gk *Men, brothers*
[c] Gk *concerning hope and resurrection*

22.30–23.11: Paul before the Sanhedrin. The tribune brings him before it to get evidence, not to try him. **22.30:** The tribune calls for an advisory meeting of the *council;* see 5.21n. **23.2:** *Ananias, high priest* in the reigns of Claudius and Nero, was murdered by rebels about 66 CE. **3:** *Whitewashed wall,* cf. Ezek 13.10–15; Mt 23.27. **5:** Ex 22.28. It is strange that Paul does not recognize the *high priest.* **6:** *Paul* as a *Pharisee* (26.5; Phil 3.5) realizes he can exploit a difference of opinion between *Sadducees* and *Pharisees* over the *resurrection* (see Josephus, *J.W.* 2.163–65). **8:** *Sadducees* denied a *resurrection* (Mk 12.18). **9:** The *Pharisees* side with Paul (see 15.5n.). **10:** Paul is rescued from mob violence for a second time by an agent of Rome (21.33–36). **11:** A vision (cf. 18.9–10) provides assurance that martyrdom will not occur in Jerusalem (21.13).

23.12–35: A plot to kill Paul results in his transfer to Caesarea, the seat of the Roman governor. **12:** *Conspiracy,* 9.24; 20.19. **16:** There is no other extant information about Paul's family. The notion of Paul's education in Jerusalem (22.3) could suggest that other family members were there. **17–22:** The prisoner Paul's remarkable

neither to eat nor drink until they kill him. They are ready now and are waiting for your consent." [22] So the tribune dismissed the young man, ordering him, "Tell no one that you have informed me of this."

[23] Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, "Get ready to leave by nine o'clock tonight for Caesarea with two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen. [24] Also provide mounts for Paul to ride, and take him safely to Felix the governor." [25] He wrote a letter to this effect:

[26] "Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. [27] This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, but when I had learned that he was a Roman citizen, I came with the guard and rescued him. [28] Since I wanted to know the charge for which they accused him, I had him brought to their council. [29] I found that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but was charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. [30] When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him.[a]"

[31] So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him during the night to Antipatris. [32] The next day they let the horsemen go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. [33] When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. [34] On reading the letter, he asked what province he belonged to, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, [35] he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive." Then he ordered that he be kept under guard in Herod's headquarters.[b]

24 Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and an attorney, a certain Tertullus, and they reported their case against Paul to the governor. [2] When Paul[c] had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying:

"Your Excellency,[d] because of you we have long enjoyed peace, and reforms have been made for this people because of your foresight. [3] We welcome this in every way and everywhere with utmost gratitude. [4] But, to detain you no further, I beg you to hear us briefly with your customary graciousness. [5] We have, in fact, found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.[e] [6] He even tried to profane the temple, and so we seized him.[f] [8] By examining him yourself you will be able to learn from him concerning everything of which we accuse him."

[9] The Jews also joined in the charge by asserting that all this was true.

[a] Other ancient authorities add *Farewell*
[b] Gk *praetorium*
[c] Gk *he*
[d] Gk lacks *Your Excellency*
[e] Gk *Nazoreans*
[f] Other ancient authorities add *and we would have judged him according to our law.* [7] *But the chief captain Lysias came and with great violence took him out of our hands,* [8] *commanding his accusers to come before you.*

access to the commanders shows some favoritism. **23:** *Caesarea,* 8.40n. The number of *soldiers* emphasizes the danger faced. The Gk word translated *spearmen* is obscure. **24:** Antonius *Felix,* procurator of Judea (ca. 52–60 CE), brother of Pallas, a favorite freedman of the emperor Claudius. **26:** *His Excellency,* the same word used in addressing Theophilus (Lk 1.3). **27–30:** The letter summarizes the preceding events and perhaps casts the tribune in a better light. As was the case with Jesus (Lk 23.4,14–16,20–25), Romans find no serious charges (v. 29; cf. 18.14–16). **31:** *Antipatris,* a city in the Plain of Sharon on the main road to Caesarea. **35:** *Herod's headquarters,* a palace built by Herod the Great and occupied by the Roman governors in Palestine.

24.1–27: Paul before Felix. Paul denies the charges, and the governor postpones the case. **2–4:** *Tertullus* begins the prosecution with the customary method of opening a speech with praise that is intended to attract the attention and good will of the one being addressed. **5:** *Agitator,* a charge of political sedition (see 16.21; 17.7; 18.13) would be taken seriously by a Roman court. *Sect,* or party, is used in a bad sense here and at 24.14; 28.22; it is used of the Sadducees at 5.17. *Nazarenes,* the term otherwise used in the singular to identify Jesus (2.22; 3.6; 4.10; 6.14; 22.8) is here used in the plural to describe Christians for Romans. **6:** *Profane the temple,* 21.28.

10 When the governor motioned to him to
speak, Paul replied:

"I cheerfully make my defense, knowing
that for many years you have been a judge
over this nation. 11 As you can find out, it is
not more than twelve days since I went up
to worship in Jerusalem. 12 They did not find
me disputing with anyone in the temple or
stirring up a crowd either in the synagogues or
throughout the city. 13 Neither can they prove
to you the charge that they now bring against
me. 14 But this I admit to you, that according
to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship
the God of our ancestors, believing everything
laid down according to the law or written in
the prophets. 15 I have a hope in God—a hope
that they themselves also accept—that there
will be a resurrection of both[a] the righteous
and the unrighteous. 16 Therefore I do my best
always to have a clear conscience toward God
and all people. 17 Now after some years I came
to bring alms to my nation and to offer sacri-
fices. 18 While I was doing this, they found me
in the temple, completing the rite of purifica-
tion, without any crowd or disturbance. 19 But
there were some Jews from Asia—they ought
to be here before you to make an accusation, if
they have anything against me. 20 Or let these
men here tell what crime they had found when
I stood before the council, 21 unless it was this
one sentence that I called out while standing
before them, 'It is about the resurrection of the
dead that I am on trial before you today.'"

22 But Felix, who was rather well informed
about the Way, adjourned the hearing with the
comment, "When Lysias the tribune comes
down, I will decide your case." 23 Then he or-
dered the centurion to keep him in custody, but
to let him have some liberty and not to prevent
any of his friends from taking care of his needs.

24 Some days later when Felix came with
his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for
Paul and heard him speak concerning faith
in Christ Jesus. 25 And as he discussed justice,
self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix
became frightened and said, "Go away for the
present; when I have an opportunity, I will
send for you." 26 At the same time he hoped
that money would be given him by Paul, and
for that reason he used to send for him very
often and converse with him.

27 After two years had passed, Felix was
succeeded by Porcius Festus; and since he
wanted to grant the Jews a favor, Felix left
Paul in prison.

25 Three days after Festus had arrived in
the province, he went up from Caes-
area to Jerusalem 2 where the chief priests
and the leaders of the Jews gave him a report
against Paul. They appealed to him 3 and
requested, as a favor to them against Paul,[b]
to have him transferred to Jerusalem. They
were, in fact, planning an ambush to kill him
along the way. 4 Festus replied that Paul was
being kept at Caesarea, and that he himself
intended to go there shortly. 5 "So," he said,
"let those of you who have the authority
come down with me, and if there is anything
wrong about the man, let them accuse him."

6 After he had stayed among them not
more than eight or ten days, he went down
to Caesarea; the next day he took his seat on
the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.
7 When he arrived, the Jews who had gone
down from Jerusalem surrounded him,
bringing many serious charges against him,
which they could not prove. 8 Paul said in
his defense, "I have in no way committed an
offense against the law of the Jews, or against
the temple, or against the emperor." 9 But
Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, asked

[a] Other ancient authorities read *of the dead, both of*
[b] Gk *him*

10: See 22.1n. **14:** *The Way* (see 9.2n.) is compatible with the ancestral religion. **15:** *Resurrection,* here general belief in resurrection as common ground (also v. 21). **16:** *Clear conscience,* 20.20,27,33; 23.1. **17:** *To bring alms,* may connect to 21.23–26 but is reminiscent of Paul's plan in Rom 15.25–29 to deliver the collection (see 11.29n.; 20.4n.). **23:** *Custody,* perhaps protective custody. **24:** *Drusilla* was the sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice (25.13); she had left her husband Azizus, king of Emesa, to marry Felix. **25–26:** Cf. Mk 6.20. *Felix* embodies both positive and negative features, but ultimately his corruption means that Paul remains in prison. **27:** *After two years had passed,* either from Felix's appointment or Paul's arrest. *Porcius Festus,* appointed procurator of Judea by the emperor Nero in 60 CE.

25.1–12: Appeal to the emperor. Paul insists on a Roman trial, and Festus consents to send him to Rome. **3:** See 23.12. **8:** Paul maintains that he is both a good Jew and a good Roman citizen. **9:** *Favor,* 24.27.

Paul, "Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and be tried there before me on these charges?" 10 Paul said, "I am appealing to the emperor's tribunal; this is where I should be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you very well know. 11 Now if I am in the wrong and have committed something for which I deserve to die, I am not trying to escape death; but if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can turn me over to them. I appeal to the emperor." 12 Then Festus, after he had conferred with his council, replied, "You have appealed to the emperor; to the emperor you will go."

13 After several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to welcome Festus. 14 Since they were staying there several days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man here who was left in prison by Felix. 15 When I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me about him and asked for a sentence against him. 16 I told them that it was not the custom of the Romans to hand over anyone before the accused had met the accusers face to face and had been given an opportunity to make a defense against the charge. 17 So when they met here, I lost no time, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. 18 When the accusers stood up, they did not charge him with any of the crimes[a] that I was expecting. 19 Instead they had certain points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. 20 Since I was at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wished to go to Jerusalem and be tried there on these charges.[b] 21 But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of his Imperial Majesty, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to the emperor." 22 Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you will hear him."

23 So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then Festus gave the order and Paul was brought in. 24 And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish community petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But I found that he had done nothing deserving death; and when he appealed to his Imperial Majesty, I decided to send him. 26 But I have nothing definite to write to our sovereign about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write— 27 for it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him."

26 Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and began to defend himself:

2 "I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, 3 because you are especially familiar

[a] Other ancient authorities read *with anything*
[b] Gk *on them*

10: Paul does not want to be turned over to a Jewish court; therefore he insists on *the emperor's tribunal,* i.e., trial according to Roman law. **11–12:** Paul's *appeal* to the *emperor* becomes the mechanism that takes him to Rome (19.21; 23.11). Details of the law of appeals are unclear.

25.13–26.32: Paul's defense before Agrippa. Paul's speech is intended to present a model defense of Christianity and allows for the pronouncement of a symbolic Roman acquittal. **25.13:** *King Agrippa,* Herod Agrippa II (ruled 53–ca. 93 CE), sided with the Romans in the First Jewish Revolt. He and his sister *Bernice* were children of Herod Agrippa I (12.1n.). **16:** Roman judicial process is put in a good light. **18–20:** The *accusers* do not bring a *charge* of sedition (24.5). Cf. 18.13–16; but in this case Festus does not dismiss the charges. **25:** *Nothing deserving death* is the repeated verdict of the Roman authorities handling Paul's case (26.31; cf. Lk 23.4,15,22). *His Imperial Majesty,* Gk "Sebastos" ("Augustus"), one of the imperial titles. **26.1:** The scene set for Paul's speech fulfills 9.15 and Lk 21.12–15. Compare Jesus's appearance before Herod Antipas (Lk 23.6–12). **2:** *Defense,* 22.1n. *The Jews,* see 13.45n. **3:** The narrative assumes that Agrippa was a practicing Jew. **4:** *Among my own people,* stresses

with all the customs and controversies of the Jews; therefore I beg of you to listen to me patiently.

4 "All the Jews know my way of life from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my own people and in Jerusalem. 5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I have belonged to the strictest sect of our religion and lived as a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand here on trial on account of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors, 7 a promise that our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship day and night. It is for this hope, your Excellency,[a] that I am accused by Jews! 8 Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

9 "Indeed, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth.[b] 10 And that is what I did in Jerusalem; with authority received from the chief priests, I not only locked up many of the saints in prison, but I also cast my vote against them when they were being condemned to death. 11 By punishing them often in all the synagogues I tried to force them to blaspheme; and since I was so furiously enraged at them, I pursued them even to foreign cities.

12 "With this in mind, I was traveling to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13 when at midday along the road, your Excellency,[a] I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. 14 When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew[c] language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.' 15 I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The Lord answered, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me[d] and to those in which I will appear to you. 17 I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

19 "After that, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance. 21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place: 23 that the Messiah[e] must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

24 While he was making this defense, Festus exclaimed, "You are out of your mind, Paul! Too much learning is driving you insane!" 25 But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth. 26 Indeed the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in

[a] Gk *O king*
[b] Gk *the Nazorean*
[c] That is, *Aramaic*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *the things that you have seen*
[e] Or *the Christ*

Paul's thoroughly Jewish upbringing (22.3n.; Phil 3.5). **8:** *You,* i.e., the Jewish people. **9–20:** A third account of Paul's conversion (9.1–8; 22.4–16). **10:** *In Jerusalem,* according to 9.1–2 Paul's authorization concerned Damascus. *Saints,* see 9.13n. **14:** Here *all* fall *to the ground* and the *voice* speaks *Hebrew* (see note *c*), quoting a common Greek proverb about the futility of resisting the divine will (cf. 9.4; 22.7); a goad is a pointed stick used to prod an ox or other animals. **16:** Only in this account does Paul's commission on the road come directly from Jesus (cf. Gal 1.1); there is no mention of Ananias or Paul's blindness. **20:** Paul's mission is universal, directed to both Jews and Greeks. **21:** *For this reason,* i.e., inclusion of the Gentiles. **22–23:** *The prophets and Moses . . . the Messiah must*

a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the
prophets? I know that you believe." 28 Agrippa
said to Paul, "Are you so quickly persuading
me to become a Christian?"[a] 29 Paul replied,
"Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that
not only you but also all who are listening to
me today might become such as I am—except
for these chains."

30 Then the king got up, and with him the
governor and Bernice and those who had
been seated with them; 31 and as they were
leaving, they said to one another, "This man
is doing nothing to deserve death or impris-
onment." 32 Agrippa said to Festus, "This
man could have been set free if he had not
appealed to the emperor."

27 When it was decided that we were to
sail for Italy, they transferred Paul and
some other prisoners to a centurion of
the Augustan Cohort, named Julius. 2 Embarking
on a ship of Adramyttium that was about to
set sail to the ports along the coast of Asia,
we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus,
a Macedonian from Thessalonica. 3 The next
day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated
Paul kindly, and allowed him to go to his
friends to be cared for. 4 Putting out to sea
from there, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus,
because the winds were against us. 5 After
we had sailed across the sea that is off Cilicia
and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia.
6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian
ship bound for Italy and put us on board.
7 We sailed slowly for a number of days and
arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the
wind was against us, we sailed under the lee
of Crete off Salmone. 8 Sailing past it with dif-
ficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens,
near the city of Lasea.

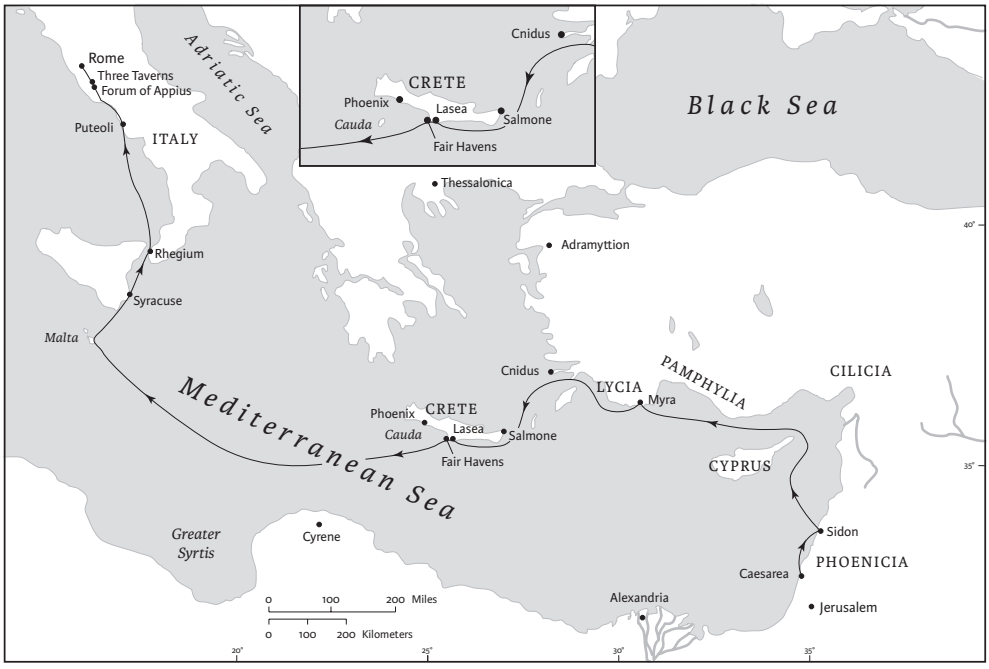
9 Since much time had been lost and sail-
ing was now dangerous, because even the
Fast had already gone by, Paul advised them,
10 saying, "Sirs, I can see that the voyage will
be with danger and much heavy loss, not
only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our
lives." 11 But the centurion paid more atten-
tion to the pilot and to the owner of the ship
than to what Paul said. 12 Since the harbor
was not suitable for spending the winter, the
majority was in favor of putting to sea from
there, on the chance that somehow they
could reach Phoenix, where they could spend
the winter. It was a harbor of Crete, facing
southwest and northwest.

13 When a moderate south wind began to
blow, they thought they could achieve their
purpose; so they weighed anchor and began
to sail past Crete, close to the shore. 14 But
soon a violent wind, called the northeaster,
rushed down from Crete.[b] 15 Since the ship
was caught and could not be turned head-
on into the wind, we gave way to it and were
driven. 16 By running under the lee of a small
island called Cauda[c] we were scarcely able
to get the ship's boat under control. 17 Af-
ter hoisting it up they took measures[d] to
undergird the ship; then, fearing that they
would run on the Syrtis, they lowered the

[a] Or *Quickly you will persuade me to play the Christian*
[b] Gk *it*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Clauda*
[d] Gk *helps*

suffer, 3.18n.; 10.43; 15.21n.; Lk 24.25–27,44–47. **27:** See v. 3. **28:** *Christian,* see 11.25–26n. **31:** *Nothing to deserve death or imprisonment,* a further "acquittal" (25.25n.). **32:** See 25.11–12n.

27.1–44: Shipwreck. A dangerous winter voyage ends in shipwreck. **1:** The "we" passages (16.10n.) resume here. *The Augustan Cohort,* a unit of this name was stationed in Syria in the first century. **2:** *Adramyttium,* a seaport south of Troas (16.8). *Aristarchus,* 19.29; 20.4. *Thessalonica,* 17.1n. **3:** *Sidon,* a Phoenician seaport, north of Tyre. *Julius treated Paul kindly,* compare the centurions of Lk 7.1–10; 23.47; and Cornelius (10.1–2n.). *Friends,* i.e., Christians. **4:** *Under the lee of Cyprus,* apparently north of the island. **5–6:** *Myra* on the southern coast of Asia Minor was a regular stage in the route of Egyptian grain ships bound for Italy (see v. 38). **7:** *Cnidus,* on the mainland northwest of Rhodes. *Under the lee of Crete,* to its south for shelter from the *wind*; *Salmone* is at the northeast tip of the island. **8:** *Fair Havens,* a bay on the southern coast of Crete. *Lasea,* a city somewhat inland and east of Fair Havens. **9:** *Sailing was . . . dangerous* after September and ceased from mid-November until mid-March. *The Fast,* the Day of Atonement, in September or October. **16:** *Cauda,* south of Crete. *The ship's boat* (see vv. 30–32) was in tow. **17:** The *measures* undertaken by the crew are not clear. *The Syrtis,* a dangerous shoal west of Cyrene on the north coast of Africa. *Sea anchor,* a conjecture for the Gk word meaning "vessel" or "implement,"



Chs 27–28: Paul's journey to Rome

sea anchor and so were driven. [18] We were being pounded by the storm so violently that on the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard, [19] and on the third day with their own hands they threw the ship's tackle overboard. [20] When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest raged, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

[21] Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul then stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and thereby avoided this damage and loss. [22] I urge you now to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. [23] For last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, [24] and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before the emperor; and indeed, God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you.' [25] So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. [26] But we will have to run aground on some island."

[27] When the fourteenth night had come, as we were drifting across the sea of Adria, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. [28] So they took soundings and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on they took soundings again and found fifteen fathoms. [29] Fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. [30] But when the sailors tried to escape from the ship and had lowered the boat into the sea, on the pretext of putting out anchors from the bow, [31] Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." [32] Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat and set it adrift.

[33] Just before daybreak, Paul urged all of them to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been in suspense and remaining without food, having eaten nothing. [34] Therefore I urge you to take

i.e., a device to slow the ship. **18:** Jn 1.5 and numerous Greek and Roman parallels (e.g., Josephus, *J.W.* 1.280). **22:** Cf. v. 10. **24:** 23.11; 25.11–12. **27:** The *sea of Adria* then included the central Mediterranean. **30:** *Escape* of the crew

some food, for it will help you survive; for none of you will lose a hair from your heads." 35 After he had said this, he took bread; and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat. 36 Then all of them were encouraged and took food for themselves. 37 (We were in all two hundred seventy-six[a] persons in the ship.) 38 After they had satisfied their hunger, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea.

39 In the morning they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned to run the ship ashore, if they could. 40 So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea. At the same time they loosened the ropes that tied the steering-oars; then hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. 41 But striking a reef,[b] they ran the ship aground; the bow stuck and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the force of the waves. 42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none might swim away and escape; 43 but the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, 44 and the rest to follow, some on planks and others on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

28 After we had reached safety, we then learned that the island was called Malta. 2 The natives showed us unusual kindness. Since it had begun to rain and was cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us around it. 3 Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire, when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. 4 When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "This man must be a murderer; though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." 5 He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 They were expecting him to swell up or drop dead, but after they had waited a long time and saw that nothing unusual had happened to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.

7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. 8 It so happened that the father of Publius lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and cured him by praying and putting his hands on him. 9 After this happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. 10 They bestowed many honors on us, and when we were about to sail, they put on board all the provisions we needed.

11 Three months later we set sail on a ship that had wintered at the island, an Alexandrian ship with the Twin Brothers as its figurehead. 12 We put in at Syracuse and stayed there for three days; 13 then we weighed anchor and came to Rhegium. After one day there a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. 14 There we found believers[c] and were invited

[a] Other ancient authorities read *seventy-six*; others, *about seventy-six*
[b] Gk *place of two seas*
[c] Gk *brothers*

is a popular motif found in Greco-Roman novels. **35–36:** *He took bread,* gave *thanks,* and *broke it,* cf. Lk 22.19; 24.30,35 (see 2.42n.). The meal in which all partake has clear eucharistic overtones. **37:** *Two hundred seventy-six* people on board is quite possible. **41:** *A reef,* Gk "a place of two seas." **42:** The *soldiers* were responsible for the *prisoners* (see 12.19; 16.27). **43:** The "good" *centurion* intervenes (see v. 3n.; 10.1n.).

28.1–10: Paul on Malta. Unharmed though bitten by a viper, Paul heals the father of Publius. **1:** *Malta,* a significant island south of Sicily controlled by the Romans. **2:** *Natives* (lit., "barbarians"), used of non-Greek speakers. **4:** *Justice,* here a deity. **5:** Lk 10.19; Mk 16.18 (Ps 91.13). **7:** *Leading man,* a local official on Malta. **8–9:** Lk 4.38–40.

28.11–16: The journey to Rome. Paul goes by sea to Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli, then by land to the capital. **11:** *Three months* (see 27.9n.) would be too soon to have set sail but is probably an approximation. *The Twin Brothers,* the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, patron deities of sailors. **12:** *Syracuse,* capital city of the island of Sicily. **13:** *Rhegium,* modern Reggio Calabria, port city on the Italian coast opposite Sicily. *Puteoli,* modern Pozzuoli, on the north side of the Bay of Naples. **14:** *Believers,* there are already Christians at Rome (see 18.2n.).

to stay with them for seven days. And so we
came to Rome. 15 The believers[a] from there,
when they heard of us, came as far as the
Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet
us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and
took courage.

16 When we came into Rome, Paul was al-
lowed to live by himself, with the soldier who
was guarding him.

17 Three days later he called together the
local leaders of the Jews. When they had as-
sembled, he said to them, "Brothers, though
I had done nothing against our people or the
customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested
in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.
18 When they had examined me, the Romans[b]
wanted to release me, because there was no
reason for the death penalty in my case. 19 But
when the Jews objected, I was compelled to
appeal to the emperor—even though I had
no charge to bring against my nation. 20 For
this reason therefore I have asked to see you
and speak with you,[c] since it is for the sake of
the hope of Israel that I am bound with this
chain." 21 They replied, "We have received no
letters from Judea about you, and none of the
brothers coming here has reported or spoken
anything evil about you. 22 But we would like
to hear from you what you think, for with
regard to this sect we know that everywhere
it is spoken against."

23 After they had set a day to meet with
him, they came to him at his lodgings in great
numbers. From morning until evening he ex-
plained the matter to them, testifying to the
kingdom of God and trying to convince them
about Jesus both from the law of Moses and
from the prophets. 24 Some were convinced
by what he had said, while others refused to
believe. 25 So they disagreed with each other;
and as they were leaving, Paul made one fur-
ther statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in
saying to your ancestors through the prophet
Isaiah,

26 'Go to this people and say,
You will indeed listen, but never
understand,
and you will indeed look, but never
perceive.
27 For this people's heart has grown dull,
and their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have shut their eyes;
so that they might not look with
their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart and
turn—
and I would heal them.'

28 Let it be known to you then that this salva-
tion of God has been sent to the Gentiles;
they will listen."[d]

30 He lived there two whole years at his
own expense[e] and welcomed all who came to
him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and
teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all
boldness and without hindrance.

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *they*
[c] Or *I have asked you to see me and speak with me*
[d] Other ancient authorities add verse 29, *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, arguing vigorously among themselves*
[e] Or *in his own hired dwelling*

15: The *Forum of Appius* was 40 mi (65 km) from Rome, and *Three Taverns* 30 mi (50 km), both on the Via Appia. **16:** The "we" passages (16.10n.) end here. *By himself,* apparently in private quarters.

28.17–28: Paul and the Jews of Rome. 17: Even as a captive Paul sticks to the pattern of speaking to Jews first (9.20n.; 13.5n.; 17.2n.). **20:** The *hope of Israel* is now bound up with Christianity. **23:** *Kingdom of God,* 1.3n.; *the prophets,* 26.22–23n. **24:** The reception is mixed as it has been all along (17.11–12n.). **26–27:** Isa 6.9–10, a prophetic reproof in the Hebrew Bible, is used elsewhere to explain Jewish rejection of the gospel (see Mt 13.14–15; Jn 12.40; cf. Rom 9–11). **28:** The "turn to the *Gentiles*" of 13.46; 18.6 is repeated. It is no more a final rejection than the previous instances were, but may indicate the social reality of Luke's day.

28.30–31: Conclusion. Though under house arrest (v. 16) Paul preached *without hindrance* for *two whole years.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTERS/EPISTLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

CLASSIFICATION AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Letters, or epistles, are the earliest documents in the New Testament and its most common literary form: Some scholars date 1 Thessalonians before 50 CE, about twenty years before Mark, the earliest of the Gospels. Of the twenty-one letters in the New Testament, thirteen are from Paul or his missionary associates: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. These letters are arranged not chronologically but in rough order of length, with Romans being the longest and Philemon the shortest. When the book of Hebrews was attributed to Paul, the number of Pauline letters in ancient manuscripts and lists came to fourteen. Another seven letters, which appear to be pseudonymously attributed to other apostles, round out the group: 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; James; and Jude. The Gk word *epistolē* ("letter") originally referred to an oral communication sent by messenger (Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.10.1). Even in the New Testament period, the letter-carrier might be entrusted with crucial information about a letter's content that was conveyed to its recipients orally. Paul often includes missionary associates in the greeting of his letters (1 Cor 1.1; 2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; Col 1.1; 1 Thess 1.1; Philem 1). He omits them in Galatians, where he has no future plans to visit the region, and in Romans, addressed to a church he did not found. Ephesians lacks a specific destination in the best manuscripts and may be an exhortation sent to several churches in Asia Minor by a later disciple of Paul.

Several other Pauline epistles also differ in language and theological emphasis from the major Pauline letters. The Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus; see pp. 1725–44), addressed to his key assistants, treat them as youthful leaders of local churches. The Pastoral Epistles look to a future in which Christians are established in the larger society. While both 1 and 2 Thessalonians have as their principal theme the return of the Lord Jesus in the end-time, the second letter seeks to moderate expectations that the last days are at hand. This change in eschatological perspective, as well as its warning against pseudo-Pauline writings, has led some scholars to conclude that 2 Thessalonians was written by a later disciple of Paul as well. Since Paul had a number of close associates in his missionary activities, it would not be surprising if they used a familiar medium, the apostolic letter, to continue dealing with concrete issues in the churches of the Pauline mission. Although many of the letters unquestionably by Paul are considerably longer than ordinary private letters, they address concrete situations in the churches.

Ephesians, however, lacks not only an address but also references to specific individuals or problems. Among the non-Pauline letters, Hebrews and James also appear to be tractates or general exhortations, rather than letters to specific communities. Jude addresses a sharp apocalyptic warning to Christians in general. First John speaks to concrete problems in its church circles, but lacks the form of a letter; 2 and 3 John are both personal letters, though addressed to different problems. First Peter uses the letter form as exhortation for suffering Christians in Asia Minor. Finally, 2 Peter appears to be the latest epistle in the New Testament. It contains a possible allusion to the Gospel account of the transfiguration of Jesus (1.16–18; see Mk 9.2–8) and refers to Christians who misinterpret Paul's letters (3.15–16). Like 2 Timothy, 2 Peter is presented as the last testament of an apostle. It affirms the unity of apostolic teaching concerning the "day of the Lord" (3.1–14) against some who used Paul's authority to deny that God would end the world.

WRITING AND SENDING LETTERS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

Letters from Greco-Roman antiquity include imperial decrees addressed to subjects in a particular area, such as that by the Roman emperor Claudius to "the city of Alexandria" in Egypt in 41 CE concerning Jewish agitation for citizen rights; collections of philosophical letters by prominent figures like Cicero, Pliny, and Seneca; and hundreds of papyri from Egypt documenting the concerns of ordinary people. Royal diplomatic correspondence has its own formalities of language, which are echoed in the so-called letters that the heavenly Christ addresses

to the angels of the churches in Revelation 2–3. Philosophical letters often use a highly formal rhetoric, which indicates that such letters were intended to be preserved for posterity. They are typically longer than private letters, which are generally described as "documentary" to distinguish them from such literary creations. Authors often retained copies of and revised literary correspondence before committing it to copying for posterity. Documentary letters existed only for one or more immediate purposes, such as dealing with problems at home, urging an absent husband or son to return, reporting on a military posting, pleading for legal redress, engaging in commerce, describing one's circumstances to family or friends, and recommending the bearer of the letter to its recipient.

The existence of so many letters from private individuals does not necessarily imply a high rate of literacy among craftsmen, traders, or women. A letter could be dictated to a scribe who would be charged with the actual writing. Even those who could write often preferred to employ the services of a scribe (Rom 16.22; Gal 6.11). The letter-carrier or another party might read the letter at its destination and, depending upon the carrier's relationship to the sender, might also interpret the content of the letter. Some documentary letters in Egypt suggest that after the letter had been read in Greek, it might be translated into the local dialect so that the women in the sender's audience could understand it.

The formal parts of an ancient letter—to be distinguished from other rhetorical patterns authors of literary epistles might use—are straightforward. The opening or superscription identifies sender(s) and recipient(s) and concludes with a greeting or salutation. Epithets, information about geographical locations, and terms of endearment often expand on individuals named. Paul regularly shifts to a Semitic form of salutation, "grace and peace," expanded with reference to God and Christ Jesus (2 Cor 1.2). When his apostolic authority is an issue between himself and the recipients, that note may be attached as a self-designation (2 Cor 1.1; Rom 1.1–5, a community for which Paul is not a founding apostle). In ancient letters, the opening is often followed by a formal statement of the sender's wish for the health of the recipients. Such formulas may also be used to close the letter. Another common formula expresses the sender's prayer to the gods or thanksgiving on behalf of the recipients. In the Pauline letter type, this conventional way of opening a letter usually develops into a much longer thanksgiving or blessing section. That section often previews items from the body of the letter that follows.

After the opening formalities, the body of the letter states the actual business or request that is the reason for the letter. The sender may either give information about his own future travel plans or request it about others. Paul usually has such travel reports near the end of the body of a letter. Various formulas can be used to conclude the letter. Often greetings are given from or to others not mentioned in the body of the letter.

Once a letter was written, the sender had to find a person to deliver the letter to its recipient. Often the presence of someone who was on the way to the desired location provided an opportunity for writing. There was no guaranteed overnight delivery in antiquity! Even letters entrusted to friends for delivery had an uncertain fate. Under the best of circumstances a response was weeks or months away. The sender would ordinarily retain a copy, and some scholars have suggested that the first collection of Paul's letters was due to the apostle's own editing of his copies of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians. This hypothesis accounts for the start of the process of collecting and editing Pauline letters, but lacking any specific manuscript evidence, it remains speculative.

Pheme Perkins

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

NAME AND AUTHORSHIP

This letter is named for the recipients to whom it is addressed, "God's beloved in Rome" (1.7). The believers in Christ at Rome had not been evangelized by Paul; the identity of those who first preached the gospel in Rome remains unknown. Paul names himself as the letter's author, and this has rarely been doubted.

DATE OF COMPOSITION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Most scholars think that Paul wrote Romans late in his missionary life sometime between 52 and 58 CE. There are two related historical contexts to consider. The first is the context of the Roman church, where there are both Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Christ (2.17; 1.5–6), and some tension exists between them (see 14.1–15.6). On the basis of an episode reported in Suetonius's *Life of Claudius* 25.3, scholars have proposed that the Roman church had been affected by Emperor Claudius's expulsion of Jews from Rome, probably in 49 CE. Suetonius writes that Roman Jews were constantly making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, so Claudius ordered them out of the city. Historians have understood the word "Chrestus" to be a misspelling of "Christos" and proposed this as evidence that the Jews expelled from Rome were believers in Jesus Christ. Some scholars think that when Paul wrote Romans, these Christian Jews had returned home. Acts 18.1–3 reports that at Corinth Paul met a Jewish Christian couple, Aquila and Priscilla, who had been expelled by Claudius; in Rom 16.3–4, Paul sends greetings to Aquila and Prisca (presumably the same woman), suggesting that some of those who had been expelled under Claudius have now returned. The tension between Jewish and Gentile believers evident in the letter is understood, then, to be the result of the returning Christian Jews finding that their position in the church community had changed or even been diminished. Paul's emphasis on the centrality of Israel in God's purposes and the need for Gentile believers to recognize with gratitude their adoption into God's people (chs 9–11) is understood as a response to the friction between Jews and non-Jews in the Roman congregation.

A second, and related, historical context is Paul's life and missionary agenda. There must have been some reason why Paul, in the midst of a taxing and potentially dangerous period in his life (see 15.22–29), would undertake writing this letter to people who were converted by someone other than himself. Several explanations have been given about why Paul wrote this dense and powerful letter to the church at Rome: theological, personal, and pastoral. For centuries this letter was regarded as a distillation of Paul's theological thought, expressed in a general way. Melancthon, a contemporary of Luther, described Romans as setting forth all the articles of the faith. This approach found voice also in the twentieth century. Karl Barth described Romans as a "dogmatics in outline." In this view, Paul wrote this letter not to address particular matters in Rome but to express his understanding of the gospel. Since the early twentieth century, however, recognition of the fact that Romans as an actual letter must be addressed to a specific historical situation at a particular point in Paul's life has led most interpreters to suggest either personal or pastoral reasons for Paul writing. Among the personal reasons are that Paul was seeking to gain both financial and prayer support from the Roman church for his mission to evangelize Spain (15.14–32). Another is that Paul writes Romans in light of his upcoming visit to Jerusalem (15.25–27): either Paul writes to sum up his thinking in case he does not escape Jerusalem alive (a "last will and testament"), or he writes it as a preparation for an anticipated defense of his gospel in Jerusalem, a church with similar issues to those in Rome. Among the possible pastoral motives for Romans are that Paul feels constrained to address the tensions he has heard about between Jewish and Gentile believers; he writes to assure Jewish Christians that they still maintain a special place in God's purposes (1.16; chs 9–11), and to exhort non-Jewish believers to recognize their dependence on both Israel and God's mercy (11.13–32). Another is that Paul feels obliged, on the basis of his self-understanding as the apostle to the Gentiles (1.1), to preach his gospel to the church at Rome, because that church includes Gentiles (1.5–6). Romans is Paul's preaching of the gospel in writing in order to fulfill his divinely given commission that Gentiles, including those at Rome, might receive the fullness of the gospel.

STRUCTURE

Romans begins with a letter opening (1.1–7) in which Paul introduces himself in an atypically lengthy passage. In this opening Paul makes it clear that he wishes to be understood as completely identified with the gospel that the Romans themselves believe. The letter continues with a thanksgiving section (1.8–15), which is standard in most of Paul's letters. What distinguishes this thanksgiving is that Paul spends a significant amount of time explaining why he has not yet been able to visit the Roman church. The body of the letter begins at 1.16 and extends to 11.36. The main focus of Paul's thoughts in the letter body are summarized in 1.16–17. In 12.1–5.13 Paul turns to matters of ethics. Paul has addressed matters of behavior in the letter body, for example at 6.11, but in these later chapters he focuses more intensely on the character and behavior appropriate to believers. This ethical section is integrally related to the concepts and claims Paul has made prior to ch 12. At 15.14–33 Paul talks, as he does in some of his other letters, about his plans and desire to visit his addressees. The letter closes with greetings and a doxology (16.1–27).

INTERPRETATION

Each proposal concerning Paul's purpose in writing this letter must take into account several significant emphases in it. One weighty emphasis in Romans is on God's righteousness. Paul opens the letter body by declaring that in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed (1.17). The unveiling of God's righteousness is at once the unveiling of God's wrath against human unrighteousness (1.18). Paul claims that the gospel is God's power for salvation in light of this unveiling (1.16). God gives righteousness to those who believe through the faith of Jesus Christ (3.21–26). Another way that Paul describes the condition of being gifted with righteousness through faith is that believers are "in Christ" (8.1) and Christ is in believers (8.10). The gift of this condition means that believers are joint heirs with Christ (8.17), having been adopted into the same privileged relationship to God as Christ has (8.15). Even believers' faith is not theirs alone. The quality of Christian belief is that it is Christ's faith by and in which Christians believe (3.22,26). Romans also emphasizes the centrality and power of the Spirit. The Spirit is God's and Christ's (8.9), and it is the guarantor of life (8.11). Believers are in the Spirit and the Spirit is in them (8.9). Paul understands that one of the distinguishing features of his gospel to the Gentiles is that it is accompanied by the power of the Spirit (15.18–19). A further emphasis in this letter is on God's commitment to Israel. Paul is convinced that despite the fact that very few of his fellow Israelites have currently accepted Jesus as the Christ, this signifies neither that God has rejected God's people nor that Israel will be denied salvation (chs 9–11).

Interpretation of this great letter has influenced church history. Some of the most significant thinkers and leaders in the history of Christianity (for example, Augustine, Luther, John Wesley, Karl Barth) had their thinking transformed and nurtured through study of this text. Engagement with Romans shaped their theology and practice and, in turn, the self-understanding of countless other Christians.

Ann Jervis

1 Paul, a servant[a] of Jesus Christ, called
to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel
of God, 2 which he promised beforehand
through his prophets in the holy scriptures,
3 the gospel concerning his Son, who was
descended from David according to the
flesh 4 and was declared to be Son of God
with power according to the spirit[b] of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus
Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have
received grace and apostleship to bring
about the obedience of faith among all the
Gentiles for the sake of his name, 6 including yourselves who are called to belong to
Jesus Christ,

7 To all God's beloved in Rome, who are
called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus
Christ for all of you, because your faith is
proclaimed throughout the world. 9 For God,
whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel[c] of his Son, is my witness
that without ceasing I remember you always
in my prayers, 10 asking that by God's will I
may somehow at last succeed in coming to
you. 11 For I am longing to see you so that I
may share with you some spiritual gift to
strengthen you— 12 or rather so that we may
be mutually encouraged by each other's
faith, both yours and mine. 13 I want you to
know, brothers and sisters,[d] that I have often
intended to come to you (but thus far have
been prevented), in order that I may reap
some harvest among you as I have among the
rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am a debtor both to
Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise
and to the foolish 15 —hence my eagerness
to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in
Rome.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is
the power of God for salvation to everyone
who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the
Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God
is revealed through faith for faith; as it is

[a] Gk *slave*
[b] Or *Spirit*
[c] Gk *my spirit in the gospel*
[d] Gk *brothers*

1.1–7: Salutation. Like other ancient Greco-Roman writers, Paul begins his letter to Rome by identifying himself and the letter's recipients. Unlike other undisputed letters Paul does not name a co-sender, even though Timothy is with him (16.21). This is an exceptionally lengthy self-identification in which Paul identifies himself by describing "the gospel." It closes with a formula that draws God the Father and the Lord Jesus into the simpler "grace to you and peace" of other letters (1 Thess 1.1; for the longer form, Gal 1.3; Phil 1.2; 1 Cor 1.3; 2 Cor 1.2; Philem 3). **1:** *Servant,* lit., "slave"; as elsewhere (Phil 1:1; Gal 1:10), Paul understands his life to be dedicated to Christ's service. *Christ,* Gk "christos," "anointed," translates Heb *mashiaḥ*, "anointed, messiah." *Apostle,* lit., "one sent forth" whether as an ambassador or prophet. *Gospel,* lit., "good news," used in the Jewish scriptures of God's salvation (e.g., Isa 40.9), and in inscriptions for the emperor's birthday or accession said to mark a new order; *of God* suggests a message both from and about God. **2–4:** A confession of faith shared by both Paul and the Roman believers. **2:** *Promised beforehand*, God's prophets declared the good news in advance (Gal 3.8). **3:** The good news concerns God's *Son*. Kings of Israel, Israel itself, Roman emperors, and significant philosophers were designated "sons of God." Jesus Christ is God's Son physically (*according to the flesh*) descended from *David*, as in Mt 1.1–17,20; Lk 3.23–31. **4:** *Spirit of holiness*, a phrase not found elsewhere in the NT, probably meaning the Holy Spirit. **5:** *Obedience of faith* (Rom 16.26) is a construction which equates obedience and faith. *Gentiles*, Gk "ethnē" (lit., "nations"), a term used by Jews for all non-Jews. Paul was called by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles (see also 1.13; 15.16; Gal 1.16). **7:** *Saints,* lit., "holy ones," the NT term for all believers in Jesus Christ.

1.8–15: Thanksgiving. Ancient letters followed the salutation with an expression giving thanks for or praying for the well-being of recipients. Paul follows this practice except in Gal and in 2 Cor. This thanksgiving is unusual in its length and in focusing more on Paul than on the recipients. **14:** *Greeks and . . . barbarians; the wise and . . . the foolish.* A standard way of classifying humanity. Paul insists that his life is in service to all non-Jews.

1.16–17: The theme of the letter. 16: *Not ashamed*, a rhetorical trope to express the positive opposite of the negative statement. *The gospel* is *the power of God,* not a set of doctrines. The purpose of the gospel is *salvation* and *everyone who has faith* may benefit from its saving power. Paul reminds his hearers, who are primarily non-Jews (see 11.17–24), that the gospel first came to *the Jew.* **17:** *Righteousness of God*, a central theme in Romans (see

written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."[a]

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; 21 for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools; 23 and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. 29 They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters,[b] insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.

2 Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. 2 You say,[c] "We know

[a] Or *The one who is righteous through faith will live*
[b] Or *God-hated*
[c] Gk lacks *You say*

also 3.21–26). God's righteousness is God's character which desires justice (the Gk word for "righteousness" also means "justice") for all God's creation. It is God, not Paul, who is revealing righteousness (10.3). *Through faith* may refer to the faithfulness of God or perhaps of Jesus, while *for faith* is human trust in God. God gives God's own righteousness to those who have faith, and the result is life. Paul quotes Hab 2.4 in order to summarize the connection between the revelation of God's righteousness, and the reception of that righteousness by faith, and life; see the alternate translation of Hab 2.4 in textual note *a*.

1.18–32: Revelation of God's wrath. 18: *The wrath of God* reflects the human situation without the grace of God (3.22–23). Here God's wrath is passive; God responds to human unrighteousness by handing humanity over (1.24,26,28). *Ungodliness and wickedness* (lit., "unrighteousness"), which is the opposite of God's righteous character, result from humans being willing to *suppress the truth.* **20:** This is why *there is no excuse.* **21:** Humans *knew God* but made the fateful error of not honoring or thanking God. **24:** *God gave them up,* lit., "God handed them over"; also vv. 26,28. This expression evokes the image of handing over to an enemy. Later it will be clear that Paul thinks that as a consequence of humanity's choice, humanity is under sin's power (3.9n.; 6.6). **25:** Humanity knew the truth about God, but *they exchanged* it. Note the repetition of the idea of "exchange," vv. 23,25,26. **25:** An example, among others, that Paul gives of the consequences of not honoring and thanking God is that women *exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural*, just as men did. Whether Paul is talking about heterosexual people engaging in homosexual acts (that is, acts that are "unnatural" for heterosexuals) is unclear. It is uncertain whether Paul or his Jewish contemporaries ever considered the possibility of same-gender sexual orientation. **29:** The consequence of not acknowledging God is that humanity is *filled with every kind of wickedness*, which Paul goes on to itemize; for similar lists, see Gal 5.19–21; 1 Tim 1.9–10. **32:** The evidence of humanity's self-inflicted predicament is that we choose to do things that we know mean that we *deserve to die.*

2.1–16: All humanity will be judged. 1: Paul challenges an imaginary interlocutor for *passing judgment on another*, while mistakenly assuming that he will not be judged by God. **2:** The words *you say*, which are not

that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth." [3] Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? [4] Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? [5] But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. [6] For he will repay according to each one's deeds: [7] to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; [8] while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. [9] There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, [10] but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. [11] For God shows no partiality.

[12] All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. [13] For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. [14] When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. [15] They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them [16] on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.

[17] But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God [18] and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, [19] and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, [20] a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, [21] you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? [22] You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? [23] You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? [24] For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

in the Gk, have been added to make it clear that what follows are words attributed to the interlocutor. Some interpreters suggest that Paul is addressing Jews who condemn Gentiles for the deeds in 1.18–32. However, Paul does not address fellow Jews directly until 2.17. **3:** Paul is probably addressing all of humanity, *whoever you are*, since, as Paul will state, there is no one who is righteous (3.10). **5:** *The day of wrath*, which is the expected culmination of the current revelation of God's wrath (1.18), refers to God's final judgment on humanity; see also 14.10; 1 Cor 4.4–5; 2 Cor 5.10; 1 Thess 1.9–10. Paul believes that when judgment occurs in the future it will finally end humanity's subservience to sin and creation's bondage to decay (8.21). **6:** At the day of wrath, God will *repay according to each one's deeds* (lit., "works"). See Prov 24.12; also Ps 62.12. **9:** This verse, which appears to contradict Paul's earlier statement that God saves everyone who has faith (1.16), might be read as a building block in argument. In the immediate context it builds toward Paul's statement in v. 11. **11:** *God shows no partiality,* might have been offensive to *the Jew*; Jews believed that they were God's chosen people to whom God was partial. Both here and at 1.16 Paul maintains the priority of the Jew in God's purposes and care. Israel's election is irrevocable (11.28). **12:** Sin is judged whether or not people are aware of the law. Those who are *apart from the law*, that is, the Gentiles, will be judged (*perish* and *judge* appear to have parallel meanings). Those who are *under the law*, that is the Jews, will be judged by the law. **13:** The statement that it is *the doers of the law who will be justified* serves as a building block in Paul's argument toward his central conviction that all have sinned and consequently justification comes only as God's gift through faith (3.23-25). **14–15:** Gentiles can do the law *instinctively* (lit., "by nature") by means of the guidance of their *conscience. Written on their hearts*, cf. Jer 31.33.

2.17–29: Who is a Jew? 17: Paul turns to a Jewish interlocutor who is proud of a relationship to God grounded in the law. **18.** *Know his will* (Ps 40.8; Bar 4.4), a positive feature of Jewish piety. **19.** *A guide . . . a light*, see Isa 42.6–7. **21–24.** Each sentence could be read as a statement rather than a question. As questions, these sentences interrogate an imagined interlocutor. The scriptural citation in v. 24 (Isa 52.5) could serve as the evidence for a

25 Circumcision indeed is of value if you
obey the law; but if you break the law, your
circumcision has become uncircumcision.
26 So, if those who are uncircumcised keep
the requirements of the law, will not their
uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?
27 Then those who are physically uncircum-
cised but keep the law will condemn you that
have the written code and circumcision but
break the law. 28 For a person is not a Jew who
is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision
something external and physical. 29 Rather,
a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and
real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it
is spiritual and not literal. Such a person
receives praise not from others but from God.

3 Then what advantage has the Jew?
Or what is the value of circumcision?
2 Much, in every way. For in the first place the
Jews[a] were entrusted with the oracles of God.
3 What if some were unfaithful? Will their
faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?
4 By no means! Although everyone is a liar, let
God be proved true, as it is written,

"So that you may be justified in your
words,
and prevail in your judging."[b]

5 But if our injustice serves to confirm the
justice of God, what should we say? That God
is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in
a human way.) 6 By no means! For then how
could God judge the world? 7 But if through
my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to
his glory, why am I still being condemned as
a sinner? 8 And why not say (as some people
slander us by saying that we say), "Let us do
evil so that good may come"? Their condem-
nation is deserved!

9 What then? Are we any better off?[c] No,
not at all; for we have already charged that
all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the
power of sin, 10 as it is written:

"There is no one who is righteous, not
even one;
11 there is no one who has
understanding,
there is no one who seeks God.
12 All have turned aside, together they have
become worthless;
there is no one who shows kindness,
there is not even one."
13 "Their throats are opened graves;
they use their tongues to deceive."
"The venom of vipers is under their lips."
14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and
bitterness."
15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
16 ruin and misery are in their paths,
17 and the way of peace they have not
known."
18 "There is no fear of God before their
eyes."

19 Now we know that whatever the law
says, it speaks to those who are under the law,
so that every mouth may be silenced, and the
whole world may be held accountable to God.

[a] Gk *they*
[b] Gk *when you are being judged*
[c] Or *at any disadvantage?*

statement of the charge in v. 23. **25:** Even *circumcision* (the sign of the covenant between God and the Jews; Gen 17.1–4) does not determine those who carry out God's will. **29:** When Paul writes that a *person is a Jew who is one inwardly,* he is not calling for Jews to abandon circumcision. Rather, like the law and the prophets (Deut 10.16; 30.6; Jer 4.4; 9.26), Paul asks his fellow Jews to let the meaning of circumcision transform their hearts. Paul's aim here is to support his upcoming declaration (3.9) that even Jews need the gospel.

3.1–8: The faithfulness and justice of God. 1: Paul responds to the legitimate concerns Jews might have about God's trustworthiness if, after God's election they do not have an *advantage.* **2–3:** God *entrusted* God's *oracles* (that is, Scripture) to the Jews and remains faithful to them. **4.** *Everyone is a liar,* Ps 116.11; *"So that you may be justified. . .,"* Ps 51.4. **5–8:** Paul addresses a negative characterization of his gospel: that since *the justice of God* (in Gk this is the same phrase as in 1.17, where it is translated "the righteousness of God") is clearly demonstrated when it is contrasted to *our injustice*; those who say *"Let us do evil so that good may come"* are presenting a slanderous misrepresentation of his message.

3.9–20: No one is righteous. 9: Despite the Jews' advantages, *both Jews and Greeks* (i.e., the whole of humanity) are in the same predicament, *under the power of sin.* Sin for Paul is personified as an active, God-defying agent that enslaves humanity by provoking sinful actions. Paul develops this idea in chs 6–7. **10–12:** Pss 14.1–2; 53.1–2. **13:** Pss 5.9; 140.3. **14:** Ps 10.7. **15–17:** Isa 59.7–8; Prov 1.16. **18:** Ps 36.1. **19:** *Under the law*, see 2.12n.

20 For "no human being will be justified in
his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for
through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

21 But now, apart from law, the right-
teousness of God has been disclosed, and is
attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the
righteousness of God through faith in Jesus
Christ[a] for all who believe. For there is no dis-
tinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short
of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified
by his grace as a gift, through the redemption
that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put for-
ward as a sacrifice of atonement[b] by his blood,
effective through faith. He did this to show his
righteousness, because in his divine forbear-
ance he had passed over the sins previously
committed; 26 it was to prove at the present
time that he himself is righteous and that he
justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.[c]

27 Then what becomes of boasting? It is
excluded. By what law? By that of works? No,
but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that a
person is justified by faith apart from works
prescribed by the law. 29 Or is God the God of
Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also?
Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one; and
he will justify the circumcised on the ground
of faith and the uncircumcised through that
same faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law
by this faith? By no means! On the contrary,
we uphold the law.

4 What then are we to say was gained by[d]
Abraham, our ancestor according to
the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by
works, he has something to boast about, but
not before God. 3 For what does the scrip-
ture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was
reckoned to him as righteousness." 4 Now
to one who works, wages are not reckoned
as a gift but as something due. 5 But to one
who without works trusts him who justi-
fies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as

[a] Or *through the faith of Jesus Christ*
[b] Or *a place of atonement*
[c] Or *who has the faith of Jesus*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *say about*

20: *The law* brings the *knowledge of sin* (see 7.7–12), but doing the law cannot make humans righteous (*justified*). Ps 143.2 supports the conclusion that doing *deeds prescribed by the law* (lit., "works of law") is not the means of being *justified.* Rather, it is necessary to be released from sin's power in order to be righteous/justified in God's sight.

3.21–26: God's righteousness in Christ Jesus. 21: *Now . . . the righteousness of God has been disclosed* (lit., "revealed"), see 1.17, where the phrase "righteousness of God" is first introduced. Paul says that it is being revealed (a different Gk word for "reveal") in the gospel. *Apart* has a spatial sense. God's righteousness is revealed in a place outside the law, although it is also *attested* (lit., "witnessed") *by the law and the prophets,* i.e., the Jewish scriptures as a whole. **22:** The Gk can also be understood as referring to Christ's own faith (also v. 26; Gal 2.16,20; 3.22; Phil 3.9; see textual notes *a* and *c*). If this reading is chosen, it does not eliminate the need for human faith as well: God's righteousness through the faith of Jesus Christ is available *for all who believe.* **24:** *Now justified*, "now" is not in the Gk; "justified" is the verbal form (lit., "being justified") of the Gk word translated as "righteousness" in v. 21. See also 1.17; 3.5,25,26. *Redemption* refers to buying a slave out of captivity and connotes liberation or deliverance. **25:** *Sacrifice of atonement* translates Gk "hilastērion." This word, found only here and at Heb 9.5 in the NT, can be translated as "place of atonement," "atonement," "expiation, "propitiation," "sacrifice of reconciliation," "sacrifice." **26:** *Prove,* the same Gk word translated "show" in v. 25. *Faith in Jesus,* or "the faith of Jesus"; see v. 22n.

3.27–31: Righteousness received by faith. 27: *Law of faith*, the principle of faith (see "law" as "principle" also at 7.21–23); or the law taken in hand by faith and so fulfilled by being in Christ (as at 8.1–4). **31:** *By this faith*, while "this" is not in the Gk, the translation does draw attention to the fundamental matter of faith for both those who are *circumcised* (i.e., Jews) and those who are *uncircumcised* (the rest of humanity). *We uphold the law* presents an idea that Paul will develop in the following chapters.

4.1–12: Abraham made righteous by faith. 1: *Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh* refers to the Jews' belief that their ethnic genealogy goes back to Abraham. **3:** Gen 15.6 (also in Gal 3.6; and Jas 2.23, which draws a different conclusion on the basis of this scripture). **5:** *Him who justifies the ungodly* refers to God's unique ability to reckon the ungodly righteous (see also v. 6). *Ungodly* includes all humanity (3.19–20,23). *Such faith* refers to faith as exemplified in Abraham: faith that *trusts* in recognition that being made righteous (justified) is the work

righteousness. 6 So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

7 "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;
8 blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin."

9 Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We say, "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness." 10 How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, 12 and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised.

13 For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

16 For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, 17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 18 Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already[a] as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. 20 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 Therefore his faith[b] "was reckoned to him as righteousness." 23 Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *already*
[b] Gk *Therefore it*

of God, not the consequence of *works*, that is, human striving to be good in God's sight; *trusts* translates the same Gk word as "believed" in 4.3. **6–8:** Paul supports his interpretation of Genesis by quoting Ps 32.1–2. God's grace is seen in God's willingness *not* to *reckon sin. Sin* here is transgression of God's will for humanity to do only good. *Reckon* is a commercial term meaning to repay. Paul contrasts that sort of transaction with the gift of justification/being made righteous (3.24). **9:** See v. 3n. **10–11:** Abraham was justified (Gen 15.6) *before he was circumcised* (Gen 17.24). Paul uses the sequence of the Genesis story to bolster his claim that the blessedness of being reckoned righteous on the basis of faith is available to *all who believe* whether or not they are *circumcised* (that is, are Jews). **12:** The *circumcised* may also have righteousness reckoned to them, as long as they follow Abraham's *example of faith*, that is, his trust in God's capacity to give righteousness to the ungodly (4.5).

4.13–25: God's promise to Abraham extends to all who share his faith. 13: Paul echoes Jewish interpretation of God's promise to Abraham (Gen 12.3) as being the inheritance of *the world* (*Jub*. 19.21; cf. *2 Bar*. 14.13). *Righteousness of faith*, that is, righteousness that comes through faith. **15:** *Wrath* here refers to God's response to transgression of the law (cf. the curses on those who disobey the law in Lev 27; Deut 28). Paul offers a different perspective on God's wrath at 1.18. **17:** Gen 17.5. *Life to the dead*, alludes both to Abraham's dead body (4.19) and God's raising Jesus from the dead (4.24). *Calls into existence*, refers not only to the birth of Isaac but to God's capacity to bring righteousness where it does not exist. Paul may also be working with the conviction that God created all out of nothing; see 2 Macc 7.28; *2 Bar*. 21.4; 48.8. **18:** Gen 15.5. **19:** Gen 17.17; 18.11. **20:** *Distrust*, lit., "lack of faith." **22:** See vv. 3n.,9. **25:** *Handed over*, the same Gk word translated "gave up" in 1.24,26,28; see

5 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2] through whom we have obtained access[b] to this grace in which we stand; and we[c] boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. [3] And not only that, but we[c] also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, [5] and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

[6] For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. [7] Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. [8] But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. [9] Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.[d] [10] For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. [11] But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

[12] Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— [13] sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. [14] Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

[15] But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. [16] And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. [17] If, because of the one man's

[a] Other ancient authorities read *let us*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *by faith*
[c] Or *let us*
[d] Gk *the wrath*

1.24n. Elsewhere Paul describes *death* as an enemy (1 Cor 15.26). See also 1 Cor 11.23 and Isa 53.4–5,11–12. *For our trespasses,* on account of humanity's sins. *For our justification,* for the sake of humanity being made righteous.

5.1–5: The state of being justified. 1: *Therefore* signifies that which follows from what he has just said. *Justified,* lit., "having been made/pronounced righteous." **2:** Here to *boast* (and at 5.3,11) is good. Contrast 2.17; 3.27. *Sharing the glory of God* is the opposite of humanity's state under sin's power (3.9–23). God's "glory" sums up all of God's attributes. Because of Christ we may anticipate participating in that glory. **3:** *Our sufferings*, afflictions and hardships integral to "this present time" (8.18). See also 8.35; 12.12. **5:** *God's love* for us that, being *poured into our hearts*, frees us to love God, transforming us from being God's enemies (5.10). See also 5.8; 8.39. Reference to the *Holy Spirit* anticipates Paul's description in ch 8 of the importance of the Spirit's presence and work for the justified.

5.6–11: Christ's death has justified us. 6: Paul equates being *weak*, that is, helpless in the face of sin's power, with being *ungodly*; see 4.5. *At the right time,* lit., "at that time." **8:** *For us*, for our sakes. **9:** *We shall be saved,* being justified assures final salvation; cf. 8.24, where salvation is a present state. *The wrath of God*, or simply *the wrath* (see textual note *d*), refers to a future manifestation of wrath; see 2.5n.; 1 Thess 1.10. **10:** *Reconciled* is another way Paul speaks about being made righteous/justified. *By* (i.e., "through") *his life*, refers to Christ's resurrection. His death and risen life effected the end of humanity's enmity to God and assures salvation.

5.12–21: The story of our salvation. 12: *Therefore* (lit., "on account of this") translates a different Gk idiom than "therefore" at 5.1, indicating that what Paul says now is the conclusion to all that he has said so far. *Sin*, see 1.24. *One man*, i.e., Adam (Gen 2–3). *Death came through sin*, Paul's theology sees death and sin as interdependent (cf. 2 Esd 3.7). *All have sinned*, see 3.23. **14:** *Sin is not reckoned*, see also 7.7. **14:** *Moses*, the one who transmitted God's law to the Jewish people. *A type*, a model or pattern. *One who was to come,* Christ/Messiah. Paul presents Adam and Christ as contrasting models. Adam is the pattern for humanity that sins and dies, Christ the pattern for humanity liberated from sin and fit for life. See also 1 Cor 15.21–23,45–49. **15:** *The many* is synonymous with "all," vv. 12,18. See also v. 19. **16:** *Justification*, see 2.13; 3.20,24. *Condemnation,* see also 8.1. **17:** *Exercised*

trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. 19 For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification[a] leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6 What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8 But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. 13 No longer present your members to sin as instruments[b] of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments[b] of righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, 18 and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms

[a] Or *righteousness*
[b] Or *weapons*

dominion, lit., "ruled"; Paul emphasizes that death is rooted in Adam while life is rooted in Christ. **18–19:** *Therefore,* lit., "so then." *One man's act of righteousness* is the same as *one man's obedience.* This may refer to Christ's faith; see 3.22n.,26. Obedience and faith are synonymous for Paul; see 1.5n. **20:** *Trespass multiplied,* see 7.7–8.

6.1–23: Living in Christ Jesus. 1–2: *In sin*, the domain of sin (see 5.21) is distinct from being in Christ. See also 3.9n.; 6.11,14. **3–5:** *Baptized into his death,* by baptism the believer is united with Christ (see v. 5) and so with the one death that ended in life, thereby defeating sin's power. See 5.12. *Might walk*, that is, conduct our lives. *Newness of life,* sharing in Christ's resurrection life. *If,* better "since." **6:** *Old self*, our old humanity rooted in Adam. *Crucified,* see also Gal 2.20. *Body of sin*, "body," as at 12.1, indicates the whole person; here, the person *enslaved to sin.* See 1.24; 3.9. **11:** *Must consider*, for Paul this expression implies a firm conviction which determines how believers live. *In Christ Jesus*, the new environment inhabited by those who are liberated from the domain of sin; the realm where grace rules. **13:** *Your members,* the constituent parts of the whole person, physical and internal. *To sin*, i.e., to sin's power, from which those who are in Christ Jesus have been freed. **14:** *Under*, Paul's anthropology is that humans serve either sin, death, and law (see 7.6–24), or God (see v. 22), characterized as *grace.* **16:** *If,* better "when." **17:** *Form of teaching,* lit., "type (pattern) of teaching." See 15.14–15. **18:** *Slaves of righteousness,* see also v. 22. **19:** *Sanctification,* holiness, which is the goal of being made righteous through faith; the daily task of

because of your natural limitations.[a] For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

20 When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7 Do you not know, brothers and sisters[b]—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during that person's lifetime? 2 Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

4 In the same way, my friends,[b] you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

7 What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived 10 and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

13 Did what is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.[c]

[a] Gk *the weakness of your flesh*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Gk *sold under sin*

those who are justified/made righteous. See 12.1–2. **21:** *Advantage,* lit., "fruit." **22:** *Eternal life*, see 5.21. **23:** *Wages . . . free gift*, Paul contrasts two entirely different categories of transactions, summarizing his previous emphasis on the "much more" of God's work in Christ (5.9,15,17,20).

7.1–13: Sin and the law. 1: *The law*, refers to the Jewish law and perhaps also to Roman law. **4:** *Died to the law,* see also 6.14. Paul envisions the law as trapped in the domain of sin from which those in Christ have been freed. Later he claims that the law is fulfilled by living in the Spirit (8.4). *To another,* that is, the risen Christ. *Bear fruit for God,* a life of holiness; see 6.19. **5:** *The flesh,* here an environment dominated by sin and death. The Dead Sea Scrolls express a similar view, referring to the dominion of sin in the flesh (1QH 4.25). See 8.4–7. *Members,* see 6.13n. **6:** *Dead to that which held us captive*, see 6.14. **7:** *I*, scholars disagree whether Paul is referring to himself alone or to a generic "I" representative of Adamic humanity (see 5.12–21). *"You shall not covet,"* Ex 20.17; Deut 5.21. **10:** Perhaps an allusion to Lev 18.5 or Deut 30.6–20. **11–13:** *Sin, seizing an opportunity*, Paul thinks that sin used the law to produce more of itself (v. 8); the law itself is *holy.* See 3.19; 6.14; 7.4.

7.14–25: The power of sin and deliverance through Jesus Christ. 14: *The law is spiritual,* see v. 13. *I am*, scholars disagree whether Paul is referring here to the condition of those who are under the power of sin (3.9) or to those who are in Christ. *Of the flesh* (lit., "fleshly"), depending on what condition Paul is referring to, this can mean either "determined by the power of the flesh" (v. 5; 8.4–7), or "made of flesh," that is, physical beings (cf. 4.1). *Sold into slavery under sin*, talking about the condition of humanity under the power of sin (3.9n.; see also

15 I do not understand my own actions. For I
do not do what I want, but I do the very thing
I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree
that the law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer
I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For
I know that nothing good dwells within me,
that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I
cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want,
but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if
I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do
it, but sin that dwells within me.

21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to
do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For
I delight in the law of God in my inmost self,
23 but I see in my members another law at war
with the law of my mind, making me captive
to the law of sin that dwells in my members.
24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue
me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to
God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the
law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to
the law of sin.

8 There is therefore now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the
law of the Spirit[a] of life in Christ Jesus has set
you[b] free from the law of sin and of death.
3 For God has done what the law, weakened
by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own
Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal
with sin,[c] he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so
that the just requirement of the law might
be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to
the flesh but according to the Spirit.[a] 5 For
those who live according to the flesh set
their minds on the things of the flesh, but
those who live according to the Spirit[a] set
their minds on the things of the Spirit.[a] 6 To
set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set
the mind on the Spirit[a] is life and peace. 7 For
this reason the mind that is set on the flesh
is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's
law—indeed it cannot, 8 and those who are in
the flesh cannot please God.

9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in
the Spirit,[a] since the Spirit of God dwells in

[a] Or *spirit*
[b] Here the Greek word *you* is singular number; other ancient authorities read *me* or *us*
[c] Or *and as a sin offering*

5.12–21). **17:** *Sin that dwells within me*, another personification of sin as a God-defying power; see 3.9n. and v. 20. **18:** *In my flesh*, see v. 14n. **21:** *Law,* here probably meaning "norm," or "principle," giving the sense of inevitability; see 3.27n. **23:** *Members*, here our bodies as opposed to the "inmost self," v. 22. See 6.13 for a slightly different use of the word. *Law,* see v. 21. This and the previous verses resonate with passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially 1QS 3.13–4.26. **24:** *Body of death*, probably means body under the dominion of death. See 5.12; 6.14. Deliverance comes *through Jesus Christ* and his lordship which is stronger than the power of sin, death and the flesh. **25:** Some think this sentence may have originally appeared before v. 24, others that it was added by a copyist.

8.1–4: What God has done for humanity. 1: *Now no condemnation*, as a result of God's action (v. 3), humanity is released from subservience to sin, death, and the flesh (see 6.14) and from deserved condemnation (see 5.16,18). *In Christ Jesus* is the new environment God offers for humanity to inhabit. **2:** *Law of the Spirit of life*, refers to the principle or ruling function of the Holy Spirit in the domain of Christ Jesus. The alternative *spirit* in textual note *a* is misleading, since Paul's focus in these verses is on God's Spirit (v. 9). *Law of sin and death,* refers to the powers of sin and death which regulated humanity's existence until God delivered us; see 5.12–21; ch 6. **3:** *The law*, here the Jewish law, as at 2.12–15; 3.20–21; 7.14. *The flesh*, see 7.5. *Likeness of sinful flesh* (lit., "in the likeness of the flesh of sin"), alludes to God's Son's complete identification with humanity's predicament, but without being identical to us; he is not enslaved to sin's power. See 2 Cor 5.21. *To deal with sin,* lit., "for the sake of, or concerning, sin"; the translation *as a sin offering* (textual note *c*) is a particular theological interpretation of the Gk. *In the flesh,* see 7.5. **4:** *Just requirement,* see 7.12. *Walk,* see 6.4. *Flesh . . . Spirit*, opposing domains (see v. 6) regulated in the first instance by sin and death, and in the second by righteousness and life (see vv. 9–10). Being in the Spirit, which is another way Paul speaks of being in Christ Jesus (see 8.1), allows for the law to be fulfilled, whereas life in the flesh does not (see 7.5).

8.5–17: Life in the Spirit. 5: *Flesh*, see 7.5. **6:** See v. 4n. **7–8:** See 7.5n. *Hostile to God*, see 5.10. **9–10:** *In the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells*, indicates the complete transformation offered in the domain of the Spirit; those

you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit[a] is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ[b] from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through[c] his Spirit that dwells in you.

12 So then, brothers and sisters,[d] we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba![e] Father!" 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness[f] with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the

[a] Or *spirit*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *the Christ* or *Christ Jesus* or *Jesus Christ*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *on account of*
[d] Gk *brothers*
[e] Aramaic for *Father*
[f] Or *15a spirit of adoption, by which we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16The Spirit itself bears witness*

in Christ Jesus both live in the Spirit and the Spirit lives in them. Paul can speak of the Spirit and *Christ* interchangeably. The Spirit *is life because of righteousness,* that is, existence in and through God's Spirit means having resurrection life as a present promise (see 6.4n.) on account of the good news of the justifying power of God (see 1.16–17). **11:** *Will give life,* refers to the resurrection at Christ's return; see 5.10; 6.5,8; 1 Cor 15.12–24,50–57. **13:** *Put to death the deeds of the body*, indicates the capacity available to those who live in Christ. See also 6.11–14. This God-given ability is in stark contrast to the predicament of those who live under the power of sin (see 1.18–32; 3.9–10). *Deeds* (lit., "practices") *of the body* refers to actions that result from the continuing existence and influence of sin, despite being in Christ/the Spirit. **15–16:** *Spirit of adoption*, the Spirit does not make us slaves but adopted children; see also Gal 4.5–7. *Abba! Father!*, this Spirit-prompted exclamation gives evidence with *our spirit* (the human spirit) that we are God's own children, in contrast to our previous hostility toward God (8.7; 5.10). *Abba* is an Aramaic word which Jesus may have used in his own prayer (Mk 14.26). **17:** *Joint heirs*, see 8.39. *If, in fact, we suffer with him*, "if" can mean "seeing that," indicating that this is in fact the case (see v. 18). Three words in this verse emphasize union with Christ: "joint heirs," "suffer with," and "glorified with." See also 6.3–5.

8.18–25: Sufferings and glory. 18. *Sufferings,* see 5.3–4. Being in Christ does not insulate believers from hardships. *This present time,* probably another way Paul speaks of "the present evil age" (see Gal 1.4). See also 3.26. *Glory,* see 5.2 and v. 17. See also Phil 3.21. *To be revealed,* "reveal" translates the same Greek word used in 1.17 in relation to the gospel's revelation of the righteousness of God, and in 1.18 concerning God's wrath. This word appears also in v. 19. **19:** *Creation waits,* Paul personifies creation, and attaches the same verbs to creation and humanity, "wait" (vv. 19,23,25) and "groan" (v. 23). The inseparability of creation and humanity is emphasized. *Children of God*, see vv. 16–17,29. **20–21:** *Futility,* another image for creation being in *bondage to decay*. This echoes Gen 3.17–19 where God curses the earth that Adam must nevertheless work. **22:** *Labor pains,* Paul uses the image of labor pangs to describe the struggle involved in the transition from the present time to a glorious future. See also 1 Thess 5.3; Mk 13.8. This image also appears in Jewish apocalyptic literature (e.g., *1 En.* 62.). **23:** *First fruits of the Spirit,* the first part of the harvest that represents what is to come. See 8.11. *Wait for adoption*, here "adoption" is future, in comparison to 8.15. *Redemption of our bodies*, "redemption" means liberation (see 3.24n.). "Our bodies" may refer simply to "our selves," or to the expectation that God will raise our bodies now

redemption of our bodies. 24 For in[a] hope
we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not
hope. For who hopes[b] for what is seen? 25 But
if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for
it with patience.

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our
weakness; for we do not know how to pray
as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes[c]
with sighs too deep for words. 27 And God,[d]
who searches the heart, knows what is the
mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit[e] inter-
cedes for the saints according to the will of
God.[f]

28 We know that all things work together
for good[g] for those who love God, who are
called according to his purpose. 29 For those
whom he foreknew he also predestined to be
conformed to the image of his Son, in order
that he might be the firstborn within a large
family.[h] 30 And those whom he predestined he
also called; and those whom he called he also
justified; and those whom he justified he also
glorified.

31 What then are we to say about these
things? If God is for us, who is against us?
32 He who did not withhold his own Son,
but gave him up for all of us, will he not
with him also give us everything else?
33 Who will bring any charge against God's
elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to
condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes,
who was raised, who is at the right hand of
God, who indeed intercedes for us.[i] 35 Who
will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will hardship, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
36 As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all day
long;
we are accounted as sheep to be
slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than
conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For
I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor
things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor
depth, nor anything else in all creation, will
be able to separate us from the love of God in
Christ Jesus our Lord.

[a] Or *by*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *awaits*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *for us*
[d] Gk *the one*
[e] Gk *he* or *it*
[f] Gk *according to God*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *God makes all things work together for good*, or *in all things God works for good*
[h] Gk *among many brothers*
[i] Or *Is it Christ Jesus . . . for us?*

dead because of sin to life that never ends. See 8.10–11. **24–25:** See 2 Cor 5.7.

8.26–30: Conformed to Christ's image. 26: *Intercedes,* here Paul introduces another benefit of life in the Spirit; see also 8.2–17. Some manuscripts include *for us*, possibly from a copyist clarifying Paul's meaning, see v. 27. **27:** *Saints,* see 1.7n. **28:** *For good*, there are several manuscript variations of this verse; see textual note *g*. *Called,* i.e., "chosen"; see 1.1,7. *His purpose*, namely humanity's conformity to Christ; see v. 29. **29:** *Foreknew . . . predestined*, see Eph 1.4. Though from a human perspective God's intention that humans be conformed to the image of God's Son can be conceived as being prior in time, Paul affirms that there was never a moment when this was not God's will. *Firstborn*, see v. 16–17; see also Col 1.15. **30:** *Glorified*, is in the past tense, like "called" and "justified"; unlike v. 17, Paul sees temporality both from the human and divine perspective: though from our perspective being glorified is future, from God's perspective it has already occurred since it is God's will; see also v. 29n.

8.31–39: The love of God in Christ Jesus. 31: *If God is for us . . .*, cf. Ps 118.6. **32:** *Did not withhold,* lit., "spare"; see also 3.25; 4.25; 5.8; 8.3–4. *With him*, echoes Paul's concept of believers' union with Christ, see also v. 17n. **34:** *Right hand*, Christ's resurrection is integrally connected to Christ's ascension to God's side. *Intercedes*, see also v. 26 where it is the Spirit who intercedes. For Paul the activities of Christ and the Spirit are harmonious, see 8.9–10. **35:** *Love of Christ*, see v. 39 which speaks of God's love coming to us in Christ. See also 5.8. *Hardship,* the same Gk word is translated "sufferings" in 5.3. **36:** Ps 44.22. **38:** *Death . . . life,* dying or living. **39:** *Creation*, can also be translated "creature" or "created thing." The preceding list refers to things that are not God and includes also those not listed (*anything else*). *Love of God,* see 5.5n.

9 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am
not lying; my conscience confirms it by
the Holy Spirit— [2] I have great sorrow and
unceasing anguish in my heart. [3] For I could
wish that I myself were accursed and cut off
from Christ for the sake of my own people,[a]
my kindred according to the flesh. [4] They are
Israelites, and to them belong the adoption,
the glory, the covenants, the giving of the
law, the worship, and the promises; [5] to them
belong the patriarchs, and from them, ac-
cording to the flesh, comes the Messiah,[b] who
is over all, God blessed forever.[c] Amen.

[6] It is not as though the word of God had
failed. For not all Israelites truly belong to
Israel, [7] and not all of Abraham's children
are his true descendants; but "It is through
Isaac that descendants shall be named for
you." [8] This means that it is not the children
of the flesh who are the children of God, but
the children of the promise are counted as
descendants. [9] For this is what the promise
said, "About this time I will return and Sarah
shall have a son." [10] Nor is that all; something
similar happened to Rebecca when she had
conceived children by one husband, our
ancestor Isaac. [11] Even before they had been
born or had done anything good or bad (so
that God's purpose of election might con-
tinue, [12] not by works but by his call) she was
told, "The elder shall serve the younger." [13] As
it is written,

"I have loved Jacob,
but I have hated Esau."

[14] What then are we to say? Is there injus-
tice on God's part? By no means! [15] For he says
to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I
have compassion."

[16] So it depends not on human will or exer-
tion, but on God who shows mercy. [17] For the
scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you
up for the very purpose of showing my power
in you, so that my name may be proclaimed
in all the earth." [18] So then he has mercy on
whomever he chooses, and he hardens the
heart of whomever he chooses.

[19] You will say to me then, "Why then does
he still find fault? For who can resist his

[a] Gk *my brothers*
[b] Or *the Christ*
[c] Or *Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever*; or *Messiah. May he who is God over all be blessed forever*

9.1–5: Paul's love for his fellow Israelites. 1: *Not lying*, Paul is taking a solemn oath concerning the truth of his words. **3:** *According to the flesh,* see 1.3. **4–5:** *Israelites*, fellow Jews. Perhaps Paul here uses this term rather than "Jews" to evoke the closeness of God's relationship to God's chosen people. (God changes the name of Jacob, one of the founding ancestors of the Jews, to "Israel" after an intimate encounter between Jacob and God; see Gen 32.29). Paul affirms that although the majority of the Jews do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah/Christ, *they are Israelites*, that is, God's chosen people to whom *belong* the special divine gifts listed in vv. 4–5. *Adoption*, that is, as God's children (Ex 4.22; Jer 31.9). The same word appears in 8.15,23. *Glory*, God's presence (Ex 16.10; 24.16). *Covenants*, the plural is unusual, but perhaps refers to the covenants with Abraham (Gen 15.18; 17.2,7,9), with Isaac (Gen 26.3–5; Ex 2.24), and with Israel through Moses (Ex 24.7–8; Sir 44.12,18). *Giving of the law,* Ex 20.1–17; Deut 5.1–21. *Patriarchs* (lit., "the fathers"), perhaps referring to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; see 11.28. *According to the flesh,* see 1.3n.

9.6–18: God's faithfulness and freedom. 7–9: Gen 21.12; Paul interprets this scripture to prove that the *children of God* are only those who are children of the *promise* God gave to Abraham (Gen 18.10). Although Abraham had other sons (Gen 25.2,12,19), only Isaac was his heir (Gen 21.12). This passage affirms Paul's assertion that God is faithful to God's word. Earlier Paul asserted that faith alone allowed Abraham to receive God's promise (4.13). Israelites cannot count on anything other than their faith in God's promise, just as Gentiles also can only receive God's gifts through faith. **11:** *God's purpose of election might continue,* lit., "God's purpose according to election might continue, or persist." Earlier Paul spoke of God's purpose (8.28); here he speaks of the means by which God works that purpose—election, that is, God's freedom of choice. **12:** Gen 25.23. **13:** Mal 1.2–3. *Loved* and *hated*, that is, chosen and not chosen. **15:** Ex 33.19, a passage that affirms God's freedom. **16:** The same thought as v. 12, but expressed in light of the scripture in v. 15. See also v. 18. **17:** Ex 9.16. **18:** *Hardens the heart*, a reference to the Exodus story, see Ex 7.3,13–14; 8.19; 9.12; 10.1,20,27; 11.10.

9.19–29: God controls God's wrath. 21: For the image of God as a *potter*, see Isa 29.16; Jer 18.1–11; Wis 15.7.

will?" [20] But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, "Why have you made me like this?" [21] Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use? [22] What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; [23] and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— [24] including us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? [25] As indeed he says in Hosea,

"Those who were not my people I will call
'my people,'
and her who was not beloved I will call
'beloved.'"

[26] "And in the very place where it was said
to them, 'You are not my people,'
there they shall be called children of
the living God."

[27] And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the children of Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved; [28] for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively."[a] [29] And as Isaiah predicted,

"If the Lord of hosts had not left survivors[b]
to us,
we would have fared like Sodom
and been made like Gomorrah."

[30] What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; [31] but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. [32] Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, [33] as it is written,

"See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will
make people stumble, a rock that will
make them fall,
and whoever believes in him[c] will not
be put to shame."

10 Brothers and sisters,[d] my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. [2] I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. [3] For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. [4] For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

[5] Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them." [6] But the righteousness that comes from

[a] Other ancient authorities read *for he will finish his work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make the sentence shortened on the earth*
[b] Or *descendants*; Gk *seed*
[c] Or *trusts in it*
[d] Gk *Brothers*

22–23: Paul has referred to God's *wrath* several times and in various ways, see especially 1.18; 2.5–6; 4.15; 5.9. What is clear is that Paul understands God's wrath to be the fitting response to human unrighteousness. The construction of the Greek and the manuscript options make it difficult to translate and to fully understand vv. 22–23. *Prepared beforehand,* see 8.29n. **25–26:** Paul uses Hos 2.23 and 1.10, which speak of the restoration of Israel to God's favor after Israel had forsaken God, as scriptural support for his conviction that God now includes non-Jews in God's people. **27–28:** Isa 10.22–22; Hos 1.10. *Only a remnant*, the Gk does not have the word "only." **29:** Isa 1.9.

9.30–10.4: Israel's misunderstanding. 9.30–32: Paul distinguishes between *righteousness through faith* and *righteousness based on the law* (lit., "law of righteousness"): there is only one kind of righteousness, that which is through faith. Israel has misunderstood that the law of righteousness cannot be fulfilled except through faith. See 3.20–28. *Israel*, see 9.4–5n. *Stumbling stone*, it is not clear whether this refers to Christ or to the law. **10.2:** *Not enlightened,* lit., "not according to knowledge." **3:** *Submitted* resonates with Paul's claim that *God's righteousness* is a power; see 6.14n.; 8.10. See also 1.16–17. **4:** *Christ is the end of the law*, although *end* can mean either "cessation" or "goal," here it likely means the latter, as 8.3–4 suggests; see also 3.31.

10.5–13: Righteousness that comes by faith. 5: Lev 18.5. As he does elsewhere (e.g., Gal 3.11–12), Paul criticizes the notion that life comes from works of law; see also 3.20. **6–8:** Paul personifies *the righteousness that*

faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down) [7] "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). [8] But what does it say?

"The word is near you,
on your lips and in your heart"

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); [9] because[a] if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. [11] The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. [13] For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

[14] But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? [15] And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" [16] But not all have obeyed the good news;[b] for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" [17] So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.[c]

[18] But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for

"Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world."

[19] Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,

"I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation;
with a foolish nation I will make you angry."

[20] Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

"I have been found by those who did not seek me;
I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."

[21] But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

11 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. [2] God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? [3] "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars; I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." [4] But what is the divine reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." [5] So too at the present time there is

[a] Or *namely, that*
[b] Or *gospel*
[c] Or *about Christ*; other ancient authorities read *of God*

comes from faith, and has it speaking words that paraphrase Moses' words in Deut 9.4; 30.11–14. The use of *abyss*, which replaces Deuteronomy's phrase "cross to the other side of the sea," shows that Paul is using Moses' words to reference the events of Christ's death and resurrection. This confirms Paul's point in 10.4 that Christ is the "end" (i.e., goal) of the law. **9–10:** *Will be saved,* probably refers to salvation at the last judgment; see 5.9n. *Justified* is a form of the same Gk word as "righteousness." *Is saved,* lit., "for salvation." **11:** Isa 28.16 (LXX). **12:** *Jew and Greek,* see also 3.29. **13:** Joel 2.32. In Joel, *Lord* refers to God, but Paul's use of this citation makes "Lord" refer to Jesus Christ.

10.14–21: Israel's deafness to the word of Christ. 15: Isa 52.17; *bring good news,* lit., "evangelize good things." The Gk verb translated "evangelize" has the same stem as the noun translated "gospel." **16:** *Obeyed*, see 1.5. Isa 53.1 (LXX). **17:** *Word of Christ* likely means "the message about Christ"; see textual note *c*. **18:** Ps 19.4. **19:** Deut 32.21; *"those who are not a nation,"* that is, non-Jews; cf. 9.25. **20:** Isa 65.1. **21:** Isa 65.2; "held out my hands" indicates God's continual invitation to Israel.

11.1–10: God has not rejected Israel. 1: *I myself am an Israelite*, Paul's claim proves that by no means has God rejected God's people. **2:** *Foreknew,* expresses the absolute security Israel has with God. *Elijah*, the ninth–century BCE prophet whose obedience to God enabled him to defeat the prophets of the rival god, Baal (1 Kings 18.1–46). **3:** See 1 Kings 19.10. **4:** See 1 Kings 19.18, where the verb "keep" is future tense. **5–6:** *Remnant,* see 9.27.

a remnant, chosen by grace. [6] But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace.[a]

[7] What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, [8] as it is written,

"God gave them a sluggish spirit,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day."

[9] And David says,

"Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;
[10] let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and keep their backs forever bent."

[11] So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their stumbling[b] salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel[c] jealous. [12] Now if their stumbling[b] means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

[13] Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry [14] in order to make my own people[d] jealous, and thus save some of them. [15] For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead! [16] If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy.

[17] But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root[e] of the olive tree, [18] do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. [19] You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." [20] That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. [21] For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you.[f] [22] Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. [23] And even those of Israel,[g] if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. [24] For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.

[a] Other ancient authorities add *But if it is by works, it is no longer on the basis of grace, otherwise work would no longer be work*
[b] Gk *transgression*
[c] Gk *them*
[d] Gk *my flesh*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *the richness*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *neither will he spare you*
[g] Gk lacks *of Israel*

Chosen by grace, God's grace, not obedience to the law, is the basis for the God's choice. **7:** *The elect*, that is, the "remnant." *Hardened*, Paul describes what he means by this in his selection of the following scriptures. **8:** Isa 29.10; Deut 29.4. **10:** Ps 69.22–23.

11.11–24: Israel is essential to the salvation of the Gentiles. 11: *So as to fall*, that is to lose their place with God. **12:** *Defeat,* that is, failure. In context of talk of wealth, a better translation is "loss." Israel's loss results in wealth (that is, the riches of the good news) for the Gentiles. *Full inclusion,* see 11.26n. **13:** *Apostle to the Gentiles*, see 1.5. **15:** *Their rejection*, that is, Israel's rejection of the gospel. *Acceptance*, that is, of the gospel. *Life from the dead,* probably not a reference to the general resurrection but rather a succinct description of the gift of faith in Christ: being brought from death to life. **16:** *Dough*, probably a reference to Num 15.18–21. This verse, with its reference to the *root* and the *branches,* prepares for the image that dominates the next verses in which Israel is the root and the branches of the tree. **17:** *You, a wild olive shoot*, Gentile believers in Jesus. **18:** *The branches,* i.e., the branches that have been broken off. **22:** *Kindness* and *severity of God*, that is, God's mercy and judgment; aspects of God's character that Paul has highlighted throughout the letter. *Continue in his kindness*, another way of saying continue to recognize that you are saved only through faith in God's mercy; that you are saved by God's grace.

25 So that you may not claim to be wiser
than you are, brothers and sisters,[a] I want
you to understand this mystery: a hardening
has come upon part of Israel, until the full
number of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so
all Israel will be saved; as it is written,
"Out of Zion will come the Deliverer;
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob."
27 "And this is my covenant with them,
when I take away their sins."
28 As regards the gospel they are enemies of
God[b] for your sake; but as regards election
they are beloved, for the sake of their ances-
tors; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are
irrevocable. 30 Just as you were once disobe-
dient to God but have now received mercy
because of their disobedience, 31 so they
have now been disobedient in order that, by
the mercy shown to you, they too may now[c]
receive mercy. 32 For God has imprisoned all
in disobedience so that he may be merciful
to all.
33 O the depth of the riches and wisdom
and knowledge of God! How unsearchable
are his judgments and how inscrutable his
ways!
34 "For who has known the mind of the
Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?"
35 "Or who has given a gift to him,
to receive a gift in return?"
36 For from him and through him and to him
are all things. To him be the glory forever.
Amen.

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers
and sisters,[a] by the mercies of God, to
present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy
and acceptable to God, which is your spir-
itual[d] worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this
world,[e] but be transformed by the renewing
of your minds, so that you may discern what
is the will of God—what is good and accept-
able and perfect.[f]
3 For by the grace given to me I say to
everyone among you not to think of yourself
more highly than you ought to think, but to
think with sober judgment, each according to
the measure of faith that God has assigned.
4 For as in one body we have many members,
and not all the members have the same func-
tion, 5 so we, who are many, are one body
in Christ, and individually we are members
one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ
according to the grace given to us: prophecy,
in proportion to faith; 7 ministry, in minister-
ing; the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter,
in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the
leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in
cheerfulness.

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk lacks *of God*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *now*
[d] Or *reasonable*
[e] Gk *age*
[f] Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

11.25–35: All Israel will be saved. 25: *Mystery,* a divine disclosure. *A hardening has come upon part of Israel*, see 11.7n. *Full number,* lit., "fullness"; it is unclear whether this means a particular number God has ordained or all non-Jews. *Has come in,* presumably to join others who are saved by God's grace. **26:** *All Israel,* as opposed to the remnant of which Paul spoke earlier, 9.27; 11.5–7. **27:** Isa 59.20–21; 27.9 (LXX). *Zion,* a name for Jerusalem. **29:** *The gifts,* see 9.4–5. *The calling of God*, another way to speak of God's election of Israel. *Irrevocable,* see 11.1. **30:** *Disobedient* and *their disobedience* refers to lack of faith. See 1.5. **32:** *Imprisoned all in disobedience,* see 1.18–32. *Merciful to all,* articulates one of the letter's most important ideas; see 1.5,16. **34:** Isa 40.13 (LXX). **35:** Cf. Job 35.7; 41.11.

12.1–8: The holy life. 1: *Bodies*, i.e., entire selves. *Holy and acceptable to God*, because God has through Christ liberated believers from ungodliness and their previous enmity toward God; see 5.6–11. *Spiritual,* the alternative translation "reasonable" (textual note *d*) is closer to the Gk. The sense is that the fitting response to the mercy of God is to present to God our entire selves. **2:** *This world*, can also be translated as "this age," a reference to Paul's distinction between the "present evil age" (see Gal 1.4) and the new creation. *Renewing of your minds,* compare the state of having a "debased mind" (1.28). **3:** *Measure of faith,* might best be understood as "measure that is faith." Our self-assessment is to be done in the context of faith; and faith is what God has *assigned* (lit., "distributed"). Faith is understood here as a gift. **4–8:** See also 1 Cor 12.12–30. God's gifts to particular members of the church are to be used for the body of Christ.

[9] Let love be genuine; hate what is evil,
hold fast to what is good; [10] love one another
with mutual affection; outdo one another in
showing honor. [11] Do not lag in zeal, be ardent
in spirit, serve the Lord.[a] [12] Rejoice in hope,
be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.
[13] Contribute to the needs of the saints; ex-
tend hospitality to strangers.

[14] Bless those who persecute you; bless and
do not curse them. [15] Rejoice with those who
rejoice, weep with those who weep. [16] Live
in harmony with one another; do not be
haughty, but associate with the lowly;[b] do not
claim to be wiser than you are. [17] Do not repay
anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what
is noble in the sight of all. [18] If it is possible,
so far as it depends on you, live peaceably
with all. [19] Beloved, never avenge yourselves,
but leave room for the wrath of God;[c] for it is
written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says
the Lord." [20] No, "if your enemies are hungry,
feed them; if they are thirsty, give them
something to drink; for by doing this you will
heap burning coals on their heads." [21] Do not
be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with
good.

13 Let every person be subject to the
governing authorities; for there is
no authority except from God, and those
authorities that exist have been instituted by
God. [2] Therefore whoever resists authority
resists what God has appointed, and those
who resist will incur judgment. [3] For rulers
are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.
Do you wish to have no fear of the authority?
Then do what is good, and you will receive
its approval; [4] for it is God's servant for your
good. But if you do what is wrong, you should
be afraid, for the authority[d] does not bear the
sword in vain! It is the servant of God to exe-
cute wrath on the wrongdoer. [5] Therefore one
must be subject, not only because of wrath
but also because of conscience. [6] For the same
reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities
are God's servants, busy with this very thing.
[7] Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom
taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is
due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to
whom honor is due.

[8] Owe no one anything, except to love one
another; for the one who loves another has
fulfilled the law. [9] The commandments, "You
shall not commit adultery; You shall not mur-
der; You shall not steal; You shall not covet";
and any other commandment, are summed
up in this word, "Love your neighbor as your-
self." [10] Love does no wrong to a neighbor;
therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

[11] Besides this, you know what time it is,
how it is now the moment for you to wake

[a] Other ancient authorities read *serve the opportune time*
[b] Or *give yourselves to humble tasks*
[c] Gk *the wrath*
[d] Gk *it*

12.9–21: The character of Christian life. 9–10a: *Love,* Paul starts with the most excellent gift (see 1 Cor 12.31–13.1–13). **13:** *Saints,* see 1.7n. **14:** Mt 5.44. **19:** *Leave room for the wrath of God,* lit., "give place to the wrath"; as the NRSV translation indicates, interpreters understand Paul to be referring to God's eschatological wrath (see 3.5). Deut. 32.35. **20:** See Prov 25.21–22. Perhaps the reference to *burning coals* is to burning shame for having been repaid good for evil.

13.1–7: Pay to all what is due. 1: *Be subject,* indicates submission to someone else. *Governing authorities,* refers most likely to humans in power in the Roman Empire, rather than to cosmic powers such as angels (8.38). *Instituted by God,* Paul claims that God is the one who set up the governing authorities, an idea that would be surprising to those authorities who believed their powers were ordained by the Roman gods. The character of the God revealed in Jesus Christ contextualizes subjection to the governing authorities. **2:** *Will incur judgment,* lit., "will receive judgment on themselves"; whether this is the judgment of the authorities or God is not clear. Perhaps Paul here thinks of it as the same; see v. 4. **6:** *Servants,* the Gk word means people who do public work on behalf of the state.

13.8–10: Love is the fulfilling of the law. 8: *Owe,* the same Gk word translated "due" in v. 7. **9:** *The commandments* which Paul cites are found in Ex 20.13–17 and Deut 5.17–21. *Love your neighbor as yourself,* Lev. 19.18; see also Mk 12.29–31; Gal 5.14; Jas 2.8.

13.11–14: Understanding the time. 11: *Now is the moment,* lit., "the hour is already (come, or past)"; Paul urges the Roman believers to recognize that they are not in a time of waiting but a time of action. *Wake from sleep,*

from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; 12 the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 13 let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

14 Welcome those who are weak in faith,[a] but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. 2 Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. 3 Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. 4 Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord[b] is able to make them stand.

5 Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. 6 Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

7 We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister?[c] Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?[c] For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.[d] 11 For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to[e] God."

12 So then, each of us will be accountable to God.[f]

13 Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.[g] 14 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. 15 If your brother or sister[c] is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy

[a] Or *conviction*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *for God*
[c] Gk *brother*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *of Christ*
[e] Or *confess*
[f] Other ancient authorities lack *to God*
[g] Gk *of a brother*

that is, be up and ready; see also 1 Thess 5.6. *Salvation is nearer*, lit., "our salvation is nearer," likely a reference to the return of Christ (Phil 3.20–21) which will accomplish the ultimate defeat of death (1 Cor 15.26). **12:** *Put on the armor of light*, another way of saying what Paul says in v. 14. See also Gal 3.27. **14:** *Flesh,* see 7.5n.

14.1–12: Welcome, do not judge each other. 1: *Welcome,* a command to receive and accept the *weak in faith.* The "weak in faith" is probably a designation made by "the strong," among whom Paul counts himself (15.1). From the perspective of "the strong" it is weak to be scrupulous about diet and calendar observances. Nevertheless, this difference of opinion is not to divide the community. **3:** Paul's conviction is that *God has welcomed them*—both the weak and the strong—and so neither group should feel they can either *despise* or *pass judgment* on the other. See also v. 10. **4:** *Servants,* the Gk word means members of a household who cannot be freed or bought by another; they are intrinsic to the household and entirely dependent on the master. The household servants *stand or fall* on the basis of whether or not the master finds their behavior acceptable. *Upheld,* lit., "will be made to stand." **7:** *Live to ourselves . . . die to ourselves*, might be better translated "live/die for ourselves," which meaning the next verse spells out. **10:** *Judgment seat of God*, see 2.1–16. **11:** See Isa 45.23; cf. Phil 2.10–11.

14.13–23: Do not make another fall. Beyond the requirement not to judge, Paul exhorts the strong and the weak not to cause difficulties for each other by placing a "stumbling block" in each other's paths, especially in matters of dietary observance; see also 1 Cor 8.7–13. **15:** *Walking in love,* see 13.8–10.

Spirit. 18 The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. 19 Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. 20 Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; 21 it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister[a] stumble.[b] 22 The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. 23 But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith;[c] for whatever does not proceed from faith[c] is sin.[d]

15 We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. 3 For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." 4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. 5 May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, 6 so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

"Therefore I will confess[e] you among the Gentiles,
and sing praises to your name";

10 and again he says,

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people";

11 and again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples praise him";

12 and again Isaiah says,

"The root of Jesse shall come,
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;
in him the Gentiles shall hope."

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

14 I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters,[f] that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. 15 Nevertheless on some points I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17 In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. 18 For I will not venture to speak of any-

[a] Gk *brother*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *or be upset or be weakened*
[c] Or *conviction*
[d] Other authorities, some ancient, add here 16.25-27
[e] Or *thank*
[f] Gk *brothers*

23: *Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin*, whether a summary of the advice Paul has just given in a particular situation, or a general principle, this statement underscores Paul's understanding that sin is only dealt with on the basis of faith.

15.1–13: Live in harmony in accordance with Christ's example. 1: See 14.1. **3:** Ps 69.9. **7:** Cf. 14.1,3. **8:** *Servant of the circumcised*, may also be translated "servant with respect to the circumcised." "The circumcised" is another designation for Jews. *Promises*, see 9.4. **9:** Ps 18.49. **10:** Deut 32.43. **11:** Ps 117.1. **12:** Isa 11.10 (LXX). *Root of Jesse* refers to a descendant of Jesse, King David's father (Ruth 4.17; 1 Sam 17.17); cf. Rom 1.3.

15.14–33: Explanation for the letter. 15–16: *Grace . . . minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles*. As at the opening of the letter (1.5), Paul claims that God has appointed him to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. This explains why he would write to a church he had not himself evangelized. *Gospel of God*, Paul also refers to the gospel as "of Christ," see v. 19, textual note *c*. *Offering of the Gentiles*, that is, the offering that consists of the Gentiles. For

thing except what Christ has accomplished[a] through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, [19] by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God,[b] so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news[c] of Christ. [20] Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news,[c] not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation, [21] but as it is written,

"Those who have never been told of him shall see,
and those who have never heard of him shall understand."

[22] This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. [23] But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you [24] when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while. [25] At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; [26] for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. [27] They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. [28] So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected,[d] I will set out by way of you to Spain; [29] and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing[e] of Christ.

[30] I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,[f] by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, [31] that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry[g] to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, [32] so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. [33] The God of peace be with all of you.[h] Amen.

16 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon[i] of the church at Cenchreae, [2] so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.

[3] Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, [4] and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. [5] Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert[j] in Asia for Christ. [6] Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. [7] Greet Andronicus and Junia,[k] my

[a] Gk *speak of those things that Christ has not accomplished*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *of the Spirit* or *of the Holy Spirit*
[c] Or *gospel*
[d] Gk *have sealed to them this fruit*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *of the gospel*
[f] Gk *brothers*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *my bringing of a gift*
[h] One ancient authority adds 16.25-27 here
[i] Or *minister*
[j] Gk *first fruits*
[k] Or *Junias*; other ancient authorities read *Julia*

another example of people being offered to God, see Isa 66.20. **18:** *Win obedience,* see 1.5n. **19:** *Illyricum,* a Roman province on the eastern Adriatic Sea. **21:** Isa 52.15. **24:** *Sent on by you,* probably a euphemism for receiving financial support for his missionary journey to Spain. **25:** *Ministry to the saints* (see 1.7n.), the money collected by Paul from his Gentile churches; see 1 Cor 16.1–4; 2 Cor 8–9. **27:** *Share in their spiritual blessings,* see 11.17–24. **31:** *Rescued from the unbelievers in Judea,* see 1 Thess 2.14 for evidence that in Judea believers in Jesus were in danger from nonbelievers.

16.1–2: Commendation of Phoebe. 1: *Our sister,* an appellation, like "brother," for a fellow believer. *A deacon,* the Gk word can be translated as "one who serves or ministers to"; Phoebe had a leadership role in *the church at Cenchreae.* Cenchreae, a port of Corinth, Greece. **2:** *Benefactor*, lit., "patron"; Phoebe was a woman who had enough wealth to be in a patron-client relationship with Paul and others.

16.3–16: Greetings. 3: *Prisca and Aquila,* see Acts 18; 1 Cor 16.19. **5:** *Church in their house,* see 1 Cor 16.19. The first believers met in houses; see also Philem 2; Col 4.15. **7:** *Junia,* a woman's name. Many manuscripts read

relatives[a] who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. 10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. 11 Greet my relative[b] Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. 12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and greet his mother—a mother to me also. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters[c] who are with them. 15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

17 I urge you, brothers and sisters,[c] to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them. 18 For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,[d] and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. 19 For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise in what is good and guileless in what is evil. 20 The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.[e]

21 Timothy, my co-worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.[a]

22 I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord.[f]

23 Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.[g]

25 Now to God[h] who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages 26 but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom[i] be the glory forever! Amen.[j]

[a] Or *compatriots*
[b] Or *compatriot*
[c] Gk *brothers*
[d] Gk *their own belly*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack this sentence
[f] Or *I Tertius, writing this letter in the Lord, greet you*
[g] Other ancient authorities add verse 24, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.*
[h] Gk *the one*
[i] Other ancient authorities lack *to whom.* The verse then reads, *to the only wise God be the glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.*
[j] Other ancient authorities lack 16.25-27 or include it after 14.23 or 15.33; others put verse 24 after verse 27

"Junias," an otherwise unattested man's name. *Apostles*, if "Junia" is read as a woman, she is evidence for female apostleship. **16:** *Holy kiss,* see 1 Cor 16.20; 2 Cor 13.12; 1 Thess 5.26; 1 Pet 5.14.

16.17–20: Warning. Many commentators consider that these verses were not written by Paul. **17:** *Teaching*, what the Roman believers had learned from their original evangelists; see 15.14. **18:** *Appetites,* see textual note *d*; see also Phil 3.19. **20:** *Satan*, though Paul refers to Satan in his other letters (1 Cor 5.5; 7.5; 2 Cor 2.11; 11.14; 1 Thess 2.18; 2 Thess 2.9), this is the only mention in Romans.

16.21–23: Further greetings. 22: *Tertius,* Paul's secretary, who wrote down the letter as Paul dictated it; cf. 1 Cor 16.21.

16.25–27: Final doxology. See textual note *j*; because of the different locations of these verses in ancient manuscripts (in some after 14.33, in others after 15.33, and in some manuscripts these verses do not appear at all) and the atypical style and content, many think that vv. 25–27 were written by someone other than Paul. **26:** *Obedience of faith*, see 1.5n.

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

NAME AND AUTHORSHIP

The letter is named for its recipients, the community of believers in Christ in the Greek city of Corinth (see map 14 in the color map section at the end of the volume). Scholars agree that Paul was its author.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

First Corinthians affords an unparalleled glimpse into the life of an early Christian community in a Greco-Roman city. This portrait both reflects the ethical challenges faced by converts rooted in Greco-Roman polytheism and signals intense experimentation with their new social identity discovered in Messiah Jesus.

Paul's Corinth was a Roman city, refounded by order of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE after its brutal destruction by Mummius in 146 BCE. Caesar populated the colony with numerous freedmen, but the ethnic mix was more diverse a century later, including Syrians and Egyptians, along with Greeks who had immigrated from surrounding cities. The first-century CE Jewish philosopher Philo speaks of a sizeable Jewish community in Corinth; see also Acts 18.4, 7. Corinth rapidly regained its ancient prosperity owing to its favorable location, on the Isthmus. By 27 BCE, Corinth was already the capital of the senatorial province of Achaia and the judicial seat of the Roman proconsul (see Acts 18.12). Sharp contrasts between rich and poor were apparent in this flourishing commercial center. But opportunities for social advancement also existed: even freedmen held civic office (see Rom 16.23b), something uncommon elsewhere. The Isthmian Games, hosted by Corinth every two years, drew large crowds. The theater, rehabilitated by the emperor Augustus in the late first century BCE, held more than fifteen thousand spectators. The Roman-style amphitheater was one of the earliest built in the Greek world, probably dating to just after the foundation of the colony; the gladiatorial games held there during the imperial cult festivals were emulated by other Greek cities, such as Athens. The city was sacred to the goddess Aphrodite, whose famous sanctuary stood on the Acrocorinth. The temple of Asclepius, the god of healing, had extensive dining facilities. Inscriptions and dedications attest to the importance of the worship of the Roman emperor. Paul's choice of this bustling cosmopolis as one of the principal centers of his missionary activity reveals the scope of his missionary ambition.

The date of Paul's arrival in Corinth is debated by scholars. The majority place the beginning of Paul's Corinthian mission in 50 CE, correlating the account of Paul's trial before Gallio, the Roman proconsul of Achaia, in Acts 18.12–17 with an inscribed letter of the emperor Claudius to Delphi, in which Gallio's name is mentioned. A minority of scholars propose that Paul first visited Corinth in 41 CE, correlating the edict of Claudius on the Jews, as reported by Suetonius and Cassius Dio, with the account in Acts 18.1–2 that Aquila and Priscilla had relocated from Italy to Corinth, "because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome." The account of Paul's activity in Corinth in Acts 18.1–18 is incomplete and anecdotal, but can be supplemented by information from Paul's letters. Upon arrival in Corinth, Paul found lodging with Aquila and his wife Priscilla, both Jews and of the same trade as Paul. Paul preached in the synagogue every sabbath; Greeks were among those whom Paul tried to persuade. In response to opposition from some Jews, Paul withdrew from the synagogue and began preaching in the house of a "godfearer" named Titius Justus. Paul names Stephanas and his household as the first coverts of the Roman province of Achaia in southern Greece (1 Cor 16.15; 1.16). The author of Acts attributes sensational importance to the conversion of the synagogue president Crispus: "Many of the Corinthians believed and had themselves baptized when they heard [of it]"—that is, of the conversion of Crispus (Acts 18.8). As Paul represents it, most of his converts were lower class, lacking in education, wealth, and birth (1 Cor 1.26–28). But Paul also baptized a few wealthy persons, such as Gaius (1.14), who eventually became the "host . . . of the whole church" (Rom 16.23). After Paul left Corinth, confusion arose among the new converts regarding boundaries between the church and the larger society, prompting Paul to write the letter on association with "immoral" persons and "idolaters," to which reference is made in 1 Cor 5.9–10. While Paul was in Ephesus, the Corinthians sent him a letter, seeking his advice on several issues, including marriage, food sacrificed to idols, spiritual gifts, and other matters (7.1; 8.1; 12.1; 16.1,12). At some point after Paul's founding visit, another Christian teacher

visited Corinth, an Alexandrian Jew named Apollos, "an eloquent man, powerful in the [exposition of] scriptures" (Acts 18.24). Apollos made a strong impression on the Corinthians, especially upon the elite who valued proficiency in philosophy and rhetoric. Factions formed within the church, with members declaring support for one teacher or another (1 Cor 1.10–12; 3.4).

LITERARY HISTORY

Most scholars view the writing known as 1 Corinthians as a single, unified composition. But its abrupt transitions, frequent changes of theme, and generally loose construction have raised questions about its integrity. Assigning portions of 1 Corinthians to separate letters would be justified only if the passages in question presupposed different situations. This appears to be the case in three instances: Paul's attitude toward the factions (contrast 11.18–19 with 1.10–12), Paul's advice on food sacrificed to idols (contrast 10.1–11.1 with 8.1–13), and Paul's announcement of his travel plans (contrast 16.5–9 with 4.17–21). Hence, some scholars have divided 1 Corinthians into three letters, composed in the following order: Letter A, On Association with the Immoral and Idolaters (10.1–22; 6.12–20; 10.23–11.34); Letter B, In Response to the Corinthians' Questions (7–9; 12–16); Letter C, Counsel of Concord (1.1–6.11).

The strongest argument for the unity of the present text derives from rhetorical analysis, which identifies 1 Corinthians as a deliberative appeal for concord (1.1–4.21), with advice on divisive issues organized under subheadings (5.1–16.24). Yet a single letter may not be consistent with the several occasions and sources of information evident in the text: an anonymous report (11.18), the Corinthians' letter (7.1), a visit by Stephanas (16.17), and a report from "Chloe's people" (1.11). Whether 1 Corinthians is one letter or several, the place of composition was western Asia Minor (1 Cor. 16.19), probably Ephesus. According to the traditional chronology of Paul's life, the date of composition would be in the mid-50s CE.

INTERPRETATION

In 1 Corinthians Paul shows remarkable familiarity with the culture of his converts and with its forms of discourse: for example, ch 7 shows Paul conversant with Cynic-Stoic views of marriage (like those of Musonius and Epictetus); 9.24–27 employs an athletic metaphor from the Isthmian Games; ch 13 praises *agape* ("love"), a Christian counterpart to the praise of *eros* ("sexual love") in Plato's *Symposium*; ch 15 offers a reasoned proof of the resurrection of the body, analogous to philosophical arguments for the immortality of the soul in Plato and Cicero; chs 1–4 evoke the language of Corinth's colonial charter, in seeking to establish a constitution for the *ekklesia* ("church, assembly"; see 1.2n.) of Christ-believers. In several passages, Paul addresses a group whose opinions on a variety of subjects—eating meat sacrificed to idols, financial support of missionaries, speaking in tongues, the resurrection of the dead, going to court before unbelievers—diverge sharply from his own. The attitudes of this group ("the strong") correlate with those typically held by persons of high social status and education.

First Corinthians demonstrates Paul's capacity to think through the social and ethical implications of the new being "in Christ": for example, his exhortation to share with "the have-nots" at the communal meal, so as to "discern the body" of Christ (11.17–34); and his insight into the paradoxical power of "the word of the cross" (1.18) to call, redeem, and sanctify the low and despised of this world, "the nothings and nobodies."

Laurence L. Welborn

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord[a] and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I give thanks to my[b] God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, 5 for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— 6 just as the testimony of[c] Christ has been strengthened among you— 7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,[d] by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters.[e] 12 What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." 13 Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of

[a] Gk *theirs*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *my*
[c] Or *to*
[d] Gk *brothers*
[e] Gk *my brothers*

1.1–3: Prescript and Greeting. The prescript of Paul's letters has the same form found in many papyrus letters of antiquity: the names of the sender and the addressees, with a short greeting. **1:** "Paulos" is the Greek form of a Latin cognomen ("Paulus"), meaning "small, of little significance," perhaps a self-deprecatory nickname expressing the apostle's sense of humility. Paul's sense of being *called* as *an apostle* is vividly described in Gal 1.15–16. *Christ* is not part of the proper name of *Jesus*, but is the Gk translation of Heb *mashiaḥ*, "the anointed," that is, the Messiah; Paul is the emissary of Messiah Jesus. It is not certain whether *Sosthenes* named here as a Christian *brother* is the same person as the synagogue president of Acts 18.17. **2:** *Church of God* (Gk "ekklesia theou") may be a translation of Heb *qahal Yahweh* ("assembly of Yahweh") expressing a sense of divine election; but "ekklesia" was the designation of the city "assembly" of Corinth, so that *church of God* may have evoked a sense of belonging to an alternative community. **2b:** This phrase is likely a gloss added to the prescript in order to make Paul's advice applicable to *all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, an indication that the original letter has been edited. **3:** The greeting *grace and peace* derives from older Jewish formulas (see *Apoc. Bar.* 78.2), but embodies the essence of Paul's own experience of God in Christ.

1.4–9: Thanksgiving. The thanksgiving is a standard feature of the prescripts of Paul's letters, comparable to the assurance of prayer for the addressees of other ancient letters. **4:** Paul gives thanks for the *grace of God . . . given* to the Corinthians, not for their "labor of love" as in 1 Thess 1.3. **5:** Because *speech* and *knowledge* are attainments of which the Corinthians are proud (1.17; 8.1–2; 13.1–2), Paul's selective mention of these gifts has an ironic quality, enhanced by the hyperbolic phrases, *in every way . . . of every kind.* **8:** Paul's assurance that God *will . . . strengthen* the Corinthians contains a mild reproach of their instability. *The day of our Lord* is an apocalyptic term for the day of judgment; see 3.13; 4.5.

1.10–17: Divisions in the church. Paul describes the situation in the church of Corinth in terms also used by political orators to characterize conflicts within city-states: *divisions* and *quarrels* are synonyms for discord, and Paul's appeal to *be in agreement* and *be united in the same mind and the same purpose* echoes the language of speeches on concord. **11:** Mention of *Chloe* without introduction indicates that she and her *people* (probably slaves) were known to the Corinthians and that she probably lived in Corinth. **12:** Paul caricatures the Corinthians' partisanship using slogans like those shouted by fans of star performers in the amphitheater. *Apollos,* from Alexandria in Egypt, was an eloquent early Christian preacher according to Acts 18.24–28; see also 1 Cor 3.4–6; 4.6; 16.12. *Cephas,* the Aramaic form of Peter's name. The climactic slogan, *I belong to Christ*, is added for ironic effect, and does not indicate the existence of a "Christ-party." **13:** Paul's rhetorical question, *Has Christ*

Paul? [14] I thank God[a] that I baptized none of
you except Crispus and Gaius, [15] so that no
one can say that you were baptized in my
name. [16] (I did baptize also the household
of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know
whether I baptized anyone else.) [17] For Christ
did not send me to baptize but to proclaim
the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom,
so that the cross of Christ might not be emp-
tied of its power.

[18] For the message about the cross is fool-
ishness to those who are perishing, but to us
who are being saved it is the power of God.
[19] For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I
will thwart."

[20] Where is the one who is wise? Where is
the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?
Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the
world? [21] For since, in the wisdom of God, the
world did not know God through wisdom,
God decided, through the foolishness of our
proclamation, to save those who believe.

[22] For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire
wisdom, [23] but we proclaim Christ crucified,
a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to
Gentiles, [24] but to those who are the called,
both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of
God and the wisdom of God. [25] For God's
foolishness is wiser than human wisdom,
and God's weakness is stronger than human
strength.

[26] Consider your own call, brothers and
sisters:[b] not many of you were wise by human
standards,[c] not many were powerful, not
many were of noble birth. [27] But God chose
what is foolish in the world to shame the
wise; God chose what is weak in the world to
shame the strong; [28] God chose what is low
and despised in the world, things that are
not, to reduce to nothing things that are, [29] so
that no one[d] might boast in the presence of

[a] Other ancient authorities read *I am thankful*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Gk *according to the flesh*
[d] Gk *no flesh*

been divided? uses a verb related to a common Greek term for "party": "Has the body of Christ been split into parties?" **14:** Paul's thanksgiving that he *baptized none . . . except Crispus and Gaius* has a note of irony which suggests that Crispus and Gaius may have been involved in forming factions. *Crispus* is the former synagogue president (Acts 18.8), while *Gaius* is described as "the host . . . to the whole church" (Rom 16.23); both are evidently of high social standing. **16:** Paul employs the device of a feigned lapse of memory to separate *Stephanas*, his strongest supporter (see 16.15–18), from Crispus and Gaius. **17:** Paul formulates his commission as an apostle antithetically: *not to baptize but to proclaim*. The negative definition of the style and content of Paul's preaching (*not with eloquent wisdom*) suggests that the Corinthians have found Paul's proclamation deficient.

1.18–2.5: The folly of the message about the cross. Paul acknowledges that his preaching is *foolishness* to the educated elite, but asserts that God has confounded the *wisdom* of this world. **18:** Paul provocatively reduces the content of the gospel to a single, shameful event—*the cross*. Greek "moria" (*foolishness*) has a social stigma that does not attach to English "folly": better, "a vulgar joke." *The message about the cross,* lit. "the word of the cross." **19:** Isa 29.14 (LXX). This text is particularly apt, since it critiques those who take pride in wisdom and foretells the creation of a new order in which the deaf will hear and the blind will see. **20:** Paul's rhetorical questions mock the educated elite by means of culturally specific titles of dignity: the Jewish *scribe* is not merely a skilled copyist but an expert in the scriptures; the *debater* is a philosophical researcher highly esteemed in the Hellenic world. **21:** Paul shapes a playful contrast between two types of *wisdom*: on the one hand, a divine attribute; on the other, a human attainment (cf. Sir 1.9–10; Wis 7; 8). **22:** The *desire* for *wisdom* among the *Greeks* was proverbial: see Herodotus 4.77.1. **23:** The first-century BCE orator Cicero attests the constraint upon discourse about the cross among persons of higher social class: "The mere mention of the word 'cross' is shameful to a Roman citizen and a free man" (*Pro Rabirio* 5.16). **24–25:** In formulating the paradox of the *crucified Christ* as *the power* and *wisdom of God*, Paul employs phrases that sound positively blasphemous—*God's foolishness . . . God's weakness*. **26–31:** Paul expounds the social consequences of the divine reversal of wisdom and foolishness. **26–28:** The terms used by Paul to describe the makeup of the community are those employed by Greek writers to designate the major class divisions in civil strife: *wise, powerful,* and *of noble birth* are euphemisms for "the rich," while "the poor" are the *foolish, weak,* and *low* (born). Paul offers a radical explanation of why the majority of those who have been "called" by the gospel of the crucified are persons lacking in education, wealth,

God. [30] He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, [31] in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in[a] the Lord."

2 When I came to you, brothers and sisters,[b] I did not come proclaiming the mystery[c] of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. [2] For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. [3] And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. [4] My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom,[d] but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

[6] Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. [7] But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. [8] None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. [9] But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love
him"—

[10] these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. [11] For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. [12] Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. [13] And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.[e]

[14] Those who are unspiritual[f] do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [15] Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

[16] "For who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?"

But we have the mind of Christ.

[a] Or *of*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *testimony*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *the persuasiveness of wisdom*
[e] Or *interpreting spiritual things in spiritual language*, or *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*
[f] Or *natural*

and birth: *God chose* (repeated three times for emphasis). **31:** Jer 9.23. **2.1–5:** Paul's concession that he did not preach *in lofty words or wisdom* is a rejoinder to an anticipated objection against his assertion that the *crucified Christ* is the wisdom of God: "But little wisdom or eloquence was apparent when you came preaching among us!" Paul adopts the persona of the befuddled orator from comedy and mime in order to establish that, despite his stammering *weakness*, the message about Christ is *the power of God*. Paul's choice of terms belonging to the technical vocabulary of Hellenistic rhetoric (*lofty words, plausible words, demonstration, power*) marks a contrast between his proclamation and that of missionary rivals who have made use of the art of rhetoric. **2:** Paul's use of the perfect participle, *crucified*, to describe more precisely the Christ whom he proclaims is a provocation to the elite: Paul insists that the present significance of Christ, even after his resurrection, consists in nothing other than that he is the crucified.

2.6–16: The wisdom Paul teaches. Paul's claim that he speaks *wisdom among the mature* is perplexing, in light of his previous assertion that he preaches the gospel without eloquent wisdom (1.17; 2.1,4). The seeming contradiction is resolved if 2.6–16 is regarded as Paul's self-parody as a teacher imparting *secret wisdom* to initiates. The brilliance of this strategy is that, by mocking himself and his proclamation, Paul undermines the idea that an apostle is a wise man as defined by the elite, while simultaneously asserting the existence of a paradoxical wisdom capable of transforming those who receive it, despite the ineptitude of its communicators. **6:** *Mature* (Gk "teleios") is a technical term in the mystery religions, designating one who has been fully initiated. *The rulers of this age* may be spiritual, demonic powers, but more likely are political authorities. **9:** The source of this citation is uncertain, but may come from the *Apocalypse of Elijah* (thus the second-century CE exegete Origen), cited here as scripture. **16:** Isa 40.13.

3 And so, brothers and sisters,[a] I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. [2] I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, [3] for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? [4] For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

[5] What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. [6] I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. [7] So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. [8] The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. [9] For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

[10] According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. [11] For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— [13] the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. [14] If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. [15] If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

[16] Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?[b] [17] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

[18] Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. [19] For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written,

"He catches the wise in their craftiness,"

[20] and again,

"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise,
that they are futile."

[21] So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, [22] whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, [23] and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

4 Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. [2] Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. [3] But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. [4] I am not aware of anything

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] In verses 16 and 17 the Greek word for *you* is plural

3.1–4.21: Apostles as servants of the Lord. 3.1–4: Paul chides the Corinthians in a derisive manner for their spiritual immaturity. **1:** Paul's description of the Corinthians as *infants* uses a metaphor from political rhetoric, comparing the factious with quarrelsome children. **4:** The reduction in the number of slogans from the four of 1.12 to two, *"I belong to Paul," "I . . . to Apollos,"* suggests that Apollos is the focus of the Corinthians' partisanship.

3.5–4.5: In a series of well-constructed metaphors, Paul portrays himself and Apollos as farm workers (3.6–9), construction laborers (3.9–15), and household stewards (4.1–5), in order to emphasize collegiality against partisanship, and to diminish the importance attributed to them. **3.5:** Both Paul and Apollos have been *assigned* positions as *servants* by *the Lord*. **6:** The one who *planted* has priority over the one who has *watered*, and a greater claim upon the produce. **10:** Paul is a *skilled master builder* (Gk "sophos architekton," a technical term of construction work) who has laid the *foundation* of the community, while Apollos is, figuratively, one of the anonymous workers (*someone*) who has added something to the structure. **13:** *The Day,* the day of judgment; see 1.8n. **15:** The expression *as through fire* is a common Greek idiom describing a narrow escape from danger: as the fire ignites, the workers escape from the legal penalty to be imposed upon their shoddy construction by running through the walls of the burning building. **19:** Job 5.12–13. **20:** Ps 94.11. **22:** *Paul . . . Apollos . . . Cephas,* see 1.12n. **4.3:** Paul's indifference to the possibility that he may be *judged* by the Corinthians employs a Greek

against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God.

6 I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters,[a] so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying, "Nothing beyond what is written," so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another. 7 For who sees anything different in you?[b] What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?

8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings! Indeed, I wish that you had become kings, so that we might be kings with you! 9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to mortals. 10 We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. 11 To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, 12 and we grow weary from the work of our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; 13 when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day.

14 I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. 17 For this reason I sent[c] you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church. 18 But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. 21 What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Or *Who makes you different from another?*
[c] Or *am sending*

verb ("anakrinein") with a technical usage for the preliminary examination of political leaders to establish their qualifications, suggesting that the Corinthians plan to "examine" Paul's apostolic credentials. **5:** *Before the Lord comes,* see 1.8n.; 3.13.

4.6–13: Application. 6: Paul makes clear that he has been teaching with the aid of figures of speech *applied* to himself and Apollos (see 1.12n.). *"Nothing beyond what is written"* is a maxim of uncertain origin whose meaning must be pertinent to the following clause, *so that none of you will be puffed up.* **7–8:** With mounting sarcasm, Paul mocks the pretensions of leading figures in the Corinthian church (*king* was the client's term for a rich patron). Paul ironically reminds these patrons that everything they *have* (spiritually) they have *received* as a *gift*; they have nothing of which to *boast*. **9–13:** Paul expounds the consequences of the message about the cross for himself and his colleagues, who have conformed their lives to the fate of the crucified Christ: they are *fools* (Gk "moroi") in a *spectacle* (Gk "theatron") *exhibited* by God. Paul's vocabulary is explicitly theatrical: like the poor fools in the mime, Paul and his colleagues are *weak, hungry, poorly clothed, beaten* (literally, "given the knuckle-sandwich"), etc. **13:** *Rubbish* and *dregs* were the worst terms of abuse in Greek, originally applied to those unfortunate persons, mostly paupers and the deformed, who were put to death for the purification of the city.

4.14–21: Admonition. Paul portrays himself as a solicitous *father*, the Corinthians as unruly *children*, and other ministers of the gospel as *guardians* (Gk "paidagogoi"). That Paul is not altogether pleased with the performance of the guardians is suggested by his hyperbolic reference to their number, *ten thousand*, and by the need for parental intervention. If the Corinthians will not accept instruction from *faithful Timothy* (see Acts 18.5), Paul will come with his *stick* (Gk "rabdos"), standard equipment of the fool in the mime. Paul's warning to the Corinthians is imbued with an ironic consciousness of the possibility of his own discomfiture.

5 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. 2 And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?

3 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment 4 in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing.[a] When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.[b]

6 Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? 7 Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons— 10 not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world. 11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister[c] who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging those outside? Is it not those who are inside that you are to judge? 13 God will judge those outside. "Drive out the wicked person from among you."

6 When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous, instead of taking it before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels—to say nothing of ordinary matters? 4 If you have ordinary cases, then, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? 5 I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide between

[a] Or *on the man who has done such a thing in the name of the Lord Jesus*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *Jesus*
[c] Gk *brother*

5.1–13: Sexual immorality in the community. 1: The expression *father's wife* is an idiom for "stepmother." Paul accurately reports that sexual relations with one's stepmother were prohibited by biblical law (Lev 18.7–8; 20.11; Deut 22.30) as well as by Roman law; according to the *Institutes of Gaius*, "neither can I marry her who has previously been my mother-in-law . . . or stepmother" (1.63) **2:** That the church had taken no disciplinary action suggests that the sinner was a person of high social status. **3–5:** While it is not clear precisely what was involved in the execution of this sentence, Paul's language (*hand this man over to Satan*) indicates a punishment that was drastic and permanent, such as excommunication. **5:** *Flesh* for Paul does not refer to the human body but to an instinct toward sin, a way of life unredeemed by the spirit and oriented toward worldly advantages. *The day of the Lord,* see 1.8n. **6–8:** Paul's metaphor compares immorality in the community with *old yeast* which must be cleansed from the house in preparation for the Jewish festival of Passover, when only *unleavened* bread was to be eaten (Ex 12.15–20). **7:** Paul nowhere else describes *Christ* as *our paschal lamb*; but cf. Jn 1.29; 19.36; Rev 5.12. **9–13: Clarifying a misunderstanding. 9:** Defenders of the unity of 1 Corinthians assume that the *letter* to which Paul refers has been lost. But would the Corinthians have treated one of Paul's letters with such disregard? Alternatively, the letter may be preserved in 1 Cor 10.1–22; 6.12–20; 10.23–11.34, passages which discuss association with the immoral and idolaters; see further Introduction, pp. 1637–38. **13:** *Drive out the wicked person*, following the instructions of Deut 13.5; 17.7; etc.

6.1–11: Lawsuits between believers. Someone *dares* to do what should be unthinkable for a Christian: *to take another* Christian *to court before the unrighteous*. **1:** The phrase *has a grievance against another* employs a technical expression of legal proceedings frequently attested in Greek sources. In general, only persons of more than moderate wealth had access to the courts. **2:** For the idea that *the saints* (the believers) *will judge the world*, see Dan 7.22 (LXX); Wis 3.8; Rev 3.21; 20.4. **3:** That the angels themselves are subject to judgment, see Jude 6; 2 Pet 2.4. **4:** The lawsuits in question seem to have been *ordinary* civil *cases*, concerned with money or property.

one believer[a] and another, [6] but a believer[a] goes to court against a believer[a]—and before unbelievers at that?

[7] In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? [8] But you yourselves wrong and defraud—and believers[b] at that.

[9] Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, [10] thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

[12] "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. [13] "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,"[c] and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. [14] And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. [15] Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! [16] Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." [17] But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. [18] Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. [19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple[d] of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? [20] For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

7 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is well for a man not to

[a] Gk *brother*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] The quotation may extend to the word *other*
[d] Or *sanctuary*

7: Paul's advice resembles that of Jesus in Mt 5.39–40; Lk 6.28–30: nonresistance. **9–11:** Catalogues of vices and virtues are known from Jewish and Greek writers, especially the Stoic philosophers. **9:** *Male prostitutes* (Gk "malakoi," lit., "soft men") were boys and men sodomized by other males, while *sodomites* (Gk "arsenokoitai," lit., "men who bed males"; a word first found here and based on LXX Lev 18.22; 20.13) were men who exercised the dominant role, pederasts.

6.12–20: Christians going to prostitutes. The abrupt beginning of 6.12, and differences of tone and content with 5.1–6.11, suggest that this paragraph originally belonged not here but possibly between 10.22 and 10.23, with which 6.12–20 has much in common: in both passages, the temptation to immorality is strong and Christians are urged to "flee" (6.18; 10.8,14); in both passages, Paul quotes the Corinthian slogan, *"All things are lawful for me"* (6.12; 10.23). **12:** Paul quotes a slogan of the Corinthians, a proud boast of freedom, asserting liberation from cultural taboos. Paul counters by insisting upon the mutually *beneficial* as the criterion of moral judgment. **13:** Another slogan of the Corinthians, with a background in Cynic philosophy. Paul counters by affirming God's power over the body. **14:** The resurrection of Jesus signals that the body is not meant for corruption but for ongoing life. **15:** Paul appeals to his characteristic idea of the church as the body of Christ (see 12.12–14,27) in order to exclude the possibility of contact with a dangerous polluting agent, the *prostitute*. **16:** Gen. 2.24. **18:** Cf. 10.14 (5.9). That *the fornicator sins against* himself, against his own person (reflected in his *body*), is an idea with Stoic parallels. **19:** Like the community as a whole (cf. 3.16), each believer is *a temple of the Holy Spirit*. **20:** Paul draws upon the custom of sacred manumission: the slave whose freedom was *bought with a price* with money previously deposited in the temple treasury was regarded as the property of the god.

7.1–40: Marriage and sexual relations. In response to the Corinthians' questions, Paul rethinks the most basic relationships, with the result that marriage as well as other marks of social status are relativized in importance by the eschatological "calling" from the Lord. **1:** *Now concerning,* a formula introducing the first of several topics about which the Corinthians had queried Paul in their letter; see also 7.25; 8.1; 12.1; 16.1; 16.12. The words *"It is well for a man not to touch a woman"* are a quotation from the Corinthians' letter. *Touch* is an idiom for "have sex with." The quotation may be an expression of extreme asceticism, or may represent an

touch a woman." [2] But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. [3] The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. [4] For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. [5] Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. [6] This I say by way of concession, not of command. [7] I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind.

[8] To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. [9] But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

[10] To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband [11] (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

[12] To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any believer[a] has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. [13] And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. [14] For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. [15] But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you.[b] [16] Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

[17] However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. [18] Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to

[a] Gk *brother*

[b] Other ancient authorities read *us*

ironic retort by those who claimed freedom from conventional morality (6.12n.) to Paul's warning against immorality in his previous letter. **2:** Against the temptation to immorality, Paul counsels monogamy and fidelity in marriage; cf. 1 Thess 4.3–5. **3:** *Conjugal rights,* lit., "debt," used here in a technical and euphemistic sense, to denote the obligation of spouses to each other. **4:** That the partnership of marriage includes the bodies of the husband and wife was also affirmed by the Stoic philosopher Musonius. **5:** Paul warns rather strongly (*deprive* is literally "defraud") against withholding conjugal relations and allows for exceptions only within limits—*by* harmonious *agreement*, for a season, *to devote* oneself *to prayer* (cf. *T. Naph.* 8). **6:** To avoid the impression that he commands sexual relations within marriage, Paul clarifies the point of his previous statement: he has spoken *by way of concession*, to prevent temptation on account of *lack of self-control*. **7:** Paul's *wish* is that all were as he is—unmarried (v. 8) yet self-controlled, a state which he regards as a *gift from God*; yet Paul acknowledges that others have different gifts. **8–9:** Paul counsels celibacy *to the unmarried and widows*, unless they are "out of control." Greek writers describe *passion* as an internal burning; love spells in magical papyri send desire into the body of the beloved as "heat." **10–11:** The *command* of *the Lord* appears to refer to sayings about divorce like those attributed to Jesus in Mk 10.2–12; Mt 5.31–32; 19:3–9. Paul has formulated the command of Jesus in accordance with Roman law under which *the wife* could *divorce her husband*; according to biblical law, divorce was initiated only by the husband (Deut 24.1). To *separate* is a technical term for divorce in Greek sources. **12–16:** Paul offers advice to Christ-believers in mixed marriages. The advice is naturally offered on Paul's own authority, because such marriages were not envisioned by Jesus. If the non-Christian is sympathetically disposed to live with the believer, there should be no divorce. **14:** Paul's statement rests upon the notion that "holiness," like "uncleanness," is a quality transferable within relationships; cf. *1 Clem* 46.2. **15:** For *peace* as the goal of Christian life, see 2 Cor 13.11; Rom 14.17. **16:** The term *save* is used here in the sense of conversion; cf. 1 Pet 3.1–2. **17–24:** Paul inserts a paragraph enunciating his general *rule in all the churches,* of which the preceding advice on marriage has been a special application: the *call* of God does not remove a Christian from his or her situation in society, but intensifies obedience to God in the midst of life. **18:** Paul envisions cases of a Jewish convert who might *seek*

remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. 20 Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called.

21 Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever.[a] 22 For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters. 24 In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters,[b] there remain with God.

25 Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. 26 I think that, in view of the impending[c] crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are. 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a virgin marries, she does not sin. Yet those who marry will experience distress in this life,[d] and I would spare you that. 29 I mean, brothers and sisters,[b] the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

[a] Or *avail yourself of the opportunity*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Or *present*
[d] Gk *in the flesh*

to remove the marks of circumcision, and of a Gentile convert who might *seek circumcision*, motivated by a desire for social acceptance in either group. **19:** Paul insists that *circumcision* and *uncircumcision* amount to *nothing*; what matters is keeping *the commandments of God*; cf. Gal 5.6; 6.15; Rom 2.25–26. **20:** Paul plays provocatively with the word "calling" to indicate that something has been added to every *condition*, by virtue of which the Christian can *remain* in his or her calling, yet with a higher vocation. **21:** A *slave* should *not be concerned* about his condition. But what if he is able to become free? Paul's advice has puzzled interpreters; the Greek literally reads "rather make use of" (the words "your present condition now more than ever" have been supplied by the NRSV translators), with the verb lacking an object in the Greek text, and either "slavery" or "freedom" must be supplied to complete the meaning. The context argues for the latter: if the slave can somehow become free, he or she should *make use* of freedom. **22:** The calling *in the Lord* results in a status reversal: the Christian *slave* has become a *freed person* of Christ, while the free man has become *a slave of Christ*. Paul's thought moves beyond the Stoic consolation of "inner freedom" and implies changes in social relationship and behavior; see Philem 16. **23:** *You were bought with a price* evokes the readers' experience of the large Roman slave market at Corinth. As was the custom in sacred manumission, where the god was imagined to be the purchaser, so Christ has *bought* the Corinthians *with a price*, whether slave or free, so that they should no longer enslave themselves to *human masters*. **25–38:** Whether *virgins* should *marry* must have been a question raised in the Corinthians' letter to Paul, as indicated by the recurrence of the formula *now concerning* (see 7.1n.). **25:** Paul acknowledges that the advice that follows is his own *opinion*, since he has *no command of the Lord*; cf. 7.10,12. **26:** *The impending crisis* refers to the tribulations expected to occur in the last days before the judgment; see also vv. 29,31. **27:** What kind of "bond" is envisioned? Not, evidently, the bond of marriage, but a pledge to preserve the virginity of the young woman, to which the man addressed by Paul has committed himself. **28:** Paul reassures the man and his betrothed that the decision to *marry* is no *sin*, should they prove incapable of keeping their pledge to virginity. **29–31:** Paul shares his belief about the foreshortening of time as justification for urging an adjustment in social, emotional, and economic relations. The participle that Paul chooses (*grown short*) to describe what has happened to *time* in the Christ-event is from a verb used elsewhere in Greek literature of the furling of a ship's sails, of the folding of a bird's wings, of curtains gathered together. An apocalyptic parallel to Paul's account of life according to the principle of *as though . . . not* is found in 2 Esd 16.41b–44: "Let the one who buys be like the one who will lose; . . . those who marry, like those who will have no children." But there are important differences: for Paul, the eschatological rupture occurs in the present, and is immanent to every action, whereas

32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The
unmarried man is anxious about the affairs
of the Lord, how to please the Lord; 33 but
the married man is anxious about the affairs
of the world, how to please his wife, 34 and
his interests are divided. And the unmarried
woman and the virgin are anxious about the
affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy
in body and spirit; but the married woman is
anxious about the affairs of the world, how to
please her husband. 35 I say this for your own
benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but
to promote good order and unhindered devo-
tion to the Lord.

36 If anyone thinks that he is not behaving
properly toward his fiancée,[a] if his passions
are strong, and so it has to be, let him marry
as he wishes; it is no sin. Let them marry.
37 But if someone stands firm in his resolve,
being under no necessity but having his own
desire under control, and has determined in
his own mind to keep her as his fiancée,[a] he
will do well. 38 So then, he who marries his
fiancée[a] does well; and he who refrains from
marriage will do better.

39 A wife is bound as long as her husband
lives. But if the husband dies,[b] she is free to
marry anyone she wishes, only in the Lord.
40 But in my judgment she is more blessed if
she remains as she is. And I think that I too
have the Spirit of God.

8 Now concerning food sacrificed to idols:
we know that "all of us possess knowl-
edge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds
up. 2 Anyone who claims to know something
does not yet have the necessary knowledge;
3 but anyone who loves God is known by him.

4 Hence, as to the eating of food offered
to idols, we know that "no idol in the world
really exists," and that "there is no God but
one." 5 Indeed, even though there may be
so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in
fact there are many gods and many lords—
6 yet for us there is one God, the Father,
from whom are all things and for whom we
exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through

[a] Gk *virgin*
[b] Gk *falls asleep*

2 Esdras distinguishes present from future, and distributes the crisis across different actions. **32–35:** Paul wants his converts to be *free from anxieties*. Epictetus counselled the ideal Cynic to avoid the distractions of marriage; but the goal of Paul's advice is not philosophical self-mastery but *unhindered devotion to the Lord*. **36–38:** Paul gives particular consideration to a situation which posed a special danger: when the desires of those who have pledged themselves to celibacy threaten to get out of control. In advising marriage in this case, Paul is not compromising his preference for the unmarried state. In Paul's hierarchy of virtue, marriage is good, but celibacy is better. **39–40:** The freedom of a Christ-believing widow to remarry is affirmed, with one proviso: that she marry a fellow Christ-believer. Yet Paul judges a widow to be *more blessed* who *remains* unmarried.

8.1–13: Eating food offered to idols. 1: The formula *now concerning* (see 7.1n.) indicates that this matter had been raised in the Corinthians' letter to Paul. The background was apparently this: Paul's advice in a previous letter (cf. 1 Cor 5.9) to shun the worship of idols (see 1 Cor 10.14–22) proved confusing and difficult for some to follow. What if one were invited to dine in the banquet hall of a sacred precinct? To decline such invitations would be socially disadvantageous (cf. 1 Cor 5.10). In reply, Paul quotes repeatedly from the Corinthians' letter (8.1,4,8), permitting a detailed reconstruction of the social location and religious beliefs of the disputants. *"All of us possess knowledge"* is a quotation from the Corinthians' letter. The content of their knowledge is quoted in 8.4: *"No idol . . . really exists."* As a consequence, eating idol meat is a matter of indifference: *"We are no worse off,"* etc. (8.8; but also see further, below). Perhaps the "strong" represented it as their duty to build up the conscience of the "weak," so that they would not cling to superstitious scruples (8.10). In seeking to identify the "strong" and the "weak," one should bear in mind that the poor seldom had meat as part of their diet, except when it was distributed at public religious festivals, whereas the rich could afford to buy meat in the market, and would have received invitations to dine in temples, owing to their social status. **1:** Paul counters the emphasis upon religious *knowledge* by exposing its tendency to self-inflation; *love* (Gk "agape") is the constructive force of Christian community, praised in ch 13. **3:** Cf. Rom 8.28–30; Gal 4.9; 1 Cor 13.12. **4:** The Corinthians' knowledge that *"no idol in the world really exists"* is grounded in the monotheistic faith to which they have been converted; cf. Deut 4.35; 6.4; Wis 7.17; 13.1; 15.2–3. **5:** Paul acknowledges not that *many gods* exist, but that they are worshiped as such by others. **6:** Paul quotes an early confession; cf. Rom 11.36; Col 1.15–16.

whom are all things and through whom we exist.

7 It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. 8 "Food will not bring us close to God."[a] We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. 9 But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? 11 So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed.[b] 12 But when you thus sin against members of your family,[c] and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling,[d] I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them[e] to fall.

9 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 2 If I am not an apostle to others, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3 This is my defense to those who would examine me. 4 Do we not have the right to our food and drink? 5 Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife,[f] as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? 6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? 7 Who at any time pays the expenses for doing military service? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not get any of its milk?

[a] The quotation may extend to the end of the verse
[b] Gk *the weak brother . . . is destroyed*
[c] Gk *against the brothers*
[d] Gk *my brother's falling*
[e] Gk *cause my brother*
[f] Gk *a sister as wife*

7: Paul confronts the "strong" with the reality that some do not share their enlightened attitude toward the gods. Those who have been *accustomed to idols until now* must be Gentiles rather than Jews. The Greek word translated *conscience* does not correspond to the modern conception of an internal guide to moral conduct in the future, but denotes a past misdeed which causes pain. The "strong" have asserted that their consumption of idol meat did not convict them of any wrongdoing, and have alleged that the *conscience* of other Christians is *weak* for harboring such scruples. Paul appropriates the term *conscience* from the "strong" and uses it to express his own true concern that someone for whom the *so-called gods* (v. 5) have existence might be *defiled* by eating *food offered to an idol*. **8:** The entire verse is another quotation from the Corinthians' letter, despite the NRSV's punctuation. **9:** The Greek word translated *liberty* has a meaning closer to "authority" or "right," as in 9.4–6,12,18. **10:** The situation envisioned here is illustrated by the temple of Asclepius at Corinth, which had three dining rooms on the east side of the courtyard. **11–12:** Paul formulates a radical conclusion regarding the relationship between *knowledge* and love: the proper object of religious concern is not an abstract truth about God, but *those weak believers for whom Christ died*. **13:** Paul formulates a general principle of Christian ethics: self-limiting regard for others.

9.1–27: Paul's defense of his means of subsistence, with implications for his legitimacy as an apostle. As if to illustrate the principle of renunciation articulated in 8.13, Paul launches into a spirited defense of his decision not to accept financial support from some at Corinth. The background of the controversy was as follows: while Paul was resident in Corinth, he provided for his own needs by working with his hands (Acts 18.1–3). When other apostles and evangelists subsequently arrived, they accepted patronage from wealthy persons. In retrospect, Paul's refusal of support appeared questionable. Did Paul know he was not entitled to support because he was not really an apostle? Moreover, labor of the sort by which Paul sustained himself was viewed as degrading by persons of high social status. These doubts must have found expression in the Corinthians' letter to Paul. **1:** *Am I not free?* Paul responds to the insinuation that he is not "free" to evangelize because he is a "slave" of his labor. *An apostle . . . seen Jesus*; cf. 15.8; Gal 1.1,11–17. **3:** *Defense* (Gk "apologia"), a speech of defense before a court. On plans to *examine* Paul, see the allusion in 4.3–4. **5:** *The brothers of the Lord* are Jesus's brothers; cf. Mk 6.3; Gal 1.19. *Cephas,* the Aramaic form of Peter's name. **6:** *Barnabas* was Paul's first colleague in mission; see Gal.2.1–10; Acts 9.27; 11.25–26; 13–14. **7–14:** Why does Paul multiply examples of the exercise of a privilege (by the soldier,

[8] Do I say this on human authority? Does
not the law also say the same? [9] For it is
written in the law of Moses, "You shall not
muzzle an ox while it is treading out the
grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned?
[10] Or does he not speak entirely for our
sake? It was indeed written for our sake, for
whoever plows should plow in hope and
whoever threshes should thresh in hope
of a share in the crop. [11] If we have sown
spiritual good among you, is it too much if
we reap your material benefits? [12] If others
share this rightful claim on you, do not we
still more?

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this
right, but we endure anything rather than
put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of
Christ. [13] Do you not know that those who are
employed in the temple service get their food
from the temple, and those who serve at the
altar share in what is sacrificed on the altar?
[14] In the same way, the Lord commanded that
those who proclaim the gospel should get
their living by the gospel.

[15] But I have made no use of any of these
rights, nor am I writing this so that they
may be applied in my case. Indeed, I would
rather die than that—no one will deprive
me of my ground for boasting! [16] If I pro-
claim the gospel, this gives me no ground
for boasting, for an obligation is laid on
me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the
gospel! [17] For if I do this of my own will, I
have a reward; but if not of my own will, I
am entrusted with a commission. [18] What
then is my reward? Just this: that in my
proclamation I may make the gospel free
of charge, so as not to make full use of my
rights in the gospel.

[19] For though I am free with respect to all,
I have made myself a slave to all, so that I
might win more of them. [20] To the Jews I be-
came as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those
under the law I became as one under the law
(though I myself am not under the law) so
that I might win those under the law. [21] To
those outside the law I became as one outside
the law (though I am not free from God's law
but am under Christ's law) so that I might win
those outside the law. [22] To the weak I became
weak, so that I might win the weak. I have
become all things to all people, that I might
by all means save some. [23] I do it all for the
sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its
blessings.

[24] Do you not know that in a race the
runners all compete, but only one receives
the prize? Run in such a way that you may
win it. [25] Athletes exercise self-control in
all things; they do it to receive a perish-
able wreath, but we an imperishable one.
[26] So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as
though beating the air; [27] but I punish my
body and enslave it, so that after pro-
claiming to others I myself should not be
disqualified.

the planter, the herder, the priest) about which the Corinthians are in agreement, when it is not his exercise of the privilege which is in dispute, but his renunciation of it? For the key to Paul's argumentative strategy, see the following note on vv. 12b–14. **9:** Deut. 25.4. **12b–14:** Paul cleverly reinterprets *the Lord's command* as a *right* of which he has *not made use*. Paul's critics may have pointed out that, by working as a craftsman, Paul had violated the norms of Christian mission—*that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel*. **14:** What *the Lord commanded* refers to a saying like that attributed to Jesus in Lk 10.7. **15:** Against those who find his occupation shameful, Paul asserts that it has provided him with *ground for boasting*; see also 2 Cor 11.7–10. **16:** Paul represents his preaching as an *obligation* (lit., "necessity"), not a choice; cf. Rom 1.14–15. **17–18:** By means of a series of well-chosen economic terms, Paul reverses the values of the Corinthian patrons: *reward* is literally "wages"; *commission* (Gk "oikonomia") is "the work of a household-manager"; *free of charge* is a characteristic of benefactors. Paul's point is that evangelists who accept financial support are mere hirelings, whereas he is the true benefactor of the community. **19–23:** Paul portrays himself as a populist leader who identifies with the interests of the common people. Paul justifies his self-lowering action *for the sake of the gospel*: by making himself *a slave to all*, he hopes to *save some*. Paul's upper-class critics may have regarded him as a demagogue, but the poor and weak would have found his self-presentation appealing. **24–27:** In an extended metaphor, Paul compares himself to an athlete in training for the games. His renunciation of financial support should be understood as a form of discipline, an exercise of *self-control*. **25:** The *perishable wreath* may allude specifically to the winner's crown of the Isthmian Games, which was made of pine.

10 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,[a] that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, [2] and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, [3] and all ate the same spiritual food, [4] and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. [5] Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

[6] Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. [7] Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." [8] We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. [9] We must not put Christ[b] to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. [10] And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. [11] These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. [12] So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. [13] No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

[14] Therefore, my dear friends,[c] flee from the worship of idols. [15] I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. [16] The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? [17] Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. [18] Consider the people of

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*
[c] Gk *my beloved*

10.1–22: Warning against participation in the worship of idols. Paul's demand for a complete break with polytheistic sacrificial rituals is significantly more rigorous than his advice on food offered to idols in ch 8, suggesting that this passage belonged (with 6.12–20) to the letter on association with the immoral and idolaters mentioned in 5.9–10. Paul's admonition takes the form of a typological interpretation of Israel's Exodus and wilderness traditions, encouraging the Corinthians to see the danger to their community through the prism of Israel's calamitous idolatry. **1:** The expression *our ancestors* reckons Gentile Christians as belonging to Israel. For Israel *under the cloud*, see Ps 105.39; Wis 10.17; 19.7; on passage *through the sea*, cf. Ex 14.21–22. **2:** Paul typologically constructs Israel's Exodus experience as prefiguring Christian baptism. **3–4:** *Spiritual food* refers to the "manna" of Ex 16.15; cf. Ps 78.24–25; *spiritual drink* is the water struck from the rock by Moses in Ex 17.6; Num 20.7–11; cf. Ps 78.15–16. The tradition that the *rock followed* Israel through the wilderness is found in *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Num 20.19. In a stunning typological substitution, Paul explains that *the rock was Christ.* Using a similar hermeneutical maneuver, the first-century CE Jewish interpreter Philo equates the "rock" with "wisdom" and "manna" with the divine "logos" (*Quod deterius* 115–18). **5:** For the divine punishment of the wilderness generation, see Num 14.29–30; Jude 5; Heb 3.17. **6:** Paul suggests that *evil desire* is the root of idolatry and immorality; for the background, see Num 11.4–6; Ps 106.14–15. **7:** Paul quotes Ex 32.6, the only scripture cited explicitly in ch 10, because it epitomizes Paul's concern with idolatry and immorality among the Corinthians. **8:** For the close connection of idolatry with sexual immorality, see *T. Reuben* 4. On the *twenty-three thousand* who died by the plague, cf. Num 25.1–9. **9:** That Israel *put* God *to the test*, see Ps 78.18; for *destroyed by serpents*, see Num 21.6. **10:** Num. 16.41,49. **11:** Paul discerns a deeper "typological" purpose in the *things* that *happened* to Israel. Paul's capacity to grasp such correspondences depends upon his eschatological perspective. **12–13:** Paul reassures the Corinthians that God *will provide the way out* of the temptation to participate in polytheistic rituals. **14:** Paul formulates the point of the preceding typological interpretation as an urgent injunction; cf. the similarly formulated warning in 6.18. **15–22:** To dissuade the Corinthians from participating in polytheistic rituals, Paul develops an argument that he hopes will appeal to the *sensible*. The argument rests upon the assumption that religious "fellowship" (Gk "koinonia") is mutually exclusive. **16:** The elasticity of the Greek phrase translated *sharing in* allows both for the social concept "fellowship with" and for the sacramental idea of "participation in" *the blood . . . the body of Christ*. **17:** More than an act of communal sharing, Christ-believers become *one body*

Israel;[a] are not those who eat the sacrifices
partners in the altar? [19] What do I imply then?
That food sacrificed to idols is anything,
or that an idol is anything? [20] No, I imply
that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to
demons and not to God. I do not want you to
be partners with demons. [21] You cannot drink
the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.
You cannot partake of the table of the Lord
and the table of demons. [22] Or are we provok-
ing the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger
than he?

[23] "All things are lawful," but not all things
are beneficial. "All things are lawful," but
not all things build up. [24] Do not seek your
own advantage, but that of the other. [25] Eat
whatever is sold in the meat market with-
out raising any question on the ground of
conscience, [26] for "the earth and its fullness
are the Lord's." [27] If an unbeliever invites
you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat
whatever is set before you without raising
any question on the ground of conscience.
[28] But if someone says to you, "This has been
offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, out
of consideration for the one who informed
you, and for the sake of conscience— [29] I
mean the other's conscience, not your own.
For why should my liberty be subject to the
judgment of someone else's conscience? [30] If
I partake with thankfulness, why should I be
denounced because of that for which I give
thanks?

[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or what-
ever you do, do everything for the glory of
God. [32] Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or
to the church of God, [33] just as I try to please
everyone in everything I do, not seeking my
own advantage, but that of many, so that they
11 may be saved. [1] Be imitators of me, as I
am of Christ.

[2] I commend you because you remember
me in everything and maintain the traditions
just as I handed them on to you. [3] But I want
you to understand that Christ is the head of
every man, and the husband[b] is the head of
his wife,[c] and God is the head of Christ. [4] Any
man who prays or prophesies with some-
thing on his head disgraces his head, [5] but
any woman who prays or prophesies with
her head unveiled disgraces her head—it is

[a] Gk *Israel according to the flesh*
[b] The same Greek word means *man* or *husband*
[c] Or *head of the woman*

through partaking of the *one bread*; cf. 12.13. **20:** Cf. Deut 32.17. **21:** Greek papyri furnish examples of invitations to dine upon the "couch" of deities such as lord Sarapis. **22:** Cf. Deut 32.19,21.

10.23–11.1: Limits upon religious exclusivity. Paul anticipates objections to his advice to shun idolatry and deals with two ambiguous cases; on the meaning of "conscience," see 8.7n. **23:** As in 6.12, Paul quotes a Corinthian slogan and counters with consideration of what is *beneficial* and edifying. **25:** Should all meat *sold in the market* be regarded as idol meat? The question was relevant, because meat markets were often located in the vicinity of temples. **27:** The *meal* is presumably in the private home of an unbeliever. **29b–30:** Because these questions stand in tension with what precedes and follows, some interpreters regard them as the objections of an imaginary interlocutor, while others suggest that they originated as a marginal gloss by one of the "strong" who read Paul's letter. **31–33:** Paul foregoes consideration of further cases and formulates a general rule of conduct.

11.2–16: Hairstyles in the assembly. The point at issue is difficult to determine. Paul seems to insist that charismatic women leaders wear the veil, in accordance with Jewish custom. But v. 15 allows that women have their *hair* as a *covering*. Hence, some interpreters construe *unveiled* (vv. 5,13) more generally as "uncovered," in reference to the loose, disheveled hair of women in the ecstatic worship of Dionysus and Cybele. But there is little support for this connection in the text. More interesting than what Paul argues for is what he does not argue against—the Spirit-filled leadership of women. It is assumed that women will *pray* and *prophesy* in the worship assembly (v. 5). **2:** A problematic beginning: How will Paul *maintain the traditions* in the face of the new social identity given in Christ (cf. Gal 3.28)? **3–7:** Paul argues on the basis of a hierarchy of being: *God, Christ, man, woman*. **4:** Jewish men in the first century did not wear a head-covering; see *Gen. Rab.* 17.8. **5–6:** On the potential disgrace of a *woman unveiled* in public, see the comment of Plutarch on Roman custom: "It is more usual for women to go forth in public with their heads covered and men with their heads uncovered" (*Quaestiones Romanae* 267a). For Paul's assumption that *it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut* short, it may be

one and the same thing as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. 7 For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection[a] of God; but woman is the reflection[a] of man. 8 Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. 10 For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of[b] authority on her head,[c] because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. 12 For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? 14 Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. 16 But if anyone is disposed to be contentious—we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

17 Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. 19 Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. 20 When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. 22 What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for[d]

[a] Or *glory*
[b] Gk lacks *a symbol of*
[c] Or *have freedom of choice regarding her head*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *is broken for*

relevant that Roman portraiture generally depicts women with long hair braided and wound up around their heads. **7:** See Gen 1.27. **8–9:** An argument from the order of creation; see Gen 2.18–23. **10:** *The angels* are probably the "sons of God" in Gen 6.2 who had intercourse with mortal women and fathered a race of giants. Like other Jewish writers of the period (e.g., *T. Reuben* 5.6), Paul evidently fears that the angels will be aroused to lust by the sight of exposed women. **11–12:** *Nevertheless* indicates that Paul breaks off the preceding argument and moves on to emphasize what is important: *in the Lord* there is mutuality and reciprocity between *woman* and *man*. **13–16:** Paul's argument having collapsed, he hands the decision over to the Corinthians, invoking a Stoic argument from *nature* and finally appealing to *custom*.

11.17–34: Divisions at the Lord's Supper. A gulf between the "haves" and the "have-nots" emerged at the very place where the Corinthians should have been most capable of discerning the unity of the body of Christ—at the Lord's Supper. According to the conventions of Greco-Roman dinner parties, the host apportioned the fare according to the status of his guests, reserving the best food and wine for his social equals and intimate friends. **18:** The phrase *come together as a church* designates the weekly assembly of all the Christians of Corinth (cf. 14.23; 16.2), a larger gathering of the several subgroups, or "house churches," for the purpose of eating the Lord's Supper. The whole church evidently met in the home of Gaius (Rom 16.23). **19:** Paul's assertion that *there have to be factions* may reflect an apocalyptic belief about the tribulation expected in the last days, but also may be meant ironically. **20–21:** The contrast between *the Lord's supper* and "the private supper" (NRSV: *your own supper*) makes clear how Paul sees the problem: the privatization of a meal intended for the community. The Greek verb translated *goes ahead* is ambiguous: it may suggest that some (the leisure class) began to eat before others (slaves, laborers) had arrived, but also that some selfishly ate their food while others looked on. In any case, the result is that *one goes hungry and another becomes drunk*. **22:** Paul's question *Do you not have homes?* is heavy with irony against the proprietary class. **23–26:** Paul reminds the Corinthians of the act of self-giving,

you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. [28] Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For all who eat and drink[a] without discerning the body,[b] eat and drink judgment against themselves. [30] For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.[c] [31] But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined[d] so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

[33] So then, my brothers and sisters,[e] when you come together to eat, wait for one another. [34] If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts,[f] brothers and sisters,[e] I do not want you to be uninformed. [2] You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. [3] Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

[4] Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5] and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; [6] and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. [7] To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. [8] To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, [9] to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, [10] to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. [11] All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

[12] For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. [13] For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks,

[a] Other ancient authorities add *in an unworthy manner,*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *the Lord's body*
[c] Gk *fallen asleep*
[d] Or *When we are judged, we are being disciplined by the Lord*
[e] Gk *brothers*
[f] Or *spiritual persons*

which established the basis of their fellowship, on the basis of early tradition; cf. Mk 14.12–25. **25:** Paul's reference to *the cup, after supper* presupposes that a meal was served between the bread and the wine. **26:** *Until he comes,* see 1.8n. **29:** What is meant by *discerning the body*? Probably the gathered church as Christ's body. **33–34:** Paul's counsel that the Corinthians *wait for one another* implies sharing, so as to alleviate the hunger and humiliation of those who have nothing (vv. 21–22).

12–14: On spiritual gifts. Paul counters an overemphasis upon glossolalia (speaking in tongues). Judging from the amount of space devoted to the subject, the gift of tongues must have been highly prized among the Corinthians. Not everyone in the church spoke in tongues (12.30); those who had the gift may have looked down upon those who did not. Paul does not deny the power of speaking in tongues, but interprets that power by ordering the gifts from the greatest (love) to the least (tongues), while affirming that all are necessary for the body of Christ. **12.1:** The formula *now concerning* (see 7.1n.) indicates that a question about *spiritual gifts* had been raised in the Corinthians' letter. **3:** Paul establishes criteria to determine whether a person is *speaking by the Spirit of God*. Did someone in the church at Corinth actually say *"Jesus be cursed!"* in an ecstatic trance? Did the Corinthians hesitate to expel this person because of an overvaluation of spiritual gifts? **4–11:** Paul affirms the diversity of *gifts* within unity. **7:** The guiding principle should be *the common good*. **8–11:** The nine named gifts are ranked: first *wisdom*, last *tongues*. **12–26:** Paul's metaphor of the church as a *body* is derived

slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

13 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,[a] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *body to be burned*

from Greco-Roman political discourse, where the figure functioned to urge concord. In the well-known fable of Menenius Agrippa, the Roman senator compared a strike by the common people to a revolt of the hands, mouth, and teeth against the belly, resulting in the death of the body. In ancient politics, the body analogy was essentially conservative, portraying the established order as "natural." Paul uses the metaphor subversively to question conventional assumptions about status and honor. **13:** Paul alludes to an early baptismal formula; cf. Gal 3.27–28. **14–21:** Ancient philosophers and orators referred to the *hands* and *feet*, the *eyes* and *ears* in elaborating the society-as-body metaphor, but Paul emphasizes mutuality rather than hierarchy. **22–26:** Paul reverses the values of ancient political rhetoric, which figured the parts of the body representing the ruling class, such as the head and the belly, as most honorable and indispensable. Paul claims, scandalously, that the weaker parts are actually more *indispensable* and *honorable*, that we acknowledge this fact when *we clothe* these private parts, and that *God has so arranged the body* in this paradoxical manner, *giving the greater honor to the inferior member*. **27:** Paul summarizes the argument and applies it to *the body of Christ* metaphor. **28–30:** Because God has established the diversity of gifts in the body, one should not succumb to the ambition to have others' gifts, or to the tendency to privilege one gift over others.

13.1–13: Praise of love. In the context of chs 12–14, Paul's encomium of love serves to devalue the gift of tongues by showing the Corinthians a "more excellent way." Yet, ch 13 is self-contained, and the transitions from 12.31 to 13.1 and from 13.13 to 14.1 are weak, so that some scholars conjecture that ch 13 was conceived and written earlier and independently (possibly as an essay for Paul's school in Ephesus; cf. Acts 19.9) and reused here because of its relevance. With Paul's speech in praise of love, cf. Plato *Symp.* 197c–e. **1–3:** The gifts are *nothing* without *love*. **1:** *Tongues of mortals* refers to human speech; *tongues of angels* refers to glossolalia; cf. *T. Job* 48–52; 2 Cor 12.4. Paul's comparative terms, *noisy gong* and *clanging cymbal*, are derived from ancient religious rituals; such sounds lack the warmth of love. **3:** If the alternative reading *my body to be burned* (textual note *a*)

4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not
envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude.
It does not insist on its own way; it is not
irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in
wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It
bears all things, believes all things, hopes all
things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies,
they will come to an end; as for tongues,
they will cease; as for knowledge, it will
come to an end. 9 For we know only in part,
and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when
the complete comes, the partial will come to
an end. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a
child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a
child; when I became an adult, I put an end to
childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror,
dimly,[a] but then we will see face to face. Now
I know only in part; then I will know fully,
even as I have been fully known. 13 And now
faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and
the greatest of these is love.

14 Pursue love and strive for the spiritual
gifts, and especially that you may
prophesy. 2 For those who speak in a tongue
do not speak to other people but to God; for
nobody understands them, since they are
speaking mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the
other hand, those who prophesy speak to
other people for their upbuilding and encour-
agement and consolation. 4 Those who speak
in a tongue build up themselves, but those
who prophesy build up the church. 5 Now I
would like all of you to speak in tongues, but
even more to prophesy. One who prophesies
is greater than one who speaks in tongues,
unless someone interprets, so that the church
may be built up.

6 Now, brothers and sisters,[b] if I come to
you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit
you unless I speak to you in some revelation
or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? 7 It is
the same way with lifeless instruments that
produce sound, such as the flute or the harp.
If they do not give distinct notes, how will
anyone know what is being played? 8 And if
the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will
get ready for battle? 9 So with yourselves; if in
a tongue you utter speech that is not intel-
ligible, how will anyone know what is being
said? For you will be speaking into the air.
10 There are doubtless many different kinds of
sounds in the world, and nothing is without
sound. 11 If then I do not know the meaning
of a sound, I will be a foreigner to the speaker
and the speaker a foreigner to me. 12 So with
yourselves; since you are eager for spiritual
gifts, strive to excel in them for building up
the church.

13 Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue
should pray for the power to interpret. 14 For
if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my
mind is unproductive. 15 What should I do
then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray
with the mind also; I will sing praise with the
spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind
also. 16 Otherwise, if you say a blessing with

[a] Gk *in a riddle*
[b] Gk *brothers*

is adopted, Paul is probably referring to the notorious Indian philosophers ("gymnosophists") who immolated themselves to demonstrate their contempt of death. **4–7:** The qualities of love: *patient*, cf. 1 Thess 5.14; Gal 5.22; *kind*, cf. Rom 2.4; *not envious*, cf. 3.3; not *arrogant*, cf. 4.18–19. **5:** Cf. 10.33. **8–13:** Paul emphasizes the imperishability of *love*, in contrast to the limitations of *prophecies*, *tongues*, and *knowledge*, which the Corinthians have overvalued. **8:** The Greek verb translated *ends* is used elsewhere in reference to the wind: love is like a wind that never "subsides." **12:** *In a mirror, dimly*: that is, one does not see the thing itself but only its reflected image. **13:** For the triad *faith, hope, and love,* cf. 1 Thess 1.3; 5.8; Col 1.4–5.

14.1–40: Prophecy is more edifying than tongues-speaking. 1: *Prophesy*, not in the sense of "predict the future" but "edify" the church, as in v. 3. **2:** Paul shares with Plato, Philo, and others the belief in a higher form of Spirit-inspired speech directed to the divine, but incomprehensible to normal human intelligence. **5:** Paul's concession, *I would like all of you to speak in tongues*, reveals the high value that was set upon this gift, and how many Corinthians earnestly strove for it. By declaring that *one who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues*, Paul reverses the hierarchy of speech-types assumed by the elite, elevating the comprehensible above the esoteric. The new criterion of value is whether the community is edified. **6–12:** Paul devalues the esoteric speech of tongues by comparison with the sounds produced *by lifeless instruments*. **13–19:** In praying, singing, and other acts of worship, Paul counsels cooperation between *spirit* and *mind*. **16:** The word

the spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say the "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since the outsider does not know what you are saying? 17 For you may give thanks well enough, but the other person is not built up. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you; 19 nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

20 Brothers and sisters,[a] do not be children in your thinking; rather, be infants in evil, but in thinking be adults. 21 In the law it is written,

"By people of strange tongues
and by the lips of foreigners
I will speak to this people;
yet even then they will not listen to
me,"

says the Lord. 22 Tongues, then, are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers. 23 If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider who enters is reproved by all and called to account by all. 25 After the secrets of the unbeliever's heart are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, "God is really among you."

26 What should be done then, my friends?[a] When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. 32 And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, 33 for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

(As in all the churches of the saints, 34 women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.[b] 36 Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?)

37 Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. 38 Anyone who does not recognize this is not to be recognized. 39 So, my friends,[c] be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; 40 but all things should be done decently and in order.

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Other ancient authorities put verses 34-35 after verse 40
[c] Gk *my brothers*

translated *outsider* (Gk "idiotes") means someone untrained, i.e., not adept at understanding those speaking in tongues. **18–19:** As in the case of food (cf. 8.13), Paul adopts the ethical principle of self-limiting regard for others. **20–25:** The Corinthians have been naïve in failing to consider the effects of speaking in tongues upon nonadept believers as well as unbelievers. **21:** The point of the citation (not found *in the law*, as Paul says, but in Isa 28.11–12) is that the word of the Lord foretold not only the phenomenon of speaking in tongues but also its failure to convince. **22–23:** For unbelievers, *tongues* are a *sign* opposed and spoken against, leading outsiders to the conclusion that Christ-believers are *out of their minds*. **26–33a:** Paul gives instructions for an orderly procedure involving tongues and prophecy in the worship assembly. **33b–36:** Many scholars regard this passage as a later non-Pauline addition, because it disrupts the flow of the argument from v. 33a to v. 37; it contradicts the assumption of 11.5 that women will pray and prophesy in the assembly; it resembles the viewpoint of the Deutero-Pauline letters (see 1 Tim 2.9–15); it exhibits non-Pauline sentiments, e.g., v. 34b, *as the law also says*; and vv. 34–35 appear after 14.40 in some manuscripts. **37–40:** Assertion of authority and summary of the argument of ch 14.

15 Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters,[a] of the good news[b] that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, [2] through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

[3] For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, [4] and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters[a] at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.[c] [7] Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. [8] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. [9] For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. [10] But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. [11] Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

[12] Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; [14] and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. [15] We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. [16] For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. [17] If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. [18] Then those also who have died[c] in Christ have perished. [19] If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

[20] But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.[c] [21] For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; [22] for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. [24] Then comes the end,[d] when he hands over the kingdom to God the

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Or *gospel*
[c] Gk *fallen asleep*
[d] Or *Then come the rest*

15.1–58: A reasoned proof of the resurrection of the dead. The issue that evokes this argument is identified in v. 12: some of the Corinthians have said, "*There is no resurrection of the dead*." Those Greeks and Romans who were not skeptics about life beyond death tended to believe in the separation of the soul from the body, a belief sanctioned by the oracle at Delphi and popular philosophers. Enlightened persons found the idea of the resurrection of the body laughable; cf. Acts 17.32. Paul constructs an argument for the resurrection of the body on the analogy of the philosophical proof of the immortality of the soul in Plato *Phaedr.* 245c–257d; Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* bk. 1; Plutarch *On the Soul*; etc. The major divisions of Paul's discourse are easily recognized and correspond to his philosophical models: 15.1–34, proof of the fact of the resurrection, established by reasoned arguments; and 15.35–58, discussion of the manner of the resurrection and the nature of the resurrection body, culminating in a "mythological hymn." **15.1–2:** Paul reminds the Corinthians that the resurrection faith belongs to the foundation of Christian tradition. **3–4:** Paul quotes an early creed; cf. Rom 4.24–25; 10.9–10; 1 Thess 5.10. The phrase, *he was buried*, is unique to this instance of the creed and may have been added by Paul for the context here. **5–7:** Within the argument of ch 15, the list of witnesses to Christ's resurrection, which belonged to the tradition that Paul had received, provides the evidential basis for what follows. **5:** *Cephas* is the Aramaic form of Peter's name. **8:** Paul adds his own witness to the tradition. The term translated *one untimely born* refers to an abortion or miscarriage. Paul may be taking up an insult hurled at him by his opponents. **9:** See 9.4–5; 22.4–5; Gal 1.13. **12–34: The reality of the resurrection of the dead. 13–19:** Paul employs a series of rhetorical syllogisms (*if . . . then*) to refute the denial of the resurrection by some at Corinth. **18–19:** Cf. 1 Thess 4.13. **20–28:** Paul argues positively for the resurrection based upon an *order* established by God. **20:** *The first fruits* guarantee the harvest to come. **21–23:** For the *Adam–Christ* typology, see also vv. 45–49; Rom 5.12–21. **23:** Cf. 1 Thess 4.16. **24–25:** On the apocalyptic scenario envisioned here, cf. 2 Esd 7.29; Rev 20.4–6; *Pirke Eliezer* 11. **24:** Cf. Rom 5.17.

Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For "God[a] has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection," it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

29 Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?

30 And why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour? 31 I die every day! That is as certain, brothers and sisters,[b] as my boasting of you—a boast that I make in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If with merely human hopes I fought with wild animals at Ephesus, what would I have gained by it? If the dead are not raised,

"Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die."

33 Do not be deceived:

"Bad company ruins good morals."

34 Come to a sober and right mind, and sin no more; for some people have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

35 But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" 36 Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. 39 Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. 40 There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory.

42 So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is[c] from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will[d] also bear the image of the man of heaven.

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *the Lord*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *let us*

25: See Ps 110.1. **26:** For the personification of death, see vv. 54–55; 2 Esd 8.55. **27:** Ps 8.6. **29–34:** A personal attack on his opponents, appealing to practice, experience, and generally accepted wisdom. **29:** It is not clear what was involved in the Corinthian practice of *baptism on behalf of the dead*. Paul appeals to the practice to suggest to the Corinthians that they have an implicit faith in the resurrection. **32:** Paul speaks metaphorically, comparing the mortal danger to which he is daily exposed in his apostolic calling with a "beast fight" in the arena of Ephesus, the city from which Paul is writing. The quotation is from Isa 22.13. **33:** Paul cites a proverb from a play by the Greek comic writer Menander (third century BCE). **35–50: The nature of the resurrection body.** Through analogies, Paul seeks to show that there can be types of *bodies* other than bodies of *flesh*. **36–38:** The first analogy is drawn from a *seed*; the same analogy is used in Jn 12.24. **39:** The second analogy references the different kinds of *flesh* of lower beings. **40–41:** The third analogy points to the difference between *heavenly bodies* and *earthly bodies*, and references the various types of *glory* among celestial bodies. **42–44:** By means of four antitheses, Paul contrasts the resurrected *body* with the present, mortal body. **45:** Gen. 2.7. **45–49:** *The first man . . . the man of dust* is Adam; the *last Adam . . . the second man . . . the man of heaven* is Christ; cf. 15.21–23n. **49:** Christians will be transformed in the resurrection: they will exchange the *image of the man of dust*, which they currently bear as descendants of Adam, for the *image of the man of heaven*, which they will receive through

50 What I am saying, brothers and sisters,[a]
is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the
kingdom of God, nor does the perishable
inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I will tell
you a mystery! We will not all die,[b] but we
will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the
twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For
the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be
raised imperishable, and we will be changed.
53 For this perishable body must put on im-
perishability, and this mortal body must put
on immortality. 54 When this perishable body
puts on imperishability, and this mortal body
puts on immortality, then the saying that is
written will be fulfilled:

"Death has been swallowed up in
victory."
55 "Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of
sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who
gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus
Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved,[c] be steadfast, im-
movable, always excelling in the work of the
Lord, because you know that in the Lord your
labor is not in vain.

16 Now concerning the collection for
the saints: you should follow the
directions I gave to the churches of Galatia.
2 On the first day of every week, each of you
is to put aside and save whatever extra you
earn, so that collections need not be taken
when I come. 3 And when I arrive, I will
send any whom you approve with letters
to take your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems
advisable that I should go also, they will
accompany me.

5 I will visit you after passing through
Macedonia—for I intend to pass through
Macedonia— 6 and perhaps I will stay with
you or even spend the winter, so that you
may send me on my way, wherever I go. 7 I
do not want to see you now just in passing,
for I hope to spend some time with you, if
the Lord permits. 8 But I will stay in Ephesus
until Pentecost, 9 for a wide door for effective
work has opened to me, and there are many
adversaries.

10 If Timothy comes, see that he has
nothing to fear among you, for he is doing
the work of the Lord just as I am; 11 there-
fore let no one despise him. Send him on
his way in peace, so that he may come to
me; for I am expecting him with the broth-
ers.

12 Now concerning our brother Apollos,
I strongly urged him to visit you with the
other brothers, but he was not at all willing[d]
to come now. He will come when he has the
opportunity.

13 Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be
courageous, be strong. 14 Let all that you do be
done in love.

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *fall asleep*
[c] Gk *beloved brothers*
[d] Or *it was not at all God's will for him*

participation in Christ. **50:** Paul clarifies that a resurrection of *flesh and blood* is impossible. **51–57:** Paul discloses a *mystery*, a lyrical account of the destiny of those who survive until the resurrection, a Pauline counterpart to the mythological hymn which concludes philosophical proofs of the immortality of the soul. **52:** Cf. 1 Thess 4.16. **54:** Isa 25.7. **55:** Hos 13.14. **56:** A later gloss by an editor reflecting thorough acquaintance with Paul's mature theology; cf. Rom 5.12; 7.7–8,13. **58:** Concluding exhortation.

16.1–24: Advice on administrative and personal matters. 1–4: Paul gives instructions for the implementation of a charitable *collection* for the poor *saints* (believers) in Jerusalem. See further Gal 2.10; 2 Cor 8–9; Rom 15.25–29. **1:** The formula *now concerning* (see 7.1n.) indicates that a question about the collection had been raised in the Corinthians' letter to Paul. **4:** *If it seems advisable,* better "if it is considerable"—that is, the size of the collection: Paul will only take the collection to Jerusalem in person if the sum is worth the effort. **5–8:** Paul's account of his travel plans in this passage contrasts sharply with that in 4.18–19; cf. Acts 19.1, 21–22. **10–11:** Paul is doubtful whether Timothy (see 4.17n.) will be treated with respect by the Corinthians; thus Paul provides the strongest assurance: *he is doing the work of the Lord*. **12:** The formula *now concerning* (see 7.1n.) indicates that the Corinthians had asked about Apollos (see 1.12n.) in their letter to Paul. The eagerness of some in Corinth for Apollos's speedy return is illuminated by Acts 18.27–28. **13–14:** This concluding exhortation signals the end of the letter, after which the paragraph on Stephanas (vv. 15–18) makes a surprising new beginning.

15 Now, brothers and sisters,[a] you know
that members of the household of Stephanas
were the first converts in Achaia, and they
have devoted themselves to the service of
the saints; 16 I urge you to put yourselves at
the service of such people, and of everyone
who works and toils with them. 17 I rejoice
at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus
and Achaicus, because they have made up for
your absence; 18 for they refreshed my spirit
as well as yours. So give recognition to such
persons.

19 The churches of Asia send greetings.
Aquila and Prisca, together with the church
in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord.
20 All the brothers and sisters[a] send greetings.
Greet one another with a holy kiss.

21 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own
hand. 22 Let anyone be accursed who has no
love for the Lord. Our Lord, come![b] 23 The
grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 24 My love
be with all of you in Christ Jesus.[c]

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *Marana tha*. These Aramaic words can also be read *Maran atha*, meaning *Our Lord has come*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

15–18: Appeal for *recognition* of *Stephanas*. On the *household of Stephanas*, see 1.16n. **15:** The direct address, *brothers* (*and sisters*), communicates a sense of urgency. Why should Paul need to appeal for recognition of *the first converts in Achaia* (the principal Roman province of southern Greece)? Evidently Paul assumed that the congregation, or some of its members, had no strong inclination to grant it. The phrase *devoted themselves to the service of the saints* (i.e., the believers) employs some of the same vocabulary used by Paul in describing the charitable collection in 16.1; 2 Cor 8.4; 9.1. **17:** *Fortunatus* ("Lucky") and *Achaicus* ("the Achaian") are probably Stephanas's slaves or freedmen; their names indicate servile origins. **19:** On *Aquila* and *Prisca* in *Asia* (Minor), see Acts 18.2,18–21,26. **20:** The *holy kiss* was a form of early Christian greeting; cf. 1 Thess 5.26; Rom 16.16; 1 Pet 5.14. **21:** Up to this point Paul had been dictating the letter; now he adds a few words in his *own hand.* **22:** *Our Lord, come!* An early Christian prayer, in Aramaic, expressing hope in an imminent coming of the Messiah; cf. Rev 22.20.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

NAME AND AUTHORSHIP

Like its canonical predecessor, this letter is named for its addressees, the community of believers in Corinth. A change from 1 Corinthians appears, however, in the opening formula where the addressees are expanded to include "all the saints throughout Achaia." It is "second" in the sense that it follows 1 Corinthians in canonical order, but it is almost certainly not a single continuous letter, but rather two or more letters or fragments of letters combined. The opening names two senders, Paul and Timothy, in a formula analogous to the mention of Paul and Sosthenes in 1 Cor 1.2. Timothy, Paul's missionary co-worker, has played an important role in communicating between Paul and the Corinthian congregation, perhaps informing Paul of trouble arising in Corinth after he had sent the letter we call 1 Corinthians. Timothy is mentioned here presumably to fortify Paul's appeal, but he is not a coauthor of the letter. Titus, another coworker in the Pauline mission, also appears prominently in the letter as a go-between to restore harmony between Paul and the Corinthians (2.1–4,13; cf. 1 Cor 4.17; Acts 19.21–22). Traditional dating ranges from 54 to 57 CE. Second Corinthians was sent from Macedonia five to seven years after Paul's original visit to Corinth. At least one letter intervened between Paul's writing 1 and 2 Corinthians: the "sorrowful letter" he first mentions in 2.3–4 (see also 2.9; 7.8,12). This letter may be lost, or may be incorporated in 2 Cor 10–13.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

On the Roman city of Corinth in the first century, see Introduction to 1 Corinthians. The historical circumstances of 2 Corinthians are complicated since it appears to comprise sections of two or more letters that Paul sent to Corinth. Some scholars find four blocks of material, separately composed, from which they construct a narrative of conflict and reconciliation occurring after the receipt of 1 Corinthians while Paul was missionizing between Asia (Ephesus) and Macedonia. The principal events reflected in this theory are a "painful visit" (2.1) to Corinth by Paul (his second visit), which he followed up with the "sorrowful letter," and subsequently a recovery from crisis illustrated in a later letter of reconciliation, chs 1–7. Emphasis on the integrity of the letter, on the other hand, finds two crises shaping the rhetoric of the letter; a first caused by a particular offender and resolved according to the reconciliation in chs 1–7, and a second ongoing crisis, still troubling Paul in chs 10–13, involving the intrusion of "false apostles," perhaps from Jerusalem (11.13,22–23), who denigrate Paul's ministry. Within these blocks are two shorter blocks, 6.14–7.1 and chs 8–9, dedicated respectively to issues of purity in the community and monetary matters, especially contributions to Paul's collection from his churches for the poor in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16.1–4; Rom 15.26–27; Gal 2.10). The purity passage (6.14–7.1) is so uncharacteristic of Paul in vocabulary and content that many deem it an interpolation by a later editor. Chapters 8 and 9 both concern the collection, though some argue that they, too, are separate letters. In any event they are consistent with the narrative of conciliation both between Paul and this community and between the Gentile churches and Jerusalem.

INTERPRETATION

However one imagines the letter's composition, its content reflects with power and pathos the difficulties Paul faced in his missionary work, both in suffering persecutions, beatings, and imprisonments, and, in what seems even more painful to him, the volatile relational crises he negotiated in this nascent, fragile community of believers. Lists of apostolic hardships (4.7–12; 6.4–10), charges of vacillation (1.15–18), the pain of a personal affront (2.5–11), and the sting of criticism from intruding missionaries (10.1–13.10) reveal the afflicted apostle more vividly than in any other letter. "Afflicted in every way" (4.8; 7.5), "disputes without and fears within" (7.8), he writes. In the context of forgiving his offender, Paul reveals a strategy of resisting assaults of every kind for the sake of the community, for "in the presence of Christ," he is not to be "outwitted by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his designs" (2.10–11; cf. 10.3; 11.14). The reconciling action facilitated by Christ's presence is further nuanced in 5.16–21 where the death of Christ is the fulcrum between worlds, the ground of a new way of

knowing: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (5.17). Paul's life both in the presence of Christ and in Christ makes his afflictions a participation in the reconciling suffering, death, and rising of Christ. The turning of the ages in the death of the "one who died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves" (5.14) is the theological fundament on which this discourse of reconciliation rests. While reconciliation was present in 1 Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians, where Satan's designs persist, Paul's apocalyptic appeal intensifies.

The letter presents a theological narrative of apostolic affliction, including criticism of Paul within the church, relieved by divine comfort grounded in the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. Human suffering, inevitable in the world still enthralled to Satan's designs, becomes participation in perception and action in Christ's suffering and death and life as "new creation" (5.17). Living the paradox of power in affliction enables Paul to boast (as a "fool," 11.1–12.13) in his weaknesses and to characterize his ministry "as having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (6.10). Interwoven with this basic narrative of God's reconciling and creative "yes" in Christ (1.19) is the story of Paul's painful visit to Corinth, his own reconciliation with an offender (chs 1–7), along with challenges to his ministry in the presence of false apostles (chs 10–12). The lengthy appeal for contributions to the Jerusalem church (chs 8–9) registers hope that despite these difficulties, the Corinthians' generous contribution will manifest the "surpassing grace of God" whose "gift" is "indescribable" (9.14–15). The letter to the Romans, written from Corinth, confirms that the collection from Macedonia and Corinth was completed. At the time that he wrote Romans, Paul was on his way to deliver that gift to the "saints at Jerusalem" (Rom 15.25–29).

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1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will
of God, and Timothy our brother,
To the church of God that is in Corinth,
including all the saints throughout Achaia:
[2] Grace to you and peace from God our
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the
God of all consolation, [4] who consoles us in
all our affliction, so that we may be able to
console those who are in any affliction with
the consolation with which we ourselves are
consoled by God. [5] For just as the sufferings
of Christ are abundant for us, so also our
consolation is abundant through Christ. [6] If
we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it
is for your consolation, which you experience
when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. [7] Our hope
for you is unshaken; for we know that as you
share in our sufferings, so also you share in
our consolation.

[8] We do not want you to be unaware,
brothers and sisters,[a] of the affliction we

[a] Gk *brothers*

1.1–11: Opening salutation and blessing.

1.1–2: Opening salutation. *Paul and Timothy*, also co-senders in Phil 1.1; Col. 1.1; Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1; Philem 1. *Brother* (cf. 1 Thess 3.2), and elsewhere "my beloved child" (1 Cor 4.17), was an emissary for Paul (but never called an "apostle") to Corinth (1 Cor 4.17; 16.10). *Apostle by the will of God*, also 1 Cor 1.1; cf. Rom 1.1; Gal 1.1. Here, where that status is being contested, that claim is especially pointed. The addressees include the church at Corinth and *all the saints* (or "the sanctified," Paul's designation for all believers) *throughout Achaia* (the Roman province in southern Greece to which the city of Corinth belongs). *Grace to you and peace*, Paul's standard greeting, which reflects Greco-Roman epistolary form with modified vocabulary: e.g., *grace* (Gk "charis") instead of the standard Gk term "chaire" ("greeting").

1.3–11: Blessing. 3–5: *Blessed be God.* Instead of the typical thanksgiving formula, "I give thanks . . .," (1 Cor 1.4), Paul here uses the language of *blessing* associated with Jewish benedictions; cf. Eph 1.3. The benediction establishes that the principal agent of comfort in affliction, as of apostolic commission, is God, the *Father of mercies* (Ex 34.6; Pss 25.6; 69.16; Rom 12.1; Phil 2.1) and *God of all consolation* (Isa 40.1; 49.3). **6–7**: Suffering in service to God is answered by the consolation of God. As the Corinthians *patiently endure the same sufferings*, they will experience that comfort. **8:** *Affliction in Asia,* what Paul refers to is unclear (cf. 1 Cor 15.32 and Acts

experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 10 He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, 11 as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our[a] behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

12 Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness[b] and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God—and all the more toward you. 13 For we write you nothing other than what you can read and also understand; I hope you will understand until the end— 14 as you have already understood us in part—that on the day of the Lord Jesus we are your boast even as you are our boast.

15 Since I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double favor;[c] 16 I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on to Judea. 17 Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to ordinary human standards,[d] ready to say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time? 18 As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been "Yes and No." 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not "Yes and No"; but in him it is always "Yes." 20 For in him every one of God's promises is a "Yes." For this reason it is through him that we say the "Amen," to the glory of God. 21 But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, 22 by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

23 But I call on God as witness against me: it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth. 24 I do not mean to imply that we lord it over your faith; rather, we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand

2 firm in the faith. 1 So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. 2 For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? 3 And I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice; for I am confident about all of you, that my joy would be the joy of all of you. 4 For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *your*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *holiness*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *pleasure*
[d] Gk *according to the flesh*

19.23–24); *Asia,* the Roman province in western Asia Minor. *Despaired,* cf. 4.8; Ps 88.16 (LXX). **9–10.** But *God, who raises the dead* (4.14), rescued him from *the sentence of death* then and will *rescue again*. *Blessing,* Gk "charisma."

1.12–7.16: Body, Part I: Visitation, trauma, reconciliation.

1.12–2.13: Paul's change of plans and painful visit. 12: A defensive tone is suggested by *testimony of our conscience*; cf. 7.2. A well-attested variant (see textual note *b*) reads "hagiotēti," "holiness," instead of "haplotēti," *frankness*. **13–14:** End-time terminology (see 2 Thess 2.2n.) punctuates Paul's assertion of sincerity. **15–20:** Paul had intended a double visit ("double favor," v. 15), one on either side of his trip to Macedonia (1 Cor 16.5–6), but altered his plans a second time. **16:** *Macedonia,* Roman province in northern Greece where Thessalonica, Philippi, and Beroea were located. **17:** Against the charge of *vacillating* Paul identifies his straightforward *word* (cf. Mt 5.37; Jas 5.12) with the *faithfulness of God* (v.18). *Amen, to the glory of God* suggests a liturgical context; see 1 Cor 14.16. **19:** *Timothy and Silvanus* were coworkers on his first visit to Corinth; see Acts 18.5. **21–22:** A tone of defensiveness but also reassurance marks the claim to *ongoing* divine confirmation *in Christ* (lit., "Christ-ward") of Paul and the Corinthians together, itself founded upon God's past action of anointing, sealing, and giving the *first installment* (the same Gk word is translated "guarantee" in 5.5) of the *Spirit*; cf. Eph 1.13. Early commentators (e.g., Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian) understood this as baptismal language. **1.23–2.4:** A return to the courtroom imagery of 1.12. The prior "tearful" letter (2.3–4) is sometimes identified with chs 10–13, where Paul repeatedly and passionately restates his love for the Corinthians; see Introduction.

5 But if anyone has caused pain, he has
caused it not to me, but to some extent—not
to exaggerate it—to all of you. 6 This punish-
ment by the majority is enough for such a
person; 7 so now instead you should forgive
and console him, so that he may not be
overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 So I urge
you to reaffirm your love for him. 9 I wrote for
this reason: to test you and to know whether
you are obedient in everything. 10 Anyone
whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have
forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been
for your sake in the presence of Christ. 11 And
we do this so that we may not be outwitted by
Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

12 When I came to Troas to proclaim the
good news of Christ, a door was opened for
me in the Lord; 13 but my mind could not rest
because I did not find my brother Titus there.
So I said farewell to them and went on to
Macedonia.

14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ
always leads us in triumphal procession, and
through us spreads in every place the fra-
grance that comes from knowing him. 15 For
we are the aroma of Christ to God among
those who are being saved and among those
who are perishing; 16 to the one a fragrance
from death to death, to the other a fragrance
from life to life. Who is sufficient for these
things? 17 For we are not peddlers of God's
word like so many;[a] but in Christ we speak
as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from
God and standing in his presence.

3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves
again? Surely we do not need, as some
do, letters of recommendation to you or from
you, do we? 2 You yourselves are our letter,
written on our[b] hearts, to be known and read
by all; 3 and you show that you are a letter
of Christ, prepared by us, written not with
ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not
on tablets of stone but on tablets of human
hearts.

4 Such is the confidence that we have
through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are
competent of ourselves to claim anything as
coming from us; our competence is from God,
6 who has made us competent to be ministers
of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit;
for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

7 Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in
letters on stone tablets,[c] came in glory so that
the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses'
face because of the glory of his face, a glory
now set aside, 8 how much more will the min-

[a] Other ancient authorities read *like the others*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *your*
[c] Gk *on stones*

2.5–13: The specific cause of pain is an unnamed individual. Paul urges forgiveness of this one (cf. 7.12) toward whom some punishment (perhaps exclusion) has been applied by "the majority" (v. 6). **11:** *Satan* appears elsewhere as "the god of this world" (4.4), Beliar (6.15), and the serpent who deceived Eve (11.3). **12:** *Troas*, a city in northwest Asia Minor, near ancient Troy. *Titus,* likely the carrier of the "tearful letter" (see 7.6–13; 8.6,18,23; 12.18).

2.14–3.18: Divine commissioning and ministry in the new covenant. 14–17: A paragraph of thanks (cf. 1.3–11) reverses the mood of restlessness. **14–15:** *Triumphal procession* alludes to the Roman imperial practice of leading captives in a victory parade. Here, God is the victor; Paul with others *in Christ* is being led in spectacle. *Fragrance* and *aroma* suggest sacrificial ritual (Gen 8.21; Lev 1.9); see also the aroma of divine presence in *1 En.* 24.4–25.6 and of Wisdom in Sirach 24.15. In analogy to the effects of the message of the cross in 1 Cor 1.18–25, also associated with divine Wisdom, this aroma is for the ones *being saved* the fragrance of life, but for the ones *perishing*, the fragrance of death. **17:** *Peddlers* translates a verb of monetary transaction and suggests preaching for financial gain or preaching a diluted message. **3.1:** The Greek epistolary form *letter of recommendation* was used by early Christians to introduce believers to one another (cf. Acts 18.27; Rom 16). **2–3**: Paul defends his lack of such a letter since the Corinthian congregants constitute his *letter of Christ*. Contrasting tablets of stone (the medium for the Ten Commandments, e.g., Ex 20.1–17; 24.12; 31.18; 34.1) with human hearts, Paul invokes the "new covenant" (see v. 6) language of Jer 31.31–33 and Ezek 11.19; 36.26–27. **4–6:** Paul's own *confidence . . . through Christ toward God* reiterates the source of Paul's ministry. Concentrated "diakonos" ("servant, minister") language in chs 1–9 supports Paul's claim to be an authoritative go-between. *Competence* for the new covenant ministry is from God and bears the life of the Spirit in contrast to the dead letter of the written code. **7–11:** *Stone tablets* connect with Moses' reflection of divine glory at Sinai (Ex 34.29–35). An extended three-part

istry of the Spirit come in glory? 9 For if there
was glory in the ministry of condemnation,
much more does the ministry of justifica-
tion abound in glory! 10 Indeed, what once
had glory has lost its glory because of the
greater glory; 11 for if what was set aside came
through glory, much more has the permanent
come in glory!

12 Since, then, we have such a hope, we act
with great boldness, 13 not like Moses, who put
a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel
from gazing at the end of the glory that[a] was
being set aside. 14 But their minds were hard-
ened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear
the reading of the old covenant, that same veil
is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside.
15 Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is
read, a veil lies over their minds; 16 but when
one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.
17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the
Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And
all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory
of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are
being transformed into the same image from
one degree of glory to another; for this comes
from the Lord, the Spirit.

4 Therefore, since it is by God's mercy
that we are engaged in this ministry,
we do not lose heart. 2 We have renounced
the shameful things that one hides; we
refuse to practice cunning or to falsify
God's word; but by the open statement of
the truth we commend ourselves to the
conscience of everyone in the sight of God.
3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled
to those who are perishing. 4 In their case
the god of this world has blinded the minds
of the unbelievers, to keep them from see-
ing the light of the gospel of the glory of
Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do
not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus
Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves
for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who said,
"Let light shine out of darkness," who has
shone in our hearts to give the light of the
knowledge of the glory of God in the face of
Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in clay jars, so
that it may be made clear that this extraor-
dinary power belongs to God and does not

[a] Gk *of what*

rhetorical figure, known in rabbinic literature as "qal va-ḥomer" (lit., "light and heavy," i.e., "from the lesser to the greater"), follows through v. 11. Cf. Rom 5.16,18. **12–18:** Paul contrasts his own boldness to Moses' hiding. **13:** *End* may suggest simply "cessation," or alternately, "goal." **14:** *Their minds were hardened* recalls Deut. 29.4; Isa 29.10 (cited verbatim in Rom 11.8). Divine agency may be reflected in the passive voice of the verb "to harden." Temporal distinctions (cf. Deut 29.4 "but to this day") between the time of Moses and the present collapse: *to this very day* the veil remains when they hear the *old covenant* read. A second passive verb completes the thought: only in Christ is the veil *set aside*. **15:** Paul reiterates the temporal duration "to this day." Heart (Gk "kardia"; NRSV *minds*) is now the veiled organ. **16**: Partial human agency appears within the passive construction: *when one turns to the Lord* the veil *is removed*; *one* is indefinite. **17:** *The Lord* (Ex 34.34) is identified by Paul with the *Spirit* and the Spirit with *freedom* (cf. v. 18; Gal 5.1–5). **18:** *All of us* continues Paul's emphasis on *all* throughout the Corinthian correspondence. *With unveiled faces,* cf. Moses' repeated unveiling in Ex 34.34. *Glory . . . reflected in a mirror* may suggest the reflection of the *Lord God* in *Christ* (4.6). Some translate the verb differently, e.g., "to behold," "to contemplate." Metamorphosis to the divine *image* figures in Hellenistic religion and in Rom 8.29; 1 Cor 15.49; Col 3.10.

4.1– 5.10: Ministry, momentary affliction, and the surpassing weight of glory. **1:** *Lose heart*, cf. 4.16; Gal 6.9; Eph 3.13; 2 Thess 3.13. **2:** Paul is accused of *cunning* (12.16; cf. 11.3; 1 Cor 3.19) and of *falsifying* the divine word (cf. 2.17). *Conscience,*1.12. **3:** A return to the *veil* image encapsulates and reinforces the argument in 3.12–17. **4:** *The god of this world* is the sole reference in the New Testament to Satan as a "god"; cf. 1 Cor 2.6n.; Eph 2.2. *This world* appears in 1 Cor 3.19; 5.10; 7.31 (twice). *Minds* recalls the *minds hardened* by an unidentified, but likely divine agent in 3.14; cf. Rom 11.8. *Unbelievers*, see 6.14 and cf. 1 Cor 6.6; 7.12–15; 10.27; 14.22. Christ as *image of God* occurs only here and Col 1.15; cf. 3.18. In Wis 7.25–26, Wisdom is "image of his (God's) goodness." Elsewhere the term refers to human beings, e.g., Gen 1.26; cf. Rom 8.29; 1 Cor 11.7; 15.49. *Glory*, a central attribute of the divine presence for Paul, especially thematic in 3.7–11,17–18; 4.15–17. **5:** *Jesus Christ as Lord*, see 1 Cor 12.2; Rom 10.9; Phil 2.11; Col 2.6. *Your slaves*, see Rom 1.2; Gal 1.10; Phil 1.1. **6:** *Let light shine out of the darkness*, cf. Gen 1.3; Ps 112.4; Isaiah 9.2; Job 37.15. **7:** *Treasure,* the ministry described above. *Clay jars*, earthenware, vulnerable to

come from us. [8] We are afflicted in every way,
but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to
despair; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck
down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying in
the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of
Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.
[11] For while we live, we are always being given
up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of
Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.
[12] So death is at work in us, but life in you.

[13] But just as we have the same spirit of
faith that is in accordance with scripture—"I
believed, and so I spoke"—we also believe,
and so we speak, [14] because we know that
the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise
us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you
into his presence. [15] Yes, everything is for your
sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and
more people, may increase thanksgiving, to
the glory of God.

[16] So we do not lose heart. Even though
our outer nature is wasting away, our inner
nature is being renewed day by day. [17] For
this slight momentary affliction is preparing
us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all
measure, [18] because we look not at what can
be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what
can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be
seen is eternal.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we
live in is destroyed, we have a building
from God, a house not made with hands,
eternal in the heavens. [2] For in this tent we
groan, longing to be clothed with our heaven-
ly dwelling— [3] if indeed, when we have taken
it off [a] we will not be found naked. [4] For while
we are still in this tent, we groan under our
burden, because we wish not to be unclothed
but to be further clothed, so that what is
mortal may be swallowed up by life. [5] He who
has prepared us for this very thing is God,
who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

[6] So we are always confident; even though
we know that while we are at home in the
body we are away from the Lord— [7] for we
walk by faith, not by sight. [8] Yes, we do have
confidence, and we would rather be away
from the body and at home with the Lord.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *put it on*

breakage. **8–9:** Catalogues of affliction were common in Stoic philosophy to demonstrate the moral strength of the philosopher. Here, the power of God upholds the apostle through adversity. Cf. 6.4–10; 11.23–28; 12.10; Rom 8.35–39; 1 Cor 4.11–13; Phil 4.12. **10:** *Death,* Gk "nekrōsis," "dead or decaying flesh"; cf. Rom 4.19. *Carrying in the body*, cf. Gal 6.17. The *body*, i.e., *mortal flesh* (v. 11), is where both the death and the life of Jesus are simultaneously manifested; cf. 1 Cor 13.3. The apostle *gives up* the body (Gal 2.20; Eph 5.2), or allows his body to be *given up* (if read as a passive) **13–15:** Ps 116.10 (Ps 115.1 LXX) echoes Paul's own experience and ends with assurance of entering God's presence with thanksgiving. **15:** *For your sake*, 2.10; see also 1.6; 5.13; 8.23. *Grace* (Gk "charis") occurs seventeen times in 2 Cor and emphasizes extension and plenitude at 8.6; 9.8. **16:** *Lose heart*, 4.1; Eph 3.13. *Outer . . . inner*, "nature" is supplied for translation; cf. Rom 7.22; Eph 3.16. *Wasting away . . . being renewed:* Simultaneous actions corresponding to the dual activity in v. 10 of carrying necrosis ("death") in the body and manifesting life in our bodies. *Being renewed*, the verb "to renew" occurs only here and in Col 3.10; the noun "renewal/renewing" occurs in Rom 12.2 (of the mind) and Titus 3.5. Cf. 5.17; Gal 6.15. **17–18:** Two more pairs of antitheses end the section. Antitheses, temporal and sensory, here and elsewhere in Paul, often indicate overlapping realities, e.g., glory shining through affliction. **5.1–10:** Eschatological transformation. **1:** *The earthly tent we live in*, lit., "our earthly house of the tent"; cf. Wis 9.15; 2 Pet 1.13. Three forms of the Gk word "oikos" ("house, home") build the transition from earthly to heavenly dwelling; cf. 4.7 where the body is a "clay jar." *Destroyed,* death of the mortal body. *A house not made with hands*, i.e., "God-made" (cf. Mk 14.58; Col 2.11; Heb 9.11,24), the believer's resurrection body (cf. "spiritual body" in 1 Cor 15.44). See also Jn 2.19–21 where Jesus's resurrected body will replace the Temple. For the gathered community as God's temple, see 6.16; 1 Cor 3.16–17; cf. 2 Esd 10.40–57. **2:** *Groan*, 5.4; Rom 8.23,26. *To be clothed . . . to be further clothed* (v. 4) to put a garment on over an existing garment, so perhaps the heavenly dwelling over the earthly one, i.e., the resurrection body over the earthly one; cf. 1 Cor 15.54. **3:** *Not found naked,* i.e., clothed in the resurrection body. **4:** *In this tent . . . under our burden*, see Wis 9.15. The *mortal* (body), when *further clothed* (at death), will be *swallowed up by life.* (Cf. 1 Cor 15.53–54). **5:** *Guarantee,* see 1.22n. **6:** *Confident*: In some Hellenistic philosophers, death is met with confidence because the soul endures or because all things are regulated by a manifold order; e.g., Plato, *Phaedo* 63 E; Epictetus, *Dissertaiones* 2.1.14. *In the body . . . away from the Lord*, see Phil 1.21,23. **7:** *By faith not sight*, see

9 So whether we are at home or away, we
make it our aim to please him. 10 For all of
us must appear before the judgment seat of
Christ, so that each may receive recompense
for what has been done in the body, whether
good or evil.

11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord,
we try to persuade others; but we ourselves
are well known to God, and I hope that we are
also well known to your consciences. 12 We
are not commending ourselves to you again,
but giving you an opportunity to boast about
us, so that you may be able to answer those
who boast in outward appearance and not
in the heart. 13 For if we are beside ourselves,
it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is
for you. 14 For the love of Christ urges us on,
because we are convinced that one has died
for all; therefore all have died. 15 And he died
for all, so that those who live might live no
longer for themselves, but for him who died
and was raised for them.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard
no one from a human point of view;[a] even
though we once knew Christ from a human
point of view,[a] we know him no longer in that
way. 17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new
creation: everything old has passed away; see,
everything has become new! 18 All this is from
God, who reconciled us to himself through
Christ, and has given us the ministry of rec-
onciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was recon-
ciling the world to himself,[b] not counting
their trespasses against them, and entrusting
the message of reconciliation to us. 20 So we
are ambassadors for Christ, since God is mak-
ing his appeal through us; we entreat you on
behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For
our sake he made him to be sin who knew
no sin, so that in him we might become the
righteousness of God.

6 As we work together with him,[c] we urge
you also not to accept the grace of God in
vain. 2 For he says,

"At an acceptable time I have listened to
you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped
you."

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is
the day of salvation! 3 We are putting no ob-
stacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be
found with our ministry, 4 but as servants of
God we have commended ourselves in every
way: through great endurance, in afflictions,
hardships, calamities, 5 beatings, imprison-
ments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;
6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness,

[a] Gk *according to the flesh*
[b] Or *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself*
[c] Gk *As we work together*

4.18; 1 Cor 13.12; Rom 8.24–25; 1 Pet 1.8. **10:** *The judgment seat*, see 1 Cor 4.5; Rom 2.16; Rom 14. 9–10. *Recompense . . .*, the body is the locus of consequential moral action.

5.11–6.13: The ministry of reconciliation amid manifold afflictions. 11: *Fear of the Lord*, cf. 7.1; see also, e.g., Prov 1.7; 2.5; 9.10; etc., and Sir 1.11,12–14. *Consciences*, 1.12; 4.2. **12:** *Commending ourselves*, see 3.2n. *In outward appearances*, lit., "in the face," *not in the heart*, perhaps referring to Paul's opponents; see 10.12; 11.5–6,12–15; 12.11 for Paul's opponents. **13:** *Are beside ourselves*, perhaps a reference to spiritual ecstasy; see 12.1–8; cf. 1 Cor 14.2,28. *In our right mind*, cf. 1 Cor 14.19. **14–15:** *Love of Christ*, Christ's love for *us*, expressed in his *one* death on behalf of *all*. *All have died*, cf. Rom 6.3–4; see also Rom 7.4; 14.7–9; Gal 2.19–20. **16:** *From a human point of view,* lit., "according to the flesh," can be read as an adjective modifying "no one," or adverbially, modifying "regard." **17:** *New creation*, see Isa 43.18–19; 48.6; 65.17; 66.22; Gal 6.15; Eph 2.15; 2 Pet 3.13; Rev 21.1–5; cf. Rom 8.19–21. **18–19**: *Reconciled us*, cf. Rom 5.10–11. Reconciliation is a term found only in Pauline letters in the NT; cf. 2 Macc 1.5; 7.33; 8.29. **20:** *Ambassadors* has political resonance, it can refer to Roman legates, sent by the emperor to govern imperial provinces, or to envoys sent on a diplomatic mission. **21:** *Made him to be sin* (Gk "hamartia"; cf. Gal 3.13–14; Rom 8.3–4) is variously interpreted: Christ is a sin-offering for humanity, an atonement offering (Isa 53.9–11; Rom 3.25; 1 Cor 5.7), or Christ himself took the place of the sinner, though he remained sinless. *Righteousness of God*, either the righteousness that belongs to God and brings about the salvation of humanity, or the righteousness God imparts to human beings to justify them; see Rom 1.17; 3.5,21–22,25–26; 10.3; Phil 3.9. **6.1–10:** Summary of defense and appeal to affection. **2:** *At an acceptable time . . .*, Isa 49.8. *Now*, see 5.16. **3:** *Obstacle,* 1 Cor 9.12. **4a:** *Commend ourselves* intensifies the theme of boasting, prominent in 1 Cor, using language of self-commendation and defense: cf. 3.1; 4.2; 5.12; 10.12; 10.18; 12.11. **4b–5:** A catalogue of afflictions

holiness of spirit, genuine love, [7] truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; [8] in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; [9] as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; [10] as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

[11] We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. [12] There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. [13] In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

[14] Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? [15] What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? [16] What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we[a] are the temple of the living God; as God said,

"I will live in them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
[17] Therefore come out from them,
and be separate from them, says the
Lord,
and touch nothing unclean;
then I will welcome you,
[18] and I will be your father,
and you shall be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty."

7 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.

[2] Make room in your hearts[b] for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. [3] I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. [4] I often boast about you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with consolation; I am overjoyed in all our affliction.

[5] For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way—disputes without and fears within. [6] But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us by the arrival of Titus, [7] and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was consoled about you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. [8] For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it, for I see that I grieved you with that letter, though only briefly). [9] Now I rejoice, not because you were

[a] Other ancient authorities read *you*
[b] Gk lacks *in your hearts*

followed by a catalogue of divinely empowered virtues (vv. 6–7). **7:** *Weapons of righteousness*, Paul often uses military metaphors, e.g., 2.14n.; 10.4–5; Phil 2.25; Philem 1.2; Gal 5.13,17; Rom 13.12; 1 Thess 5.8. **8–10:** A series of paired antitheses illustrates the paradoxical nature of apostolic work; see Gal 5.22–23; Phil 4.8; Col 3.12; 1 Pet 3.8; 2 Pet 1.5–7. In Stoic philosophy such lists describe the philosopher's self-sufficiency, but here support Paul's God-sourced self-defense. **11.** *Frankly*, lit., "our mouth is open." **12:** *Affections*, lit., "the inner organs," the seat of the emotions.

6.14–7.1: Warnings about purity. These verses insert an uncharacteristic theme into the discourse on affection that resumes at 7.2. **14:** *Mismatched*, lit., "misyoked," a term related to the injunction against interbreeding animals in Lev 19.19; it may relate to marriages (cf. 1 Cor 7.12–16), but also to business relations. *Righteousness and lawlessness* (Rom 6.19); *darkness and light* (Rom 2.19; 13.12; 1 Cor 4.5; 1 Thess 5.4–5). **15:** *Beliar,* variant of Belial (Heb "worthlessness"), is attested only here in biblical literature; more commonly "Satan" (see 2.11n.; 11.14; 12.7). **16:** *Temple of the living God*, see 1 Cor 3.16. *As God said*, a chain of scriptural citations follows: **16d** conflates Ezek 37.27 and Lev 26.12; **17a–c:** Isa 52.11; **17d:** Ezek 20.34 (LXX); **18a**: 2 Sam 7.14; **18b**: Isa 43.6. **7.1:** *We have these promises*. Indicating either a present state or a future hope. *Making holiness*, cf. text variant at 1.12 and 1 Cor 3.17.

7.2–16: Return to personal defense and affection. 2: *Wronged . . . corrupted . . . taken advantage of.* Denial of these charges indicates strained relations with opponents. The last charge returns in 12.17. **5–16:** Travel narrative resumes from 2.13. Paul's reunion with Titus in Macedonia brings the welcome news of the Corinthians' good will (see 2.2–4). **6:** *God who consoles the downcast*, Isa 49.13. **8:** *My letter*, 2.2–4.

grieved, but because your grief led to repentance; for you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter. 12 So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who was wronged, but in order that your zeal for us might be made known to you before God. 13 In this we find comfort.

In addition to our own consolation, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by all of you. 14 For if I have been somewhat boastful about you to him, I was not disgraced; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus has proved true as well. 15 And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of all of you, and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. 16 I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.

8 We want you to know, brothers and sisters,[a] about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; 2 for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, 4 begging us earnestly for the privilege[b] of sharing in this ministry to the saints— 5 and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, 6 so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking[c] among you. 7 Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you[d]—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.[c]

8 I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. 9 For you know the generous act[e] of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. 10 And in this matter I

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *grace*
[c] Gk *this grace*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *your love for us*
[e] Gk *the grace*

11: Heightened rhetoric raises the question of whether Paul had been mistaken in his prior assessment of their guilt. *Eagerness to clear* (Gk "apologia") and *punishment* carry legal overtones. **12:** *The one who did the wrong*, presumably the individual of 2.5–11. *The one who was wronged*, Paul. **13:** *Comfort . . . consolation*, see 1.3–7. **15:** *Obedience*, see 2.9. *Fear and trembling*, cf. Phil 2.12; Eph 6.5. **16:** Expression of *complete confidence* (5.6,8) sums up the preceding section and looks ahead to the concrete financial requests in chs 8–9.

8.1–9.15: Body, Part II, 8.1–9.15: The collection.

8.1–24: Exhortation to contribute for relief of the saints in Jerusalem. Chapters 8 and 9, thought by some to be separate letters, discuss the collection Paul is gathering for the believers in Jerusalem; see Rom 15.25–32; 1 Cor 16.1–4; Gal 2.10; also Acts 24.17. **1:** *Grace* (Gk "charis"), here meaning "divine beneficence." The term is used ten times in chs 8–9 with rich nuance as shown in the wide range of translations of the term: "privilege" (8.4); "generous undertaking" (8.6,7,19); "generous act" (8.9); "thanks" (8.16; 9.15); "blessing" (9.8). *Macedonia,* see 1.16n. **2:** *Severe ordeal,* cf. Phil 1.29–30; 1 Thess 1.6; 2.14; 3.3–4. **4:** *Sharing* (Gk "koinōnia") refers to the collection in 8.4; 9.13; Rom 15.26. The same noun denotes participating in Christ (1 Cor 1.9; 10.16; 2 Cor 2.7; Phil 3.10) and with the Spirit (2 Cor 13.13; Phil 2.1); see also, "sharing in the gospel" (Phil 1.5) and "sharing of faith" (Philem 6). *Ministry* (Gk "diakonia"), see 3.4–6n. *Saints*, the believers in Jerusalem for whom the collection is taken; see 1.1–2n. **6:** *Titus,* having already begun (7.13), may now complete *this generous undertaking*, i.e., the collection (8.1). On *Titus* see 2.13; 8.16–24. **7:** Paul elsewhere mentions the Corinthians' spiritual gifts of *faith* (1 Cor 12.9; 13.2,8), *speech* (1 Cor 1.5; 14.9), and *knowledge* (1 Cor 1.5; 12.8; 13.2,8; 14.6). *Our love* (Gk "agapē") *for you*, see textual note *d.* On the superiority of *love* to every other spiritual gift, 1 Cor 13.13. **9:** *Became poor*, see 6.10; cf. 5.21 and Phil

am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something— 11 now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. 12 For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. 13 I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between 14 your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. 15 As it is written,

"The one who had much did not have too much,
and the one who had little did not have too little."

16 But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. 17 For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. 18 With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming the good news;[a] 19 and not only that, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking[b] for the glory of the Lord himself[c] and to show our goodwill. 20 We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, 21 for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of others. 22 And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters, but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers[d] of the churches, the glory of Christ. 24 Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

9 Now it is not necessary for me to write you about the ministry to the saints, 2 for I know your eagerness, which is the subject of my boasting about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you may not prove to have been empty in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; 4 otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—in this undertaking.[e] 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you, and arrange in advance for this bountiful gift that you have promised, so that it may be ready as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion.

6 The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share

[a] Or *the gospel*
[b] Gk *this grace*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *himself*
[d] Gk *apostles*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *of boasting*

2.6–8. **10–14:** *Giving my advice*, cf. 1 Cor 7.25. Paul encourages follow-through on their gift to make a *fair balance*, i.e., their *abundance* matching the need of the *poor* in Jerusalem. **15:** Ex 16.18.

8.16–24: Defense against mishandling. 18: *The brother*, one of two unnamed *brothers* (vv. 22–23) being sent ("apostles" in v. 23; see textual note *d*) with Titus and Paul to administer the collection. **21:** See Prov 3.4. Paul seeks to secure the integrity of the collection against accusations of mishandling. See 12.17–18 for Paul's defense against some critics of his financial management.

9.1–15: Reprise of the exhortation to give. Perhaps a separate letter after the letter comprising chs 1–8. **1:** *It is not necessary . . .* suggests information already known to his audience. **2:** *Macedonia*, see 1.16n.; *Achaia*, see 1.1–2n. **5:** Their gift will be *bountiful* and *voluntary*: both terms translate Gk "eulogia," translated as "bountifully" twice in v. 6. *Extortion* suggests that the amount requested would exceed the willingness to give; cf. Philem 14. **6:** *Sows . . . reaps*, Prov 11.24. **7:** *Not under compulsion* bears overtones of the Stoic doctrine of liberty but with

abundantly in every good work. [9] As it is written,

"He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness[a] endures forever."

[10] He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.[a] [11] You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; [12] for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. [13] Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, [14] while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. [15] Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

10 I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!— [2] I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards.[b] [3] Indeed, we live as human beings,[c] but we do not wage war according to human standards;[b] [4] for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human,[d] but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments [5] and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. [6] We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

[7] Look at what is before your eyes. If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we. [8] Now, even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. [9] I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters. [10] For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." [11] Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present.

[12] We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they do not

[a] Or *benevolence*
[b] Gk *according to the flesh*
[c] Gk *in the flesh*
[d] Gk *fleshly*

the added dimension of divine agency in accomplishing it. *God loves . . . giver*, Prov 22.8. **9:** Ps 112.9 (LXX). **10:** *Seed, bread*, Isa 55.10. *Harvest of your righteousness,* Hos 10.12 (LXX). **11–12:** *Generosity will produce thanksgiving*, see 4.15, where the extension of the gift ("*charis*") increases thanksgiving to the glory of God. **12:** *Rendering* (Gk "diakonia") *of this ministry* (Gk "leitourgia," lit., "work of the people"). **13:** *You glorify God*; or "they glorify God."

10.1–13.10: Body, Part III: Apostolic defense intensified under stress.

10.1–18: Defense of apostolic service. The last three chapters are widely held to be a separate letter; see "Introduction." **1:** *I, myself, Paul*, an emphatic identity claim; cf. Gal 5.2. *Humble when face to face*, Paul's opponents may describe him as humble in a pejorative way, e.g., as "servile," "lacking authority" (v. 10). There is continuity with the theme of power in weakness; see, e.g., 4.7–12; 11.21–30; 12.8–10; 13.4. *Bold,* 5.6,8; 7.16. **2:** *Those who think . . .* Paul's opponents are indicated directly at 10.10,12; 11.5,12–15,22–23; 12.11; and obliquely at 11.4; 12.15–16,18. **2b–4:** *Human* translates different forms of the Gk word for "flesh." For Paul the flesh may be the realm of physical existence without pejorative meaning or a powerful realm opposed to the Spirit. Here, the Spirit-indwelled flesh may be in view, i.e., Paul's *weapons* (6.7; Rom 6.3; 13.12) are not *merely human*. **5:** Metaphors of war, e.g., wielding weapons and taking captives are also associated with Stoic argumentation. **7–8:** Calling attention to some who are persuaded that they *belong to Christ* (perhaps without warrant; cf. 1 Cor 1.12), Paul urges that they *look* to him as possessing God-given *authority*; cf. 12.19;13.10; 1 Cor 3.9–15. *Building up . . . tearing down*, see Jer 1.10; etc. *Boasting* may be a charge brought against Paul. **9–10**: *Frightening you with letters*, cf. Gal 1.7. *They say*, lit., "he says." *Bodily presence is weak*, probably more than physical weakness; see, e.g., 1.17. **12:** The terms *classify or compare* form a pun in Greek, lost in translation ("enkrinai ē synkrinai"); see 11.22–23.

show good sense. [13] We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you. [14] For we were not overstepping our limits when we reached you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the good news[a] of Christ. [15] We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labors of others; but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, [16] so that we may proclaim the good news[a] in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in someone else's sphere of action. [17] "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." [18] For it is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends.

11 I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! [2] I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. [3] But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure[b] devotion to Christ. [4] For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. [5] I think that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. [6] I may be untrained in speech, but not in knowledge; certainly in every way and in all things we have made this evident to you.

[7] Did I commit a sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I proclaimed God's good news[c] to you free of charge? [8] I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. [9] And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for my needs were supplied by the friends[d] who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will continue to refrain from burdening you in any way. [10] As the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. [11] And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

[12] And what I do I will also continue to do, in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about. [13] For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. [14] And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. [15] So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their end will match their deeds.

[16] I repeat, let no one think that I am a fool; but if you do, then accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. [17] What I am saying in regard to this boastful confidence, I am saying not with the Lord's authority, but as a fool; [18] since many boast according to human

[a] Or *the gospel*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *and pure*
[c] Gk *the gospel of God*
[d] Gk *brothers*

13–15: Despite eschewing comparison, Paul engages in it. *Boasting* to keep within *limits* of the *field* (lit., "the measure of the rule (Gk "kanōn")" God assigned. **15–16:** *Sphere of action*, Gk "kanōn." Paul aims to *preach the gospel* without encroaching on someone else's territory. **17:** Jer 9.23–24; cf. 1 Cor 1.31.

11.1–12.13: "The fool's speech" and apostolic boasting in "visions and revelations." 1: *Bear with me*, emphatically repeated, and recalled with irony in v. 4 where the Corinthians are said to *submit to* (lit., "bear") *it* (another gospel) *readily enough. Foolishness*, see 11.17,21. **2:** Paul employs a marriage metaphor: as father to the bride, the Corinthian church, he must guard her purity; see, e.g., Sir 42.9–10. Paul is both "father" (1 Cor 4.14–15; Philem 10) and "mother" (1 Thess 2.7; Gal 4.19; 1 Cor 3.2). **3:** *Serpent deceived Eve*, Gen 3.13. *Cunning*, see 12.16 ("crafty"). **4–5:** The content of the *different gospel* is undefined (cf. Gal 1.6). The irony of affliction that dominates this letter suggests that the difference may be a style of apostleship (that of the *super-apostles*) characterized by boasts of superiority in status, presence, and preaching (11.12–22; 12.11–12). **6:** *Untrained in speech*, i.e., not a professional orator (10.10). **7–8:** *Humbling . . .*, supporting himself by manual labor. *Free of charge,* lit., "as a gift." *I robbed other churches,* see Phil 4.14–18. **9–11:** *Refrain from burdening,* i.e., financially; cf. 1 Thess 2.7. *Love*, not money, drives the mission. Paul may have offended donors in Corinth by refusing to be paid. *Macedonia*, see 1.16n. *Achaia*, see 1.1–2n. **16–18:** *Accept me as a fool . . .*, a vocabulary of folly different from that in 1 Cor 3.18; 4.10. Here

standards,[a] I will also boast. 19 For you gladly put up with fools, being wise yourselves! 20 For you put up with it when someone makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or gives you a slap in the face. 21 To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

But whatever anyone dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman—I am a better one: with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. 24 Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters;[b] 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. 28 And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I am not indignant?

30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus (blessed be he forever!) knows that I do not lie. 32 In Damascus, the governor[c] under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to[d] seize me, 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall,[e] and escaped from his hands.

12 It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. 3 And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. 5 On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. 6 But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, 7 even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep[f] me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment

[a] Gk *according to the flesh*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Gk *ethnarch*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *and wanted to*
[e] Gk *through the wall*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *To keep*

"folly" is the act of boasting Paul employs to combat his enemies. Such boasting is *not with the Lord's authority* (cf. 10.8,17) but *according to human standards* (lit., "according to the flesh.") **21a:** *To my shame*, employing high irony, Paul claims to be *too weak* to put up with the airs and oppressive acts of false apostles. **21b–23:** *Whatever anyone dares to boast of . . .* Paul claims the same ethnic and religious pedigree as his opponents; cf. Phil 3.4–6; Gal 1.13–15; Rom 9.4; 11.1. *Ministers*, Gk "diakonoi." **23b–28:** Paul outlines his superior claim to apostolic ministry with another catalogue of sufferings (cf. 4.8–12; 6.4–5), some of which are narrated in Acts: *imprisonments*, Acts 16.22–40; 24.27; *floggings*, Acts 16.22–23; *stoning*, Acts 14.19. *Forty lashes minus one*, see Deut. 25.3. *Damascus*, Syrian city associated with Paul's conversion (Acts 9.1–22; Gal 1.13–17). *King Aretas IV* ruled the Nabatean kingdom, i.e., "Arabia" (Gal. 1.17) ca. 9 BCE.–40 CE. Perhaps Nabateans resided in Damascus under the jurisdiction of Aretas IV through a *governor*. *Let down in a basket*, see Acts 9.23–25. **12.1–13:** Paul reluctantly *boasts* of ecstatic experiences, perhaps to match claims of his opponents; see 5.13; Gal 1.16; 2.2; 1 Cor 9.1; 15.8; cf. Acts 9.3–9; 22.6–7; 26.12–18. **2–3:** *I know a man*, a circumlocution for Paul himself. *Third heaven*, see *2 En*. 8.1–8; *T. Levi* 2.7–10; 3.1–4. For heavenly ascents, see, e.g., *1 En.* 14.8; 39.3–4; 71.1–5 3; *2 Bar.* 17.3. **4:** *Paradise*, a Persian word meaning "garden," enclosure, used in Gen 2–3 (LXX) of Eden; in the NT (Lk 23.43; Rev 2.7) and in Jewish apocalyptic literature (2 Esd 3.5–11; 4.7–8; 7.36,123; 8.52; *Apoc. Abr.* 21; *2 En*. 8.1–8; *T. Abr.* 20; *T. Levi* 18.10–11) of a place in the heavens. *Things not to be told*, a paradox, lit., "unutterable utterances." **7:** *Thorn . . . in the flesh:* a physical ailment, opposition from his opponents, or other dire impediment to his mission, ultimately charged to *a messenger* (Gk

me, to keep me from being too elated.[a]
[8] Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, [9] but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power[b] is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. [10] Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

[11] I have been a fool! You forced me to it. Indeed you should have been the ones commending me, for I am not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. [12] The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works. [13] How have you been worse off than the other churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!

[14] Here I am, ready to come to you this third time. And I will not be a burden, because I do not want what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children. [15] I will most gladly spend and be spent for you. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? [16] Let it be assumed that I did not burden you. Nevertheless (you say) since I was crafty, I took you in by deceit. [17] Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? [18] I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves with the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?

[19] Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? We are speaking in Christ before God. Everything we do, beloved, is for the sake of building you up. [20] For I fear that when I come, I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish; I fear that there may perhaps be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. [21] I fear that when I come again, my God may humble me before you, and that I may have to mourn over many who previously sinned and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and licentiousness that they have practiced.

13 This is the third time I am coming to you. "Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses." [2] I warned those who sinned previously and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again, I will not be lenient— [3] since you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. [4] For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him,[c] but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

[5] Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test! [6] I hope

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *to keep me from being too elated*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *my power*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *with him*

"angelos") *of Satan*. **9:** *Power is made perfect*, for Paul, God's power and Christ's are linked; cf. 1 Cor 1.17–19. **10:** A final list of afflictions summarizes Paul's experience of strength in weakness. **11–13:** Epilogue to "the fool's speech" focused on apostolic defense. *Super-apostles*, see 11.5n. *Signs*, see Rom. 15.19; apostolic *signs* often attested in Acts, e.g., 2.43; 4.16,22,30. *Did not burden*, i.e., worked free of charge; see 11.9n.

12.14–13.10: Final appeal and readiness to visit a third time. 14: *This third time*, Paul's second visit ended abruptly after a "painful visit" (2.1). **16:** *Deceit*, Paul is accused of an unidentified deception related to money. **17:** In two questions expecting "no" answers, Paul claims that both he and those he has sent are innocent. The unnamed *brother* may be one of the brothers in 8.18,22, or someone who accompanied *Titus* earlier to begin the collection (8.6). **18:** Two questions expecting positive answers balance those in v. 17. **21:** *When I come again,* "again" is ambiguous and could mean "God may humble me *again* . . . " referring to his second "painful" visit. **13:1:** *Any charge . . . witnesses*, a nearly verbatim quotation of Deut 19.15, where it protects the accused by demanding more than one witness; cf. Mt 18.16; 1 Tim 5.19; Heb 10.28. **2:** *Will not be lenient*, cf. 1.23. **3–4:** Paul's stern *dealing* with *those who sinned previously* (see 12.21) *and all the others* is *proof* of Christ's power working in weakness, a principal theme of the entire letter. The *power of God* is exemplified in the resurrection life Paul

you will find out that we have not failed. [7] But we pray to God that you may not do anything wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. [8] For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. [9] For we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. This is what we pray for, that you may become perfect. [10] So I write these things while I am away from you, so that when I come, I may not have to be severe in using the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

[11] Finally, brothers and sisters,[a] farewell.[b] Put things in order, listen to my appeal,[c] agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. [12] Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

[13] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of[d] the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Or *rejoice*
[c] Or *encourage one another*
[d] Or *and the sharing in*

lives *with him* (Christ). Cf. 1 Cor 1.23–24; 6.14; Rom 1.4; 6.4. **8:** *The truth*, cf. 11.10; also 4.2; 6.7. **9:** *That you may become perfect*, the noun "perfection," used only here in the NT, suggests "strengthening" and "maturation." See 13.11n.; 1 Cor 1.10; 1 Thess 3.10; Rom 9.22 **10:** *For building up and not for tearing down*, repeating 10.8 and summarizing Paul's pastoral goals.

13.11–14: Closing farewell. 11: *Farewell*, or "rejoice"; cf. 1 Thess 5.16. *Put things in order*, the verb could mean either "put yourselves in order" or "be ordered, restored" (by God). *Agree with one another*, a phrase found in Greek political rhetoric urging unity; see also Rom 12.16; 15.5; Phil 2.2; 4.2; cf. 1 Cor 1.10. *God of love*, an expression occurring only here in the Bible. *God of peace* is frequently used by Paul: Rom 15.33; 16.20; Phil 4.9; 1 Thess 5.23; see also 1 Cor 14.33. **12:** *With a holy kiss* is added to the typical Hellenistic commendation to "greet one another"; see 1 Cor 16.20; Rom 16.16; 1 Thess 5.26. *All the saints greet you*, cf. Phil 4.22; 1 Cor 16.19–20; Rom 16.16. **13:** *Grace of Jesus Christ* . . . The Gk sentence can be read as expressing a wish, "May the grace . . .," or an imperative "(You) let the grace . . . " Grace and love are subjective genitives, thus: "the grace belonging to Christ," "the love belonging to God."

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

NAME, DATE, AND AUTHORSHIP

The letter is named for its recipients, multiple gatherings or "churches" of Galatia (1.2). Galatia was a region in north-central Asia Minor occupied by an originally Celtic people beginning in the third century BCE. Under Roman rule Galatia was the name of a province that stretched farther south to the coast. No date of composition is indicated but the letter was probably written sometime between 50 and 58 CE. Scholars generally agree that Paul was the author. Its content, language, and style resemble sections of his later letter to the Romans.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Galatians paints the picture of a Christ-centered movement within Judaism. Key issues of belief, practice, and authority are subjects of dispute among its leaders. As in his other letters, Paul is a figure on the move, traveling from city to city and engaged with Gentile converts. Chapters 1–2 provide our earliest evidence about the leaders active in the years just after Jesus's death (30/33 CE) and before the catastrophic Judean rebellion against Rome (66– 70 CE). Paul makes contentious claims about rivals and competitors, including Peter, those he refers to as "pillars in Jerusalem," and a more vaguely defined faction that comes in for harsh rebuke. Disputed issues center on what it means to be a Jewish versus a Gentile follower of Christ. Though he represents himself as an iconoclast, Paul's arguments about how Gentiles should relate to traditional Jewish practices echo some strands of Jewish thought about the inclusion of Gentiles in the eschatological people of God.

CONTENTS AND INTERPRETATION

The letter adapts standard Greco-Roman letter forms but is unusual in several respects. The opening and closing do not address particular persons, and Paul's tone is clipped and defensive from the outset. The body of the letter is marked by often harsh, antagonistic arguments about rival teachers and teachings. Major issues of dispute center on the place of Gentiles in the Jesus movement.

Galatians opens with a defense of Paul's own authority that includes an account of his own "call" to be an apostle to the Gentiles and of interactions with other leaders. Initial agreements about the gospel message and missionary activity had fallen apart. The core of the letter develops several charged, polemical arguments urging readers to side with Paul amid a flurry of competing claims. Thus, Galatians creates a picture of an embattled Paul, and his Galatian converts as misled by illegitimate teachings and teachers. The target audience is clearly made up of Gentiles, but Paul probably intends it to be overheard by the opposing teachers as well.

The issue of true and false teachings looms large from the outset. Paul portrays his own authority as having a divine rather than human source. Paul recalls his own dramatic reorientation as God called him to cease persecuting the early Jesus movement and to actively promote the gospel of Jesus Christ (1.16). This narrative emphasizes Paul's independence from the leaders in Jerusalem (1.16–17), though he visits them twice. Hints of division occur in their second meeting (2.1–10), followed by a dramatic confrontation with Peter in Antioch (2.14–15), over whether Jewish and Gentile Christ-followers should eat together. This conflict sets the stage for a series of reflections on the status of Gentiles, circumcision, the law, and the "pneuma" ("breath" or "spirit") of Christ. These arguments are convoluted, but clearly Paul conceives of God's work in Christ as part of an apocalyptic plan for world history. Its culmination will involve the ingathering of at least some Gentiles, peoples who had been alienated from God and who some Jews considered morally depraved. Central to God's plan is an outpouring of the "pneuma" of Christ as the basis for a new way of life, one that ensures the vindication of the Gentile Christ-elect at the impending judgment.

Throughout the letter, Paul alternately rebukes and cajoles his "foolish Galatians" (3.1), but most of his ire is reserved for competing teachers. To explain the special status of Gentiles in God's plan for history, Paul offers arguments about the promises to Abraham, the status of the law, and the life of the "flesh" versus the new life of the "pneuma." In some cases, the Jewish law is portrayed as a necessary precursor to the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham, which have only recently come to fruition with Christ. These promises are evidence that

the Gentile peoples of the world will one day join the true people of God, a day that has dawned in Christ. In other cases, as with the allegory of Sarah and Hagar (4.21–31; see Gen 16; 21.1–21), Paul seems to suggest that the law has become an obstacle to becoming a true heir of Abraham through Christ. In still others, he suggests that the law is being fulfilled in some way by the Gentiles, at least by those who do his bidding (so 5.14; 6.2; Rom 8.1–4). The issue of whether Jewish followers of Christ should continue observing the law is never clearly addressed. But Paul insists that many of the law's provisions are not to be applied to Gentiles (5.2–3), especially circumcision. Paul's tone softens somewhat in chs 5 and 6, which call upon the Galatians to form a harmonious community bound by an ethic of mutuality, solidarity, and concern for others who share the "pneuma" of Christ.

Galatians has often been interpreted as a story of conflict between the new, free, and universal religion of Christianity and the confining, legalistic strictures of an exclusivistic Judaism, but this misrepresents both Judaism and Christianity. Scholars have shown that the characterization of Judaism as legalistic is misleading and that the early Christ-followers are not aptly characterized as belonging to a new religion, namely, Christianity. Careful reading also draws attention to the polemical, one-sided characterizations of persons, alleged factions, and groups in the highly charged rhetoric of this letter. Indeed, the claims about Gentile Christ-followers, assemblies, and rival teachers and teachings are best understood as identifications that Paul hopes to create in the minds of his audience, not straightforward depictions of social-historical realities.

Emma Wasserman

1 Paul an apostle—sent neither by human
commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—
[2] and all the members of God's family[a] who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

[3] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, [4] who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, [5] to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

[6] I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—
[7] not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. [8] But even if we

[a] Gk *all the brothers*

1.1–5: The greeting. 1: *Apostle* or "messenger," lit., "one who is sent." Only later does this become a formal designation for a specific group of Jesus's first disciples. **2:** *Churches of Galatia* refers to "gatherings" or "assemblies" in the region. **3:** A common greeting formula found also in Rom 1.7; 1 Cor 1.3; 2 Cor 1.2. **4:** *For our sins*, Paul does not clearly construe Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice, as it later comes to be understood. The language here suggests that Christ is pivotal for establishing a new way of dealing with sin. *The present evil age* draws an antagonistic relationship with outsiders and alludes to the promise of a new age right on the horizon. Apocalyptic expectations about the imminent return of Christ and a time of judgment frame Paul's arguments here as in his other letters.

1.6–2.14: A recapitulation of Paul's life and ministry. The earliest and best historical source for the movement (or set of movements) that will later come to be known as "Christianity." Unlike Acts, which presents a picture of harmony and agreement among the early leaders, Paul suggests relatively prickly meetings with others that sometimes became openly hostile.

1.6–9: Paul rebukes the Galatians. 6: Instead of the standard praise and thanksgiving to those addressed at the opening of the letter (cf. Rom 1.8–15; 1 Cor 1.4–9), Paul charges the Galatians with *deserting the one who called you*, that is, God (or God through Christ). Paul implies that they stand behind his teachings and guarantee their authenticity. *A different gospel*, the Galatians have accepted teachings that are not compatible with Paul's true and legitimate instruction. **8–9:** Even if *an angel from heaven* revealed another teaching, that angelic gospel would still be false. The idea that lesser deities (or angels) might act as mediators of divine teachings also appears in 3.19 and was common in folk religions of Asia Minor.

or an angel[a] from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!

10 Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant[b] of Christ.

11 For I want you to know, brothers and sisters,[c] that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; 12 for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. 14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. 15 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son to me,[d] so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

18 Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; 19 but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. 20 In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, 22 and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; 23 they only heard it said, "The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they glorified God because of me.

2 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. 2 I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain. 3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. 4 But because of false believers[e]

[a] Or *a messenger*
[b] Gk *slave*
[c] Gk *brothers*
[d] Gk *in me*
[e] Gk *false brothers*

1.10–12: Paul again defends his teachings as authoritative. Paul states that his teaching was directly revealed to him by Jesus Christ, implying that other teachings are of lesser value because they are *of human origin.*

1.13–24: Paul's call, early work among the Gentiles, and conflicts with others. 13–14: Cf. Phil 3.4–6. **15–16:** Paul recounts a divine intervention that reorients his understanding of God's plan for history and his own place within it. Language such as *set . . . born* is similar to prophetic call-narratives; cf. Isa 49.1; Jer 1.5. *To me* (lit., "in me"), links the ideas that Christ is revealed to Paul with the gospel's proclamation to the Gentiles. **17:** *Arabia,* most likely the Nabatean kingdom in Transjordan, whose capital was Petra. The geographic details establish Paul's distance from Jerusalem. **18:** It is unclear whether the *three years* are to be counted from Paul's call or from his return to Damascus. *Cephas*, the Aramaic equivalent of "Peter" (Gk "Petros"; both names mean "rock") and the form of the name used by Paul. **19:** *James*, the brother of Jesus; see 1 Cor 15.7; Mk 6.3; Mt 13.55; Acts 13.55; 15.13; 21.18–19. **21:** *Syria*, a district in the northeast corner of the Mediterranean; its capital Antioch was one of the largest and wealthiest in the Roman Empire. It was combined into a single province with the neighboring territory of *Cilicia,* on the southeast coast of Asia Minor. The capital of *Cilicia* was Tarsus, reportedly Paul's hometown (Acts 9.11). **22–24:** Paul distances himself from the Judean communities despite claiming to be their equal as an apostle (cf. 1 Cor 15.8–11).

2.1–10: Paul meets with the Jerusalem leaders. The relationship of this visit with that described in Acts 15.1–29 is uncertain. **1–2:** This second visit is instigated by divine revelation, again suggesting Paul's independence as an apostle. Whether the *fourteen years* are to be counted from his call or his first Jerusalem visit (1.18–19) is unclear. Two co-workers are named: *Barnabas* (also in 2.9) and *Titus,* an uncircumcised Gentile (see 2 Cor 2.13; 7.6,13,14; 8.6,16,23; 12.18). **3–5:** Hinting at future conflicts, Paul charges that *false believers* surreptitiously disrupted the meeting by challenging his teachings. The remark about Titus's uncircumcision and the later

Places mentioned in Galatians 1–2

secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us— [5] we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. [6] And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me. [7] On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised [8] (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), [9] and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circum-

conflict at Antioch (vv. 11–14) suggest that the status of Gentiles was a matter of dispute. **6–9:** Paul seems to hedge on the authority of the Jerusalem leaders but portrays their interactions as conciliatory. *Uncircumcised . . . circumcised,* Gentiles and Jews (or Judeans). Paul asserts that the Jerusalem leaders agree with him in distinguishing between their outreach to the Jews and his to the Gentiles, thus supporting his decisions concerning

cised. [10] They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was[a] eager to do.

[11] But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; [12] for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. [13] And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. [14] But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"[b]

[15] We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; [16] yet we know that a person is justified[c] not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.[d] And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ,[e] and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. [17] But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! [18] But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. [19] For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I

[a] Or *had been*
[b] Some interpreters hold that the quotation extends into the following paragraph
[c] Or *reckoned as righteous;* and so elsewhere
[d] Or *the faith of Jesus Christ*
[e] Or *the faith of Christ*

Gentile believers. **10:** *The poor* could allude to impoverished members of the movement. Josephus (*Ant.* 20.51) mentions a famine in 46/48 CE. It could also refer to some subgroup needing financial support. Paul elsewhere collects money to be sent to Jerusalem (Rom 15.25–29; 2 Cor 8.1–9.15); 1 Cor 16.1–3 mentions Galatia specifically.

2.11–14: Paul reports a confrontation with Peter at Antioch. The issue of table-fellowship raised questions about the status of Gentiles and Jews. Sharing, or not sharing, a meal typically indicated acceptance or non-acceptance. Jewish writers sometimes stereotyped Gentiles as immoral, especially sexually (see Rom 1.18–32; 1 Thess 4.5), emphasizing their alienation from the true God and their worship of idols or false gods. Many also maintain that, in spite of this alienation, the Gentiles will eventually join in worshiping the true God, though they do not agree on precisely when or how this might happen. Paul's statements throughout Galatians suggest disagreement on these points, particularly the issue of whether Gentiles should be circumcised or have a second-class status within the movement. **12:** *The people . . . from James*, presumably messengers from the Jerusalem apostles who insist that Gentile Christ-followers have a lesser status. Paul will portray this division as a matter of keeping or not keeping "the law" (2.16), but it is unclear why he construes eating with Gentiles in this way. Some texts show a concern with violating dietary laws (Dan 1.8–16; Tob 1.10–13; Jdt 10.5; *Letter of Aristeas* 142), but there are no explicit prohibitions against eating with Gentiles in the extant literature. **14:** Paul charges Peter with hypocritical behavior and here casts the issue as living "like Jews" instead of "like Gentiles."

2.15–21: Jews and Gentiles are both justified through Christ. These verses fit within a larger set of arguments about the status of Gentiles and Jews in God's unfolding plan for human and cosmic history. Later interpreters see terms such as "works," "law," "justification," and "faith" as signs pointing to major theological issues, but it remains unclear why Paul distinguishes between works of the law and justification by faith here. **15:** *Jews by birth*, Paul identifies himself with Peter, insisting that they are Jewish by birth and that they agree on what God demands of both Jews and Gentiles in the new era that has dawned with Christ. *Gentile sinners,* see 2.11–14n. **16:** By *works* Paul probably means Jewish practices that his rivals are insisting that Gentiles must observe. Whatever they are precisely, he deems them irrelevant to the larger issue of finding favor with God. Paul emphasizes Jesus's faithfulness and the radical transformation made possible by Christ's "pneuma." *Faith in Jesus Christ,* better "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ." This translation frames the issue in terms of the remarkable things that Christ has done (2.20; 3.22; Rom 3.22,26; Phil 3.9), not the convictions of individual believers. Christ's faithfulness alludes to Christ's trusting obedience to God, even to the point of death (1.4; Rom 5.18–19; Phil 2.8). **17:** Paul suggests an ironic objection to his view. **18:** *Things that I once tore down* (i.e., observance of the law) as the only path for Gentiles. **19:** *Through the law I died to the law*, it is unclear how Paul understands the different roles played by "law" here, but he stresses a new, radical kind of transformation that reorients him

have been crucified with Christ; [20] and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,[a] who loved me and gave himself for me. [21] I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification[b] comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

3 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! [2] The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? [3] Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? [4] Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. [5] Well then, does God[c] supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

[6] Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," [7] so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. [8] And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you." [9] For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.

[10] For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law." [11] Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for "The one who is righteous will live by faith."[d] [12] But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, "Whoever does the works of the law[e] will live by them." [13] Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"— [14] in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

[a] Or *by the faith of the Son of God*
[b] Or *righteousness*
[c] Gk *he*
[d] Or *The one who is righteous through faith will live*
[e] Gk *does them*

around a singular good (see also Phil 3.7–11). *Crucified with Christ,* the death and resurrection of Christ serve as an analogy for Paul's own transformation (see also Phil 3.8); this is applied to Christ-followers in 5.24; 6.14; Rom 6.5–11; cf. 2 Cor 4.10–12. **20:** *Christ who lives in me,* suggests a material transformation that Paul elsewhere connects with the "pneuma" ("Spirit") of Christ; see 4.5–6; Rom 8.9–11; 1 Cor 2.13–16; 15.20–29,35–54; 2 Cor 1.22. *Gave himself for me,* see 1.4n.

3.1–5: Paul again addresses his Gentile audience. Paul asks the Galatians whether they received the gift of the "Spirit" (Gk "pneuma"; see 2.20n.) through following practices of the Jewish law, or through accepting the gospel proclaimed by Paul. **1:** *Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified*, most likely a reference to Paul's graphic description of Jesus's crucifixion. **3:** *Ending with the flesh,* an oblique reference to circumcision. Paul often opposes "pneuma" to "flesh" (e.g., 4.29; 5.16–25; 6.8; Rom 8.1–12; 3.1; 1 Cor 15.35–55; Phil 3.2–6). He typically associates the "pneuma" of Christ with heavenly, divine, and eternal things while the flesh is associated with mortal bodies and with passions and desires that cause immorality and vice (see especially 5.16–6.10; Rom 1.26,28; 7.5). **5:** *Miracles* are associated with Paul's teaching activity and with the presence of the "pneuma" among his followers (Rom 15.19; 1 Cor 12.10; 2 Cor 12.12).

3.6–14: Abraham as a model of trusting obedience. Paul portrays Abraham's faithful obedience as a model for Gentiles. The promises to Abraham also link together God's plan for human history with the Gentile Christ-followers who can now inherit the promises. Abraham also appears as a model in Rom 4. **6:** Paul appropriates Gen 15.6 here and in Rom 4.3. Those who share this trusting loyalty (*believe*) are now deemed children of Abraham. **8:** The blessings promised to Abraham (Gen 12.3; 18.18; 22.18) are now realized among Paul's Gentiles **10:** Paul's statements about the "curse" of the law draw on Deut 27.26. In Paul's time the general Jewish view was that perfect fulfillment of the law was not a requirement of belonging to God's covenant people, but observance of the law expressed faithfulness to God's covenant. It sounds strange for Paul to suggest that the law demands perfect obedience. **11–12:** Quoting Hab 2.4 (as in Rom 1.17), Paul again makes faithful obedience and loyalty the key to divine reward. By contrast, the law appears ill-suited for this purpose. **13–14:** Paul again draws

15 Brothers and sisters,[a] I give an example
from daily life: once a person's will[b] has
been ratified, no one adds to it or annuls it.
16 Now the promises were made to Abraham
and to his offspring;[c] it does not say, "And
to offsprings,"[d] as of many; but it says, "And
to your offspring,"[c] that is, to one person,
who is Christ. 17 My point is this: the law,
which came four hundred thirty years later,
does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.
18 For if the inheritance comes from the
law, it no longer comes from the promise;
but God granted it to Abraham through the
promise.

19 Why then the law? It was added because
of transgressions, until the offspring[c] would
come to whom the promise had been made;
and it was ordained through angels by a mediator. 20 Now a mediator involves more than
one party; but God is one.

21 Is the law then opposed to the promises
of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been
given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law.
22 But the scripture has imprisoned all things
under the power of sin, so that what was
promised through faith in Jesus Christ[e] might
be given to those who believe.

23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith
would be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was
our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that
we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that
faith has come, we are no longer subject to
a disciplinarian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are

[a] Gk *Brothers*
[b] Or *covenant* (as in verse 17)
[c] Gk *seed*
[d] Gk *seeds*
[e] Or *through the faith of Jesus Christ*

connections between keeping the law and being under a curse, this time quoting Deut 21.23 to envision the crucifixion as a curse. Christ's death clears the way so that the promises to Abraham can be realized among the Gentiles. As elsewhere, Paul suggests that this new situation involves the gifts of Christ's "pneuma" (*Spirit*) and trusting loyalty (Gk "pistis," *faith*).

3.15–18: The inheritance of Abraham. Paul insists that Christ is the singular heir of Abraham's promises and that these promises have priority over the law, which came centuries later (cf. Rom 5.13– 14). **15:** *Will,* the Gk means "covenant" as well as a person's document of bequest (see textual note *b*). **16:** *Offspring,* lit., "seed" (see textual notes *c* and *d*). Paul uses the same Greek word as the Septuagint (LXX) text of Genesis where God makes promises to Abraham (Gen 12.7; 15.5; 17.8; 22.17). Paul contrasts the singular "seed" with the common (and in his view mistaken) interpretation of it as a plural, "seeds." In Rom 4.16, by contrast, he interprets the "seed" as plural (NRSV "descendants"). **17–18:** Paul distinguishes the promises from the giving of the law and connects the inheritance of the Gentiles with the former. His time frame of *four hundred thirty years* from Abraham to the giving of the law follows the LXX of Ex 12.40.

3.19–25: The purpose of the law of Moses. The law does not replace God's promise to Abraham but is a temporary means of discipline for God's people. **19:** *Added because of transgressions* allows several interpretations: It can mean to make aware of sin (Rom 3.20; 7.7); it can also carry the sense of restraining transgressions (vv. 23–25); and it can also signify that the law provoked sin (Rom 5.20; 7.7–12). *Ordained through angels* some Jewish traditions claim that the Sinai law was delivered by divine mediators, not directly by God; see Deut 33.2 (LXX); *Jub.* 1.26–2.1; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.136; cf. Acts 7.38,53; Heb 2.2. *A mediator,* Moses (see Lev 26.46; Num 36.13). **20:** An obscure verse that seems to play the mediator figure off against the idea of one, unique God; it perhaps implies that the new situation with Christ allows for more direct, unmediated access to God. **21–22:** Paul raises the possible objection that the law is at odds with the promises (see 2.19–20; Rom 3.31), only to dismiss it. The promises which come through Christ are life-giving, perhaps alluding to the immortal destiny of the Christ-elect. **22:** *Imprisoned . . . under the power of sin*, lit., "the scripture confined all things under sin." This role of the law has negative connotations, but Paul construed this as a necessary prelude to the coming of Christ. *Faith in Jesus Christ,* better "faith of Jesus Christ" (see textual note *e*), emphasizes Jesus's faith or trusting loyalty as that basis for the promise; this promise of sonship accrues to the elect who believe, trust, and are loyal; see 2.16n. **24–25:** The law is construed as a disciplinarian, necessary only during early phases of life. *Disciplinarian*, a slave who accompanied a boy to school and who often punished him for bad behavior.

3.26–29: Baptism into Christ. Through a ritual washing, the Christ-elect come to participate "in Christ" and are made into offspring of Abraham, thus fulfilling the promises. Paul may be recalling a formula used during

all children of God through faith. [27] As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28] There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring,[a] heirs according to the promise.

4 My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; [2] but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. [3] So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits[b] of the world. [4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, [5] in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. [6] And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our[c] hearts, crying, "Abba![d] Father!" [7] So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.[e]

[8] Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. [9] Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits?[f] How can you want to be enslaved to them again? [10] You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. [11] I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted.

[12] Friends,[g] I beg you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong. [13] You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I first announced the gospel to you; [14] though my condition put

[a] Gk *seed*
[b] Or *the rudiments*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *your*
[d] Aramaic for *Father*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *an heir of God through Christ*
[f] Or *beggarly rudiments*
[g] Gk *Brothers*

baptism in vv. 26–28. **26:** The Christ-elect become children of God and therefore coheirs with Christ (see also Rom 8.14–17). **27:** This ritual produces a radical transformation (Rom 6.3–11). *Clothed . . . with Christ,* an analogy for the changed physical or social-psychological reality of the baptized; see also Rom 13.14. **28:** Paul here insists that participation "in Christ" obviates common social classifications: Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female. It is unclear how this relates practically to social distinctions among the Christ-elect, whether in the present or in an imagined future. A similar erasure of social distinctions appears in 1 Cor 12.13 (cf. Col 3.9–11) without the phrase *male and female* that is taken from Gen 1.27. **29:** Christ alone is *Abraham's offspring* or "seed" (see 3.16n.), but now Paul's elect can be united with him through ritual washing.

4.1–7: The elect become children of God through Christ. 1–2: Paul uses the analogy of a *guardian* (typically a slave) to explain the role of the law. During their earlier, immature phase God's elect had the law as a guardian until the appropriate time arrived for a transition of relationships. This analogy suggests that the earlier slave-like submission to the law was necessary and inevitable. **3:** *Elemental spirits of the world*, lit., "elements (Gk "stoicheia") of the cosmos." "Stoicheia" can refer to the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire) as well as components or parts of some broader system or whole. Many scholars construe these as malevolent lesser beings (as suggested by the NRSV "elemental spirits"), but this is unlikely. Taking these "stoicheia" as parts of the cosmos that the Gentiles (mistakenly) worship fits with other polemics against idolatry (see v. 8; cf. Rom 1.23,25; Wis 13.3; Philo, *Opif.* 7; *De spec. leg.* 2.55). **4:** Paul stresses Jesus's human birth and responsibility to the law, as if it connects to his mission to rescue others. **6–7:** *Abba,* see textual note *d*; Rom 8.15. The Christ-elect receive the "pneuma" (*Spirit*) inside their bodies and are adopted as sons of God.

4.8–10: The Galatians risk returning to their former slave status. Paul construes keeping the law (at least in the ways his rivals would have them do) in this new, changed situation as equivalent to returning to their old ways, which involved enslavement and submission to weak and illegitimate gods. **9:** *Elemental spirits*, see 4.3n. **10–11:** *Days, months, and seasons* suggests that the Galatians may be observing Jewish or other festivals.

4.12–20: Paul reminds the Galatians of their close relationship. 12: Paul uses common friendship tropes to create a picture of warm, mutual relationships between himself and the Galatians. The language of imitation appears elsewhere in his letters (1 Thess 1.6; 1 Cor 4.16; 11.1; Phil 3.17) but without the emphasis on mutuality here (but see 1 Cor 9.21). **13–15:** Paul may be alluding to earlier visits to Galatia. The precise nature of the *infir-*

you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. 15 What has become of the goodwill you felt? For I testify that, had it been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? 17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them. 18 It is good to be made much of for a good purpose at all times, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, 20 I wish I were present with you now and could change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

21 Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman. 23 One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise. 24 Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia[a] and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written,

"Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children,
burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs;
for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous
than the children of the one who is married."

28 Now you,[b] my friends,[c] are children of the promise, like Isaac. 29 But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 30 But what does the scripture say? "Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman." 31 So then, friends,[c] we are children, not of the slave but of the free

5 woman. 1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *we*
[c] Gk *brothers*

mity is not known (see 6.17; 2 Cor 11.23–27; 12.7–10), but it exemplifies the care and self-sacrifice that formerly characterized their relationship. **16–17:** Paul shifts to a tone of sharp rebuke, defends his own truth-telling, and launches another high-pitched attack on his alleged competitors and opponents. **17:** *They,* i.e., Paul's rivals, are depicted as self-interested, insincere, and aiming to exclude Paul's Christ-elect in some way. **19:** The birth imagery suggests that the Christ-elect of Galatia remain immature and unformed. Paul elsewhere uses parent/child analogies to characterize his addressees as in need of his instruction (1 Cor 4.14; 2 Cor 6.13; 1 Thess 2.11).

4.21–5.1: The allegory of Hagar and Sarah. A polemically charged allegory that seems to cast non-Christ-following Jews in a harshly negative light. **21:** *The law*, construed here as the entire Pentateuch/Torah. **22–23:** Summarizes key points of the story in Gen 16.1–4,15; 21.1–7. **24–26:** *Allegory,* lit., "these things are spoken allegorically." Paul is familiar with traditions of allegorical interpretation, which treat texts as having nonliteral meanings that can be known by those with special learning and skill. Here the women stand for two types of covenants and, upending the story told in Genesis, Hagar stands for the old covenant associated with Sinai and with Jerusalem, while Sarah represents the heavenly covenant and the true Jerusalem above. **25:** *Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia* (see textual note *a*). Paul is unique in identifying Hagar directly with Mount Sinai, where the law was given to Israel. This negative identification probably targets Jews who are not part of the Christ-movement; Paul aims to associate his rivals with them in some way. **26:** *The Jerusalem above . . . our mother,* images of a heavenly Jerusalem appear in some later texts, but Paul often imagines the heavens as the true home of his Christ-elect (1 Thess 4.15–17; 1Cor 15.12–57; 2 Cor 4.16–5.5; Phil 3.14–21) **27:** Paul uses language from Isa 54.1 to celebrate the Christ-elect as the true children of Sarah; see also Isa 51.2–3. **29–30:** Gen 21.9–10 does not explicitly describe Ishmael persecuting Isaac; for Paul, however, this conflict becomes the basis for an attack on his rivals. **5:1** The allegory leads to exhortations about *slavery* versus *freedom*, flesh versus spirit (see 4.29).

[2] Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you
let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be
of no benefit to you. [3] Once again I testify to
every man who lets himself be circumcised
that he is obliged to obey the entire law. [4] You
who want to be justified by the law have cut
yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen
away from grace. [5] For through the Spirit,
by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of
righteousness. [6] For in Christ Jesus neither
circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for
anything; the only thing that counts is faith
working[a] through love.

[7] You were running well; who prevented
you from obeying the truth? [8] Such persua-
sion does not come from the one who calls
you. [9] A little yeast leavens the whole batch
of dough. [10] I am confident about you in the
Lord that you will not think otherwise. But
whoever it is that is confusing you will pay
the penalty. [11] But my friends,[b] why am I
still being persecuted if I am still preaching
circumcision? In that case the offense of
the cross has been removed. [12] I wish those
who unsettle you would castrate them-
selves!

[13] For you were called to freedom,
brothers and sisters;[b] only do not use
your freedom as an opportunity for self-
indulgence,[c] but through love become
slaves to one another. [14] For the whole law
is summed up in a single commandment,
"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
[15] If, however, you bite and devour one an-
other, take care that you are not consumed
by one another.

[16] Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not
gratify the desires of the flesh. [17] For what
the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit,
and what the Spirit desires is opposed to
the flesh; for these are opposed to each
other, to prevent you from doing what you
want. [18] But if you are led by the Spirit, you
are not subject to the law. [19] Now the works

[a] Or *made effective*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Gk *the flesh*

5.2–12: Paul's case against circumcision. A Gentile who accepts circumcision is seeking righteousness in the wrong way. **2–5:** Paul states unequivocally that circumcision will exclude Gentiles from the Christ-community and tie them to the demands of the law, which they cannot keep (see 2.16; 3.10–12). **6:** *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision,* seeming to contradict the position stated in vv. 2–5, circumcision now appears to be a matter of indifference, a point that is repeated again in 6.15 (see also 1 Cor 7.19). Among the elect, the main thing is "faith made effective through love" (see textual note *a*). This gives trusting obedience (Gk "pistis," *faith*) a passive sense because it is instigated through love, presumably God's love. **7–8:** The Galatians are deserting the true teachings of Paul. His rivals attempt to pervert the truth, which comes from *The one who calls you,* God through Christ. **9:** Paul uses the same saying in 1 Cor 5.6. **10:** Paul continues to drive a wedge between his Galatian followers and the rivals and competitors who actively seek to harm them. **11:** *If I am still preaching circumcision*, raises a possible objection that Paul's teachings about circumcision have been inconsistent. It is unclear what role the *offense of the cross* plays in this subargument, but it suggests Paul's alienation and persecution by others (see 1 Cor 1.18–25). **12:** Paul's polemic about his competitors comes to an apex of bitter sarcasm: his opponents should castrate themselves rather than seek to mutilate the genitals of others; see also Phil 3.2.

5.13–6.10: Ethics among the Christ-elect. In a shift of topic and tone, Paul presents a series of moral teachings that center on mutuality and solidarity.

5.13–26: The constraints on freedom among the elect. 13: Paul again uses freedom/slavery analogies. *Self-indulgence*, lit., "the flesh," which Paul associates negatively with self-directed desires. The alternative is enslavement to one another for the sake of love; its opposite is strife and conflict (see v. 15). Love, mutuality, and solidarity are common ethical ideals in Stoic traditions, but Paul confines them to the elect here and in Phil 2.2–4; Rom 13.8–10; 14.7–23. **14:** Returning to the *law*, Paul insists that the Christ-elect fulfill the law through this ethic of solidarity, here construed in terms of the command to love one's neighbor, quoting Lev 19.18 (also in Rom 13.8–10). **16–17:** The life of the "pneuma" (*Spirit*) requires alienation from *the desires of the flesh* (v. 13n.; 3.3; Rom 8.1–17; cf. Rom 7.14–24), which are antithetical to the "pneuma." Greek moral philosophy considered passions and desires the root cause of immorality. Platonic discussions of self-mastery associate these irrational (bad) desires with the flesh and body, as Paul does here; see also Rom 1.24,26; 6.12–13; 7.5; 13.13–14; 1 Cor 9.24–27. **18:** *Not subject to the law*, although v. 14 suggests that they may fulfill it in some way. **19–23:** Catalogues

of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy,[a] drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

6 My friends,[b] if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill[c] the law of Christ. 3 For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. 4 All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. 5 For all must carry their own loads.

6 Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. 8 If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 9 So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. 10 So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

11 See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! 12 It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. 14 May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which[d] the world has been crucified to me,

[a] Other ancient authorities add *murder*
[b] Gk *Brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *in this way fulfill*
[d] Or *through whom*

of vices and virtues were commonly used in Greco-Roman ethical instruction and were adapted by early Christian writers; see Rom 1.29–31; 1 Cor 6.9–10; 2 Cor 6.6–7; 12.20–21; in other early Christian literature, see Col 3.5–14; Mk 7.21–23; Mt 15.19; 1 Tim 1.9–10; 6.11; 2 Tim 3.2–5; 1 Pet 2.1; 4.3; 2 Pet 1.5–7; Rev 21.8; 22.15. Paul's virtue and vice lists are relatively conventional but he adds language about idolatry, the kingdom of God, the law, the "pneuma" ("Spirit"), and belonging to Christ. **24:** The use of crucifixion as an analogy for controlling the passions is distinctive. Paul elsewhere uses death metaphors to convey domination and control (7.7–25), as does Philo (e.g., *De spec. leg.* 1.105–107; 2.78; *Posterity* 73).

6.1–10: Paul exhorts the Galatians about ethical conduct. 1: The stress is on mutuality and care for others who share the "pneuma" (*Spirit*) of Christ; see also Rom 15.1–7. **2:** Here the Gentiles seem to fulfill the law in some way; see also 5.14; 1 Cor 9.21; Rom 8.2. **3–5:** Paul again warns that self-directed behavior will lead to a bad outcome at the impending judgment. **6:** Cf. 1 Cor 9.14. **7–9**: Paul again warns about the ways of the *flesh* versus "pneuma" (*Spirit*), here emphasizing the possible reward of *eternal life* (see also Rom 8.5–8). **9:** *Not grow weary,* see 2 Thess 3.13; in 2 Cor 4.1,16; Eph 3.13, the same verb is translated as "not lose heart." **10:** *The family of faith,* lit., "members of the household of faithfulness."

6.11–18: Final warning about the dangers of rival teachers. A return to the polemical tone characteristic of the letter. **11:** *What large letters I make*, Paul had dictated this letter to a secretary but writes the conclusion in his *own hand*; see 1 Cor 16.21; 2 Thess 3.17. **12–14:** Paul paints an antagonistic picture of his rivals as boastful, as he does elsewhere (see Phil 3.2–4; Rom 2.17–24; 3.27; 4.2; 1 Cor 4.7; 2 Cor 11.12–13,18). He charges that their interest in circumcising the Gentiles stems from self-interested motives: *to make a good showing in the flesh* and to avoid persecution. They are also portrayed as hypocritical, as they do not obey the law themselves. Paul sums up his own teachings as *boasting* . . . in *the cross*; positive use of boasting language also appears in Rom 5.2–3,11; 1 Cor

and I to the world. [15] For[a] neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! [16] As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

[17] From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

[18] May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters.[b] Amen.

[a] Other ancient authorities add *in Christ Jesus*
[b] Gk *brothers*

1.29–31; 2.2 **15:** See 5.6. *New creation,* the new mode of being that is made possible by the "pneuma" ("Spirit"), given to those who are "in Christ"; cf. 2 Cor 5.17; Rom 8.19–23. **16–18:** A two-part blessing. Verse 16 has the form of a traditional Jewish blessing and is conditional, bestowed on those who follow Paul's teaching; it is the counterpart to the curse in 1.8. The address *brothers and sisters* in v. 18 does not appear in the final blessing of Paul's other letters and expresses the hope that the former warm relationship between the apostle and the community will be restored. **16:** *This rule* is the teaching that Paul has advocated throughout the letter. *Israel of God,* a phrase unique to this verse, equivalent to the "true Israel," i.e., those who follow Paul's *rule* and not the teachings of his alleged rivals and opponents. **17:** *Marks of Jesus,* perhaps the scars from injuries inflicted on Paul during his work as an apostle (2 Cor 6.4–5; 11.23–25). Paul may also be suggesting that his scars identify him as belonging to Christ like the brand marks on a slave. **18:** Cf. Phil 4.23; Philem 25.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

NAME AND CONTENTS

This letter is named for its apparent recipients (1.1), the Christian community in the city of Ephesus, a commercial center on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor, which served as the hub of Paul's missionary activity in the region (Acts 18–19). He also may have been imprisoned there in the early 50s CE (1 Cor 15.32; 16.8–9). The original text of what was later called "Ephesians" likely did not specify a geographical location for its recipients, as some early manuscripts and quotations in some early Christian writings lack the reference to Ephesus in 1.1 (see note *a*). Since the text does not address problems specific to a single congregation, some scholars think that Ephesians was a circular letter sent to a number of churches, perhaps in Asia Minor. Others, noting the similarities to the letter to the Colossians, believe the original recipients of this text were the churches of Hierapolis and Laodicea (see Col 4.13,16). Those who collected and edited Paul's letters in the late first century may have added "in Ephesus" to 1.1 in recognition of the key role Ephesus played in Paul's ministry.

The first chapter of Ephesians introduces nearly all the theological themes of the letter, and readers may find it helpful to keep this chapter in mind as they read the rest of Ephesians. The blessing of God in 1.3–14 gives a sweeping overview of God's plan for salvation, whose meaning is filled out with poetic grandeur in 2:1–3.13. The thanksgiving prayer (1.15–23) focuses upon how this plan should be realized in the present life of the church, themes that are developed in detail in 3.14–6.20. In sum, the letter is an evocative celebration of God's plan to unite all of creation under the lordship of Christ.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND LITERARY HISTORY

Significant differences between Ephesians and the letters ascribed to Paul with certainty (Rom, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Gal, Phil, 1 Thess, Philem) raise questions about the identity of its author. Many important terms in Ephesians are not used by Paul elsewhere (e.g., "heavenly places," "dividing wall," "fellow citizen"), and some of Paul's characteristic terms and emphases are given new meaning (e.g., "church" as a universal rather than a local community) or are absent (e.g., "the Jews," "justification"). In addition, the verbose rhetorical style of Ephesians, especially the use of complex, long sentences (many of which have been divided in the NRSV), is not characteristic of Paul. Theological differences are also evident, especially the letter's emphasis on the experience of salvation in the present (1.3–12; 2.4–10) and the use of Greco-Roman household rules for ethical teaching (5.22–6.9); see further the Introduction to Colossians. A majority of scholars therefore hold that Ephesians is pseudonymous, written by a Jewish-Christian admirer of Paul who sought to apply Paul's thought to the situation of the church in the late first century, although some scholars hold that Paul composed this letter at the end of his career while imprisoned in Rome (see 3.1; 4.1). This latter position attributes different theological emphases to developments in Paul's thinking and the particulars of the situation addressed.

Numerous verbal parallels between the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians (see the annotations) suggest a literary relationship between the two letters. If Paul were the author of both, they likely would have both been written in the late 50s; if Ephesians were written by a later follower of Paul, then he drew upon the established authority of the letter to the Colossians and modeled his composition after it. Ephesians also includes allusions to other Pauline letters—primarily Romans and 1 Corinthians—although they are not as precise and sustained as those to Colossians.

Establishing a historical context for Ephesians has proven extremely difficult. In contrast to many of Paul's letters and even to Colossians, Ephesians contains few hints of specific events or issues that might have triggered its composition. Since unity between Jews and Gentiles within the church is a major theme, some scholars think that the text is meant to address the alienation of Jewish followers of the Christian movement from their Gentile counterparts. Other scholars suggest external events, such as Roman persecution, as the impetus for the letter's composition. A more fruitful approach may be to employ a rhetorical analysis, paying close attention to how the author presents himself and his readers, especially his desire for their maturity as believers. This approach reveals that the author sees his readers as deficient in a number of key areas, including

knowledge of God's plan for salvation, of the spiritual power at their disposal, and of the calling of the church as the body of Christ.

STRUCTURE

Ephesians begins with a greeting (1.1–2) and an introductory thanksgiving prayer (1.15–23) and ends with an epilogue (6.21–24), but it lacks many features typical of the Pauline letter form (see pp. 1611–12) and is better classified as a sermon. The text can be divided into two parts: theological teaching (chs 1–3) and ethical exhortation (chs 4–6). The first part focuses on the church as a new community in which Jews and Gentiles equally share in God's blessings. The second part is an appeal for the church to maintain that new unity and press on toward full maturity by rejecting their former lifestyle and displaying Christian values of truth, love, forgiveness, and sexual purity. However, rather than advocating a complete transformation of household relationships based on love, forgiveness, and mutual submission, the author's Christology is used to justify and Christianize the hierarchical structure of the ancient, idealized patriarchal family.

INTERPRETATION

In powerful poetic language drawn from early Christian hymns and the Jewish scriptures, Ephesians celebrates a vision of the universal church. According to God's eternal plan for humanity, Christ's death brought together Jews and Gentiles into a new, unified community: the Jewish law, which previously divided Jew from Gentile, was rendered irrelevant by the cross, and Christ thus reconciled both groups to each other and to God (2.14–16). Paul's role as the one who reveals this previously hidden plan for the salvation of all humankind is a recurring theme (3.1–12). Whether Ephesians is intended to encourage Gentiles to recognize their position as full partners in the church or whether Gentiles are being admonished to respect their Jewish fellow believers is not clear. According to Ephesians, human existence is beset by cosmic forces (1.21; 2.2; 3.10; 4.27; 6.11–12), some of them clearly malevolent. Christ has been given power over them, and through God's grace human beings are freed from their immoral and deceitful influences. The new life is one of knowledge and spiritual power, and the letter contains recurring contrasts of the old life with the new (2.1–6,11–13,19; 4.22–24; 5.8). The church must recognize Christ as its Lord and exemplar (4.12–16,20–24; 5.1–2) and also its own exalted status as a spirit-filled community that brings the power and presence of God to the world (1.22–23; 2.22; 3.10,19; 4.24). Conflict with cosmic forces continues (6.10–20), but the church looks forward to the complete reestablishment of God's sovereignty over creation (1.10) and the perfection of the church as the body of Christ (4.12–16). Because Ephesians describes the church in such universal and glorious terms, it has been used by theologians throughout the centuries to establish their own vision of the church and its mission.

The doctrine of recapitulation owes its name to the central verb in Eph 1.10 (Gk *anakephalaio sasthai*; here translated "to gather up") and its content to Rom 5. First articulated by Irenaeus in the late second century, the doctrine posits that because Christ experienced all stages of human life as a new and perfect Adam, he is able to redeem all of human experience. The language of Ephesians also deeply influenced the Protestant emphasis on predestination ("chosen," 1.4; "destined," 1.5; "sealed," 1.13) and substitutionary atonement ("redemption through his blood," 1.7; "by the blood of Christ," 2.13; "a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God," 5.2).

Jennifer K. Berenson

SIMILAR PASSAGES IN COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS	COLOSSIANS
1.1–2	1.1–2
1.15–16	1.3–4,9
5.6	3.6
5.18–20	3.16–17
5.22	3.18
5.25	3.19
6.1	3.20
6.5–9	3.22–25; 4.1
6.18–20	4.2–4
6.21–22	4.7–8

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful[a] in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 just as he chose us in Christ[b] before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. 5 He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight 9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,[c] having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, 12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; 14 this[d] is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love[e] toward all the saints, and for this reason 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *in Ephesus*, reading *saints who are also faithful*
[b] Gk *in him*
[c] Or *been made a heritage*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *who*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *and your love*

1.1–2: Salutation (cf. Col 1.1–2). *Apostle*, see Rom 1.1n. *By the will of God*, see 3.2–13; Gal 1.11–17. *Saints . . . faithful*, emphasizing two foundations of Christian existence: holiness (see Col 1.2n.) and steadfast loyalty to Jesus. On *Ephesus*, see the Introduction. **2:** A common Pauline greeting building upon conventional salutations in Gk (*grace*) and Heb (*peace*).

1.3–14: Blessing of God for his blessings to the church (cf. Rom 8.15–39) An extended praise of God based on a traditional Jewish prayer that enumerates God's actions on behalf of Israel (1 Kings 8.15,56; Lk 1.68–75). *In Christ*, a theme throughout this section, indicating Christ's mediation of divine blessings. *In the heavenly places*, anticipates the letter's interest in heavenly realities accessible in the present (1.20–23; 2.6–7; 3.11–12). **4:** *Chose us*, the language of Israel's election as God's people (Deut 7.6–8) is used here for followers of the Christian movement. *The foundation of the world*, a reference to God's creation (Gen 1.1). **5:** *Adoption*, a privileged status allowing intimacy and full inheritance rights (see 1.11–14; Rom 8.15–17; Gal 4.5). **6:** *Beloved*, a title for Christ; cf. Mk 1.11; Col 1.13. **7:** *Redemption*, release or ransom from slavery (Eph 1.21; 2.2; 6.10–17). *His blood*, Christ's death brings reconciliation with God. **9:** *Mystery*, on Paul's use of this term, see Col 1:26–28n; here defined as the unification of the church and the cosmos (1:10,20–22; 3.1–13). **10:** *To gather up*, literally, "sum up" or "to gather under one head." **11:** *Inheritance*, continuing the metaphor of adoption (1.5). **12:** *The first to set our hope on Christ,* early Jewish followers of the Christian movement. **13:** *You also*, Gentiles are now included in God's plan (2.11; 3.1). *Promised Holy Spirit,* Paul traces the promise of the Spirit to Abraham (Gal 3.14,22); other early Christian texts point to the prophet Joel (Joel 2.28–32; Acts 2.14–21) and the promise of Jesus (Lk 24.49; Jn 14.26; Acts 1.4–5). *Seal*, a sign of ownership and protection; see also 4.30. **14:** *Pledge*, the same Gk word is translated "first installment" in 2 Cor 1.22.

1.15–23: Thanksgiving prayer for wisdom and power (cf. Col 1.3–14). **15:** *Faith . . . love*, two central Christian virtues (1 Cor 13.13; 1 Thess 5.8; cf. Col 1.3–5). **17:** *Spirit of wisdom and revelation*, the ability to understand God's purposes. **19–20:** An emphatic assertion that the same *power* that raised Jesus is available to the church to live

the working of his great power. [20] God[a] put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [21] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. [22] And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

2 You were dead through the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. [3] All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. [4] But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us [5] even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ[b]—by grace you have been saved— [6] and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— [9] not the result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

[11] So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth,[c] called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision"—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— [12] remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. [14] For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that

[a] Gk *He*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *in Christ*
[c] Gk *in the flesh*

out its calling (cf. 2.6; 3.7,16,20). *At his right hand*, derived from Ps 110.1, a common early Christian description of Christ's exaltation (Acts 2.34–35; Rom 8.34; Col 3.1; Heb 1.13; 8.1). **21:** *Rule . . . dominion*, titles given to cosmic spiritual forces in ancient religious speculation (Col 1.16; cf. 1 Cor 15.20–28). *Name*, see Phil 2.9. **22:** *Under his feet*, exaltation language derived from Ps 8:6 (1 Cor 15.27; Heb. 2.6–8). **22–23:** *Head . . . body*, see Col 1.18n. The head-body metaphor, applied here to Christ and the church (see also Eph 4.12,15–16), is also found in speculation about the cosmos in Hellenistic, Jewish, and Gnostic thought. **23:** *Fullness*, the church expresses God's power and presence to the world; alternatively, the completion of the church by Christ (3.19; Col 1.19n; 2.9–10; see also Jer 23.24).

2.1–10: The old life contrasted with the new (cf. Col 1.21–23). **1–5:** Formerly both Gentile (*you*) and Jew (*all of us*) habitually sinned and lacked God's protection and blessings (*were dead/children of wrath*). **2:** *Course*, literally "age," a reference to the present as a period in which human life is pervaded and perverted by a malevolent spiritual force (*the ruler . . . air*; 6.10–17; see also Rom 6.12–13). **3:** *Children of wrath*, those to be punished at the future judgment (1 Thess 5.4–10). **5, 8:** *By grace . . . saved*, deliverance to a new life is due solely to God's mercy and benevolence (1.7). **5–6:** *Made us alive . . . raised us . . . seated us*, the new life is one of exaltation like Christ himself (1.19–20). **9:** *Works*, individual achievement, not "works of the law" as in Gal 2.16. **10:** *Good works*, the ethical *way of life* envisioned in God's plan (1.4; 4.1; 1 Tim 6.18; Titus 2.14; 3.8). *Prepared beforehand*, see 1.4.

2.11–22: The unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church. 11: *The uncircumcision*, a derogatory term for Gentiles. *The circumcision*, generally Jews, but often used for those who required all followers of Jesus to obey the law of Moses (Acts 10.45; Gal 2.12; Col 4.11; cf. Phil 3.3). **12–13:** *You were . . . But now*, another temporal contrast (2.1–5), focused on the Gentiles' plight as *aliens* and *strangers* from Israel and God. **12:** *Covenants of promise*, God promised Abraham (Gen 15.18; 17.2–8), Israel/Jacob (Gen 28.13–15), and David (2 Sam 7; Ps 89) his presence and protection (see Ps 105). **13:** *Far off . . . brought near*, a spatial contrast symbolizing alienation and reconciliation (v. 17; cf. Isa 57.19). **14:** *Made both groups into one*, Jews and Gentiles united in a new community (2.16). *Dividing wall*, the Jewish law; the image perhaps derives from the balustrade in the Jerusalem Temple, beyond which Gentiles

is, the hostility between us. 15 He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, 16 and might reconcile both groups to God in one body[a] through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.[b] 17 So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; 18 for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, 20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.[c] 21 In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are built together spiritually[d] into a dwelling place for God.

3 This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for[e] Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, 3 and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, 4 a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. 5 In former generations this mystery[f] was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: 6 that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

7 Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. 8 Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make everyone see[g] what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in[h] God who created all things; 10 so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.[i] 13 I pray therefore that you[j] may not lose heart over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,[k] 15 from whom every family[l] in heaven and on earth takes its name. 16 I pray

[a] Or *reconcile both of us in one body for God*
[b] Or *in him*, or *in himself*
[c] Or *keystone*
[d] Gk *in the Spirit*
[e] Or *of*
[f] Gk *it*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *to bring to light*
[h] Or *by*
[i] Or *the faith of him*
[j] Or *I*
[k] Other ancient authorities add *of our Lord Jesus Christ*
[l] Gk *fatherhood*

were forbidden. **15:** *Abolished the law*, in its promotion of *hostility* (Acts 10.28) but not in its moral insight (cf. 6.2). **17:** *Proclaimed peace*, see Isa 52.7. **19:** *Citizens*, a civic metaphor for Gentiles' full inclusion among God's people (1.5,11–14). **20–22:** An extended architectural metaphor to describe the dependence of God's people on each other and on the Lord Jesus (4.15–16). **20:** *Prophets*, early Christian prophets (3.5; 4.11; 1 Cor 14). *Cornerstone*, either the foundation (Isa 28.16) or the capstone (*T. Sol.* 22.7). **21–22:** *A holy temple*, the community embodies the presence of God; the Essenes held a similar view of themselves in contrast to the Jerusalem Temple (1QS 8.4–10).

3.1–13: The revelation of God's plan (cf. Col 1.24–29). **2:** *Commission*, or "stewardship," given to Paul at his encounter with Christ (Gal 1.15–16). **3:** *Mystery*, see 1.9n. *By revelation,* in contrast to human origin (Gal 1.11–12). *Above*, literally, "previously," either in 1.9–10 or perhaps in an earlier letter. **8:** *Least*, 1 Cor 15.8–9. **10:** The church embodies and thereby reveals God's plan (*wisdom*) to all cosmic forces. **13:** *Sufferings . . . glory*, Paul's imprisonment for preaching the gospel has secured the Gentiles' new life and future glorification (3.1; 2 Cor 1.6; 4.12; Col 1.24).

3.14–21: Prayer for the church to embody love. 14–15: *Father . . . family*, a play on words in Gk ("patēr," "patria," see note *k*); God is the Father (creator and ruler) of all nations and cosmic forces. **16–18:** See 1.15–20.

that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, [17] and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. [18] I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

[20] Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

4 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, [5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

[7] But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. [8] Therefore it is said,

"When he ascended on high he made
captivity itself a captive;
he gave gifts to his people."

[9] (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended[a] into the lower parts of the earth? [10] He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) [11] The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. [14] We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. [15] But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

[17] Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. [18] They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. [19] They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. [20] That is not the way you learned Christ! [21] For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. [22] You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

[25] So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for

[a] Other ancient authorities add *first*

18–19: *Breadth, length, height, depth*, a catalogue of dimensions used to emphasize immensity. **19:** *Filled with all the fullness*, 1.23n. **20–21:** A doxology celebrating God's ability to accomplish his plan through the church.

4.1–6.20: Ethical exhortation. 4.1–16: Appeal for unity. 2–3: See a similar list of virtues in Gal 5.22–23. **3:** *Unity . . . peace*, made possible by Christ (2.11–22), must be consciously maintained. **4–6:** Seven bases of Christian unity. **8–11:** Ps 68.18 is used to describe Christ's exaltation (1.20–22) and his *gifts* of leadership for the church. **9:** *Lower parts of the earth*, the earth itself or perhaps Hades. **14:** *Children,* literally "infants," society's most vulnerable. *Wind of doctrine*, Jas 1.6; Jude 12,13. **15–16:** A vision of the church as an organic, interrelated whole, whose goal is to reflect fully its head, Christ (2.20–22).

4.17–5.21: Appeal for a new way of life (cf. Col 3.5–17). **4.17–18:** On the plight of the Gentiles, see 2.1–3,11–12 (cf. Rom 1.18–32). **19:** *Licentiousness . . . impurity*, excessive and inappropriate sexual behavior (5.3,5). **22–24:** Like worn-out clothing, the *old* life must be replaced by a *new* one guided by knowledge of Christ. **25:** *Speak the*

we are members of one another. [26] Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and do not make room for the devil. [28] Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. [29] Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up,[a] as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. [31] Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, [32] and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.[b]

5 [1] Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, [2] and live in love, as Christ loved us[c] and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[3] But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints. [4] Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving. [5] Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

[6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. [7] Therefore do not be associated with them. [8] For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— [9] for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. [10] Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. [11] Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; [13] but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, [14] for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

"Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."

[15] Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, [16] making the most of the time, because the days are evil. [17] So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18] Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, [19] as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, [20] giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[21] Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[22] Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. [24] Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *building up faith*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *us*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *you*

truth, see 4.15; Zech 8.16. **26:** On *anger*, see also 1 Cor 13.5; Mt 5.22; Jas 1.19. **29:** *Building up*, continuing the metaphor from 2.20–22 and 4.16. **30:** *Seal*, see 1.13n. *Day of redemption,* when God's plan comes to completion. **5.2:** *Fragrant offering*, Gods of the ancient Near East are often depicted as enjoying the odor of sacrificial animals (Gen 8.21; Ex 29.18; Ezek 20.41). **3–5:** Sexual sins are the primary focus in these verses (cf. 4.19). **4:** Proper speech is a recurring theme (4.15,29). **6:** Cf. Col. 3.6. **11–13:** See Jn 3.19–21. **14:** *Sleeper . . . you*, a poetic fragment, perhaps from a baptismal hymn. **19–20:** Cf. Col 3.16–17. **21:** *Be subject to one another,* some scholars see this call to mutual subjection as a principle that moderates the subordination of wives prescribed in 5.22–33.

5.22–6.9: Appeal for transformed household relationships (cf. Col 3.18–4.1). On the form of these rules, see Col 3.18–4.1n. **5.22–33:** *Wives/ husbands*, female subordination within marriage is legitimized by an extended theological analogy where the husband is aligned with Christ's authority over the church (*head*; see 1.22; 4.15 and Col 1.18n.), while wives are to imitate the church as the passive and obedient recipient of Christ's blessings (*body*). As the church's purity is achieved through Christ's death and continual care, husbands are to sacrifice themselves wholly for their wives' good (5.2). This passage, by granting complete authority to the male and encouraging female passivity, has in the past been used to suggest that Christian women should remain in

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ
loved the church and gave himself up for
her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleans-
ing her with the washing of water by the
word, 27 so as to present the church to himself
in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or
anything of the kind—yes, so that she may
be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same
way, husbands should love their wives as
they do their own bodies. He who loves his
wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates
his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly
cares for it, just as Christ does for the church,
30 because we are members of his body.[a]
31 "For this reason a man will leave his father
and mother and be joined to his wife, and the
two will become one flesh." 32 This is a great
mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and
the church. 33 Each of you, however, should
love his wife as himself, and a wife should
respect her husband.

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord,[b]
for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and
mother"—this is the first commandment
with a promise: 3 "so that it may be well with
you and you may live long on the earth."

4 And, fathers, do not provoke your
children to anger, but bring them up in the
discipline and instruction of the Lord.

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with
fear and trembling, in singleness of heart,
as you obey Christ; 6 not only while being
watched, and in order to please them, but as
slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from
the heart. 7 Render service with enthusiasm,
as to the Lord and not to men and women,
8 knowing that whatever good we do, we
will receive the same again from the Lord,
whether we are slaves or free.

9 And, masters, do the same to them. Stop
threatening them, for you know that both
of you have the same Master in heaven, and
with him there is no partiality.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the
strength of his power. 11 Put on the whole ar-
mor of God, so that you may be able to stand
against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our[c] strug-
gle is not against enemies of blood and flesh,
but against the rulers, against the authorities,
against the cosmic powers of this present
darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil
in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up
the whole armor of God, so that you may be
able to withstand on that evil day, and hav-
ing done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand
therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around
your waist, and put on the breastplate of
righteousness. 15 As shoes for your feet put on
whatever will make you ready to proclaim the
gospel of peace. 16 With all of these,[d] take the
shield of faith, with which you will be able to
quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword
of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every
prayer and supplication. To that end keep

[a] Other ancient authorities add *of his flesh and of his bones*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *in the Lord*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *your*
[d] Or *In all circumstances*

abusive marital relationships. **26:** *Washing of water,* baptism is here compared to the Jewish custom of a bride's prenuptial bath. **31–32:** *Mystery*, see 1.9n, here revealed through exegesis of Gen 2.24. (See note *a* for a scribal addition from Gen 2.23.) **6.1–4:** *Children/fathers*, children are to obey their parents (plural), but instructions are only given to fathers concerning their upbringing. Legally, all children were property of their father. **2–3:** Ex 20.12; Deut 5.16. **5–9:** S*laves/masters*, like wives, slaves are not to imitate Christ but are to obey their masters' divinely sanctioned authority; see Col 3.22–4.1; Titus 2.9–10. **6:** *Not only while being watched*, a stereotypical accusation made against slaves. **8:** *We will receive again from the Lord,* an eschatological reward is used to motivate Christian slaves; cf. Gal 3.28. **9:** *No partiality,* despite the sanctioned social inequality inherent in the master-slave relationship, this section ends with a strong statement of God's equal treatment of both slave and free (cf. Gal 3.28).

6.10–20: Appeal for strength amid conflict. **12:** *Blood and flesh,* Ultimately, the church's enemies are not human, but rather cosmic powers (1.21; 2.2; 3.10). **13–17:** *Armor of God,* recalls the descriptions of Israel's divine protector (Isa 11.4–5; 52.7; 59.17; Wis 5.17–20). **13:** *That evil day*, generally a reference to the future eschatological crisis; here, however, the author situates the church within an ongoing spiritual conflict (5.16). **14:** *Truth*, 4.15,25. *Righteousness*, here likely indicating appropriate Christian behavior. **15:** *Gospel of peace*, 2.14–18. **17:** *Salvation*,

alert and always persevere in supplication
for all the saints. 19 Pray also for me, so that
when I speak, a message may be given to me
to make known with boldness the mystery of
the gospel,[a] 20 for which I am an ambassador
in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as
I must speak.

21 So that you also may know how I am
and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell
you everything. He is a dear brother and a
faithful minister in the Lord. 22 I am sending
him to you for this very purpose, to let you
know how we are, and to encourage your
hearts.

23 Peace be to the whole community,[b] and
love with faith, from God the Father and
the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all
who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus
Christ.[c]

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *of the gospel*
[b] Gk *to the brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

deliverance from harm. *The sword*, the only offensive weapon mentioned in this catalogue, is the proclamation of the gospel. **19–20:** Cf. Col. 4.2–4. *To make known . . . the mystery,* a final restatement of the author's divine commission (3.1–13). *In chains*, see 3.1; 4.1.

6.21–24: Epilogue (Cf. Col 4.7–8). **21:** *Tychicus*, Paul's associate in ministry; see Acts 20.4; Col 4.7; 2 Tim 4.12. **23:** *Whole community*, the Gk word *adelphoi* can more literally be translated "siblings" (note *b*). **24:** The final words of the letter are "in immortality," here translated as "undying." The phrase may instead point toward God's unending grace in the age to come.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

NAME AND AUTHORSHIP

The letter to the Philippians is one of the richest of Paul's letters and has never been seriously questioned as genuine. Philippi was a major city of Macedonia in northern Greece and a Roman colony on the Via Egnatia, the Roman road linking Byzantium in the East to the western coast of Macedonia, from which ships could easily reach Italy. The Christian community in Philippi was the westernmost Pauline church at the time of its founding (Acts 16.11–13). The mutual affection between Paul and the Philippians is evident in the letter and contrasts with the problems he had with other churches.

DATE AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION

Except that Paul was in prison and awaiting trial at the time of writing (1.7–18), it is impossible to speak confidently of the time and place of the writing of this letter. Because of references to the imperial guard or praetorium (1.13) and to the emperor's household (4.22), and also because the situation reflected in the letter bears some resemblance to that described at the end of Acts, the traditional date of the letter has been during the period of Paul's imprisonment at Rome (about 61–63 CE). The indications are by no means conclusive, however, and more recently some scholars have thought that the place of composition is perhaps Caesarea before Paul's arrival in Rome (Acts 24–26) or Ephesus at an earlier stage in Paul's career, especially because of frequent communication and emissaries between Paul and Philippi implied in the letter (2.19,25–26; 4.10,18). This information seems to be inconsistent with the great distance from Philippi to Rome, about 800 miles, taking perhaps a month of travel, or an even greater distance of almost 1,200 miles from Caesarea, requiring perhaps two months of travel, whereas Ephesus was only about 300 miles away, a relatively easy week by sea. The term referring to the emperor's household was also used for provincial government centers and the imperial civil service outside Rome. Elsewhere Paul notes an unhappy situation in Ephesus (1 Cor 15.32) and in the Roman province of Asia, of which Ephesus was a major center (2 Cor 1.8), and in Acts 20.16 he bypasses Ephesus on his way south down the coast. For these reasons it is likely that Paul wrote the letters while imprisoned in Ephesus in the mid-50s. The immediate occasion of Paul's writing was the return to Philippi of Epaphroditus (2.25–30), sent by the Philippian church with gifts for Paul (4.18), then seriously ill while staying with him. Paul took this opportunity to thank them for their gifts and to set their difficulties in a wider framework by describing his and their situation in light of the reality of his and their faith in Christ.

STRUCTURE AND INTERPRETATION

The letter follows the usual pattern of Paul's letters, but some seemingly abrupt changes of topic (especially between 3.1 and 2, and 4.3 and 4), in addition to the fact that an early Christian writer (Polycarp, *Philippians* 2.3), speaks of "letters" of Paul to the Philippians, has led some scholars to conclude that our present Philippians is composed of as many as three letters that Paul wrote to Philippi. Many scholars, however, find that Philippians is a coherent whole as it stands. After the greeting (1.1–2) and thanksgiving (1.3–11), Paul lays out the situation (1.12–26) and exhorts the community to unity (1.27–4.3) with many arguments, including proposing Christ (2.5–11), Timothy and Epaphroditus (2.19–30), and himself (3.4–14) as models of self-giving for the good of the whole. He thanks them for their recent gifts (4.10–20) and concludes the letter (4.21–23).

Paul writes from prison and is uncertain of the outcome for himself. The themes of opposition and the possibility of death are therefore prominent. Yet in the midst of suffering and uncertainty, the theme of joy emerges quite clearly and remarkably (1.4,18,25; 2.2,17–18,28; 4.4,10). The Philippians too are experiencing opposition (1.29), but Paul's major concern is to bring them together and thus overcome the threat of internal disharmony. In keeping with that purpose, he uses a hymnic passage that celebrates the self-emptying of Christ even to death, for which God bestowed on him the name of "Lord," the "name above all names" (2.6–11). The poetic reflection, was probably composed by a prior author known to both Paul and the Philippians. Here it is the

prime example of why they should be willing also to empty themselves of their own opinions. The example of Paul himself follows and supports the argument (3.4–16). Paul offers both Christ and himself as examples of courage and self-surrender in the face of suffering and death. Thus he attempts to turn the Philippians from partisanship to unity.

Carolyn Osiek

1 Paul and Timothy, servants[a] of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops[b] and deacons:[c]

[2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3] I thank my God every time I remember you, [4] constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, [5] because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. [6] I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. [7] It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart,[d] for all of you share in God's grace[e] with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. [8] For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. [9] And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight [10] to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, [11] having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

[12] I want you to know, beloved,[f] that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, [13] so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard[g] and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; [14] and most of the brothers and sisters,[f] having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word[h] with greater boldness and without fear.

[15] Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. [16] These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; [17] the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. [18] What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, [19] for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. [20] It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. [21] For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. [22] If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruit-

[a] Gk *slaves*
[b] Or *overseers*
[c] Or *overseers and helpers*
[d] Or *because I hold you in my heart*
[e] Gk *in grace*
[f] Gk *brothers*
[g] Gk *whole praetorium*
[h] Other ancient authorities read *word of God*

1.1–2: Salutation. 1: *Bishops and deacons,* the alternate translation *overseers and helpers* is preferable. These functions are not yet the church offices that they will later become.

1.3–11: Thanksgiving. A common feature of a Pauline letter. **5:** *Sharing,* "koinônia," an important Pauline concept (2.1; 3.10; 4.15). *From the first day,* when Paul first preached at Philippi (Acts 16.12). **6:** *The day of Jesus Christ,* when he will return and the present age will end (2.16; see 1 Cor 1.8; cf. 2 Thess 2.1 and 2 Pet 3.10). **10:** Rom 2.18.

1.12–26: Paul's situation in chains. 13: Paul is confined in some Roman administrative center, where he has had the opportunity to preach the gospel. **15–18:** Not all Christian preachers agreed with Paul or liked him; this is clear in Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians (especially 2 Cor 10–13), and here Paul questions their motives. **19:** See Job 13.16. **21–24:** His life is not his own but is given over to Christ, so that he is indifferent to the outcome of life or death; nevertheless, his death would mean loss to his churches.

ful labor for me; and I do not know which I
prefer. 23 I am hard pressed between the two:
my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for
that is far better; 24 but to remain in the flesh
is more necessary for you. 25 Since I am con-
vinced of this, I know that I will remain and
continue with all of you for your progress and
joy in faith, 26 so that I may share abundantly
in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come
to you again.

27 Only, live your life in a manner worthy
of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I
come and see you or am absent and hear
about you, I will know that you are stand-
ing firm in one spirit, striving side by side
with one mind for the faith of the gospel,
28 and are in no way intimidated by your op-
ponents. For them this is evidence of their
destruction, but of your salvation. And this
is God's doing. 29 For he has graciously grant-
ed you the privilege not only of believing
in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—
30 since you are having the same struggle
that you saw I had and now hear that I still
have.

2 If then there is any encouragement in
Christ, any consolation from love, any
sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and
sympathy, 2 make my joy complete: be of
the same mind, having the same love, being
in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do noth-
ing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in
humility regard others as better than your-
selves. 4 Let each of you look not to your
own interests, but to the interests of others.
5 Let the same mind be in you that was[a] in
Christ Jesus,

6 who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
7 but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
8 he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of
death—
even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the
earth,
11 and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

12 Therefore, my beloved, just as you have
always obeyed me, not only in my presence,
but much more now in my absence, work out
your own salvation with fear and trembling;
13 for it is God who is at work in you, enabling
you both to will and to work for his good
pleasure.

14 Do all things without murmuring and
arguing, 15 so that you may be blameless
and innocent, children of God without
blemish in the midst of a crooked and per-
verse generation, in which you shine like
stars in the world. 16 It is by your holding
fast to the word of life that I can boast on
the day of Christ that I did not run in vain
or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being
poured out as a libation over the sacrifice
and the offering of your faith, I am glad and
rejoice with all of you— 18 and in the same
way you also must be glad and rejoice with
me.

[a] Or *that you have*

1.27–4.1: Appeal to unity, followed by examples. 2.1–18: First example: self-emptying of Christ. 6: *In the form of God, equality with God,* may refer to divine status, or simply preexistence as a heavenly being (Dan 7.13), or Adam's original immortality (Wis 2.23–24), which Christ renounced by becoming subject to death. **7:** *But emptied himself,* the extreme limit of self-denial. **8:** Mt 26.39; Jn 10.18; Rom 5.19; Heb 5.8; 12.2. **9:** *Exalted,* in raising him from the dead. *The name . . . above every name* is Lord. **10–11:** Cf. Isa 45.23. **12:** *With fear and trembling,* a frequent biblical expression (Ex 15.16; Deut 2.25; Ps 2.11; Isa 19.6; 4 Macc 4.10) that had become a commonplace (1 Cor 2.3; 2 Cor 7.15; Eph 6.5). **15:** *Shine like stars,* Dan 12.3. **16:** *Day of Christ,* see 1.6n. **17:** Paul's possible death is compared to a temple sacrifice.

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. 20 I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 21 All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But Timothy's[a] worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me; 24 and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.

25 Still, I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus—my brother and co-worker and fellow soldier, your messenger[b] and minister to my need; 26 for he has been longing for[c] all of you, and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. 27 He was indeed so ill that he nearly died. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, so that I would not have one sorrow after another. 28 I am the more eager to send him, therefore, in order that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. 29 Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy, and honor such people, 30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ,[d] risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me.

3 Finally, my brothers and sisters,[e] rejoice[f] in the Lord.

To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard.

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh![g] 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God[h] and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh— 4 even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ,[i] the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 I want to know Christ[j] and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

[a] Gk *his*
[b] Gk *apostle*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *longing to see*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *of the Lord*
[e] Gk *my brothers*
[f] Or *farewell*
[g] Gk *the mutilation*
[h] Other ancient authorities read *worship God in spirit*
[i] Or *through the faith of Christ*
[j] Gk *him*

2.19–3.1a: Second example: Timothy and Epaphroditus. 19: *Timothy,* Acts 16.1–3; 1 Cor 16.10–11. **24:** *I trust . . . that I will also come soon,* an argument against Rome as place of writing (see Rom 15.23–25). **25:** *Epaphroditus,* apostle and coworker of Paul who brought the gift from Philippi (4.18), now being sent home.

3.1b–3: A digression about those who preach the necessity of circumcision, requiring Christians to observe the laws of Judaism. They were Paul's bitter opponents elsewhere, especially in Galatia, and are introduced here as a negative example (cf. Gal 5.1–12). **3:** *The flesh,* emphasis on physical rituals.

3.4–4.1: Third example: Paul himself. 5: *Hebrew,* a more preferred self-designation than *Jew,* which was used more often by and for outsiders. *Pharisee,* member of the group concerned with interpretation of the Jewish law. **6:** *A persecutor,* Acts 9.1–2; 1 Cor 15.9; Gal 1.13. *As to righteousness under the law, blameless,* Paul did not see himself as guilty or incomplete before his encounter with Christ. **8:** *Rubbish,* or excrement. **9:** *The righteousness from God based on faith,* a free gift bestowed by God through the grace of Christ (Rom 1.16–4.25). **10–11:** Actually to know Christ as risen and living is to have power to suffer and die like him, and to possess the hope of rising

12 Not that I have already obtained this or
have already reached the goal;[a] but I press
on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus
has made me his own. 13 Beloved,[b] I do not
consider that I have made it my own;[c] but this
one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and
straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press
on toward the goal for the prize of the heav-
enly[d] call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of
us then who are mature be of the same mind;
and if you think differently about anything,
this too God will reveal to you. 16 Only let us
hold fast to what we have attained.

17 Brothers and sisters,[b] join in imitating
me, and observe those who live according to
the example you have in us. 18 For many live
as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often
told you of them, and now I tell you even
with tears. 19 Their end is destruction; their
god is the belly; and their glory is in their
shame; their minds are set on earthly things.
20 But our citizenship[e] is in heaven, and it is
from there that we are expecting a Savior,
the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the
body of our humiliation[f] that it may be con-
formed to the body of his glory,[g] by the power
that also enables him to make all things
subject to himself.

4 1 Therefore, my broth-
ers and sisters,[h] whom I love and long
for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord
in this way, my beloved.

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be
of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask
you also, my loyal companion,[i] help these
women, for they have struggled beside me in
the work of the gospel, together with Clem-
ent and the rest of my co-workers, whose
names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice[j] in the Lord always; again I will
say, Rejoice.[j] 5 Let your gentleness be known
to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry
about anything, but in everything by prayer
and supplication with thanksgiving let your
requests be made known to God. 7 And the
peace of God, which surpasses all under-
standing, will guard your hearts and your
minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, beloved,[k] whatever is true, what-
ever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever
is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is
commendable, if there is any excellence and
if there is anything worthy of praise, think
about[l] these things. 9 Keep on doing the
things that you have learned and received
and heard and seen in me, and the God of
peace will be with you.

10 I rejoice[m] in the Lord greatly that now at
last you have revived your concern for me;
indeed, you were concerned for me, but had
no opportunity to show it.[n] 11 Not that I am

[a] Or *have already been made perfect*
[b] Gk *Brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *my own yet*
[d] Gk *upward*
[e] Or *commonwealth*
[f] Or *our humble bodies*
[g] Or *his glorious body*
[h] Gk *my brothers*
[i] Or *loyal Syzygus*
[j] Or *Farewell*
[k] Gk *brothers*
[l] Gk *take account of*
[m] Gk *I rejoiced*
[n] Gk lacks *to show it*

and living with him. **12–14:** *The goal* and *the prize,* allusion to popular sports, the Greek foot races, their finishing post, and the award to the winner (see 2.16; 1 Cor 9.24–27). **18–19:** *Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ,* presumably professing Christians who cannot accept Paul's cross theology. **20:** *Our citizenship,* our ultimate political loyalty and real homeland, contrasting with the status of many of the Philippians as Roman citizens. **21:** Rom 8.23; 1 Cor 15.47–57; 2 Cor 5.1–5; Col 3.1–4. **1:** 1 Thess 2.19–20. A *crown* was often awarded to the winner of a race (see 3.12–14n.).

4.2–9: Dissension. 2: *Euodia . . . Syntyche,* two women leaders in the Philippian church, most likely heads of house-churches (John Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* 13) and therefore among the overseers and helpers (1.1) whose disagreement has caused factions in the church that have seriously affected the community. **3:** *My loyal companion,* an unknown but influential figure who could serve as mediator between the two. Less likely, the Greek word for *companion* may be understood as a proper name, *Syzygus. Book of life,* a book kept by God containing names of those to be saved (Ps 69.28; Dan 12.1; Lk 10.20; Rev 3.5; etc.).

4.10–20: Acknowledgment of their gifts. 11: *Content,* Paul here expresses the Stoic ideal of indifference, but

referring to being in need; for I have learned
to be content with whatever I have. [12] I know
what it is to have little, and I know what it is
to have plenty. In any and all circumstances
I have learned the secret of being well-fed
and of going hungry, of having plenty and of
being in need. [13] I can do all things through
him who strengthens me. [14] In any case, it was
kind of you to share my distress.

[15] You Philippians indeed know that in the
early days of the gospel, when I left Macedo-
nia, no church shared with me in the matter
of giving and receiving, except you alone.
[16] For even when I was in Thessalonica, you
sent me help for my needs more than once.
[17] Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the
profit that accumulates to your account. [18] I
have been paid in full and have more than
enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have
received from Epaphroditus the gifts you
sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice accept-
able and pleasing to God. [19] And my God will
fully satisfy every need of yours according to
his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. [20] To our
God and Father be glory forever and ever.
Amen.

[21] Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The
friends[a] who are with me greet you. [22] All
the saints greet you, especially those of the
emperor's household.

[23] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be
with your spirit.[b]

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

with new motivation because of Christ. **15–16:** *Macedonia, Thessalonica,* according to Acts 17.1, Paul had gone to Thessalonica immediately after his stay in Philippi. **15,17,18:** *Giving and receiving, profit . . . account, paid in full,* a series of business terms used metaphorically here and in other contexts of friendship. **18:** *Fragrant offering,* Gen 8.21; Ex 29.18; Ezek 20.41.

4.21–23: Conclusion. 22: *The emperor's household,* members of the imperial civil service who are believers where Paul is confined, but not necessarily located in Rome.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

NAME AND CONTENTS

This letter is named for its recipients, the Christian community in the Phrygian city of Colossae (1.2), a community founded by Epaphras, a Colossian associate of Paul (1.7–8; 4.12–13). Once a thriving town on the Lycus River in the Roman province of Asia, Colossae had a significant Jewish population. The city fell into decline after an earthquake ca. 60 CE; the site has not yet been excavated.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND LITERARY HISTORY

Despite its similarity to the undisputed letters of Paul in structure, language, and theology, Colossians lacks some central Pauline terms (e.g., righteousness, justification), uses new theological vocabulary (e.g., to be raised with Christ), and is composed in a more elevated, liturgical style. Colossians presents a vision of believers' present lives as almost completely transformed by Christ's death and resurrection (3.1–4), a contrast to Paul's characteristic tension between the partial experience of God's blessings in the present in light of the future resurrection (e.g., Rom 6.4; 1 Cor 15.50–58). Colossians also uses the Greco-Roman format of household rules to define ethical norms (3.18–4.1), which is more characteristic of the post-Pauline Ephesians, Pastoral Letters, and 1 Peter. Paul's own ethical instructions did not reinforce or even focus on these household relationships; Paul instead adopted a baptismal creed that overturns social, ethnic, and gender hierarchies (Gal 3.28), and elevated celibacy over marriage (e.g., 1 Cor 7). Some scholars conclude that Colossians is pseudonymous—written in Paul's name by one of his disciples, either during Paul's lifetime or shortly after his death (ca. 65 CE), in order to authorize the application of Paul's thought to a new situation. Other scholars think the letter was written by Paul while imprisoned (4.3,10,18) at Rome near the end of his life and attribute any theological differences to developments in Paul's thinking and the particulars of the situation addressed.

After beginning with a glowing description of the Colossians' lives, the author soon alludes to unnamed teachers who pose a threat to their faith. Without an independent description of these teachings, precise identification is difficult. It appears that these teachers advocated observance of ascetic rituals, where the adherent seeks the help of spiritual powers to reach the divine throne (2.8–23). Many scholars understand these rituals to be indebted to Jewish mysticism; others emphasize the influence of local Phrygian religious practices or Hellenistic philosophy. The attractiveness of Jewish ritual elements within the church at Colossae reflects not only the ongoing close connections between Jewish and Christian communities, but also the fluidity of practices across porous religious boundaries. The polemical tone of Colossians, however, represents an emerging first-century Christian ambivalence toward Jewish rituals and the desire to more clearly define community boundaries.

STRUCTURE

Colossians follows the usual structure of a Pauline letter (see pp. 1611–12), beginning with a greeting (1.1–2), an introductory thanksgiving (1.3–8) and prayer (1.9–14), and ending with greetings and instructions (4.7–18). The body of the letter includes both a theological argument (2.6–23) and ethical instructions (3.1–4.6). The basis of the theological argument—focused on Christ—is presented in 1.12–2.5. In the elevated words of an early Christian hymn, Christ is praised as the supreme power over the cosmos and the church (1.15–20). Although cosmic forces enslaved humanity in the past, believers have been freed from their malevolent influence, forgiven through Christ's death, and made full citizens of the kingdom of Christ, to whom they now owe complete allegiance (1.12–14, 21–23). Christ is the perfect revelation of God (1.19; 2.9–10) and the single source of wisdom about how to live rightly (1.9–10; 2.2–3).

INTERPRETATION

The main theological argument of Colossians focuses on the change in believers' spiritual existence achieved by Christ's death on the cross (2.9–15). The recurring contrasts of death and life (2.12–13,20; 3.1–5), old and new (3.9–10), and past and present (1.12–14,21–23) emphasize the fundamental psychological and moral

reorientation required of those who would be faithful to Christ. This letter presupposes a world populated by a multitude of spiritual or cosmic entities enmeshed in conflict with humans and the divine (1.16; 2.8,15,18). Our author believes that rituals of mystical ascension to the heavenly realm (see above) belong to the old, inferior world and entail subjection to cosmic entities; they must be rejected as denials of Christ's lordship.

The members of a true Christian community, rejecting their previous immoral lifestyle (3.5–11) and reorienting their entire lives around Christ as Lord (3.1–4), are to live in harmony with each other as they worship and give thanks to God and Christ (3.12–17). It is therefore surprising that the idealized household (3.18–4.1) is only a mildly Christianized version of the ancient patriarchal family rather than a reconsideration of household relationships based on the equality of all in Christ and on mutual love and forgiveness (3.10–15). The letter's elevated language of death, ascension, and spiritual wisdom provided fertile ground for theological speculation since the second century CE; perhaps most significant, however, is the Christological language in 1.15–20 that shaped the debates of the fourth century and the formation of the church's creeds.

Jennifer K. Berenson

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

[2] To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters[a] in Christ in Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

[3] In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, [4] for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, [5] because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel [6] that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. [7] This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.[b] He is a faithful minister of Christ on your[c] behalf, [8] and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

[9] For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's[d] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. [11] May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled[e] you[f] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. [13] He has rescued us

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *slave*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *our*
[d] Gk *his*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *called*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *us*

1.1–2: Salutation. **1:** *Apostle . . . by the will of God*, see 1.25; Rom 1.1n. *Timothy*, Paul's fellow missionary and emissary (Philem 1; 2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; 2.19–24). *Brother* indicates a bond of affection and loyalty. **2:** *Saints*, literally "holy ones," refers to all followers of the Christian movement. *Brothers and sisters*, the Gk plural *adelphoi* (see note *a*) has the sense of "siblings." *Grace . . . peace*, a common Pauline greeting building upon conventional salutations in Gk (*grace*) and Heb (*peace*).

1.3–8: Thanksgiving for obedient lives. **3–5:** *Faith, hope,* and *love*, a summary of Christian virtues (1 Cor 13.13; 1 Thess 5.8). **4:** *Faith*, here allegiance or loyalty. **5:** *Gospel*, proclamation of good news, here referring to the message of Christ's victory over death (see 2.15). **6:** *The whole world,* hyperbole for all the Christian communities in the ancient world. **7:** *Epaphras*, founder of the church in Colossae (4.12–13; Philem 23).

1.9–14: Prayer for continued growth in knowledge (v. 9), moral maturity (v. 10), and endurance (v. 11). **9:** *Spiritual wisdom and understanding*, a major theme of the letter (1.25–28; 2.2–4,9–15). **12–14:** Perhaps a fragment of a baptismal hymn. **12–13:** *Light . . . darkness*, apocalyptic imagery for the opposing domains within the cosmos (see 1.16n.; 1 Thess 5.5). **12:** *Inheritance*, a metaphor based on Israel's inheritance of the land as a gift of God.

from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.[a]

[15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; [16] for in[b] him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. [17] He himself is before all things, and in[b] him all things hold together. [18] He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. [19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

[21] And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [22] he has now reconciled[c] in his fleshly body[d] through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him— [23] provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

[24] I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. [25] I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, [26] the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. [27] To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. [28] It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. [29] For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me.

[a] Other ancient authorities add *through his blood*
[b] Or *by*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *you have now been reconciled*
[d] Gk *in the body of his flesh*

14: *Redemption*, release or ransom from slavery.

1.15–20: The supremacy of Christ. This enduring language of an early Christian hymn, probably based on the Jewish figure Wisdom/Sophia (Prov 8; Sir 24; Wis 6–9; see also Jn 1.1–18; Phil 2.6–11), expresses Christ's supremacy over the cosmos (vv. 15–17) and the church (vv. 18–20). **15:** *Image*, the perfect, visible manifestation of God. *Firstborn* expresses priority and supremacy. **16:** *Thrones . . . powers*, hostile cosmic powers (1.13; 2.15; Eph 6.12). **17:** *In him all things hold together*, Christ actively maintains the coherence of the cosmos **18:** *Head*, ruling authority or originator; see Eph 1.22; 5.23. *The body, the church*, both terms stem from ancient political discourse for a community assembly, emphasizing unity and coherence; see Rom 12.4–5; 1 Cor 12.27. See also Eph 1.22–23n. *Firstborn from the dead*, the first of all those to be resurrected from the dead (1 Cor 15.20,23; Acts 26.23; Rev 1.5). **19:** *Fullness of God*, the power and presence of God (see also 1.29; 2.9–10). **20:** *Reconcile . . . making peace*, the estrangement of creation from the creator is rectified (1.13–14, 21–22, 2.15).

1.21–23: Assurance and warning. 21: *Hostile in mind, doing evil deeds*, interrelated aspects of the former life (Rom 1.18–32). **22:** *Fleshly body*, an emphatic contrast with Christ's heavenly origins (1.20, 2.9; cf. 1.15–17). *To present you . . . before him,* reconciliation is completed by Christ's approval at the eschatological judgment (v. 28). **23:** Concern for continued allegiance to Christ is the primary focus of the letter.

1.24–2.5: Paul's mission and pastoral commitment. 1.24: *Completing . . . afflictions*, not a denigration of Christ's death but an acknowledgment that those who preach the gospel will experience *sufferings* (1.29), such as imprisonment (4.3,10,18) and other hardships (2 Cor 4.7–12; 11.23–28). **26–28:** *Mystery*, in Paul's writings, the term refers to God's secret eschatological plan (Rom 11.25; 1 Cor 2.6–7, 15.51; cf. Dan 2.28; Wis 2.22); in Colossians, Christ himself is the mystery (2.2; 4.3; Rom 16.25–26; cf. Eph 1.10; 3.2–6). *Hope of glory . . . so that we may*

2 For I want you to know how much I
am struggling for you, and for those
in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen
me face to face. [2] I want their hearts to be
encouraged and united in love, so that they
may have all the riches of assured under-
standing and have the knowledge of God's
mystery, that is, Christ himself,[a] [3] in whom
are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and
knowledge. [4] I am saying this so that no one
may deceive you with plausible arguments.
[5] For though I am absent in body, yet I am
with you in spirit, and I rejoice to see your
morale and the firmness of your faith in
Christ.

[6] As you therefore have received Christ
Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives[b] in
him, [7] rooted and built up in him and estab-
lished in the faith, just as you were taught,
abounding in thanksgiving.

[8] See to it that no one takes you captive
through philosophy and empty deceit, ac-
cording to human tradition, according to the
elemental spirits of the universe,[c] and not
according to Christ. [9] For in him the whole
fullness of deity dwells bodily, [10] and you
have come to fullness in him, who is the
head of every ruler and authority. [11] In him
also you were circumcised with a spiritual
circumcision,[d] by putting off the body of the
flesh in the circumcision of Christ; [12] when
you were buried with him in baptism, you
were also raised with him through faith in the
power of God, who raised him from the dead.
[13] And when you were dead in trespasses and
the uncircumcision of your flesh, God[e] made
you[f] alive together with him, when he forgave
us all our trespasses, [14] erasing the record
that stood against us with its legal demands.
He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. [15] He
disarmed[g] the rulers and authorities and
made a public example of them, triumphing
over them in it.

[16] Therefore do not let anyone condemn
you in matters of food and drink or of ob-
serving festivals, new moons, or sabbaths.
[17] These are only a shadow of what is to come,
but the substance belongs to Christ. [18] Do not
let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-
abasement and worship of angels, dwelling[h]
on visions,[i] puffed up without cause by a

[a] Other ancient authorities read *of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ*
[b] Gk *to walk*
[c] Or *the rudiments of the world*
[d] Gk *a circumcision made without hands*
[e] Gk *he*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *made us*; others, *made*
[g] Or *divested himself of*
[h] Other ancient authorities read *not dwelling*
[i] Meaning of Gk uncertain

present, the expectation of their eschatological presentation before Christ. **2.1:** *Laodicea*, see 4.13n. **5:** *Morale, firmness*, terminology evoking military discipline.

2.6–23: Theological Argument. 2.6–15: Christ and the cross. 6–7: Thematic statement of the letter (see Introduction; 1.21–23; 3.1–4). **6:** *Received*, a technical term for the reception of oral tradition (1 Cor 15.1,3); here, that Jesus is Lord (Rom 10.9). **8:** *Philosophy* includes ethical and religious teachings. *Human tradition*, in contrast to God's revelation through Paul. *Elemental spirits*, cosmic forces perhaps based on the four primal elements of Greek thought; associated with the Jewish law in Gal 4.1–5,9–10. **9–10:** See 1.19n. **11–12:** *Circumcision,* a ritual, bodily mark of membership in the people of Israel (Gen 17.9–14). The significance of circumcision is here transferred to Christian baptism where the previous life (*the body of the flesh)* is shed in solidarity with Christ's death and the baptized are given new life (*you were also raised*) as was Christ. **13:** *Uncircumcision of your flesh*, the Colossians were Gentiles. **14:** *Record . . . demands*, a document detailing transgressions, perhaps similar to that in Dan 7.10 and Rev 20.12. *Nailing it to the cross,* ridding it of its power to condemn. **15:** *Rulers and authorities*, see 1.16n. *Disarmed . . . public example*, language evoking a Roman ritual (the "triumph") where the state's vanquished enemies were publically displayed in an elaborate parade.

2.16–23: Warnings against ascetic practices. 16: *Matters of food and drink*, observance of Jewish dietary laws. *Festivals, new moons, or sabbaths*, a summary of the Jewish religious calendar (e.g., 2 Chr 8.13; Neh 10.33). **17:** *Shadow . . . substance*, Platonic language contrasting the temporal/inferior with the eternal/perfect (see Heb 8.5n.). **18:** Ascetic practices (*self-abasement*) used to achieve a mystical ascent to heaven (*dwelling on visions*); *worship of angels* may refer to ecstatic participation in worship of God alongside angels or the showing of rever-

human way of thinking,[a] [19] and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.

[20] If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe,[b] why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, [21] "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"? [22] All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings. [23] These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence.[c]

3 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, [3] for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ who is your[d] life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

[5] Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). [6] On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.[e] [7] These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.[f] [8] But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive[g] language from your mouth. [9] Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices [10] and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. [11] In that renewal[h] there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

[12] As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. [13] Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord[i] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. [14] Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. [15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. [16] Let

[a] Gk *by the mind of his flesh*
[b] Or *the rudiments of the world*
[c] Or *are of no value, serving only to indulge the flesh*
[d] Other authorities read *our*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *on those who are disobedient* (Gk *the children of disobedience*)
[f] Or *living among such people*
[g] Or *filthy*
[h] Gk *its creator*, [11]*where*
[i] Other ancient authorities read *just as Christ*

ence to angels. **19:** *Head, body*, see 1.18n. **20:** *Died to*, no longer under the authority of (vv. 8–15). *As if . . . world*, see 2.11; 3.1–3. **21:** Jewish purity regulations. **22:** See Mk 7.7,19. **23:** The criticism is either that such practices do not address the author's moral concerns (3.5,8) or that they inappropriately focus attention on the body (see note *c*).

3.1–4.6: Ethical implications. 3.1–4: Maintain a heavenly perspective. 1: *Raised*, 2.12. *Seated at the right hand of God*, see Eph 1.19–20n. **1–2:** *Seek . . . set*, commands to orient one's life around the heavenly reality of Christ's exaltation and authority. **3:** *Died*, see 2.11–12n. *Hidden with*, expressing an intimate and inseparable connection. **4:** *Is revealed*, at the eschatological judgment.

3.5–11: Reject sins of the old life. 5: *Put to death*, vehemently refuse to engage in. *Fornication . . . evil desire,* inappropriate sexual behavior. *Idolatry*, often linked with sexual sins in Jewish and Christian thought (Hos 4.12–19; Rom 1.23–27; 1 Cor 10.7–8). **6:** *Wrath*, God's eschatological judgment. **8:** *Anger . . . abusive language*, a list of vices commonly condemned in antiquity (cf. 1 Cor 6.9; Gal 5.19–21). **9–10:** *Old self . . . new self,* another contrast emphasizing the new act of creation (recalling Gen 1.26–27) brought about by baptism (2.12). *Stripped off*, changing one's clothing as a metaphor for adopting a new way of life (3.12–14; Eph 4.22–24). **11:** An eloquent rejection of privileges based on ethnicity and socioeconomic status; cf. the additional abrogation of a gender hierarchy in Gal 3.28. *Barbarian . . . Scythian*, shorthand in antiquity for uncultured peoples.

3.12–17: Adopt virtues of the new life. 12: *Compassion . . . patience*, virtues emphasizing a proper attitude toward oneself and genuine concern for others. **13:** *Forgive*, Eph 4.32; cf. Mt 6.14–15. **16:** *Word of Christ*, teachings concerning Christ.

the word of Christ[a] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.[b] 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. 22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters[c] in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord.[c] 23 Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters,[d] 24 since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve[e] the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. **4** 1 Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, 4 so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should.

5 Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.[f] 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant[g] in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are[h] and that he may encourage your hearts; 9 he is coming with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him. 11 And Jesus who is called Justus greets you. These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *of God*, or *of the Lord*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *to the Lord*
[c] In Greek the same word is used for *master* and *Lord*
[d] Gk *not for men*
[e] Or *you are slaves of*, or *be slaves of*
[f] Or *opportunity*
[g] Gk *slave*
[h] Other authorities read *that I may know how you are*

3.18–4.1: Household relationships "in the Lord." This passage adopts a popular philosophical format of paired commands (wife/husband, etc.) for describing the ancient ideal of the patriarchal family and defends it as appropriate for a community dedicated to Christ as Lord (see the more extensive elaboration in Eph 5.22–6.9). The commands to the male figure somewhat moderate his traditional prerogatives (see 3.19,21; 4.1), although appeal to these rules throughout Christian history has tended to reinforce rather than challenge male authority. **18–19:** *Wives/husbands*, the first of the three fundamental household relationships. Cf. Eph 5:22–33. **18:** *Be subject*, accept a position of subordination. The role of Nympha (4.15n) stands in contrast to the idealized subordinate female. **19:** *Never treat them harshly*, alternatively, "do not be embittered against them." **20–21:** *Children/fathers*, cf. Eph 6.1–4. **3.22–4.1:** *Slaves/masters*, cf. Eph 6.5–9. This relationship is the most fully developed of the three, placing the burden on the slave to act in a way that does not incur the master's displeasure.

4.2–6: Final admonitions. 3: *Door for the word*, an opportunity to preach. *Mystery*, see 1.26–27n. *Prison*, see 1.24n. **5:** *Conduct yourself wisely,* perhaps the motivation for advocating the conservative household ethic above. *Making the most of the time*, recognizing the eschatological urgency. **6:** *With salt*, with graciousness or perhaps wit (cf. Mt 5.13).

4.7–18: Final greetings and instructions. 7: *Tychicus*, Paul's associate (Acts 20.4; 2 Tim 4.12), commended like Epaphras (cf. 1.7). **9:** *Onesimus*, see Philem 10–21. **10:** *Aristarchus*, Acts 20.4; 27.2; Philem 24. *Welcome him*, cf. Paul's conflict with Mark in Acts 13.13; 15.37–39. **11:** *Jesus,* a common Jewish name. *The circumcision*, Jewish fol-

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant[a] of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills. 13 For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters[b] in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, "See that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.[c]

[a] Gk *slave*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

lowers of the Christian movement, here without negative connotations (cf. Gal 2.12). **12:** *Epaphras*, see 1.7n. **13:** *Laodicea*, *Hierapolis*, cities located 10 and 15 miles (16 and 24 km), respectively, northwest of Colossae. **14:** *Luke*, 2 Tim 4.11; Philem 24. Traditionally identified as the author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts (see respective Introductions). *Demas*, 2 Tim 4.10; Philem 24. **15:** *Brothers and sisters*, see Eph 6.23n. *Nympha*, probably the leader of the church that met in her home (see Philem 1–2). **16:** *The letter from Laodicea*, no letter is extant, although some scholars identify it with Ephesians. This verse attests to the churches' practice of sharing Paul's letters prior to their distribution in a collection. **17:** *Archippus*, Philem 2. **18:** A final word in the author's handwriting to authenticate the letter (cf. 1 Cor 16.21; Gal 6.11); the rest of the letter would have been dictated to a secretary (see Rom 16.22).

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

NAME AND CANONICAL STATUS

The letter is addressed to the Christ-group comprised of people living in Thessalonica, the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia in northern Greece. The title is secondary, added to the Greek manuscripts probably fairly early during the copying and collecting of Paul's letters. Its status as "first" of two letters is due to its length relative to 2 Thessalonians, since Paul's letters were placed in the canon in order of length.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE, AND HISTORY

Although Paul is the primary writer (1.1; 2.18; 3.5; 5.27), Silvanus and Timothy (1.1) were known to the Thessalonians and likely had a hand in the composition of the letter, as reflected in the many uses of "we" throughout. Though a few late nineteenth-century scholars questioned its authenticity, 1 Thessalonians is widely considered to be a genuine letter of Paul.

Acts 17.1–10 records Paul's visit to Thessalonica as he moves east to west through Macedonia, before turning south to Athens and finally Corinth (Acts 16–18). While in Athens, Paul sends Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the believers (3.1). By the time Timothy returns, Paul and his entourage have likely moved to Corinth (cf. Acts 18.1), a visit dated ca. 49–51 CE. First Thessalonians is written at this time, making it the earliest surviving letter by Paul.

LITERARY HISTORY, STRUCTURE, AND CONTENTS

Past theories that 1 Thessalonians comprises numerous letter fragments pasted together have not proven persuasive, and the letter is generally seen as a single composition. The one exception is 2.13–16, over which scholars are divided. The inclusion of a second "thanksgiving" section in a letter is unusual, but the harsh, unnuanced words against the Jews especially run counter to Paul's reflections elsewhere (esp. Rom 9–11) and thus cause some scholars to doubt the authenticity of this section. Other scholars find historical or theological reasons to maintain its authenticity by insisting that Paul does not condemn Jews as a people, only those in Judea hostile to Jesus and his followers; Paul himself had been such a zealous persecutor (Gal 1.13–14). The letter has the following structure:

1.1	Opening greeting
1.2–10	Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' response to the gospel
2.1–12	Recalling Paul's work at Thessalonica
2.13–16	Second thanksgiving (possibly an interpolation)
2.17–3.13	Paul's desire to visit the Thessalonians
4.1–5.11	Responses to issues raised by the Thessalonians
	Proper sexual conduct (4.1–8)
	Care for one another (4.9–12)
	The fate of the dead and Jesus's return (4.13–18)
	The timing of Jesus's return (5.1–11)
5.12–22	Community leadership and general exhortations
5.23–28	Closing greeting

INTERPRETATION

The letter aims to maintain and build relationships in the wake of a hasty departure by Paul and his companions from Thessalonica. Overall, it is warm and encouraging. The relationship is affirmed not only in recalling the Thessalonians' initial reception and imitation of the Paul party (1.5–6) but in the familial metaphors the writers employ (2.7,11–12) and the pure motives expressed in the enthusiasm of Paul and his associates while living and working among them (2.5–6,8–10). Paul and his companions long to return to Thessalonica. In the meantime,

there are some specific issues that need to be addressed, which are taken up in the second half of the letter: sexual ethics, mutual love and caring among community members, and the fate of those who have died before the return of Jesus, the timing of which is also of concern. Even here, the writers are affirming of the Thessalonians' behavior (4.1,9; 5.11) and simply urge them to continue in what they are already doing.

Richard S. Ascough

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace to you and peace.

[2] We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly [3] remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. [4] For we know, brothers and sisters[a] beloved by God, that he has chosen you, [5] because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. [6] And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, [7] so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. [8] For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. [9] For the people of those regions[b] report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, [10] and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

2 You yourselves know, brothers and sisters,[a] that our coming to you was not in vain, [2] but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. [3] For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, [4] but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. [5] As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *For they*

1.1: Greeting. *Silvanus*, the Latin form of the Greek name Silas, who appears as Paul's companion in Acts (see esp. chs 16–17) and is mentioned as such in 2 Cor 1.19. *Timothy* is Paul's trusted co-worker and emissary and is credited as a letter co-writer not only here and in 2 Thess but also in 2 Cor, Phil, Philem, and Col. While Greek letters begin with the word "greeting" ("chaire"), here the writers use the similar sounding Gk word for *grace* ("charis") while also invoking the typical Jewish greeting *peace* (Heb "shalom") in order to remind the recipients of what God has provided to them.

1.2–10: Opening thanksgiving. **3:** The triad *faith . . . love . . . hope* (cf. 5.8) modifies words that underline the recipients' status as laborers: *work . . . labor . . . steadfastness*. **6:** *Persecution* here may not indicate persistent maltreatment and harassment by others, but only that the believers' refusal to participate in regular religious rituals is causing them social and occupational discrimination. **7:** *Macedonia and Achaia,* the two Roman provinces in Greece. **9:** *You turned to God from idols,* the addressees are Gentiles rather than Jews or even Jewish sympathizers, neither of which would be described as worshiping "idols." The plural *you* suggests they changed their allegiance collectively as a group. **10**: Mention of *wrath* indicates that Paul's initial preaching warned of a day of judgment.

2.1–12: Recalling Paul's work at Thessalonica. **1–6:** Behind the ardent denial of *deceit*, *impure motives*, *trickery*, *flattery*, *greed*, and a desire for *praise,* there may be a suspicion on the part of some Thessalonian believers that this is precisely what motivated Paul and his companions. In contrast, the writers reassure the believers that they had the full approval of God in acting and speaking as they did. **2:** *At Philippi,* see Acts 16.19–40.

or with a pretext for greed; [6] nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, [7] though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle[a] among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. [8] So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

[9] You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters;[b] we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. [10] You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. [11] As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, [12] urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

[13] We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers. [14] For you, brothers and sisters,[b] became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, [15] who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets,[c] and drove us out; they displease God and oppose everyone [16] by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have constantly been filling up the measure of their sins; but God's wrath has overtaken them at last.[d]

[17] As for us, brothers and sisters,[b] when, for a short time, we were made orphans by being separated from you—in person, not in heart—we longed with great eagerness to see you face to face. [18] For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and again—but Satan blocked our way. [19] For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? [20] Yes, you are our glory and joy!

3 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we decided to be left alone in Athens; [2] and we sent Timothy, our brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming[e] the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith, [3] so that no one would be shaken by these persecutions. Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for. [4] In fact, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer persecution; so it turned out,

[a] Other ancient authorities read *infants*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *their own prophets*
[d] Or *completely* or *forever*
[e] Gk lacks *proclaiming*

7a: *Made demands as apostles*: itinerant philosophers would be paid for imparting their wisdom, a practice carried out by some traveling Christian preachers (cf. 1 Cor 9.3–18; 2 Cor 2.17) but not Paul and his companions. **7b:** *Nurse* here might also be rendered "nursing mother" and is a domestic image of concern and nurturing, here particularly so because it is linked to *her own* children. **9:** That Paul and his companions *worked* daily while they *proclaimed . . . the gospel* confirms that they supported themselves as manual laborers (cf. 2 Thess 3.7–8), perhaps leatherworkers (cf. Acts 18.3); their workshop may have been the setting in which they secured the first group willing to change their allegiance from idols to God (cf. 1.9).

2.13–16: Second thanksgiving. This passage may not be original to the letter (see Introduction). **14**: *Became imitators of the churches . . . in Judea* suggests a connection between the Gentile believers in Thessalonica and Judeans. If the text is an interpolation, then the claim *God's wrath has overtaken them* may refer to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE; if original, it is likely a more general reference to anti-Jewish sentiments in the culture (e.g., Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5) or reflects a viewpoint that God has rejected the Jews (contrary to Rom 9–11).

2.17–3.13: Paul's desire to visit the Thessalonians. Paul personally expresses his affection for the Thessalonians and the frustration of separation. **2.18**: Reference to *Satan* suggests that Paul experienced physical impediments to returning that he attributed to demonic forces (cf. 2 Cor 12.7–10), which he fears may also be at work among the Thessalonians (3.5). This impediment may be the *persecutions* they experience as part of their ongoing proclamations (3.3,4,7). **19:** A *crown* could be used to honor victors in athletic contests as well as patrons and leaders of other groups. *Coming,* Gk "parousia." **3.1:** *In Athens,* see Acts 17.15–18.1.

as you know. 5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor had been in vain.

6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us—just as we long to see you. 7 For this reason, brothers and sisters,[a] during all our distress and persecution we have been encouraged about you through your faith. 8 For we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord. 9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. 12 And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. 13 And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

4 Finally, brothers and sisters,[a] we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; 4 that each one of you know how to control your own body[b] in holiness and honor, 5 not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister[c] in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 7 For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

9 Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters,[a] you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; 10 and indeed you do love all the brothers and sisters[a] throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved,[a] to do so more and more, 11 to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you, 12 so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one.

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters,[a] about those who have died,[d] so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Or *how to take a wife for himself*
[c] Gk *brother*
[d] Gk *fallen asleep*

11–13: This prayer invocation concludes the first section of the letter, with its focus on relationships (*love*) and shifts toward ethical exhortations (*holiness*; *blameless*) of the second. *Saints,* Gk "holy ones"; a reference either to already-deceased believers in Christ or perhaps to a reference to Zech 14.5 and thus indicating angels.

4.1–8: Proper sexual conduct. **4**: *Body* is only one of three ways to translate the metaphoric use of the Gk "skeuos," lit. "vessel." Here it could refer to a man's wife or his penis. In any case, the general sense is that the Thessalonians preserve sexual decorum in dealing with one another.

4.9–12: Care for one another. **9:** The basis for affirming their brotherly and sisterly love (Gk "philadelphia") rests in their being "God-taught," a term coined by the writers. **11:** *Working with your own hands* suggests that the Thessalonians are manual laborers like Paul and his companions (see. 2.9n.). **11–12:** The injunction to *live quietly* and *be dependent on no one* indicates that unlike many other groups at that time, the Thessalonians are not to rely on patrons to fund their activities.

4.13–18: The fate of the dead and Jesus's return. A message of consolation for the Thessalonians, who seem distraught that some members have died before the return of Jesus. The imagery is similar to that found in 1 Cor 15.51–53, and is developed from Jewish apocalyptic thought. **13**: *Died,* lit., "fallen asleep," suggesting

so, through Jesus, God will bring with him
those who have died.[a] 15 For this we declare
to you by the word of the Lord, that we who
are alive, who are left until the coming of
the Lord, will by no means precede those
who have died.[a] 16 For the Lord himself, with
a cry of command, with the archangel's
call and with the sound of God's trumpet,
will descend from heaven, and the dead in
Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive,
who are left, will be caught up in the clouds
together with them to meet the Lord in the
air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.
18 Therefore encourage one another with
these words.

5 Now concerning the times and the
seasons, brothers and sisters,[b] you do
not need to have anything written to you.
2 For you yourselves know very well that
the day of the Lord will come like a thief in
the night. 3 When they say, "There is peace
and security," then sudden destruction
will come upon them, as labor pains come
upon a pregnant woman, and there will be
no escape! 4 But you, beloved,[b] are not in
darkness, for that day to surprise you like
a thief; 5 for you are all children of light
and children of the day; we are not of the
night or of darkness. 6 So then let us not fall
asleep as others do, but let us keep awake
and be sober; 7 for those who sleep sleep at
night, and those who are drunk get drunk
at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let
us be sober, and put on the breastplate of
faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of
salvation. 9 For God has destined us not for
wrath but for obtaining salvation through
our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so
that whether we are awake or asleep we may
live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one
another and build up each other, as indeed
you are doing.

12 But we appeal to you, brothers and
sisters,[b] to respect those who labor among
you, and have charge of you in the Lord and
admonish you; 13 esteem them very highly
in love because of their work. Be at peace
among yourselves. 14 And we urge you,
beloved,[b] to admonish the idlers, encour-
age the fainthearted, help the weak, be
patient with all of them. 15 See that none of
you repays evil for evil, but always seek to
do good to one another and to all. 16 Rejoice
always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks
in all circumstances; for this is the will of
God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench
the Spirit. 20 Do not despise the words of
prophets,[c] 21 but test everything; hold fast to
what is good; 22 abstain from every form of
evil.

[a] Gk *fallen asleep*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Gk *despise prophecies*

a nonpermanent state. **15:** *By the word of the Lord* might refer to a tradition of a teaching of Jesus or Paul may be indicating this was revealed to him by the risen Jesus. *We who are alive*, also v. 17; the writers anticipate that these events will occur within their own lifetime. **16**: *Cry*, *call*, and *trumpet* are associated with the triumphal entrance of an emperor into a city. **17**: When the dead and living are *caught up in the clouds together* their communal identity is reforged; separation is only temporary. **18**: The purpose of this brief description is not to be predictive of the last days but to *encourage* the Thessalonians.

5.1–11: The timing of Jesus's return. **2:** *Thief in the night* suggests being taken by surprise (cf. Mt 24.20–43; 2 Pet 3.10). **3**: *Peace and security* may be a deliberate challenge to the Roman imperial authorities who pride themselves on maintaining such. **4**: Unlike robbery (v. 2), childbirth is not wholly unexpected; curiously, pregnancy, which brings life, is used to describe *destruction*. **6–8**: The point of all the imagery is to exhort the Thessalonians to vigilance in living out their commitments to God; cf. Rom 13.11–13; Eph 6.13–17. **11**: The Thessalonians should *encourage one another* about Jesus's return rather than worry about identifying precise timelines or specific events.

5.12–22: Local leadership issues. **12–13:** There is a local leadership structure in place. On prophets, see 1 Cor 14.1–5. **14–15**: The ethical imperatives here are similar to ones found within ancient philosophical literature; see also Rom 12.17; 1 Pet 3.9. Although *idlers* could refer to those refusing to work, it more likely indicates those who are disruptive at gatherings. **16–18**: As with the previous admonitions, these too are community focused and set within the context of Christian worship.

[23] May the God of peace himself sanctify
you entirely; and may your spirit and soul
and body be kept sound[a] and blameless at the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24] The one
who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.
[25] Beloved,[b] pray for us.
[26] Greet all the brothers and sisters[c] with a
holy kiss. [27] I solemnly command you by the
Lord that this letter be read to all of them.[d]
[28] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be
with you.[e]

[a] Or *complete*
[b] Gk *Brothers*
[c] Gk *brothers*
[d] Gk *to all the brothers*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

5.23–28: Closing greeting: **26**: The imperative for a *kiss* greeting among the Christ-adherents reflects a widespread cultural practice, although the adjective *holy* suggests there is a deeper commitment that unites them (cf. Rom 16.16; 1 Cor 16.20; 2 Cor 13.12; 1 Pet 5.14). **27**: *Be read to all*: In antiquity the majority could not read, thus the writers want to ensure that everyone in the Christ-group be privy to the words in this letter through a public reading.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

NAME AND CANONICAL STATUS

The letter is designated "second" as it is the shorter of the two letters addressed to Christ- adherents resident in Thessalonica (for details see Introduction to 1 Thessalonians).

AUTHORSHIP, DATE, AND HISTORY

The authorship of 2 Thessalonians has been disputed since the nineteenth century. Although attributed like 1 Thessalonians to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (1.1), notable linguistic and stylist differences may indicate different writers. More significantly, the difficulty in reconciling the end-time (eschatological) scenarios laid out in 1 Thess 4.13–5.11 and 2 Thess 2.1–12 have caused many commentators to doubt they come from the same hand. Particularly troublesome is reconciling the insistence in 1 Thess 5.1–11 that there will be no signs preceding the return of Jesus with the affirmation in 2 Thess 2.1–12 that recognizable signs will take place first. In the annotations we assume that 2 Thessalonians dates after Paul's death but is written in his style to address the Christ-group in the city of Thessalonica that faces new issues not anticipated in the first letter.

If the letter was written by Paul and his companions then it probably dates to shortly after 1 Thessalonians in the early 50s CE. If pseudonymous, it is most likely a late first- to early second-century composition.

LITERARY HISTORY, STRUCTURE, AND CONTENTS

Despite controversy over authorship, the literary integrity of 2 Thessalonians has not been brought into question. It is shorter than most other Pauline letters and follows the Greco-Roman letter writing conventions: opening, thanksgiving, body, closing.

1.1–2	Opening greeting
1.3–12	Thanksgiving for how the Thessalonians face adversity
2.1–12	Reassurances about the timing of Jesus's return
2.13–17	Second thanksgiving affirming God's faithfulness
3.1–5	Exhortation to prayer and steadfastness
3.6–15	Instruction concerning disorderly members
3.16–18	Closing greeting

The inclusion of a second thanksgiving (2.13–17) is not typical of Greco-Roman letters generally, or any other New Testament letters, except 1 Thessalonians. In the latter, the content of the second thanksgiving (2.13–16) has caused some scholars to see it as a later interpolation (see Introduction to 1 Thessalonians). In the case of 2 Thessalonians, the content itself is unproblematic. Consequently, the presence of a second thanksgiving, along with other parallel features, may indicate that a later writer copied the structure of 1 Thessalonians. Alternatively, similarity in structure and parallel features may be a mark of shared authorship. Scholars remain divided on the question.

INTERPRETATION

Second Thessalonians addresses community issues that have developed since the writing of 1 Thessalonians. Particularly problematic is the disruptiveness caused by some believers refusing to work and creating friction among members (3.6–16). Of more consequence, however, are claims that the day of the Lord has arrived, and that somehow the Thessalonians have missed the opportunity to be gathered with Jesus (2.1–2). Second Thessalonians asserts that the rumors are false, and exhorts the Thessalonians to stay the course in living out their faith commitments, even when they face opposition (1.4–6; 3.3–5).

Throughout the history of biblical interpretation the apocalyptic passages of 1 and 2 Thessalonians have been blended with passages taken from other Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts (e.g., Dan; Mk 13; Rev)

to create a single, unified narrative. Such impulses must be avoided. The scenario outlined in 2 Thessalonians is distinctive and much remains perplexing to modern readers, who no longer share the same cultural milieu.

Similarities to 1 Thessalonians, in structure and more importantly in content, include the positive emphasis on manual labor and a deep-seated concern among the recipients concerning the nature and timing of Jesus's return and the coming of God's wrath. Yet, significant differences are also striking, such as the nature and severity of the recipients' suffering and especially the details of the eschatological scenario in each letter. In any case, whether by the hand of Paul or a later writer, 2 Thessalonians, like the first letter, is primarily concerned to reassure the believers in the steadfastness of their faith commitment to God (1.3–4,11–12; 2.15–17; 3.4–5).

Richard S. Ascough

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

[2] Grace to you and peace from God our[a]
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3] We must always give thanks to God for
you, brothers and sisters,[b] as is right, because
your faith is growing abundantly, and the
love of every one of you for one another is
increasing. [4] Therefore we ourselves boast
of you among the churches of God for your
steadfastness and faith during all your
persecutions and the afflictions that you are
enduring.

[5] This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, and is intended to make you
worthy of the kingdom of God, for which
you are also suffering. [6] For it is indeed just
of God to repay with affliction those who
afflict you, [7] and to give relief to the afflicted
as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is
revealed from heaven with his mighty angels
[8] in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on
those who do not know God and on those
who do not obey the gospel of our Lord
Jesus. [9] These will suffer the punishment
of eternal destruction, separated from the
presence of the Lord and from the glory of
his might, [10] when he comes to be glorified
by his saints and to be marveled at on that
day among all who have believed, because
our testimony to you was believed. [11] To this
end we always pray for you, asking that our
God will make you worthy of his call and
will fulfill by his power every good resolve
and work of faith, [12] so that the name of our
Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you
in him, according to the grace of our God
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ
and our being gathered together to him,
we beg you, brothers and sisters,[b] [2] not to be
quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by
spirit or by word or by letter, as though from
us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is
already here. [3] Let no one deceive you in any
way; for that day will not come unless the

[a] Other ancient authorities read *the*
[b] Gk *brothers*

1.1–2: Opening greeting. The opening is almost identical to that of 1 Thess, except for the addition of *from God … Christ* in v. 2. On co-authorship, and on *grace … peace*, see 1 Thess 1.1n.

1.3–12: Thanksgiving for how the Thessalonians face adversity. The writers assure the Thessalonians that God is still with them in their suffering and thus they should persevere. **4–5**: The *afflictions* seem to be much more intense than in 1 Thess (see 1.6; 3.3,7), perhaps involving physical violence (*persecutions*). Scholars are divided as to whether the source of such *suffering* is the imperial authorities or members of other groups in the city. **6**: In the end, justice will be served when God punishes the perpetrators. **7**: The risen *Jesus* bears the imperial title *Lord*. **8**: *Vengeance*, better, "justice." **8–9**: The images of *fire* and *destruction* seem to expand the "coming wrath" of 1 Thess 1.10. **10–12**: In contrast to the destruction of their enemies, the Thessalonian believers (*saints*) will *glorify* Jesus at his coming, as they do now in how they live.

2.1–12: Reassurances about the timing of Jesus's return. **2**: False rumors are spreading in writing (*by letter*) and orally (*by word*; *by spirit*, perhaps indicative of false prophets). *As though from us* clearly indicates that pseudonymous letters were in circulation. *Day of the Lord* is the time of God's apocalyptic judgment (mentioned in 1 Thess 5.2; cf. Isa 13.6; Joel 2.1; Amos 5.18), which still lies in the future. **3**: In contrast to 1 Thess 5.2–3, the writers

rebellion comes first and the lawless one[a] is revealed, the one destined for destruction.[b] 4 He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. 5 Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? 6 And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus[c] will destroy[d] with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, 10 and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, 12 so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.

13 But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters[e] beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits[f] for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news,[g] so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brothers and sisters,[e] stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, 17 comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

3 Finally, brothers and sisters,[e] pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you, 2 and that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.[h] 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will

[a] Gk *the man of lawlessness*; other ancient authorities read *the man of sin*
[b] Gk *the son of destruction*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *Jesus*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *consume*
[e] Gk *brothers*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *from the beginning*
[g] Or *through our gospel*
[h] Or *from evil*

note a series of events that will anticipate Jesus's return, including *rebellion* (better, "apostasy") and indicates a falling away from commitment to God. **3–4**: The *lawless one* (lit., "the man of lawlessness") is a human person who disobeys God's rules and claims divinity for himself. He is an agent of Satan (v. 9) but not a supernatural being, and not to be conflated with the antichrist(s) of 1 Jn 2.18,22 (cf. 4.3; 2 Jn 7) or the beasts of Rev 13 (esp. v. 18). Yet, as in Revelation, the image of the *lawless one* may refer to a Roman emperor. Clearly the letter audience could identify the referent, even if the modern reader cannot. **6–7**: The implication is that God is ultimately in control by *restraining* the lawless one until the proper time. **8–9**: Jesus will destroy the agent of Satan, but not before there is widespread *deception* among those who refuse to believe in God. *With the breath of his mouth*, cf. Job 4.9; Isa 11.4. **11**: Even in the *delusion*, God is in control.

2.13–17: Second thanksgiving affirming God's faithfulness. **13**: Just as God is in control of the events marking the last days (2.1–12), so also *God chose* those who now believe in the truth (cf. 1 Thess 1.4). **15**: As a result of being chosen, the Thessalonians must *stand firm and hold fast* to *traditions,* i.e., to the things told to them by Paul and his companions verbally and in writing. The *letter* may refer to 1 Thessalonians, and is a contrast to the false letter mentioned in 2.2. **16–17**: As with 1 Thess 3.11–12 (see note there), the invocation shifts the focus of this letter toward practical matters.

3.1–5: Exhortation to prayer and steadfastness. **2**: As is the case with the Thessalonians, *wicked and evil people* are also plaguing Paul and his companions. **3:** *The evil one,* see Mt 6.13. **4**: The writers express their *confidence* that the Thessalonians are already faithfully enacting the *commands* (and traditions) given to them (cf. 1.4; 2.15) and will continue to do so.

go on doing the things that we command.
5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love
of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

6 Now we command you, beloved,[a] in the
name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away
from believers who are[b] living in idleness
and not according to the tradition that they[c]
received from us. 7 For you yourselves know
how you ought to imitate us; we were not
idle when we were with you, 8 and we did
not eat anyone's bread without paying for it;
but with toil and labor we worked night and
day, so that we might not burden any of you.
9 This was not because we do not have that
right, but in order to give you an example to
imitate. 10 For even when we were with you,
we gave you this command: Anyone unwill-
ing to work should not eat. 11 For we hear
that some of you are living in idleness, mere
busybodies, not doing any work. 12 Now such
persons we command and exhort in the Lord
Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to
earn their own living. 13 Brothers and sisters,[d]
do not be weary in doing what is right.

14 Take note of those who do not obey what
we say in this letter; have nothing to do with
them, so that they may be ashamed. 15 Do not
regard them as enemies, but warn them as
believers.[e]

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give
you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be
with all of you.

17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own
hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine;
it is the way I write. 18 The grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ be with all of you.[f]

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *from every brother who is*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *you*
[d] Gk *Brothers*
[e] Gk *a brother*
[f] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

3.6–15: Instruction concerning disorderly members. Alongside trouble from outsiders (cf. 1.4–8), some group members are creating internal disturbances and refusing to work (v. 11). The writers argue that persons that refuse to integrate into the group are not to be welcome at community meals. **6**: *Living in idleness*, the Greek phrase can also indicate persons who are being disorderly and disruptive, a much more frequently attested problem among groups in antiquity and thus also part of the meaning of the phrase here. **7–8**: Paul and his companions worked among the Thessalonians as laborers to earn their keep (cf. 1 Thess 2.9; 4.11–12). **9**: On the *right* to support see 1 Thess 2.7; 1 Cor 9.4–15. **10**: The context in which the Thessalonians could enforce the injunction against eating would be a shared community meal, from which the lazy and disruptive could be banned. **14–15**: Group members are to avoid engaging with anyone who refuses to adhere to the group norms even though they are still considered to be *believers* (lit., "as a brother").

3.16–18: Closing greeting. **16,18**: *Peace* and *grace* recall 1.1. The assertion to be writing *with my own hand* is identical to the phrase in 1 Cor 16.21 and Col 4.18 and similar to Gal 6.11 and Philem 19. *Every letter of mine* is an overstatement as it is missing in other canonical letters by Paul.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

The term "Pastoral Epistles" has been applied, since the eighteenth century, to the three letters from Paul to his two co-workers and envoys, Timothy and Titus. The name reflects the central concern in these three epistles for the internal life, governance, and behavior of Christian communities and their members. Scholars have long debated whether these letters were written by the apostle Paul himself, or by a later disciple who sought to provide guidance for Pauline churches in new times and places. While most scholars today regard them as pseudepigraphical (that is, ascribed to the authority of a major figure but not actually written by him, a custom well attested in ancient literature), there is not complete unanimity on the question.

The conclusion that these three epistles were not written by Paul is based upon literary, historical, and theological criteria. First and Second Timothy and Titus share a common Greek vocabulary and style that diverges in many ways from the other Pauline epistles. Historically, the Pastoral Epistles appear to presume an institutionalized leadership in local communities with bishops and deacons, and internal dissent over issues of faith and practice, which better fits a period late in the first or early in the second century CE when Paul was no longer alive. It is possible to see how some passages may have been written to explain or definitively interpret passages in the authentic letters already in circulation (such as 1 Tim 2.9–19; cf. 1 Cor 14.33–36). Theologically these letters minimize or lack characteristic Pauline themes (such as justification by faith, and the church as the body of Christ) in favor of a new emphasis on adherence to tradition and regulation as signs of the Christian piety they seek to inculcate in their readers. Although Timothy and Titus had been Paul's trusted co-workers for decades, the first letter to Timothy and the letter to Titus present the recipients as needing basic instructions for community leadership. They represent a bridge between the apostle and later generations. Second Timothy is less concerned with regulating the life of the Christian communities than Titus and 1 Timothy. It has been described as a "testament," the last words of the apostle to a close associate. It looks forward to the difficulties facing Timothy and others after Paul's death with foreboding, and bears some similarity to the Paul's genuine letter to the Philippians in this regard.

Recent challenges to the pseudepigraphical nature of all three letters have come from scholars who argue that each should be judged separately, that the letters contain fragments of original Pauline material, or that the very concept of "authorship" of a Pauline letter requires nuance, given that Paul used secretaries and served as a member of a cooperative missionary team. Still, the prevailing view of scholars is that these letters were not written by Paul but are later compositions seeking to "fix" his legacy (in both senses of the term). Even if not composed by Paul, they have historically had a very influential role in Christian thought and practice, and the controversies they sought to "fix" —such as the roles of women in the church—remain alive to the present day.

Neither is there scholarly unanimity about which other letters are certainly authentic nor which parts of those are most tellingly "Pauline" for comparison with these epistles. Each reader should consider the evidence about the authorship of the Pastorals cumulatively, first as a question of historical fact—did Paul write them or not? Then, and separately, one should reflect on the interpretative and theological implications of such a decision, for the denial of Pauline authorship may or may not entail a loss of authoritative status for that document within a particular religious community.

Regardless of authorship, the Pastoral Epistles share a common rhetorical strategy: each is addressed to a single individual among Paul's co-workers but also has in mind a wider circle of readers. In each the author presents himself as a Paul who speaks in his letters via the epistolary medium as an unambiguously authoritative figure of the past to church leaders and members of later generations who did not know him personally.

Margaret M. Mitchell

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND BACKGROUND

This letter is named for its recipient, Paul's "loyal child" Timothy (1.2); for further information on Timothy, see the Introduction to 2 Timothy, p. 1735. It presents Paul as a wise and sure teacher who hands on to his student his deposit of tradition, his "sound teaching" (1.10; 4.6), so that this fixed legacy will be passed down with fidelity to the next generation. (On the authorship and date of this letter, see 1725.) The letter presents a vision of household ethics that joins instructions on Christian "godliness" (or "piety"; 2.2) for the individual with a church order of regulations and qualifications for various roles (bishops, deacons, widows, elders) in the church, designated "the household of God" (3.15). This advice is set in a dual context formed, positively, by the warmly remembered relationship between Paul and Timothy, and, negatively, by frequent allusions to purveyors of alternate teachings in or near Timothy's church in Ephesus.

STRUCTURE

After an epistolary prescript (1.1–2) the author launches (without the customary thanksgiving) into the body of the letter, which is roughly arranged with alternating sections of contrast between true and false teaching (1.3–2.15; 4.1–5.2; 6.2b–21a) and instructions for church order and governance, understood as the means for living in the church of God (3.1–16; 5.3–6.2a). The letter concludes with summary exhortations to Timothy to guard this tradition with which he has been entrusted (6.11–21). Unusually, it lacks greetings to or from friends and associates. As with all Pauline letters a final benediction (6.21) seals the letter, perhaps in anticipation of liturgical use.

INTERPRETATION

Although the author names two of his Christian opponents (1.20), exactly what they taught, and why, is only hazily sketched here in vituperative terms: They have "deviated" from the truth (1.6); they have "suffered shipwreck in the faith" (1.19). No definitive reconstruction is possible from these verbal assaults, but it seems that these opponents have some connection with Judaism and Torah observance, "myths and endless genealogies" (1.4), and ascetic practices, such as rejecting marriage and abstaining from certain foods (4.3). There may be a link between the Christians whom this author opposes and those who held to traditions found in the later apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla* that validate women's ministries and claim Paul as the champion of an ascetic and celibate lifestyle. On this view, 1 Timothy is a kind of "corrective composition" whose author is seeking to "fix" Paul's legacy for an early second-century CE audience and its concerns.

Sometimes Timothy is directly addressed (1.18; 6.20), but more often he recedes into the background, and the author speaks to a more universal readership. As ethical instruction (*parenesis*), 1 Timothy is cast in characteristic forms of Greco-Roman moral exhortation, such as Seneca's *Moral Epistles* and the pseudepigraphical Socratic and Neopythagorean letters. These include letters between friends or teachers and students about progress in the ethical life, lists of virtues and vices, and contrasts between illustrious examples and notorious counterexamples. Likewise, the content is in many ways similar to that literature, with emphasis on decorum and decency, on the hierarchical, orderly disposition of the patriarchal household, on reliable speech, and against accumulation of wealth. But the letter's theological universe, which is punctuated by shorthand terminology and quotations from established traditions, is distinctly Christian.

Margaret M. Mitchell

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

[2] To Timothy, my loyal child in the faith:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

[3] I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, [4] and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training[a] that is known by faith. [5] But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. [6] Some people have deviated from these and turned to meaningless talk, [7] desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

[8] Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. [9] This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, [10] fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching [11] that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

[12] I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, [13] even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, [14] and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. [15] The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost. [16] But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. [17] To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.[b] Amen.

[18] I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, [19] having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; [20] among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.

[a] Or *plan*
[b] Gk *to the ages of the ages*

1.1–2: Epistolary prescript: sender, addressees, and salutation, following the typical form of a Pauline letter (see Philem 1.1–3), with the addition of mercy in the greeting (cf. 2 Tim 1.2).

1.3–2.15: The contrast of true and false teaching (part one).

1.3–11: Opening warning against false teachers, in place of a thanksgiving formula (cf. Philem 4–9), signaling the urgency of the problem, as the author sees it. **3:** *Instruct,* the author's main purpose (1.5,18; 4.11; 5.7; 6.13,17). **4:** *Myths and endless genealogies,* uncertain, but probably speculations on biblical texts (cf. 4.7; Titus 1.14; 3.9). *Divine training,* or "plan," or "stewardship." **5:** *Love . . . conscience . . . faith,* for Paul's usual triad of faith, love, and hope (1 Thess 1.3; 5.8; 1 Cor 13.13). **6:** *Deviated,* see 6.21n. **7:** *The law,* presumably the Torah. **9–10:** An implied critique of the false teachers as ethically depraved; cf. catalogues of vice in Rom 1.29–31; 1 Cor 5.11; 6.9–10; Gal 5.19–21.

1.12–20: Contrasting portraits of faithfulness and faithlessness. 12–17: A portrait of Paul, the blasphemer transformed into the faithful proclaimer; cf. the different portrayals in Paul's letters (1 Cor 15.8–10; Gal 1.13–24; Phil 3.5–11), and in Acts 9. **15:** *The saying is sure,* a favored formula in the Pastorals (see 3.1; 4.9; 2 Tim 2.11; Titus 3.8). **17:** Theology cast as doxology (cf. 6.15–16). **18:** *Prophecies,* see 4.14. **19:** *Conscience,* the seat of self-awareness of guilt or innocence (a key theme; see 1.5; 3.9; 4.2; 2 Tim 1.3; Titus 1.15). **20:** *Hymenaeus* (unknown apart from here and 2 Tim 2.17) and *Alexander* (likely to be identified with "Alexander the coppersmith" in 2 Tim 4.14; perhaps Acts 19.33), characterized as blasphemers (cf. 1.13). *Turned over to Satan,* for correction or punishment (cf. 1 Cor 5.5). Satan or the devil is mentioned frequently in the Pastorals; see 3.6,7; 5.15; 2 Tim 2.26.

2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, [2] for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. [3] This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [5] For

there is one God;
there is also one mediator between God and humankind,
Christ Jesus, himself human,

[6] who gave himself a ransom for all —this was attested at the right time. [7] For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth,[a] I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

[8] I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument; [9] also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, [10] but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. [11] Let a woman[b] learn in silence with full submission. [12] I permit no woman[b] to teach or to have authority over a man;[c] she is to keep silent. [13] For Adam was formed first, then Eve; [14] and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. [15] Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

3 The saying is sure:[d] whoever aspires to the office of bishop[e] desires a noble task. [2] Now a bishop[f] must be above reproach, married only once,[g] temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, [3] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. [4] He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way— [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? [6] He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. [7] Moreover, he must be well thought

[a] Other ancient authorities add *in Christ*
[b] Or *wife*
[c] Or *her husband*
[d] Some interpreters place these words at the end of the previous paragraph. Other ancient authorities read *The saying is commonly accepted*
[e] Or *overseer*
[f] Or *an overseer*
[g] Gk *the husband of one wife*

2.1–8: Instruction on prayer. 1–3: Accommodation with worldly authorities urged for the sake of peace for the church (see Rom 13.1–7). The irenic tone circumvents the difficult question of the limits of Christian acquiescence to an emperor who was honored as a god by daily worship and oaths of allegiance. *Godliness*, or "piety" (Gk "eusebeia"), a predominant concern of the Pastoral Epistles (3.16, translated "religion"; 4.7,8; 6.3,5,6; 2 Tim 3.5; Titus 1.1). The rationale given for such prayer is both strategic (2.2b) and theological (2.3–7). **4:** Strong emphasis on God as universal savior (cf. 4.10). *Knowledge of the truth,* as found in the gospel proclamation (see 2 Tim 2.25; 3.7; Titus 1.1). **5:** *One God . . . one mediator,* a reformulation of the Shema (see Deut 6.4–9n.; cf. 1 Cor 8.6; Eph 4.5–6). **7:** The title *herald*, although sometimes implied (e.g., 2 Cor 4.5; 5.20), is not found in the undisputed letters of Paul (unlike *apostle*); cf. 2 Tim 1.11.

2.9–15: The proper demeanor of faithful women. The author wishes to show Paul unambiguously opposed to women holding leadership and teaching positions on the grounds that it threatens conventional domestic order (also 5.3–16). Paul had left an ambiguous legacy on women: while he upheld a gender distinction in worship (1 Cor 11.2–16), Rom 16.1–7 shows he respected women as deacons and apostles. **9:** *Dress themselves modestly,* a standard concern of Stoic and other Hellenistic moralists. *And decently,* Gk "sophrosunē" ("moderation"), one of the four cardinal virtues of Greek philosophical thought. **11–12:** Very similar to the contested passage 1 Cor 14.34–35 (see note there). **13–14:** A reading of Gen 2–3 assigning all the blame to the woman (contrast Rom 5.12–21). **15:** *She will be saved through childbearing,* a soteriology (theology of salvation) at odds with Paul's justification by faith (Gal 2.16; Rom 1.16–17). *Modesty,* Gk "sophrosunē"; see v. 9n.

3.1–16: Living in the church of God (part one). Qualifications for bishops (3.1–7) and deacons (3.8–13), already established ecclesial offices (contrast 1 Cor 12.28; Phil 1.1n.). **1,2:** *Bishop,* (Gk "episkopos"), "overseer," one who looks after church affairs (see note *e*). **5:** *God's church* (cf. v. 15, "the household of God") envisioned as an

of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.

8 Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; 9 they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. 11 Women[a] likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons be married only once,[b] and let them manage their children and their households well; 13 for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

14 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, 15 if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. 16 Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great:

He[c] was revealed in flesh,
  vindicated[d] in spirit,[e]
    seen by angels,
proclaimed among Gentiles,
  believed in throughout the world,
    taken up in glory.

4 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later[f] times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. 3 They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; 5 for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer.

6 If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters,[g] you will be a good servant[h] of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives' tales. Train yourself in godliness, 8 for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 9 The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and struggle,[i] because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

11 These are the things you must insist on and teach. 12 Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture,[j] to exhorting, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders.[k]

[a] Or *Their wives*, or *Women deacons*
[b] Gk *be husbands of one wife*
[c] Gk *Who*; other ancient authorities read *God*; others, *Which*
[d] Or *justified*
[e] Or *by the Spirit*
[f] Or *the last*
[g] Gk *brothers*
[h] Or *deacon*
[i] Other ancient authorities read *suffer reproach*
[j] Gk *to the reading*
[k] Gk *by the presbytery*

orderly patriarchal Greco-Roman household. **11:** *Women* deacons (but see note *a* for the ambiguity), such as Phoebe (Rom 16.1). If women deacons are intended, the short treatment may be due to the author's anxiety about female leadership (see 2.9–15; 5.3–16). **14–15:** *If I am delayed,* an epistolary commonplace, here suggesting verisimilitude (cf. Rom 15.24; 1 Cor 16.7; Philem 22; Phil 2.24). Whether he is dead or alive, the letter takes Paul's place. **16:** Perhaps from an early hymn.

4.1–5.2: The contrast of true and false teaching (part two). 1: The *later times* (see textual note *f*), often associated with false teachings (Mk 13.21–23; 2 Thess 2.1–16; cf. 2 Tim 4.3–4). **3:** *They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods,* clearest statement of the opponents' ascetic practices. **6:** *The sound teaching*, the reliable tradition the Pastoral Epistles pass on (1.10; 4.1,6,13,16; 5.17; 6.1,3; 2 Tim 1.13; 3.10,16; 4.3; Titus 1.9; 2.1,7,10). **7:** *Myths,* see 1.4n. **7–10:** The life of faith compared to training for an athletic contest (cf. 1 Cor 9.24–27; 2 Tim 2.5). **13:** A glimpse into the contents of an early Christian worship service. **14:** *The laying on of hands,* a gesture mark-

15 Put these things into practice, devote
yourself to them, so that all may see your
progress. 16 Pay close attention to yourself and
to your teaching; continue in these things, for
in doing this you will save both yourself and
your hearers.

5 Do not speak harshly to an older man,[a]
but speak to him as to a father, to
younger men as brothers, 2 to older women as
mothers, to younger women as sisters—with
absolute purity.

3 Honor widows who are really widows.
4 If a widow has children or grandchildren,
they should first learn their religious duty to
their own family and make some repayment
to their parents; for this is pleasing in God's
sight. 5 The real widow, left alone, has set her
hope on God and continues in supplications
and prayers night and day; 6 but the widow[b]
who lives for pleasure is dead even while she
lives. 7 Give these commands as well, so that
they may be above reproach. 8 And whoever
does not provide for relatives, and especially
for family members, has denied the faith and
is worse than an unbeliever.

9 Let a widow be put on the list if she is not
less than sixty years old and has been mar-
ried only once;[c] 10 she must be well attested
for her good works, as one who has brought
up children, shown hospitality, washed the
saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted
herself to doing good in every way. 11 But
refuse to put younger widows on the list; for
when their sensual desires alienate them
from Christ, they want to marry, 12 and so
they incur condemnation for having violated
their first pledge. 13 Besides that, they learn to
be idle, gadding about from house to house;
and they are not merely idle, but also gossips
and busybodies, saying what they should not
say. 14 So I would have younger widows marry,
bear children, and manage their households,
so as to give the adversary no occasion to
revile us. 15 For some have already turned
away to follow Satan. 16 If any believing
woman[d] has relatives who are really widows,
let her assist them; let the church not be
burdened, so that it can assist those who are
real widows.

17 Let the elders who rule well be consid-
ered worthy of double honor,[e] especially
those who labor in preaching and teaching;
18 for the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle
an ox while it is treading out the grain," and,
"The laborer deserves to be paid." 19 Never
accept any accusation against an elder except
on the evidence of two or three witnesses.
20 As for those who persist in sin, rebuke
them in the presence of all, so that the rest
also may stand in fear. 21 In the presence
of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect
angels, I warn you to keep these instructions
without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis
of partiality. 22 Do not ordain[f] anyone hastily,
and do not participate in the sins of others;
keep yourself pure.

23 No longer drink only water, but take a
little wine for the sake of your stomach and
your frequent ailments.

24 The sins of some people are conspicuous
and precede them to judgment, while the sins

[a] Or *an elder*, or *a presbyter*
[b] Gk *she*
[c] Gk *the wife of one husband*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *believing man or woman*; others, *believing man*
[e] Or *compensation*
[f] Gk *Do not lay hands on*

ing the succession of ministerial authorization (see 5.22, textual note *f*; 2 Tim 1.6; Acts 6.6). **15:** *Your progress,* Gk "prokopē," the Stoic concept of ethical advancement (for the opposite, see 2 Tim 2.16; 3.9,13).

5.3–6.2a: Living in the church of God (part two). Three groups of persons are singled out for instructions: widows (vv. 3–16), elders (vv. 17–20), and slaves (6.1–2). **3–16:** *Real widows* (vv. 3,5,16), an attempt to regulate and restrict the practice of dedicated widowhood by insisting on the maintenance of the conventional patriarchal household. *Not less than sixty years old*, well beyond usual life expectancy. *Has been married only once*, the Roman ideal of the *univira* (see note *c*). **9:** *Put on the list,* designated for communal support. **13:** Stereotypical caricature of idle women as busybodies. **14:** *The adversary,* see 1.20n.; 3.7. Also can be a reference to human opponents (cf. 1 Cor 16.9; Phil 1.28).

18a: Deut 25.4. **18b:** A saying of Jesus, according to Lk 10.7. **19:** *Two or three witnesses,* Deut 19.15; 2 Cor 13.1. **22:** *Ordain,* see textual note *f* and 4.14n. **23:** *A little wine,* in contrast to the asceticism of the opponents; see

of others follow them there. 25 So also good works are conspicuous; and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

6 Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed. 2 Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful to them on the ground that they are members of the church;[a] rather they must serve them all the more, since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved.[b]

Teach and urge these duties. 3 Whoever teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, 4 is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. From these come envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, 5 and wrangling among those who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.[c] 6 Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; 7 for we brought nothing into the world, so that[d] we can take nothing out of it; 8 but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. 9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

11 But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made[e] the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you 14 to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. 16 It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

17 As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, 19 thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

[a] Gk *are brothers*
[b] Or *since they are believers and beloved, who devote themselves to good deeds*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *Withdraw yourself from such people*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *world—it is certain that*
[e] Gk *confessed*

4.3n. **6.1–2:** Reminiscent of the exhortations in Eph 6.5–9; Col 3.22–4.1, but lacking a reciprocal exhortation to the owners.

6.2b–21: The contrast of true and false teaching (part three). 3–5: A concluding portrait of the unsound teacher (cf. 1.3–11). **6–10:** The catchword *gain* leads to a favorite philosophical and biblical (Job 1.21; Eccl 5.15) commonplace about the false security of riches (taken up again in 6.17–19). **6:** *Contentment* (also v. 8), "autarkeia," a Stoic term meaning "self-sufficiency." **11–12:** *Fight the good fight,* compare 1.18 and 2 Tim 4.7. **13:** *Pontius Pilate,* the only New Testament reference to the Roman governor of Judea outside the Gospels and Acts (Mt 27.2; Lk 3.1; Acts 4.27). *The good confession,* see Jn 18.33–38, but cf. Mt 27.11–13. **14:** *Commandment,* a reference to the testimony in this letter, or perhaps the same as the "good confession" in v. 12. *Manifestation* (lit., "epiphany"), a reference to the Second Coming (a favored term in the Pastorals: 2 Tim 1.10; 4.1,8; Titus 2.13). **15–16:** A hymn to the sovereignty of God as all-powerful, immortal, and invisible (Ex 33.20; Rom 1.23; Col 1.15; Jn 1.18). **19:** *The treasure,* for the theme, see Mt 6.19–20; Lk 12.21; 2 Esd 7.77.

[20] Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; [21] by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.

Grace be with you.[a]

[a] The Greek word for *you* here is plural; in other ancient authorities it is singular. Other ancient authorities add *Amen.*

6.20–21: Timothy the guardian of the true teaching. 20: *What has been entrusted to you* (lit., "the deposit"), the teachings in this letter, a vaccination against false teaching. *Contradictions* (Gk "antitheseis"), the title of a work by Marcion (ca. 140 CE), whose canon did not include the Pastoral Epistles. *What is falsely called knowledge,* an epithet that will become a standard part of orthodox "anti-Gnostic" heresiological rhetoric. Contemporary scholars doubt there was a single "Gnostic" religious group. **21:** *Missed the mark,* a characterization of all opponents, which frames the letter (see also 1.6, "have deviated from," more literally, "being off the mark," and 2 Tim 2.18).

6.21b: Concluding benediction.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND BACKGROUND

The second letter addressed to Paul's "beloved child" Timothy, despite similarities in address and diction, has a more personal tone than the first. (On the authorship and date of this letter, see p. 1725.) Less concerned with church order and roles, here Paul is portrayed as in prison, awaiting trial and expecting death (2.9; 4.6–8, 16). In testamentary fashion the apostle hands on to his spiritual heir, Timothy, the wisdom accumulated through a life of mission, ministry, and, above all, suffering for the gospel. The letter is set within a carefully scripted historical scenario marked by Paul's imminent death and Timothy's bereavement, at a time of distortions to the apostle's "sound teaching" (1.13; see 4.3).

Timothy is named as co-sender of six Pauline letters (2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; Col 1.1; 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1; Philem 1). They present Timothy as one of his most loyal co-workers, who acted as a trusted delegate to churches (1 Thess 3.2–6; 1 Cor 4.17; 16.10; Phil 2.19–22). According to Acts 16, Timothy's mother was Jewish and his father Greek. That later account imagines that Paul had him circumcised in the face of anticipated Jewish hostility (an event not corroborated in Paul's epistles). This letter sketches Timothy's life in broad strokes, from his early immersion in the scriptures (2 Tim 3.15) and matrilineal Christian pedigree (1.5), to his authorization for ministry by the laying on of Paul's hands (1.6), and his present ecclesiastical challenges. Most prominent in the letter, however, is the detailed and moving portrait of Paul, though ignominiously cast in prison for the gospel in Rome (1.8,16–17; 2.9), forsaken even by close friends (1.15; 4.10,16), nonetheless empowered by his Lord not only to endure suffering and death but to celebrate it as the fitting culmination to his life of apostolic ministry and service (4.6–8,17–18).

STRUCTURE AND INTERPRETATION

The theme of 2 Timothy is announced in 1.8: Timothy and all who follow him should not be ashamed of the gospel or its representative, Paul, but should stand in fidelity to them, even to the point of suffering. Second Timothy follows a regular epistolary structure with an opening prescript (1.1–2), thanksgiving (1.3–7), body (1.8–4.18), greetings and closing (4.19–22). Timothy is urged to contemplate the positive example of Paul (1.8–14) and the negative one afforded by those who deserted Paul in time of need (1.15–18).

The essential principle of the argument is appeal to example (Paul as one who suffered for the gospel: 1.12; 2.9–10; 3.11; 4.6–7, 16–18), and call for imitation, by Timothy (2.3; 4.5), and by all readers through him (see especially 2.11–12). Further, the exhortation to Timothy to be strong and teach others correctly (2.1–13) is contrasted with false teachers who must be contended with (2.14–26), for, as expected at the end-time, signs of their appearance are already here (3.1–9). But Timothy is to follow in Paul's footsteps (3.10–4.5). These exhortations culminate in the depiction of the dying apostle's reflections on his life and its imminent conclusion (4.6–8; cf. Phil 1.12–26). The letter ends on a hopeful note as the imprisoned Paul exults in divine deliverance (both past and future) and issues spirited directives for the ministry, including a future visit from Timothy (4.9, 21).

Margaret M. Mitchell

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

[2] To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

[3] I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. [4] Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. [5] I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. [6] For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; [7] for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

[8] Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, [9] who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, [10] but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. [11] For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher,[a] [12] and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him.[b] [13] Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. [14] Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

[15] You are aware that all who are in Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. [16] May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; [17] when he arrived in Rome, he eagerly[c] searched for me and found me [18]—may the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! And you know very well how much service he rendered in Ephesus.

2 You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; [2] and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. [3] Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. [4] No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. [5] And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. [6] It is the farmer who does the

[a] Other ancient authorities add *of the Gentiles*
[b] Or *what has been entrusted to me*
[c] Or *promptly*

1.1–2: Epistolary prescript (see 1 Tim 1.1n.) *The promise of life,* see 1 Tim 4.8.

1.3–7: Thanksgiving for Timothy's faith. 3: *I remember you constantly in my prayers,* cf. 1 Thess 1.2–3; Philem 4; Rom 1.9; Phil 1.3–4. **5:** *Lois* and *Eunice*: Timothy's "living faith" is a matrilineal inheritance. **6:** *I remind you,* memory plays a key role in the exhortation (also 2.8,14). *Laying on of my hands,* see 1 Tim 4.14n.

1.8–14: Theme: shared suffering, rather than shame, for the gospel and its apostle. 8: *Ashamed,* the expected response to imprisonment; see also 1.12,16; 2.15. **9–10:** Gospel proclamation in shorthand form, with characteristic themes. **9:** *Before the ages began,* see Titus 1.2; cf. Jn 1.2–3. **10:** *Appearing,* see 1 Tim 6.14n. *Abolished death,* cf. 1 Cor 15.26,54–57. **11.** *Herald and an apostle,* see 1 Tim 2.7n. **12:** *The one in whom I have put my trust,* Timothy, and each subsequent reader who stands in his place. *What I have entrusted to him* (lit., "the deposit"), as in 1.14; 1 Tim 6.20; cf. 2.2, a major theme of the Pastorals. *That day,* the Second Coming of Christ, the eschaton, see v. 18; 4.8; 2 Thess 1.10. **13:** *Sound teaching,* see 1 Tim 4.6n.

1.15–18: Examples, worthy and unworthy. 15: Asia, a Roman province in Asia Minor. *Phygelus and Hermogenes,* otherwise unknown. *Turned away from me,* Paul's abandonment is depicted again in 4.10,16. **16:** *Onesiphorus,* see 4.19. *My chain,* i.e., imprisonment; see 2.9. **18:** *That day,* see v. 12n.

2.1–13: Timothy's charge to suffer for the gospel. 2: *Entrust,* Timothy is to hand on the deposit he received from Paul (see 1.12n.) to the next generation. **4–6:** *Soldier, athlete, farmer,* commonplaces from three professions

work who ought to have the first share of the crops. 7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 11 The saying is sure:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
12 if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he will also deny us;
13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful—
for he cannot deny himself.

14 Remind them of this, and warn them before God[a] that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth. 16 Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have swerved from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place. They are upsetting the faith of some. 19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness."

20 In a large house there are utensils not only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for special use, some for ordinary. 21 All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned[b] will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work. 22 Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 23 Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant[c] must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, 25 correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, 26 and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.[d]

3 You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. 2 For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid them! 6 For among them are

[a] Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*
[b] Gk *of these things*
[c] Gk *slave*
[d] Or *by him, to do his* (that is, God's) *will*

about the cost of securing divine favor. **8:** Another encapsulation of the gospel (cf. 1.10; Rom 1.3). **11:** *The saying is sure,* see 1 Tim 1.15n. **11–13:** A series of parallel clauses, suggesting to some scholars a quotation from a hymn. *Died with him . . . live with him,* Rom 6.5–11; 2 Cor 5.14–15. *Reign with him,* in glory at the end-time (1 Cor 4.8). *Deny him,* Mt 10.33; Mk 8.38; 1 Jn 2.22–23.

2.14–26: Strategies for proper combat with false teachers. 14: *Wrangling over words*, Gk "logomachia," a special concern of the Pastoral epistles (see 1 Tim 6.4). **17:** *Hymenaeus,* 1 Tim 1.20. *Philetus,* otherwise unknown. *Gangrene,* the opposite of "healthy" teaching (see 1.13n.). **18:** *Swerved from the truth,* see 1 Tim 6.21n. *The resurrection has already taken place* (cf. 1 Cor 15.12), a glimpse at the eschatology of the opponents, though not the theology behind it. **19:** *God's firm foundation* (cf. 1 Tim 6.19), as known in scripture. *This inscription,* a quotation from Num 16.5; the second sentence has resonances with Isa 26.13; Job 36.10; Sir 17.26. **20–21:** *Utensils . . . some for special use, some for ordinary* (lit., "some for honor, some for dishonor"); cf. Rom 9.19–23. **23:** *Stupid and senseless controversies*, see 1 Tim 6.4; Titus 3.9. **26:** *Held captive,* "captured and kept alive" (the same verb is used in Lk 5.10).

3.1–9: End-time now: a close-up picture of the opposition. 1: *The last days,* seen as both future and already present. **2–4:** Vice catalogue (see 1 Tim 1.9–10n.). **5:** *Godliness,* see 1 Tim 2.1–3n. **6:** *Captivate silly women,* ancient

those who make their way into households
and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by
their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires,
7 who are always being instructed and can
never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. 8 As
Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these
people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith,
also oppose the truth. 9 But they will not
make much progress, because, as in the case
of those two men,[a] their folly will become
plain to everyone.

10 Now you have observed my teaching, my
conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my pa-
tience, my love, my steadfastness, 11 my per-
secutions, and my suffering the things that
happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and
Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the
Lord rescued me from all of them. 12 Indeed,
all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus
will be persecuted. 13 But wicked people and
impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiv-
ing others and being deceived. 14 But as for
you, continue in what you have learned and
firmly believed, knowing from whom you
learned it, 15 and how from childhood you
have known the sacred writings that are able
to instruct you for salvation through faith in
Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is inspired by God
and is[b] useful for teaching, for reproof, for
correction, and for training in righteousness,
17 so that everyone who belongs to God may
be proficient, equipped for every good work.

4 In the presence of God and of Christ
Jesus, who is to judge the living and the
dead, and in view of his appearing and his
kingdom, I solemnly urge you: 2 proclaim the
message; be persistent whether the time is
favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke,
and encourage, with the utmost patience
in teaching. 3 For the time is coming when
people will not put up with sound doctrine,
but having itching ears, they will accumulate
for themselves teachers to suit their own
desires, 4 and will turn away from listening
to the truth and wander away to myths. 5 As
for you, always be sober, endure suffering,
do the work of an evangelist, carry out your
ministry fully.

6 As for me, I am already being poured out
as a libation, and the time of my departure
has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I
have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
8 From now on there is reserved for me the
crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the
righteous judge, will give me on that day,
and not only to me but also to all who have
longed for his appearing.

9 Do your best to come to me soon, 10 for
Demas, in love with this present world, has
deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Cres-
cens has gone to Galatia,[c] Titus to Dalmatia.
11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring
him with you, for he is useful in my ministry.
12 I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13 When
you come, bring the cloak that I left with Car-

[a] Gk lacks *two men*
[b] Or *Every scripture inspired by God is also*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *Gaul*

negative caricature of women, employed as part of the invective against the opponents (cf. 1 Tim 2.11–12; 4.7). **7:** *Knowledge of the truth,* see 1 Tim 2.4n. **8:** *Jannes and Jambres,* the names of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses (Ex 7.11), according to postbiblical Jewish tradition.

3.10–4.5: Timothy's charge to steadfastness in his ministry. 11: *Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra,* cf. the order of Paul's persecutions in Acts 13.14–14.23 (which may suggest knowledge of Acts by this author). **15–16:** *Sacred writings, scripture,* the Jewish scriptures (the Hebrew Bible in the ancient Greek version, the Septuagint), which Christians will later call the Old Testament. **4.1:** *Appearing,* see 1 Tim 6.14n. *Kingdom,* also 4.18. **2:** A succinct list of the tasks of church leaders. **3–4:** The false teachers as purveyors of myths (cf. 1 Tim 1.4; 4.7; Titus 1.14). **5:** *Evangelist,* Eph 4.11; Acts 21.8.

4.6–8: Paul's reflections on his impending death. 6–7: Sacrificial (Phil 2.17) and athletic (1 Cor 9.24–27; Phil 2.16; 1 Tim 6.12; Acts 20.24) metaphors applied to Paul's missionary life. **8:** *Crown of righteousness,* the winner's prize, signifying positive judgment from the Lord at his Second Coming (1 Thess 2.19; 1 Cor 9.25; Phil 4.1).

4.8–18: An update from prison. 9: An abrupt shift from the previous indication of Paul's imminent death (also 4.21). **10–11:** Paul's abandonment at the end (also 1.15; 4.16). **10–12:** *Demas, Luke, Mark,* cf. Philem 24 and Col 4.10–14. *Crescens,* mentioned only here. On *Titus,* see Introduction to Titus. **12:** *Tychicus,* see Col 4.7; cf. Eph 6.21–22; Acts 20.4; Titus 3.12. **13:** *Troas,* ancient Troy, the departure point from Asia to Europe (2 Cor 2.12–13;

pus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. [14] Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds. [15] You also must beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message.

[16] At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! [17] But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. [18] The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

[19] Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. [20] Erastus remained in Corinth; Trophimus I left ill in Miletus. [21] Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers and sisters.[a]

[22] The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.[b]

[a] Gk *all the brothers*

[b] The Greek word for *you* here is plural. Other ancient authorities add *Amen.*

Acts 16.8–12). *Carpus*, mentioned only here. *The books, and above all the parchments,* a suggestive but unspecific reference to Paul's literary proclivities. **14:** *Alexander,* see 1 Tim 1.20n. **16:** *My first defense,* probably a preliminary hearing (cf. Phil 1.7). **17:** *The Lord . . . gave me strength,* as he will Timothy (2.1; also 1 Tim 1.12). *Rescued from the lion's mouth,* Ps 21.22 (LXX); Dan 6.21; 1 Macc 2.60.

4.19–21: Epistolary greetings. 19: *Prisca and Aquila,* prominent missionary team and close associates of Paul (Rom 16.3; 1 Cor 16.19; Acts 18.2,18). *Onesiphorus,* 1.16–17. **20:** *Erastus,* the city-treasurer of Corinth (Rom 16.23; cf. Acts 19.22). *Trophimus,* Acts 20.4; 21.29. **21:** All of these people who are with Paul (despite 4.11!) are found only here. *Come before winter,* while a sea voyage is possible.

4.22: Concluding benediction.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO TITUS

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND BACKGROUND

This letter, which has many similarities to 1 Timothy, is named for its recipient, Paul's envoy and co-worker Titus. It is cast as a reminder and incitement to Titus to complete his mission on Crete (1.5). Acts and the other Pauline letters do not mention any apostolic mission on this, the largest of the Aegean islands and home to a large Jewish community. Those who argue that the letter is genuine contend that such a mission could have taken place after Paul's imprisonment at Rome recounted in Acts 28, while those who regard it as pseudepigraphical (see Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles, 1725) think the author has chosen Crete as a locale representing quintessential disobedience (1.12), or because of a later tradition associating Titus with the island.

Although Titus is not mentioned in Acts, Paul's letters ascribe a prominent role to an associate named Titus. According to Gal 2.3 Titus was a Gentile who accompanied Paul to the conference with the Jerusalem apostles, where Titus served as a litmus test for the acceptability of uncircumcised Gentile converts. Titus played a crucial role in the pastoral ministry to Corinth, first as a key administrator of the collection for the church in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8.6,16–17,23; 12.18), and later as Paul's diplomatic envoy who successfully brokered a reconciliation between the apostle and the Corinthian church, which had harbored doubts about Paul's legitimacy and financial reliability (2 Cor 2.13; 7.6–7,13–16).

STRUCTURE AND INTERPRETATION

The letter to Titus is framed as a commissioning letter. After the usual epistolary prescript (1.1–4, which is expanded with a theological creed), the body of the letter focuses on Titus's dual mandate to correct things on Crete and to appoint elders (1.5–16). The basis for his ministry follows in instructions concerning the submission expected of various groups in the church (2.1–10), the theological basis for pious living (2.11–15), and a final section bringing the two themes—submission and good works—together (3.1–11). The letter concludes with a discussion of travel plans (3.12–13), a final exhortation to good works (3.14), epistolary greetings (3.15a), and a benediction (3.15b).

Titus receives a dual task from his mentor, Paul: "putting things in order" (1.5) by exhorting the faithful in sound teaching (1.9,13; 2.1–2,8), and refuting the opposition (2.2,15; cf. 1.9). The mainstay of sound teaching, as the author defines it, is strict maintenance of a patriarchal church order and the proper submission it demands (2.5,9; 3.1; contrast the characterization of the opponents as "insubordinate" or "rebellious" in 1.6,10). This ethic of the "household code" as applied to the Christian house-church reflects the wider cultural context of Hellenism in the Roman empire and is characteristic of the Pastoral epistles. The second task, the refutation of opponents (depicted as fellow Christians of Jewish background who adhere to the requirements of the law of Moses, the Torah, such as dietary laws), is addressed by the author by sharp invective and ridicule (1.10–16; 2.8; 3.9–11) rather than theological debate, which the author appears to eye largely with suspicion (1.13–14; 3.9–11).

Though short, this letter is theologically packed, requiring readers to pause and reconstruct the underlying gospel narrative and theological concepts, which the author often invokes by terse shorthand. Passages such as 1.1–3; 2.11–14; and 3.4–7 allow for instructive comparison with other tight Pauline formulations (see Gal 4.1–11; Rom 3.21–26; 2 Tim 1.9–10), so the theology constructed here can be appreciated both for its distinctiveness and for its continuity with earlier traditions.

Margaret M. Mitchell

1 Paul, a servant[a] of God and an apostle of
Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of
God's elect and the knowledge of the truth
that is in accordance with godliness, [2] in the
hope of eternal life that God, who never lies,
promised before the ages began— [3] in due
time he revealed his word through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by
the command of God our Savior,

[4] To Titus, my loyal child in the faith we
share:

Grace[b] and peace from God the Father and
Christ Jesus our Savior.

[5] I left you behind in Crete for this reason,
so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders
in every town, as I directed you: [6] someone who is blameless, married only once,[c]
whose children are believers, not accused
of debauchery and not rebellious. [7] For a
bishop,[d] as God's steward, must be blameless;
he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered
or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for
gain; [8] but he must be hospitable, a lover of
goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. [9] He must have a firm grasp of the
word that is trustworthy in accordance with
the teaching, so that he may be able both to
preach with sound doctrine and to refute
those who contradict it.

[10] There are also many rebellious people,
idle talkers and deceivers, especially those
of the circumcision; [11] they must be silenced,
since they are upsetting whole families by
teaching for sordid gain what it is not right
to teach. [12] It was one of them, their very own
prophet, who said,

"Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes,
lazy gluttons."

[13] That testimony is true. For this reason rebuke them sharply, so that they may become
sound in the faith, [14] not paying attention to
Jewish myths or to commandments of those
who reject the truth. [15] To the pure all things
are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure. Their very minds and
consciences are corrupted. [16] They profess
to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit
for any good work.

2 But as for you, teach what is consistent
with sound doctrine. [2] Tell the older men
to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound
in faith, in love, and in endurance.

[3] Likewise, tell the older women to be
reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers
or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is
good, [4] so that they may encourage the young
women to love their husbands, to love their
children, [5] to be self-controlled, chaste, good
managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of
God may not be discredited.

[a] Gk *slave*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *Grace, mercy,*
[c] Gk *husband of one wife*
[d] Or *an overseer*

1.1–4: Epistolary prescript, sender, addressee, and salutation with theological expansion reminiscent of Rom 1.2–6 (cf. 1 Cor 2.7; Col 1.26; 2 Tim 1.10). **2:** *God, who never lies,* cf. v. 12. *Before the ages began,* see 2 Tim 1.9; cf. Jn 1.2–3. **3:** *God our Savior,* also 2.10; 3.4; 1 Tim 1.1; 2.3; 4.10. **4:** *Christ Jesus our Savior,* also 2.13; 3.6; 2 Tim 1.10.

1.5–16: Titus's commission in Crete. 5–7: *Elders … bishop,* apparently regarded as synonymous or at least overlapping categories (cf. 1 Tim 3.1–7; 5.17–20). **6:** *Rebellious,* lit., "insubordinate" (also 1.10). **7:** *Steward,* manager of the household (cf. 1 Cor 4.1–2). **9:** *Sound doctrine,* the reliable tradition the Pastorals pass on; see 1 Tim 4.6n. **10:** *Those of the circumcision,* Jewish Christians who teach adherence to Torah, the law of Moses (see Gal 2.12), including dietary laws (see v. 15). **11:** *Upsetting whole families,* lit., "households," the basic unit of civic and church life. **12:** Invective against opponents supported by a hexameter from the Cretan poet Epimenides (ca. 600 BCE). **13:** *Sound in the faith,* having a "healthy" faith (also 2.2; see 1 Tim 4.6n.). **14:** *Jewish myths,* probably speculations on biblical texts like Genesis; see 3.9; 1 Tim 1.4; 4.7. **15:** Cf. Rom 14.14. **16:** *Good work,* see 2.7,14; 3.1,8,14 (also 3.8n.).

2.1–10: The proclamation of sound teaching in submission. A catalogue of virtues reflecting and inscribing the hierarchical order of the Greco-Roman household (v. 2, older men; vv. 3–5, women, older and younger; vv. 6–8, younger men; vv. 9–10, slaves). **2:** *Faith … love … endurance,* a variation on Paul's usual triad of faith, love, and hope (1 Cor 13.13; 1 Thess 1.3; 5.8; cf. 1 Tim 1.5). **5:** *Being submissive,* the author seeks to rein in the insubordinate (1.6,10) by calling for obedience to superiors (also 2.9; 3.1) and adherence to the model of Titus (v. 7).

[6] Likewise, urge the younger men to be
self-controlled. [7] Show yourself in all respects
a model of good works, and in your teaching
show integrity, gravity, [8] and sound speech
that cannot be censured; then any opponent
will be put to shame, having nothing evil to
say of us.

[9] Tell slaves to be submissive to their mas-
ters and to give satisfaction in every respect;
they are not to talk back, [10] not to pilfer, but
to show complete and perfect fidelity, so that
in everything they may be an ornament to
the doctrine of God our Savior.

[11] For the grace of God has appeared,
bringing salvation to all,[a] [12] training us to
renounce impiety and worldly passions,
and in the present age to live lives that
are self-controlled, upright, and godly,
[13] while we wait for the blessed hope and
the manifestation of the glory of our great
God and Savior,[b] Jesus Christ. [14] He it is who
gave himself for us that he might redeem
us from all iniquity and purify for himself a
people of his own who are zealous for good
deeds.

[15] Declare these things; exhort and reprove
with all authority.[c] Let no one look down on
you.

3 Remind them to be subject to rulers
and authorities, to be obedient, to be
ready for every good work, [2] to speak evil
of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle,
and to show every courtesy to everyone.
[3] For we ourselves were once foolish,
disobedient, led astray, slaves to various
passions and pleasures, passing our days in
malice and envy, despicable, hating one an-
other. [4] But when the goodness and loving
kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he
saved us, not because of any works of right-
eousness that we had done, but according
to his mercy, through the water[d] of rebirth
and renewal by the Holy Spirit. [6] This Spirit
he poured out on us richly through Jesus
Christ our Savior, [7] so that, having been jus-
tified by his grace, we might become heirs
according to the hope of eternal life. [8] The
saying is sure.

I desire that you insist on these things,
so that those who have come to believe in
God may be careful to devote themselves
to good works; these things are excellent
and profitable to everyone. [9] But avoid
stupid controversies, genealogies, dissen-
sions, and quarrels about the law, for they
are unprofitable and worthless. [10] After a
first and second admonition, have noth-
ing more to do with anyone who causes
divisions, [11] since you know that such a
person is perverted and sinful, being self-
condemned.

[12] When I send Artemas to you, or Tychi-
cus, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis,
for I have decided to spend the winter there.
[13] Make every effort to send Zenas the lawyer

[a] Or *has appeared to all, bringing salvation*
[b] Or *of the great God and our Savior*
[c] Gk *commandment*
[d] Gk *washing*

2.11–15: The theological basis for present pious living. 11: *The grace of God has appeared* (lit., "been manifested"), in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (cf. 3.4). **13:** *The manifestation* (lit., "epiphany"), a reference to the Second Coming, as elsewhere in the Pastorals (1 Tim 6.14; 2 Tim 1.10; 4.1,8). *Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,* if translated this way (see note *b*), is one of the few places in the New Testament where Christ may be referred to as God (Jn 1.18; 20.28; Rom 9.5). **14:** *Who gave himself,* Gal 1.4; 2.20; Eph 5.2; 1 Tim 2.6. *Redeem us,* buy back from slavery (Rom 3.24; 1 Cor 1.30; 6.20; 7.23; Eph 1.7; Col 1.14; cf. Mk 10.45). *A people of his own,* appropriation of the biblical promise to Israel (Deut 7.6–8; Ex 9.5–16); cf. 1 Pet 2.9.

3.1–11: Submission and good works are the marks of the saved. 1: *Subject to rulers and authorities,* advice for Christians to accommodate to the larger social order (cf. Rom 13.1–7; 1 Tim 2.1–3). **4–7:** A tight creedal formulation, perhaps from an early hymn. **5:** *The water of rebirth and renewal,* baptism, as both promise of resurrection (Rom 6.3–5) and power for present transformation (Rom 12.2). **8:** *The saying is sure,* a frequent formula in the Pastorals (1 Tim 1.15; 3.1; 4.9; 2 Tim 2.11). *Good works,* as distinguished from "works of righteousness" in v. 5 (the works of the law); see 1.16n. **9–11:** Condemnatory attitude toward the opponents (cf. 1 Tim 6.3–5; 2 Tim 2.14–18); cf. the gentler disposition of 1 Tim 2.4; 2 Tim 2.24–26. **9:** *Genealogies,* linked with "myths" (see 1.4n.) in 1 Tim 1.4.

3.12–13: Travel plans. 12: *Artemas,* otherwise unknown. *Tychicus,* one of Paul's companions (Acts 20.4; Eph 6.21–22; Col 4.7; 2 Tim 4.12). *Nicopolis,* probably in western Greece. **13:** *Zenas the lawyer,* named only here.

and Apollos on their way, and see that they lack nothing. 14 And let people learn to devote themselves to good works in order to meet urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive.

15 All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with all of you.[a]

[a] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

Apollos, an early Christian leader named in 1 Cor 1.12; 16.12; Acts 18.24. *See that they lack nothing,* providing hospitality for itinerant missionaries, as in Rom 16.2; 3 Jn 6. **14:** *People*, Gk "our people."

3.14: Concluding exhortation to good works.

3.15a: Epistolary greetings.

3.15b: Concluding benediction.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO PHILEMON

NAME AND AUTHORSHIP

This enigmatic letter is a piece of the apostle Paul's business correspondence, containing an intentionally designed blend of personal and public appeal, addressed to three individuals, Philemon (for whom the letter is named), Apphia, and Archippus, and to the church that meets in one of their houses (v. 2). Though its meaning is much debated, its genuineness is not disputed.

STRUCTURE AND INTERPRETATION

The structure of Philemon is straightforward. After the epistolary prescript (vv. 1–3) and thanksgiving (vv. 4–7), which praise Philemon for his past benefactions, in the epistolary body (vv. 8–22) Paul makes a fresh request for the present situation involving the slave Onesimus, through various forms of subtle and not-so-subtle appeal, ending with the suggestion that Paul will soon visit Philemon (v. 22). He closes the letter with epistolary greetings from missionary co-workers that accent the public visibility of Philemon's decision (vv. 23–24), and a final benediction (v. 25).

The letter employs a carefully calibrated rhetoric to make a request of Philemon. In order to interpret this letter one must reconstruct the situation it presupposes, but in doing so the reader must largely depend upon the letter itself, which is cryptic, partly because Paul and his recipients already know the circumstances, and partly because Paul chooses to be indirect. We know that Paul writes this letter from prison (vv. 1,9–10) in a location not specified, where he has been joined by someone named Onesimus, whom Paul has converted to the gospel there (v. 10). This Onesimus, who is the slave of Philemon (v. 16), is the object of Paul's appeal (v. 10). While the circumstances that led to Onesimus's encounter with Paul are not described in the letter (v. 15 merely says "he was separated from you"), two quite different possibilities suggest themselves: either Onesimus ran away from his master, perhaps after causing him some financial loss (vv. 15,18), or Onesimus was sent by his owner to serve Paul in prison (v. 13), much as Epaphroditus was sent to Paul in prison by the Philippians (Phil 2.25–30). The advantage of the latter possibility is that it explains how Onesimus came to be in prison with Paul, whereas the former option must explain why a slave would run away to a prison. Perhaps Onesimus, according to legal precedent, sought out a friend of his master to act as an intermediary in a dispute between himself and his owner. The precise occasion of the letter is the moment of Paul's sending Onesimus back to his master (v. 12). The letter is meant to accompany Onesimus and register an appeal "for my child, Onesimus" (v. 10).

What is Paul asking Philemon to do? The history of interpretation has focused on several different possibilities: (1) Paul is asking Philemon to receive Onesimus back as his slave (though a "brother in Christ") and forgive whatever transgressions he had committed (vv. 17–18); (2) Paul is asking Philemon to send Onesimus back to him to continue serving the apostle's physical needs while in prison (vv. 13–14); (3) Paul is strongly hinting that Philemon should not only receive Onesimus back but grant this new Christian brother his freedom through formal manumission (vv. 16,21). Each of these options has some grounding in the text, and which one the reader adopts depends upon which verses are thought to be the focal point of the argument and upon how one assesses Paul's tone at various points. The decision may also depend on how one reads 1 Cor 7.17–21, and the famously ambiguous 7.21 (see n. there), as representing Paul's general view on whether Christ-believing slaves should be manumitted. One thing, however, is certain about this letter: Paul engages in full-strength arm-twisting of Philemon to do his "good deed" (v. 14). But the final decision of what to do is left up to Philemon himself—in the context of a host of onlookers among his fellow Christians. One of the most remarkable things about this letter is that it was preserved and ultimately incorporated into the canonical collection of Paul's letters, perhaps an indication that Philemon's ultimate decision met Paul's request.

This letter has played a role in the history of Christian social ethics disproportionate to its size. The extent to which Paul challenged the institution of chattel slavery or not, and the legacy of this text (and others in the

Pauline tradition, such as 1 Cor 7.17–24; Col 3.22–4.1; Eph 6.5–9) for Christian social and political thought, has long been debated. This is especially so in the American context, where the Bible was appealed to by both abolitionists and defenders of slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Margaret M. Mitchell

[1] Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,[a]

To Philemon our dear friend and coworker, [2] to Apphia our sister,[b] to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

[3] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4] When I remember you[c] in my prayers, I always thank my God [5] because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. [6] I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we[d] may do for Christ. [7] I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

[8] For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, [9] yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.[e] [10] I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. [11] Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful[f] both to you and to me. [12] I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. [13] I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; [14] but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. [15] Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, [16] no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

[17] So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. [18] If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. [19] I,

[a] Gk *the brother*
[b] Gk *the sister*
[c] From verse 4 through verse 21, *you* is singular
[d] Other ancient authorities read *you* (plural)
[e] Or *as an ambassador of Christ Jesus, and now also his prisoner*
[f] The name Onesimus means *useful* or (compare verse 20) *beneficial*

1–3: Epistolary prescript (senders, addressees, and salutation), with each sender and recipient carefully designated. **1:** *Timothy,* see Introduction to 2 Timothy. **2:** *Our sister,* fellow Christian. *Apphia,* named only here. *Archippus,* see Col 4.17. *And to the church in your house,* Paul puts Philemon's decision in a more public context.

4–7: Thanksgiving for Philemon's past good deeds. In vv. 4–22a Paul uses the singular address (*you*). Because he calls him "brother" in v. 20, it must refer either to Philemon or Archippus; tradition and current scholarship almost unanimously choose Philemon, on the grounds that he is the first named. **4:** *Remember you in my prayers,* cf. 2 Tim 1.3. **5:** *Saints,* lit., "holy ones," believers in Christ Jesus. **7:** *Hearts,* Gk "splanchna," lit., "inner organs," refers to the emotional center of a person (see vv. 12,20).

8–22: Paul's appeal for another good deed from Philemon. 10: *Whose father I have become,* lit., "whom I begot" to new life in the gospel (cf. 1 Cor 4.15). **11:** *Useful* ("eu-chrestos") is a double pun, referring both to Onesimus's name (see textual note *f*) and his identity in Christ ("eu-Christos" = "good in Christ"). **14:** *Voluntary,* Paul does not command (cf. v. 8), but prefers to persuade. **15:** *Was separated,* a perhaps deliberately vague reference to Onesimus's absence. **16:** *No longer as a slave,* finally the problem is stated: status dissonance (i.e., when a person occupies two or more social positions simultaneously). What happens when a slave of a Christian master becomes a Christian? Some scholars take Paul to mean the slave stops being a slave by becoming a brother, but others think Paul considers the new status of *brother* as relativizing, but not changing, the slave's station in the world. *In the flesh and in the Lord,* in the world and in the church. **17–19:** *Partner, charge . . . to my account,*

Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. 20 Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

22 One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,[a] 24 and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.[b]

[a] Here *you* is singular
[b] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

repay, business terminology signalling Paul's financial obligations to Philemon. *Writing this with my own hand,* cf. 1 Cor 16.21; Gal 6.11. *Owing me even your own self,* Philemon's spiritual obligation to the one who converted him. **21:** *More than I say,* a mere commonplace, or perhaps a diplomatically framed hint to release him from slavery through manumission? **22b:** *Your* prayers, in the plural. Paul here joins the co-recipients (v. 2) with him in registering his plea to Philemon.

23–24: Greetings, the same five people are named in Col 4.10–14. *Epaphras,* Col 1.7; 4.12.

25: Concluding benediction.

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

NAME, GENRE, AND AUDIENCE

The "Letter to the Hebrews" is a misnomer on two counts. First, while it does have typical elements of a letter closing (13.18–25), it opens not as a letter but as a sonorous sermon to be read aloud in the assembly. The author labels his work a "word of exhortation" (13.22; cf. Acts 13.15), essentially a sermon (here in writing). Second, its addressees (unspecified in the text itself) are not "Hebrews" in any meaningful sense. They speak Greek and know the Jewish scriptures in the Greek translation, the Septuagint. The author's arguments depend at several points on Septuagint readings that differ from the original Hebrew. If the letter is addressed to a church founded as part of Pauline mission (see below), we should expect a mixed congregation of Gentile and Jewish followers of the Christian movement. The author's attention to the place of the Levitical ritual and priesthood in God's plan is appropriate to such a mixed audience, all of whom read the Jewish scriptures as the word of God.

CANONICAL STATUS AND LOCATION IN CANON

Hebrews was more readily embraced in the eastern churches than those in the west until the fourth century CE, but it was widely accepted by the end of the fourth century. Its canonicity was occasionally questioned in connection with doubts about its authorship, but it was more often defended, despite those questions, on the basis of the apostolicity of its contents. Today, all Christian communions hold Hebrews to be canonical scripture.

Hebrews is placed after Romans in an Egyptian codex of Paul's letters from around 200 CE. Other eastern manuscripts locate it after 2 Corinthians or after 2 Thessalonians, still within the body of Paul's letters to churches (and before Paul's letters to individuals). Western manuscripts tend to place Hebrews at the end of the Pauline corpus, reflecting stronger doubts about Pauline authorship. Some early Lutheran Bibles placed Hebrews after 3 John as a canonical but nonapostolic writing. The western position is now reflected in almost all modern printed Bibles.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND LITERARY HISTORY

Hebrews is technically anonymous. Early scribes attributed the letter to Paul based on his reputation as a letter-writer and the reference to Timothy (13.23), but, as Origen and Tertullian recognized, this attribution is surely incorrect. Paul, for example, insists that he came to faith through direct divine intervention (Gal 1.11–17; 1 Cor 15.3–10;); the author of Hebrews affirms that he came to faith through the preaching of other apostles (Heb 2.3–4). Paul intentionally avoids the kind of rhetorical ornamentation that the author of Hebrews delights in displaying (see 1 Cor 2.1–5). The author does appear, however, to be a part of a larger Pauline network, coordinating his movements with those of Timothy and to personally know the addressees, to whom he hopes to be restored (13.19). Some connection with Italy is evident from 13.24. More likely, the author sends greetings from outside Italy; possibly the addressees are located in Italy, with the author sending the greetings of "those (with him) from Italy" back home.

First Clement draws on Hebrews, establishing that it was composed sometime before ca. 95 CE. It is not clear whether the author wrote prior to the destruction of the Temple, since he engages the tabernacle and its sacrifices primarily on the basis of what is written in the Torah rather than from personal knowledge of worship in Jerusalem. The author's pointed question in 10.2 is more naturally asked prior to the cessation of sacrifices in 70 CE, when the Temple was destroyed by the Roman armies.

The addressees are not being challenged either by a new wave of persecution or by heretical innovations. Rather, the author addresses a perceived crisis of commitment among some of the recipients. These Christians had formerly shown themselves bold in the face of rejection and scorn, the plundering of their property, imprisonment, and other hardships in the past (10.32–34). With the passing of time, however, the loss of honor and place in society has begun to erode the commitment of some, who have begun to dissociate themselves from this unpopular group (10.25). The author intervenes in the hope of keeping others from "drifting away" (2.1; see also 3.12; 4.11; 6.4–6; 10.26–31; 12.15) or otherwise succumbing to their neighbors' pressure to conform once again to their expectations for pious and reliable citizens.

STRUCTURE

The sermon alternates between exposition and exhortation, which is a key to its structure. Demonstrations of the Son's (1.2) superior status and effectiveness vis-à-vis other mediators of God's favor (angels, Moses, Levitical priests) give way to exhortations to keep responding in an appropriate manner to the word God spoke through this Son. Hebrews 4.14–16 and 10.19–22, which share similar content, are particularly important exhortations, bracketing the "long and difficult word" about Jesus's priesthood and sacrifice (see also 4.14–10.18), which is the centerpiece of the sermon. Scholars had formerly suggested that Heb 13, with its more practical guidance, was not original to the sermon. Most scholars today have come to understand that this practical advice on how to show gratitude is integral to the author's agenda.

INTERPRETATION

The addressees would have readily grasped the author's message. He urges them, in the midst of their difficulties, not to lose sight of the immense favors and privileges they have been granted by their divine patron through Jesus, the mediator of God's favor, and to continue to live out a grateful response of loyalty, obedient service, and public testimony. The relationship of grace will thus be preserved, and the addressees will attain what God has yet promised for the future. A large part of keeping faith involves being willing to continue to embrace a lower status in the visible world for the sake of attaining a place of honor in the invisible but unshakable realm where God dwells.

The high Christology of Hebrews (esp. 1.1–4) played an important role in combating Arianism in the fourth century and contributed to the emergence of Trinitarian theology. Equally significant was its contribution to reflection on the meaning of Jesus's death as an atoning sacrifice. Its promotion of the relationship between the Old and New Covenants as "shadow" to "reality" became a lynchpin in eastern Christian interpretation of the Old Testament. Perhaps ironically, Hebrews also played a role in the emergence of a specialized clergy (see 5.4–5) and in the establishment of the Eucharist, with the bread and wine, as an ongoing offering of Jesus's high priestly sacrifice by his junior priests. In the Reformation period, its emphasis on the unrepeatability of Christ's sacrifice and the elimination of graded access to God through priestly professionals was used to criticize Roman Catholic practice. Hebrews 6.4–8 provoked perennial discussion concerning the possibility for, or practical limitations upon, repentance for sins committed after baptism, entering into discussions of election and predestination as well. The encomium on faith in Hebrews 11 remains perhaps the most popular portion of the sermon.

David A. deSilva

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in
many and various ways by the prophets,
2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by
a Son,[a] whom he appointed heir of all things,
through whom he also created the worlds. 3 He
is the reflection of God's glory and the exact
imprint of God's very being, and he sustains[b]
all things by his powerful word. When he had
made purification for sins, he sat down at the
right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having be-
come as much superior to angels as the name
he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say,
"You are my Son;
today I have begotten you"?
Or again,
"I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son"?
6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into
the world, he says,
"Let all God's angels worship him."
7 Of the angels he says,
"He makes his angels winds,
and his servants flames of fire."
8 But of the Son he says,
"Your throne, O God, is[c] forever and ever,
and the righteous scepter is the scepter
of your[d] kingdom.
9 You have loved righteousness and
hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your
companions."
10 And,
"In the beginning, Lord, you founded the
earth,
and the heavens are the work of your
hands;
11 they will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like clothing;
12 like a cloak you will roll them up,
and like clothing[e] they will be changed.
But you are the same,
and your years will never end."
13 But to which of the angels has he ever said,
"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies a footstool
for your feet"?
14 Are not all angels[f] spirits in the divine ser-
vice, sent to serve for the sake of those who
are to inherit salvation?

[a] Or *the Son*
[b] Or *bears along*
[c] Or *God is your throne*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *his*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *like clothing*
[f] Gk *all of them*

1.1–2.18: Summons to give the Son one's full attention and allegiance.

1.1–4: The sermon's thesis statement. God's final and complete word has been spoken through the Son, who has greater honor even than the angels. This is all one single sentence in Greek. Verses 3–4 are not just independent theological statements about the Son, but serve purposefully to amplify the significance of the Son, such that the audience should prioritize responding to the word God spoke through him above all other considerations. **1:** *In many and various ways*, better, "piecemeal and in various ways." The author will show throughout the sermon how the pieces of divine revelation found in the Jewish scriptures become a unified revelation of the Son, often by reading a passage from them as being spoken about (1.5b), spoken to (1.5a,13; 5.5–6), or even spoken by (2.12–13; 10.5–8) the Son. **2b–3:** The author uses Jewish reflection on the figure of Wisdom to speak of the Son's relationship to God and activity prior to the incarnation (see Prov 8.22–31; Wis 7.25–8.1; 9.1; cf. Col 1.15–20; Phil 2.6–11).

1.5–14: Arguments from scripture that Jesus is superior in status to angels, mediators of the Old Covenant. Establishing this point contributes to the force of the author's call to action in 2.1–4. **5:** Ps 2.7; 2 Sam 7.14. **6:** *Into the world,* the divine realm of God and the angels, the unshakable "world." The author thinks here of the Son's ascension following his incarnation and death (see 2.5). The quotation is from Deut 32.43 (LXX). **7:** Ps 104.4. **8–9:** Ps 45.6–7. **10–12:** Ps 102.25–27. Essential to the argument is the author's cosmology and eschatology. The visible earth and heavens are created, material, and therefore temporary. The presently unseen divine realm (the place of God's rest, 4.1–11, and the heavenly homeland, 11.16) is immaterial and eternal. Jesus has passed through the former (4.14) to enter the latter ("heaven itself," 9.24) as the forerunner for God's many children (2.10; 6.19–20). The author expects a day on which God will remove the created earth and heavens, allowing Jesus's faithful clients to enter the unshakable, eternal realm (12.25–28) and thus enjoy "eternal salvation" (5.9). **13:** Ps 110.1. Psalm 110 is a key text within this sermon (see 1.3; 5.6; 7.17,21; 8.1; 10.12; 12.2). **14:** *Are to inherit salvation*, this author speaks of salvation consistently as a future deliverance at the return of Christ and dissolution of the material cosmos.

2 Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. [2] For if the message declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, [3] how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, [4] while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.

[5] Now God[a] did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. [6] But someone has testified somewhere,

"What are human beings that you are
mindful of them,[b]
or mortals, that you care for them?[c]
[7] You have made them for a little while
lower[d] than the angels;
you have crowned them with glory and
honor,[e]
[8] subjecting all things under their feet."

Now in subjecting all things to them, God[a] left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, [9] but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower[f] than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God[g] he might taste death for everyone.

[10] It was fitting that God,[a] for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. [11] For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father.[h] For this reason Jesus[a] is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,[i] [12] saying,

"I will proclaim your name to my brothers
and sisters,[i]
in the midst of the congregation I will
praise you."

[13] And again,

"I will put my trust in him."

And again,

"Here am I and the children whom God
has given me."

[14] Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, [15] and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. [16] For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. [17] Therefore he had to become like

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Gk *What is man that you are mindful of him?*
[c] Gk *or the son of man that you care for him?* In the Hebrew of Psalm 8.4–6 both *man* and *son of man* refer to all humankind
[d] Or *them only a little lower*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *and set them over the works of your hands*
[f] Or *who was made a little lower*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *apart from God*
[h] Gk *are all of one*
[i] Gk *brothers*

2.1–4: Exhortation to heed the announcement of deliverance made through the Son, drawing a "lesser to greater" inference on the basis of 1.1–14. Again, this is a single sentence in Greek; 3b–4 serve directly to amplify why this *salvation* is *so great*. **2:** *The message declared through angels,* the law of Moses (see *Jub*. 1.27–29; 2.1; Acts 7.38,53; Gal 3.19; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.136). **3–4:** *Signs and wonders . . . and gifts of the Holy Spirit*, see Gal 3.1–5; 1 Cor 2.1–5.

2.5–18: A further argument in support of the exhortation (2.1–4). Attachment to Jesus is the path to a share in his honor as well as the path of gratitude for past benefits and Jesus's ongoing mediation. **6–8:** Quoting Ps 8.4–6. *Mortals . . . them . . . their*, the translation obscures the double meaning in the Greek, where "son of man" could refer to a generic human being or to a messianic figure. The author of Hebrews reads the psalm at both levels, with Jesus fulfilling the psalm's vision ahead of the "many sons and daughters" (*children*, 2.10). **10:** *Fitting*, because God knew the trials through which the many sons and daughters would pass on the way to the end of their journey. "Perfection" language is used in Hebrews to speak of something or someone being brought to its final, divinely ordained condition, here Jesus's installation in heaven as high priest. **12:** Ps 22.22. **13:** Isa 8.17, 18. **14–15:** Both Greco-Roman and Jewish ethicists recognized that *fear of death* often undermined individual commitment to virtuous and altruistic action. Socrates was also celebrated for having sought to free his followers from the fear of death by the way he himself faced it (Seneca, *Epistulae* 24.4).

his brothers and sisters[a] in every respect,
so that he might be a merciful and faithful
high priest in the service of God, to make
a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the
people. [18] Because he himself was tested by
what he suffered, he is able to help those who
are being tested.

3 Therefore, brothers and sisters,[a] holy
partners in a heavenly calling, consider
that Jesus, the apostle and high priest of
our confession, [2] was faithful to the one
who appointed him, just as Moses also "was
faithful in all[b] God's[c] house." [3] Yet Jesus[d] is
worthy of more glory than Moses, just as
the builder of a house has more honor than
the house itself. [4] (For every house is built
by someone, but the builder of all things
is God.) [5] Now Moses was faithful in all
God's[c] house as a servant, to testify to the
things that would be spoken later. [6] Christ,
however, was faithful over God's[c] house as
a son, and we are his house if we hold firm[e]
the confidence and the pride that belong to
hope.

[7] Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,
"Today, if you hear his voice,
[8] do not harden your hearts as in the
rebellion,
as on the day of testing in the
wilderness,
[9] where your ancestors put me to the test,
though they had seen my works [10] for
forty years.
Therefore I was angry with that
generation,
and I said, 'They always go astray in their
hearts,
and they have not known my ways.'
[11] As in my anger I swore,
'They will not enter my rest.' "

[12] Take care, brothers and sisters,[a] that none of
you may have an evil, unbelieving heart that
turns away from the living God. [13] But exhort
one another every day, as long as it is called
"today," so that none of you may be hardened
by the deceitfulness of sin. [14] For we have
become partners of Christ, if only we hold our
first confidence firm to the end. [15] As it is said,

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the
rebellion."

[16] Now who were they who heard and yet
were rebellious? Was it not all those who left
Egypt under the leadership of Moses? [17] But
with whom was he angry forty years? Was it
not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in
the wilderness? [18] And to whom did he swear

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Other ancient authorities lack *all*
[c] Gk *his*
[d] Gk *this one*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *to the end*

3.1–4.13: Summons to honor God's word through trust and perseverance.

3.1–6: A second argument concerning Jesus's superior status, this time in regard to Moses, mediator of the Old Covenant. Throughout Hebrews (8.6; 9.15; 12.24), Jesus is cast in the role of mediator, a person who grants clients access to a greater patron otherwise inaccessible to them. Because of Jesus's proximity to God as Son, as ever at God's right hand and as one who has never alienated God through sin, he surpasses all other valid mediators of God's favor known from the author's tradition (angels, Moses, Levitical priests). **1:** *Consider that Jesus . . . was,* better, "consider Jesus . . . who was." The Greek here does not invite reflection upon a proposition about Jesus, but rather reflection upon Jesus himself. *Apostle*, as God's decisive messenger (1.2a). **3.2:** *Faithful in all God's house*, see Num 12.7–8. **6:** *If*, emphasizing the believers' responsibilities within the grace relationship (see also 3.14; 6.4–8; 13.13–16). *Pride,* or "boast," "claim to honor." The Greek denotes more here than a subjective feeling.

3.7–4.11: A homiletical application of the Num 14.1–35 episode to the situation of the addressees, who stand similarly at the threshold of "entering God's rest" and are urged not to imitate those who failed to trust their divine patron and died in the wilderness under God's servant, Moses. **7–11**: Ps 95.7–11. **8:** *Rebellion . . . testing*. The Septuagint translated the Hebrew place names "Meribah" and "Massah," with the result that the psalm text refers no longer to three separate incidents (Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.1–13; Num 14.1–35), but principally to one (Num 14.1–35). **12–13:** The author repeatedly urges the members of the Christian group to take communal responsibility for each individual member's perseverance (see also 4.1; 6.10; 10.24–25,32–34; 12.15–16). **15:** Ps 95.7. **16–19:** The rhetorical questions recall details of the incidents in Num 14. **18:** Disobedience (see also **4.11**) and

that they would not enter his rest, if not to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

4 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 2 For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.[a] 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as God[b] has said,

"As in my anger I swore,
'They shall not enter my rest,' "

though his works were finished at the foundation of the world. 4 For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." 5 And again in this place it says, "They shall not enter my rest." 6 Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 again he sets a certain day—"today"—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted,

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts."

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God[b] would not speak later about another day. 9 So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; 10 for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs.

12 Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

14 Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested[c] as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

5 Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he

[a] Other ancient authorities read *it did not meet with faith in those who listened*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Or *tempted*

19: distrust toward God's voice emerge as characteristics greatly to be avoided. **4.1:** *Seem*, better "think it right." At stake is a value judgment on the part of individual believers concerning what would be, for them, the more advantageous path, whether to persist in moving forward in their Christian commitment or shrink away from the unpopular group. **2:** *Those who listened*, Joshua and Caleb, who believed God's promises and urged the people to act upon them (Num 13.30; 14.6–10). **3:** Ps 95:11. **4:** Gen 2.2. **5:** Ps 95.11. **8:** That is, by leading the Hebrews in the conquest of Canaan. The author argues that, since David (the traditional author of the Psalms) speaks of entering God's rest two hundred years after Joshua's conquest of Canaan, the latter cannot be the ultimate land of promise (see also 11.9–10). **10:** *God's rest*, lit., "the one who entered his [God's] rest has also himself rested from his works just as God did from his own." This could be a statement about people in general or a specific, if elliptical, statement about Jesus, who has entered God's presence (where God "rests") as a forerunner for the many (6.19–20), and has completed his labors on behalf of his followers (10.11–14). **12–13:** *Laid bare,* or, "with their throats exposed." The author crafts a truly fearsome image here of human vulnerability before the divine pronouncement.

4.14–10.18: The "long and difficult word" about Jesus's priestly work.

4.14–5.10: Exhortation and initial exposition. 14–16: Continuing to witness to the acts of God in Christ and to draw near to God, by persevering in drawing near to one another in worship, represents the author's princi-

himself is subject to weakness; [3] and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. [4] And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

[5] So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you";

[6] as he says also in another place,

"You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek."

[7] In the days of his flesh, Jesus[a] offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. [8] Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; [9] and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, [10] having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

[11] About this[b] we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding. [12] For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; [13] for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. [14] But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

6 Therefore let us go on toward perfection,[c] leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God, [2] instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. [3] And we will do[d] this, if God permits. [4] For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, [5] and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, [6] and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt. [7] Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. [8] But

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Or *him*
[c] Or *toward maturity*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *let us do*

pal exhortation to the addressees. See also 10.19–25. **5.3:** See Lev 9.7–22; 16.3–16. **4:** Ex 28.1. **6:** While other New Testament texts refer to Ps 110.1 (see Mt 22.44; Mk 12.36; Lk 20.42–43; Acts 2.24; 1 Cor 15.25), only this author extends his interest to Ps 110.4, reading this as God's appointment of Jesus to an alternative priesthood. **7:** Although often identified with the episode in Gethsemane (Mk 14.32–43), the language is typical for descriptions of fervent prayer among Jewish authors (2 Macc 11.6; 3 Macc 1.16; 5.7, 25). **8:** *Although he was a Son* qualifies the preceding statement ("he was heard because of his reverent submission") rather than the following one. The author will later argue that learning through discipline is inherent in being a son or daughter (see 12.5–11).

5.11–6.20: Digression. While technically an interruption of the argument, this passage underscores the author's principal agenda of impressing upon the hearers the importance of maintaining their commitment to persevere in loyal witness and obedience to God, lest they bring disgrace upon Jesus by their defection and thereby retribution upon themselves. **5.11–14:** The author appeals for a responsive and attentive hearing, challenging the hearers to measure up to his expectations that they would help reinforce for one another the value of maintaining commitment to the faith and practices of the Christian group. *Milk . . . solid food*, frequent images for stages of progress in learning, maturity, and skill (see 1 Cor 3.1–2; Epictetus, *Diatribai* 2.16.39; *Enchiridion* 51.1–2). **6.1–3:** Exhortation to move forward on the Christian journey. Several elements of the addressees' instruction in their new faith are of central importance to the author's argument, particularly *resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.* **4–8:** Argument from the contrary (the consequences of falling away rather than persevering toward the goal) in support of exhortation. The author does not think here in terms of "losing salvation," since "salvation" is, for him, what happens at Christ's second intervention in human affairs (1.14; 9.28; cf. 1 Pet 1:5, 9; 2.2). Relinquishing one's relationship with Christ through ingratitude and disloyalty means failing to persevere unto salvation. **6:** *On their own,* or, "to their own detriment." **7–8:** The Greek makes explicit that these verses

if it produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and on the verge of being cursed; its end is to be burned over.

9 Even though we speak in this way, beloved, we are confident of better things in your case, things that belong to salvation. 10 For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake[a] in serving the saints, as you still do. 11 And we want each one of you to show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope to the very end, 12 so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and multiply you." 15 And thus Abraham,[b] having patiently endured, obtained the promise. 16 Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute. 17 In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, 18 so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. 19 We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

7 This "King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him"; 2 and to him Abraham apportioned "one-tenth of everything." His name, in the first place, means "king of righteousness"; next he is also king of Salem, that is, "king of peace." 3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

4 See how great he is! Even[c] Abraham the patriarch gave him a tenth of the spoils. 5 And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to collect tithes[d] from the people, that is, from their kindred,[e] though these also are descended from Abraham. 6 But this man, who does not belong to their ancestry, collected tithes[d] from Abraham and blessed him who had received the promises. 7 It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. 8 In the one case, tithes are received by those who are mortal; in the other, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. 9 One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, 10 for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the levitical priesthood—for the

[a] Gk *for his name*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *Even*
[d] Or *a tenth*
[e] Gk *brothers*

provide a rationale for the preceding claim drawn from an agricultural analogy. Such metaphors are common in discussions of patron-client relationships (see Isa 5.1–7; Seneca, *De beneficiis* 1.1.2; 2.11.4–5; 4.8.2; 4.33.1–2; *Pseudo-Phocylides* 152), where an appropriate return of gratitude for a benefit given was an absolute. *Thorns and thistles*, see Gen 3.18. *Blessing* and *cursed* recall covenantal language (see Deut 28.1–14 and 15–68; 30.19). **9–12:** The author reassures the audience, pointing to their investment in one another thus far as their grounds for being confident of having pleased God. Such care for one another is the "useful crop" (6.7) that constitutes a fair return to God for God's benefits. **12:** *Those who through faith*, such as Abraham (6.13–18), and also the many heroes discussed in 11.1–12.3. **13–20:** An argument confirming the hearers' cause for confidence. God's promises can indeed be trusted as reliable bases for their investment of themselves. **13–14:** Gen 22.16–18. **19:** *Inner shrine*, the Holy of Holies, here of the heavenly Temple itself rather than the earthly model (see 8.1–6n). **20**: The author closes his digression by returning to the topic and language of 5.10.

7.1–10.18: Exposition resumed: Superior access to God through Jesus.

7.1–28: Jesus's superior mediation as high priest. See 3.1–6n. **1–2:** Gen 14.17–20. **2:** Righteousness and peace were qualities of the messianic age (see Isa 9.6–7; 11.1–9; 32.16–18). **3:** Scripture's silences about Melchizedek become eloquent here and in 7.5. **4:** Gen 14.20. **5:** Num 18.21–24; Deut 26.12–15. **11:** *Perfection* here refers specifi-

people received the law under this priesthood—what further need would there have been to speak of another priest arising according to the order of Melchizedek, rather than one according to the order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. 13 Now the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

15 It is even more obvious when another priest arises, resembling Melchizedek, 16 one who has become a priest, not through a legal requirement concerning physical descent, but through the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is attested of him,

"You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek."

18 There is, on the one hand, the abrogation of an earlier commandment because it was weak and ineffectual 19 (for the law made nothing perfect); there is, on the other hand, the introduction of a better hope, through which we approach God.

20 This was confirmed with an oath; for others who became priests took their office without an oath, 21 but this one became a priest with an oath, because of the one who said to him,

"The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,
'You are a priest forever' "—

22 accordingly Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant.

23 Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25 Consequently he is able for all time to save[a] those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other[b] high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

8 Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent[c] that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up. 3 For

[a] Or *able to save completely*
[b] Gk lacks *other*
[c] Or *tabernacle*

cally to the complete and decisive cleansing of the conscience of the worshiper and the fitting of him or her to enter into the full and real presence of God. The strict limitations on access to God under the Old Covenant (9.6–10), which no number of sacrifices ever overcame (10.1–4), signaled to the author the ineffectiveness of those rituals. He celebrates Jesus's death as the sacrifice that fits his followers to enter not just the earthly Holy of Holies but into God's presence in heaven (6.19–20; 7.18–19; 10.19–25). **12:** Priests were essential to the maintenance of the Old Covenant, but the covenant also regulated and authorized the priesthood. The author views the two as inseparable such that the removal of one means the removal of both. **14:** Mt 1.2–3; Lk 3.33; Rev 5.5. **16:** *Requirement concerning physical descent*, Num 1.47–53; 3.1–16; Deut 18.5; *indestructible life*, the word "forever" in Ps 110.4 becomes highly significant for the author here. **17:** Ps 110.4. **18:** The author is keenly aware that he is suggesting that a priesthood, covenant, and sacrificial system clearly ordained by divine decree are now surpassed. He is therefore intent on discovering those divine oracles that legitimate his claims in regard to each, hence the prominence of Ps 110.4; Jer 31.31–34; and Ps 40.6–8 in this central exposition. **19:** *Perfect*, see 7.11n. **21:** *Because of,* better, "through the agency of"; Ps 110.4. **27:** See 5.3n.

8.1–13: Jesus's location in a better sanctuary, mediating a better covenant. 8.1–6: Based on Ex 25.40, Jewish authors often viewed the earthly tabernacle as a model of the cosmos, with the Holy Places modeling heaven (see Wis 9.8; Rev 8.2–4; 11.19; 15.5–8; Philo, *Moses* 2.71–145; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.179–87). The author understands Jesus's ascension to indicate his entrance into the cosmic, heavenly Holy of Holies where God lives. **1:** See Ps

every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They offer worship in a sanctuary that is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one; for Moses, when he was about to erect the tent,[a] was warned, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." 6 But Jesus[b] has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one.

8 God[c] finds fault with them when he says:
"The days are surely coming, says the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah;
9 not like the covenant that I made with
their ancestors,
on the day when I took them by the
hand to lead them out of the land
of Egypt;
for they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I had no concern for them, says
the Lord.
10 This is the covenant that I will make
with the house of Israel
after those days, says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
11 And they shall not teach one another
or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,'
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.
12 For I will be merciful toward their
iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no
more."
13 In speaking of "a new covenant," he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.

9 Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. 2 For a tent[a] was constructed, the first one, in which were the lampstand, the table, and the bread of the Presence;[d] this is called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a tent[a] called the Holy of Holies. 4 In it stood the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which there were a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; 5 above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.[e] Of these things we cannot speak now in detail.

6 Such preparations having been made, the priests go continually into the first tent[a] to carry out their ritual duties; 7 but only the high priest goes into the second, and he but once a year, and not without taking

[a] Or *tabernacle*
[b] Gk *he*
[c] Gk *He*
[d] Gk *the presentation of the loaves*
[e] Or *the place of atonement*

110.1. **4:** That is, the *priests* in the line of Levi. **5:** *Shadow*, a term denoting that which is less real because it is derivative; *pattern*, or perhaps better "archetype." The author contrasts the heavenly temple, which he believes was shown to Moses on the mountain, with the earthly tabernacle and temple. The language of "shadow" and "archetype" is adapted from Plato: that which exists in the divine realm is more "real" than the copies seen on earth. **6:** *And to that degree*, better, "to the degree that." In other words, the quality of the covenant and the promises determine the quality of the ministry. **8.8–12:** Jer 31.31–34. See 7.18n. **13:** The author of Hebrews, like Paul in Galatians (3.19; 3.23–4.5), considers the first covenant to have been valid for a limited duration.

9.1–10.18: Jesus's unique achievement, preparing all the people to enter God's real presence. The author uses the covenant inauguration rite of Ex 24.1–8 and the Day of Atonement ritual of Lev 16 as templates for expressing the significance of Jesus's death and exaltation as events that inaugurate the New Covenant and effect the decisive removal of sins promised under that covenant (Jer 31.31–34). **2:** *Lampstand . . . table . . . bread*, see Ex 25.30–40. **3:** *Holy of holies*, Ex 26.31–33. **4:** *The golden altar of incense* was actually in the first tent, where it was regularly accessed by the priests as part of the daily offering (see Lk 1:9–10; Ex 30.1–8). **4:** *Ark . . . manna . . . rod*, see Ex 16.30–34; 25.10–22; 37.1–9; Num 17.1–11. **7:** *But once a year*, that is, on the Day of Atonement (see Lev 16). **9.6–10:** See 7.11n.

the blood that he offers for himself and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people. [8] By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary has not yet been disclosed as long as the first tent[a] is still standing. [9] This is a symbol[b] of the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, [10] but deal only with food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body imposed until the time comes to set things right.

[11] But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come,[c] then through the greater and perfect[d] tent[a] (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), [12] he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. [13] For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, [14] how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit[e] offered himself without blemish to God, purify our[f] conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

[15] For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.[g] [16] Where a will[g] is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. [17] For a will[g] takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. [18] Hence not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. [19] For when every commandment had been told to all the people by Moses in accordance with the law, he took the blood of calves and goats,[h] with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people, [20] saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God has ordained for you." [21] And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent[a] and all the vessels used in worship. [22] Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

[23] Thus it was necessary for the sketches of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves need better sacrifices than these. [24] For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. [25] Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; [26] for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. [27] And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, [28] so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

10 Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it[i] can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach. [2] Otherwise, would they not have

[a] Or *tabernacle*
[b] Gk *parable*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *good things to come*
[d] Gk *more perfect*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *Holy Spirit*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *your*
[g] The Greek word used here means both *covenant* and *will*
[h] Other ancient authorities lack *and goats*
[i] Other ancient authorities read *they*

9: *During which*, better, "in which" or "in accordance with which." The antecedent is either "tent" or "symbol," but not "present time." **9.2:** *Blood of goats and calves*, Lev 16.14–16. **13:** *Ashes of a heifer*, Num 19.1–10. **15–17:** The author plays on the dual meaning of Gk *diathēkē* as "covenant" or "will." **18–21:** See Ex 24.3–8. **19:** *Scarlet wool and hyssop*, see Lev 14.4; Num 19.6. **20:** See Ex 24.8. **23:** Lev 16.14–16. **24:** See 8.1–6n. **28:** See 1.14n. *The sins of many*, see Isa 53.12; Mk 10.45. *A second time*, Christ's return may parallel the reemergence of the high priest from the Holy of Holies, completing the ritual act. **10.1–4:** See 7.11n. **1:** *Shadow,* see 8.5.

ceased being offered, since the worshipers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? 3 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Consequently, when Christ[a] came into the world, he said,

"Sacrifices and offerings you have not
desired,
but a body you have prepared for me;
6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.
7 Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do
your will, O God'
(in the scroll of the book[b] it is written
of me)."

8 When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), 9 then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. 10 And it is by God's will[c] that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11 And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ[d] had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," 13 and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,

16 "This is the covenant that I will make
with them
after those days, says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds,"

17 he also adds,

"I will remember[e] their sins and their
lawless deeds no more."

18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

19 Therefore, my friends,[f] since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Meaning of Gk uncertain
[c] Gk *by that will*
[d] Gk *this one*
[e] Gk *on their minds and I will remember*
[f] Gk *Therefore, brothers*

4: The author's claim is inconsistent with Lev 17.11, but in the tradition of the prophetic critique of animal sacrifices (e.g., Isa 1.11–13,16–17; Jer 7.21–23). **10.5–7:** Ps 40:6–8, following the Septuagint, which rendered the Hebrew "ears you have dug for me" with "a body you have prepared for me," giving the author the opportunity to find a reference to Christ's incarnation in the text. This becomes the scriptural warrant for the shocking human sacrifice of Christ's body. See 7.18n. **10.12–13:** Ps 110:1. **14:** See 7.11n. **10.16–17:** With the resumption of Jer 31.33–34, the author declares his case for Jesus inaugurating the new covenant and bringing about its better promises (decisive forgiveness of sins and cleansing of the conscience) proven. See 7.17n.

10.19–13.25: Exhortation to persevere in gratitude for the benefactions granted through Jesus.

10.19–39: Exhortations based on this new access, consequences, and past successes.

10.19–25: See 4.14–16n; 7.11n. **22:** *With our hearts sprinkled clean . . . and our bodies washed*, or, "having sprinkled our hearts clean . . . and washed our bodies." **24:** Better, "let us keep holding one another in our thoughts, such that an explosion of love and good works results." The purpose of "considering" the other is not to motivate the other to loving action, but to find one's own motivation to love and serve the other. **10.25:** This is the clearest expression of the pastoral problem addressed by the author. *The Day* of Christ's second coming (see 9.28).

[26] For if we willfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [27] but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. [28] Anyone who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy "on the testimony of two or three witnesses." [29] How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? [30] For we know the one who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." [31] It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

[32] But recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, [33] sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. [34] For you had compassion for those who were in prison, and you cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting. [35] Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. [36] For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. [37] For yet

"in a very little while,
the one who is coming will come and
will not delay;
[38] but my righteous one will live by faith.
My soul takes no pleasure in anyone
who shrinks back."

[39] But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved.

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. [2] Indeed, by faith[a] our ancestors received approval. [3] By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.[b]

[4] By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable[c] sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but

[a] Gk *by this*
[b] Or *was not made out of visible things*
[c] Gk *greater*

10.26–31: Rationale for embracing the author's exhortation based on consideration of the contrary. **26:** see 10.18. There were no provisions for intentional or "willful" sin under the law. **28:** Deut 17.6; 19.15. **29:** *Spurned*, better, "trampled upon." The author underscores the grievous insult involved in valuing friendship with unbelieving neighbors over showing God, Christ, and the Spirit the loyalty and gratitude that their gifts merit. **30:** Deut 32.35–36.

10.32–39: Exhortation to imitate former endurance and remain constant (show "faith"). **32–34:** The converts' neighbors used the shaming techniques of their culture to pressure believers to return to their former allegiances and commitments. **32:** *Struggle*, better, "contest." The author uses an athletic image to cast the audience's past experience of being shamed in a more noble light as a competition in which winning comes through resisting. **34:** *Better and more lasting*, see 1.10–12n. **35:** *Confidence,* or "boldness." The Greek word denotes more than a subjective feeling. The believers displayed such "boldness" in the face of their neighbors' pressure in 10.32–34 by their visible and vocal persistence in their new faith. **37–38:** The author prefixes a few words from Isa 26.20 to a creative rendering of Hab 2.3–4 (LXX).

11.1–12.3: Encomium on faith. A recurring theme of the examples of faith-in-action is that people of faith chart their course through this life with a view to future realities (see 11.7,20–22,24–26,28) and to the invisible realities of the realm beyond this creation (see 11.3,10,13–16,27; 12.2), including God's power to give life to the dead (11.17–19,35–38; 12.2). **11.1:** The Gk word translated as *assurance* could also be rendered "underlying essence" or even, in business dealings, "title deed." The author's point is that throwing away trust in Christ means throwing away one's title to a place in the eternal realm. Similarly, *conviction* can signal more than an internal feeling, such as "evidence" or "proof." Exhibiting faith is evidence to the world of the reality of God and God's promises. **3:** *Worlds,* or "ages" (the present age and the "coming world," 2.5). See 2 Macc 7.28. **4:** Gen 4.3–10. Genesis gives no explanation for the rejection of Cain's sacrifice; this author joins other Second Temple period writers in speculating as to what was missing (see also Josephus, *Ant.* 1.53; 1 Jn 3.12).

through his faith[a] he still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and "he was not found, because God had taken him." For it was attested before he was taken away that "he had pleased God." 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. 7 By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised.[b] 12 Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

13 All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, 14 for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, 18 of whom he had been told, "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you." 19 He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. 20 By faith Isaac invoked blessings for the future on Jacob and Esau. 21 By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, "bowing in worship over the top of his staff." 22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his burial.[c]

23 By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.[d] 24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleas-

[a] Gk *through it*

[b] Or *By faith Sarah herself, though barren, received power to conceive, even when she was too old, because she considered him faithful who had promised.*

[c] Gk *his bones*

[d] Other ancient authorities add *By faith Moses, when he was grown up, killed the Egyptian, because he observed the humiliation of his people* (Gk *brothers*)

5–6: Gen 5.22–24. The author relies on the LXX, which rendered the Hebrew "walked with God" as "pleased God." Pleasing God is further underscored in Heb 12.28; 13.16, 21. **7:** *Warned*, Gen 6.13. *Respected the warning*, Gen 6.22. **8–9:** Gen 12.1–8. Focusing on Abraham's willingness to embrace the marginal life of a resident alien as a hallmark of his faith-in-action speaks to the hearers' situation directly. **11:** Gen 17.15–22; 21.1–7. **12:** Gen 15.5; 22.17. **13:** *Strangers and foreigners*, see Gen 23.4; 24.37. **15:** A pointed application for the addressees, some of whom have been inclined *to return* (10.24–25). **16:** *Called their God*, that is, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (e.g., Ex 3.6,15–16; Mt 22.32). **17:** Gen 22.1–10. **18:** Gen 21.12. **19:** The author conjectures that since Abraham knew God's promises could not fail, he believed that Isaac would be restored to life, becoming a prototype of faith in resurrection. See Gen 22.12–14. **20:** Gen 27.27–29,39–40. **21:** Gen 48, "*bowing in worship*," Gen 47.31 (LXX). **22:** Gen 50.24–25; Ex 13.19. **23:** Ex 2.1–3; *edict*, Ex 1.22. **24:** See Ex 2.11. Jewish tradition had by this time significantly embellished Moses's proximity to the throne (Philo, *Moses* 1.13; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.232–34). Focusing on Moses's willingness to leave honor and wealth behind as a mark of his faith in action speaks to the hearers'

ures of sin. 26 He considered abuse suffered for the Christ[a] to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king's anger; for he persevered as though[b] he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.[c]

29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient,[d] because she had received the spies in peace.

32 And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two,[e] they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented— 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

39 Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,[f] and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of[g] the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners,[h] so that you

[a] Or *the Messiah*
[b] Or *because*
[c] Gk *would not touch them*
[d] Or *unbelieving*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *they were tempted*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *sin that easily distracts*
[g] Or *who instead of*
[h] Other ancient authorities read *such hostility from sinners against themselves*

situation directly. **26:** *Abuse*, better, "reproach," "censure." The author will urge the hearers to continue to make the same choice (13.13). **27:** According to Ex 2.14–15, Moses left for Midian out of fear. This facet of the tradition was frequently rewritten (see, e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 2.254–57). **28:** Ex 12.7,13,21–30. **29:** Ex 14.21–31. **30:** Josh 6.12–21. **31:** Josh 2.1–21; 6.22–25. See also Mt 1.5; Jas 2.25. **32:** *Gideon*, Judg 6–8; *Barak*, Judg 4–5; *Samson,* Judg 13–16; *Jephthah*, Judg 11–12; *David*, 1 Sam 16–30; 2 Sam 1–24; *Samuel*, 1 Sam 1–12; 15.1–16.13. **33:** *Mouths of lions*, Dan 6. **34:** *Quenched raging fire,* Dan 3. **35:** *Women received their dead*, 1 Kings 17.17–24; 2 Kings 4.18–37; *tortured . . . a better resurrection*, 2 Macc 6.18–7.42 (esp. 7.9,11,14,23,29). **36–38:** Traditions about the prophets underlie these verses. Jeremiah was taunted (Jer 20.7–8), beaten (37.15), and imprisoned (20.1–3; 37.15–18). According to legend, Isaiah was sawn in two (*Lives of the Prophets* 1.1; *Asc. Isa.* 5.1–14), Jeremiah was stoned (*Lives of the Prophets* 2.1), and Uriah was slain with the sword (Jer 26.20–23). Presenting faith as a willingness to embrace a marginal existence in this world (represented by living in caves and wearing hides rather than textiles) speaks directly to the hearers' situation. **39–40:** The author understands the faithful righteous of Israel to arrive at the heavenly homeland together with the addressees, being perfected together by Jesus's priestly mediation. The fact that the hearers are in the most privileged position, living on this side of Jesus's mediation, should nurture a sense of greater responsibility to continue in faith themselves, as did earlier biblical figures. **40:** *Something better*, Gk adds "concerning us." **12.2:** *Of our faith*, Gk lacks "our." The author presents Jesus here as the ultimate example of faith, who has gone farther in and more completely demonstrated that virtue than anyone else. It is not a statement of how Jesus acts upon the believers' faith.

may not grow weary or lose heart. [4] In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. [5] And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children—

"My child, do not regard lightly the
discipline of the Lord,
or lose heart when you are punished by
him;
[6] for the Lord disciplines those whom he
loves,
and chastises every child whom he
accepts."

[7] Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? [8] If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. [9] Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? [10] For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness. [11] Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

[12] Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, [13] and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

[14] Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. [15] See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled. [16] See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright for a single meal. [17] You know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent,[a] even though he sought the blessing[b] with tears.

[18] You have not come to something[c] that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, [19] and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. [20] (For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death." [21] Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear.") [22] But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, [23] and to the assembly[d] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, [24] and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

[25] See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when

[a] Or *no chance to change his father's mind*
[b] Gk *it*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *a mountain*
[d] Or *angels, and to the festal gathering [23] and assembly*

12.4–29: Encouragement to confidence in the face of opposition and to grateful response to God. 4: *In your struggle against sin*, language suggestive of a wrestling match, continuing the athletic metaphor. **5–11:** The author transforms the believers' neighbors' attempts to shame and harass them into an educative, formative process by means of which God shapes them as God's sons and daughters for citizenship in the eternal realm. **5–6:** Prov 3.11–12. **7:** *Discipline*, or "formative training." The Gk word "paideia" referred to the process of creating virtuous, skilled, and cultured citizens. **11:** The author's hearers would recognize the famous Greco-Roman educational maxim: "The roots of education are bitter but its fruits are sweet." **12:** Isa 35.3. **13:** Prov 4:26. **15–17:** See 3.12–13n. **15:** *See*, the verb is plural, emphasizing the responsibility of all the members of the Christian group for the perseverance of each individual member. *Fails to obtain the grace*, or "falls short of the gift"; *root of bitterness*, see Deut 29.18, where this refers to idolatry within the community. **16–17:** Esau's example reinforces the author's warnings (6.4–8; 10.26–31). **16:** *Sold his birthright*, technically the right to a double share in the inheritance, Gen 25.29–34. **17:** *Blessing*, Gen 27.30–34. **18–19:** The author recalls the appearance of God at Sinai at the giving of the law (Ex 19.16–19; 20.18–21; Deut. 4:11–12,33,36 25; 5:22–27). **20:** Ex 19.12–13. **21:** Moses had said this in regard to the golden calf incident (Deut 9.19). **24:** *The blood of Abel*, Gen 4.10. **25:** Compare the warning

they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! 26 At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven." 27 This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; 29 for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

13 Let mutual love continue. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.[a] 4 Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." 6 So we can say with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper;
I will not be afraid.
What can anyone do to me?"

7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food,[b] which have not benefited those who observe them. 10 We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent[c] have no right to eat. 11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. 12 Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. 13 Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. 14 For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. 15 Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing—for that would be harmful to you.

18 Pray for us; we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. 19 I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you very soon.

20 Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 make you complete in

[a] Gk *were in the body*
[b] Gk *not by foods*
[c] Or *tabernacle*

in 2.1–4. **26:** Hag 2.6. In the author's worldview, the eternal realm of God's kingdom already exists, but remains invisible and inaccessible to his Son's followers until the removal of the visible cosmos (see Heb 6.19–20; 9.8). See 1.10–12n. **28:** *Give thanks*, or "show gratitude." The response called for includes costly loyalty, bold confession, and diligent service (see 13:12–13,15–16). **29:** Deut 4.24.

13.1–21: Specific advice for embodying gratitude. 1: *Mutual love*, Gk "philadelphia," the love that exists between siblings, celebrated as the strongest kind of love in the ancient world, involving sharing of resources, solidarity, cooperation, and inviolable mutual commitment. **2:** *Entertained angels*, Gen 18.1–8; 19.1; Tobit. **5–6:** The author again reminds the hearers about their greatest asset, namely God's patronage and protection, jeopardized when they long for their lost status and property. **5:** Deut 31.6; Josh 1.5. **6:** Ps 118.6. **11:** Lev 16.27. **12:** Mt 21.39; Jn 19.20. **13:** *Abuse*, better "reproach." The focus is on social shaming as the price of loyalty and obedience to God. **14:** *No lasting city*, see 1.10–12n. **15:** *Sacrifice of praise,* see Ps 50.14,23; Hos 14.2. **20:** *Great shepherd of the sheep*, see Ezek 34.22–24; Jn 10.11–18; 1 Pet 2.25.

everything good so that you may do his will, working among us[a] that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

22 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,[b] bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. 23 I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free; and if he comes in time, he will be with me when I see you. 24 Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy send you greetings. 25 Grace be with all of you.[c]

[a] Other ancient authorities read *you*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

13.22–25: Epistolary postscript. 23: *Timothy* is a prominent member of the Pauline team (see Acts 16.1–3; 17.14–15; 1 Cor 4.17; 2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; 1 Thess 1.1; 3.2,6).

THE LETTER OF JAMES

NAME AND CANONICAL STATUS

The letter of James gets its name from the opening greeting (1.1) that identifies the author by the Greek name *Iakōbos* (from the common Jewish name "Jacob"), translated into English as "James."

The church historian Eusebius noted that the letter found slow acceptance into the Christian canon despite the fact that it was "regularly used in very many churches" as one of the "'general' epistles" (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23; 3.25). The *Muratorian Canon* (late second century) does not mention James, but the letter was included in Bishop Athanasius's canon list (ca. 367 CE). Its canonicity was then largely secure until the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, when Martin Luther moved it (along with Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation) to the end of the New Testament; in Luther's view it lacked essential elements of the gospel. But John Calvin and Philip Melanchthon, like the Council of Trent (1546), defended both the canonical status and the theological value of the letter.

AUTHORSHIP

From the earliest discussions of the letter in the third century, Christian tradition has held that the name "James" in the opening refers to a brother of Jesus (Mt 13.55; Mk 6.3; Gal 1.19) who was an early leader of the Jerusalem church (Gal 2.9) and according to Acts (see 15.13–21) played a decisive role in an apostolic directive stipulating what aspects of Torah observance should be required of Gentile believers. Some have even seen similarities in language between this letter and the apostolic letter in Acts 15.23–29. Yet scholars from ancient times to the present have questioned whether that James is the actual author. Jerome was aware of assertions the letter "was published under [James's] name by another" (De Vir. Ill.: On Illustrious Men 2). The Greek literary style seems well beyond the capabilities of a Galilean villager. Between those who maintain direct authorship by Jesus's brother and those who think the letter was only attributed to him, some have suggested that after James's martyrdom (ca. 62 CE; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200–203) his disciples reworked material originating from him to create the letter we know.

DATE AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The only clues regarding the letter's date stem from connections with other literature. The author presumes knowledge of not only the Jewish scriptures but also teachings by Jesus (as examples, compare 1.5 to Mt 7.11, and 2.5 to Mt 5.3) and Paul (compare 2.14–26 to Rom 3.27–4.22). Whether there was direct acquaintance with written materials such as the Q collection of Jesus's sayings or Paul's letters is a matter of continuing debate. If James's statement a person is "not [justified] by faith alone" (2.24) is a direct response to the contrary assertion in Rom 3.28, this letter cannot be earlier than the late 50s CE. A latest possible date around 95 CE is suggested by evidence that *1 Clem.* 29.1; 30.1–5 is dependent on Jas. 4.1–10, and *1 Clem*. 30.3; 31.2 on Jas 2.14–26.

There are likewise no solid indications of the historical circumstances that prompted the letter. The symbolic address of the recipients as the "twelve tribes" raises the possibility that the language of "Dispersion" (1.1 and note) is likewise symbolic (see the conclusion regarding the need to bring back anyone who "wanders from the truth," 5.19–20; but compare 1 Pet 1.1). Certainly the choice of these images together with the esteem for the "law" (Gk *nomos*, corresponding to Heb *torah*; 1.25; 2.8–12; 4.11), the reference to their "assembly" by the Gk *synagōgēs* (lit. "synagogue"; 2.2), and the use of the style and many examples from the Septuagint (LXX) convince most interpreters the letter was directed to ethnic Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah/Christ (1.1; 2.1). Yet even these indicators are ambiguous. The Septuagint was scripture for both ethnically Gentile and Jewish followers of Jesus. Such writers as Ignatius, Hermas, Justin, Origen, and Eusebius used the terms *synagōgēs* and *ekklēsia* ("church") both in parallel and interchangeably for exclusively Gentile communities well after the first century. Though each item may be inconclusive in itself, their cumulative presence in a letter identifying its author as Jacob/James makes it likely the letter originated with Jewish followers of Jesus.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

Many scholars have described the letter as a loosely organized collection of teachings similar to the book of Proverbs. More recent literary analyses using both ancient and modern approaches, however, have converged

on an understanding of the letter's structure. Following its epistolary salutation (1.1), there is a twofold introduction (1.2–11; 1.12–21) that sets out in parallel fashion some major themes of the book (testing, wisdom, and consistency). Several longer units follow the introduction and develop specific themes: consistency of word and action (1.22–2.13); faith and works (2.14–26); proper speech (3.1–18); relations with others and God (4.1–12); and coming judgment (4.13–5.9). The letter concludes (5.10–20) with brief exhortations regarding the recipients' responsibilities toward other members of the community.

INTERPRETATION

Luther's treatment of the letter of James made it difficult to hear the letter on its own terms. While 2.14–26 may be a reaction against libertine readings of Paul's teaching that justification was "by faith apart from works" (Rom 3.28), both ancient and many modern scholars are less clear that James and Paul are in fundamental disagreement with each other. Both see faith primarily as trust in God (Rom 4.5; Jas 1.5–6), and both argue that faith should shape one's manner of life (Rom 2.13; Phil 2.12–13; Jas 2.18). Yet issues of justification do not pervade the letter as a whole. Reading James on its own terms requires seeing how the understanding of consistently living out "the implanted word" (1.21) developed in the first two chapters leads to the specific ethical teachings at both personal (1.19–21, 26; 3.13–18) and communal (2.2–4; 4.11–12) levels and to a strong stand in favor of social justice (1.27; 2.5; 5.4). Recent scholars have tended to focus on the relationships between "poor" and "rich" and the place of anointing and prayer for the sick (5.13–16).

Timothy B. Cargal

1 James, a servant[a] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:
Greetings.

[2] My brothers and sisters,[b] whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, [3] because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; [4] and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

[5] If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. [6] But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; [7, 8] for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

[9] Let the believer[c] who is lowly boast in being raised up, [10] and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. [11] For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

[12] Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and

[a] Gk *slave*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Gk *brother*

1.1: Salutation. *Servant of God and . . . Christ,* a unique dual designation in the New Testament, where identifications of people as "servant of God" (Titus 1.1; 1 Pet 2.16; Rev 7.3), "servant of (Jesus) Christ" (Rom 1.1; Eph 6.6; Jude 1), or "servant of the Lord" (2 Tim 2.24) are common. *Twelve tribes,* symbolic reference to the church as a new Israel (cf. Rev 7.4–8). *Dispersion,* scattered either geographically (cf. 1 Pet 1.1) or symbolically (5.19–20n.).

1.2–11: Trials and wisdom. 2: *Trials,* or "temptations" as in 1.12 (Gk "peirasmos"). *Consider,* in Greek either a command or a statement of usual practice ("you considered"). **3:** *You know . . . testing . . . produces endurance,* common teaching of Jewish wisdom tradition (cf. Rom 5.3–4). **4–5:** *Lacking in nothing . . . lacking in wisdom,* suggests against their view that wisdom is a gift from God rather than learned through "trials" (cf. 1 Kings 3). **6:** *Ask in faith,* trusting God to give the "gift" (1.17) rather than temptation (1.13–14). **7–8:** *Double-minded,* not knowing what God will do. **9–11:** Reversal of fortunes between poor and rich (2.5; 5.1–3; cf. 1 Sam 2.7; Lk 6.20–26).

1.12–21: Life through the word. 12: *Crown,* victor's laurel wreath rather than royal diadem (cf. Rev 2.10).

will receive the crown of life that the Lord[a] has promised to those who love him. [13] No one, when tempted, should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. [14] But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; [15] then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. [16] Do not be deceived, my beloved.[b]

[17] Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.[c] [18] In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

[19] You must understand this, my beloved:[b] let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; [20] for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. [21] Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

[22] But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. [23] For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves[d] in a mirror; [24] for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. [25] But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

[26] If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. [27] Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

2 My brothers and sisters,[e] do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?[f] [2] For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, [3] and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet,"[g] [4] have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? [5] Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters.[h] Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? [6] But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? [7] Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

[a] Gk *he*; other ancient authorities read *God*
[b] Gk *my beloved brothers*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *variation due to a shadow of turning*
[d] Gk *at the face of his birth*
[e] Gk *My brothers*
[f] Or *hold the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ without acts of favoritism*
[g] Gk *Sit under my footstool*
[h] Gk *brothers*

14–15: *Desire . . . sin . . . death,* certain progression of acting consistent with one's corrupted will. **18:** God's opposite desire (*purpose*) to use *the word of truth* to give *birth* to a new will within us (cf. 1.21). **19:** Need for self-control; cf. Sir 5.10–14. **20:** Greek explicitly contrasts *anger* that originates in people ("orgē andros") with *righteousness* that is from God ("dikaiosunēn theou"). **21:** Consistency with God's *implanted word* both checks improper action and *saves* one's *soul*/life.

1.22–2.13: Consistency of word and action. Section framed by references to speech, actions, and God's law. **1.22–25:** Here *the word* that must be done is the "implanted word" (1.21) from God (Mt 7.24; Rom 2.13), not their own words. **24:** *Immediately forget* in the sense that behavior will not change unless there is a unity of word and deed. **25:** *Perfect . . . law of liberty,* God's revealed will makes one "mature and complete" (1.4) and free from the lure of improper desire (1.14). **26:** *Bridle their tongues,* now the focus shifts to consistency between their own speech and actions (2.16n.; 3.2). **27:** *Religion* should assist others and thereby one's self as well (cf. Mic 6.8). **2.1–4:** Discriminatory actions rooted in socio-economic *distinctions*. **5:** They claim to "believe" (see 2.1) that God chose the poor (see 1.9–10), but their actions reveal that they have chosen the rich. **6:** *Oppress you,* see 5.1–6. **7:** *The excellent name,* the "glorious Lord Jesus Christ" (2.1), *invoked* in their baptism.

8 You do well if you really fulfill the royal
law according to the scripture, "You shall love
your neighbor as yourself." 9 But if you show
partiality, you commit sin and are convicted
by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever
keeps the whole law but fails in one point has
become accountable for all of it. 11 For the one
who said, "You shall not commit adultery,"
also said, "You shall not murder." Now if you
do not commit adultery but if you murder,
you have become a transgressor of the law.
12 So speak and so act as those who are to be
judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment
will be without mercy to anyone who has
shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judg-
ment.

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters,[a]
if you say you have faith but do not have
works? Can faith save you? 15 If a brother or
sister is naked and lacks daily food, 16 and one
of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm
and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply
their bodily needs, what is the good of that?
17 So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith
and I have works." Show me your faith
apart from your works, and I by my works
will show you my faith. 19 You believe that
God is one; you do well. Even the demons
believe—and shudder. 20 Do you want to be
shown, you senseless person, that faith apart
from works is barren? 21 Was not our ances-
tor Abraham justified by works when he
offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see
that faith was active along with his works,
and faith was brought to completion by the
works. 23 Thus the scripture was fulfilled
that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was
reckoned to him as righteousness," and he
was called the friend of God. 24 You see that
a person is justified by works and not by
faith alone. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the
prostitute also justified by works when she
welcomed the messengers and sent them
out by another road? 26 For just as the body
without the spirit is dead, so faith without
works is also dead.

3 Not many of you should become teach-
ers, my brothers and sisters,[a] for you
know that we who teach will be judged with
greater strictness. 2 For all of us make many
mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in
speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole
body in check with a bridle. 3 If we put bits
into the mouths of horses to make them obey
us, we guide their whole bodies. 4 Or look at
ships: though they are so large that it takes
strong winds to drive them, yet they are guid-
ed by a very small rudder wherever the will
of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a
small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small
fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue
is placed among our members as a world of
iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire
the cycle of nature,[b] and is itself set on fire

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Or *wheel of birth*

8: Lev 19.18 as hallmark of God's reign revealed in Jesus (Mk 12.28–31; Jn 13.34; Gal 5.14). **10:** Unity of the law in the command to love (Rom 13.8–9; cf. Deut 27.26; 4 Macc 5.19–21). **11:** *You murder,* charge possibly based on actions in 5.6; cf. 4.2, **2.12:** Summary conclusion of section. **13:** Cf. Mt 6.14–15.

2.14–26: Faith and works. 14: *Works,* or "deeds," a translation that avoids overstating differences between James and Paul (see Introduction). *Can faith save,* i.e., faith only spoken about but not acted on cannot make one spiritually alive (see 2.17, 26). **16:** *Keep warm* and *eat* in Greek are passive verbs ("be warm and well fed"), expressing what one wants and expects God to do. Stating God's desire for the needy, they fail to act on it (cf. 1.22). **18:** James rejects separating *faith* and *works,* insisting on a both/and relationship between them. **21–22:** Abraham's *works* in offering Isaac (see Gen 22.1–19) may bring his *faith . . . to completion* by showing absolute trust in God's promise Isaac was the heir (cf. Heb 11.17–19). **23:** Quoting Gen 15.6. *Friend of God,* see 2 Chr 20.7; Isa 41.8, and contrast Jas 4.4. **25:** *Rahab* also acted on faith in God's promise (Josh 2.8–13; cf. Heb 11.31).

3.1–18: Proper use of speech is teaching God's wisdom. 1: *Judged with greater strictness,* both for consistency between words and actions, and for mercy toward others (2.12–13). **2:** *Perfect,* or "mature" as in 1.4 (Gk "teleios"). **3–4:** *Bits* and *rudder* exercise control far beyond what might be expected from their size because they express *the will of the pilot* or rider. **5:** *The tongue* likewise expresses the person's will and directs one's actions (Lk 6.45). **6:** *Tongue is . . . set on fire by hell,* destructive impact of will and actions opposed to God's will (cf. 1.14–15, 26–27).

by hell.[a] [7] For every species of beast and bird,
of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and
has been tamed by the human species, [8] but
no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil,
full of deadly poison. [9] With it we bless the
Lord and Father, and with it we curse those
who are made in the likeness of God. [10] From
the same mouth come blessing and cursing.
My brothers and sisters,[b] this ought not to
be so. [11] Does a spring pour forth from the
same opening both fresh and brackish water?
[12] Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters,[c]
yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can
salt water yield fresh.

[13] Who is wise and understanding among
you? Show by your good life that your works
are done with gentleness born of wisdom.
[14] But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and
false to the truth. [15] Such wisdom does not
come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. [16] For where there is envy
and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. [17] But the
wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and
good fruits, without a trace of partiality or
hypocrisy. [18] And a harvest of righteousness is
sown in peace for[d] those who make peace.

4 Those conflicts and disputes among
you, where do they come from? Do they
not come from your cravings that are at war
within you? [2] You want something and do
not have it; so you commit murder. And you
covet[e] something and cannot obtain it; so you
engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not
have, because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do
not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order
to spend what you get on your pleasures.
[4] Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship
with the world is enmity with God? Therefore
whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. [5] Or do you suppose
that it is for nothing that the scripture says,
"God[f] yearns jealously for the spirit that he
has made to dwell in us"? [6] But he gives all the
more grace; therefore it says,

"God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble."

[7] Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist
the devil, and he will flee from you. [8] Draw
near to God, and he will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify
your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Lament
and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be
turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. [10] Humble yourselves before the Lord,
and he will exalt you.

[11] Do not speak evil against one another,
brothers and sisters.[g] Whoever speaks evil

[a] Gk *Gehenna*
[b] Gk *My brothers*
[c] Gk *my brothers*
[d] Or *by*
[e] Or *you murder and you covet*
[f] Gk *He*
[g] Gk *brothers*

8: *No one can tame,* an implicit call to do the very thing said to be impossible. **9:** *Lord and Father,* both titles referring to God. *Likeness of God,* human beings who should act as God's agents (see Gen 1.26). **10:** *Blessing and cursing,* another indication of "double-mindedness" (1.7–8; 4.8). **11–12:** Cf. Mt 7.16–18. **13:** *Who is wise,* teachers should be those whose *good life* shows both *works* of the word (1.22) and the *gentleness* of mercy (2.13) arising from God's will *born of wisdom* (cf. 1.18). **15–16:** *Earthly, unspiritual, devilish,* what some might call *wisdom* is proven by its effects (*envy, selfish ambition, disorder,* and *wickedness*) not to be wisdom at all. **17–18:** Genuine *wisdom* is likewise proven by its origins (*from above,* see 1.5, 17) and effects (cf. these virtues and preceding vices with Gal 5.19–24).

4.1–12: Relations with God and others. 1: *Your cravings,* improper desire brings destruction to the community as well as the self (cf. 1.14–15). **2:** *Murder,* probably hyperbole, although the charge is leveled three times in the letter (see 2.11; 5.6n.). **3:** *Ask and do not receive,* here the problem is the purpose of the request (*pleasures*) rather than "doubt" (see 1.6–8). **4:** *Adulterers,* Greek is feminine ("Adulteresses!"), recalling prophetic tradition of casting Israel as God's unfaithful wife (Jer 3.6–10; Ezek 16.8–52; Hos 1–3; cf. Mk 8.38). *Friend of the world . . . enemy of God,* contrast 2.23. **5:** *Scripture says,* either a general statement setting up the citation in the next verse or a quotation from an unknown source. **6:** Quotation from Prov 3.34. **8:** *Purify your hearts,* the seat of will and intellect (Mt 13.15; Jn 13.2), and so a correction to *double-mindedness* that results from nearness with God (cf. 1.7–8). **9–10:** Repentance in anticipation of the great reversal at the last day (see 1.9–10). **11:** *Not a doer of the law*

against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money." 14 Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, commits sin.

5 Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. 2 Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure[a] for the last days. 4 Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. 5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.

7 Be patient, therefore, beloved,[b] until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.[c] 9 Beloved,[d] do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! 10 As an example of suffering and patience, beloved,[b] take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

12 Above all, my beloved,[b] do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "Yes" be yes and your "No" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

13 Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. 14 Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone

[a] Or *will eat your flesh, since you have stored up fire*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Or *is at hand*
[d] Gk *Brothers*

but a judge, the law properly rules over the readers (2.8; cf. 1.25). **12:** God is *able to save* by changing one's will (1.18, 21) or to *destroy* by being left to one's "desire . . . sin . . . [and] death" (1.14–15).

4.13–5.9: Coming judgment. 4.14: *You do not . . . know,* Christ's return "is near" (5.8–9), but the precise time is unknown (Mk 13.32). *Mist that . . . vanishes,* the impermanence of this age and its ways of life (1.11). **15:** *If the Lord wishes,* actions are properly determined by God's will and word (1.22). **17:** Theologically termed "sins of omission" arising from failing to do what one knows God desires (2.16n.). **5.2–4:** *Gold and silver have rusted,* while these metals do not rust or corrode, the imagery suggests deterioration (*rotted, moth-eaten;* cf. Mt 6.19–21) from lack of use by both the rich and those from whom they have been *kept back by fraud* (cf. 2.15–16). *Wages* were to be paid daily according to Jewish law (Deut 24.14–15). **6:** *Condemned and murdered the righteous one,* possibly a reference to Jesus's crucifixion but more likely to the general mistreatment of the poor by the rich as elsewhere in the letter (2.6b–7; 5.4; cf. Sir 34.26–27). **7:** *Precious crop,* possibly a sign of hope that repentance by the rich may yet lead to their inclusion in the spiritual harvest (5.19–20; cf. Mt 9.37–38).

5.10–20: Closing exhortations. The letter ends with brief exhortations to fulfill responsibilities to other members of the community. **10–11:** As in 1.2–5 and 1.12–18, God's *purpose* during times of *endurance* is not to put people through "trials" or "temptations" but to be *compassionate and merciful.* **12:** If one's actions are consistent with one's words there will be no need for an *oath* (cf. Mt 5.33–37). **13–16:** Both prayer and praise are here placed in communal context. **15:** *Will save . . . will raise,* these verbs can refer both to temporal physical healing and to

who has committed sins will be forgiven.
16 Therefore confess your sins to one another,
and pray for one another, so that you may be
healed. The prayer of the righteous is power-
ful and effective. 17 Elijah was a human being
like us, and he prayed fervently that it might
not rain, and for three years and six months
it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed
again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth
yielded its harvest.

19 My brothers and sisters,[a] if anyone
among you wanders from the truth and is
brought back by another, 20 you should know
that whoever brings back a sinner from wan-
dering will save the sinner's[b] soul from death
and will cover a multitude of sins.

[a] Gk *My brothers*
[b] Gk *his*

spiritual salvation and resurrection at the end of the age; given other uses of *save* in the letter (1.21; 2.14; 4.12; 5.20), James probably intends both senses in this context. **17–18:** Since Elijah (1 Kings 17.1; 18.41–45) was *like us,* he is a typical rather than extraordinary example (but see Jesus's remarks at Lk 4.25–27). **19–20:** *From wandering,* lit., "from the error of his way," recalling Rahab's actions in saving herself and the messengers (2.25). *Sinner's,* lit. "his," referring either to one who *wanders from the truth* or to *whoever brings back* the wanderer. If Rahab provides the pattern, the ambiguity may be deliberate and express James's understanding of what the letter has accomplished.

THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

NAME, AUTHORSHIP, AND DATE

The First Letter of Peter presents itself as a pastoral letter written by the apostle Peter from "Babylon," where he is accompanied by Silvanus (= Silas) and Mark (5.12–13), to churches in five provinces of Asia Minor (1.1). Some scholars still treat Simon Peter as the letter's author, with Silvanus as secretary (5.12); others consider Silvanus as the actual author, who wrote at Peter's instruction. However, the situation that the letter indirectly describes points to a time after Peter's death, which probably occurred in the early 60s CE. The high level of its Greek prose, the letter's rhetorical sophistication, and familiarity with Hellenistic religious thought seem inappropriate for a Galilean fisherman and missionary to Jews (Gal 2.9). The lack of references to the life and teaching of the earthly Jesus, the christological emphasis on the cosmic Christ, and the address to Gentile Christians who had previously lived a sinful idolatrous life (1.14,18,21; 2.1,9–11,25; 4.3) all point to a later disciple of Peter writing in the name of the revered apostle. Thus most scholars interpret the document as a letter from the last decade of the first century CE, written in Peter's name to support the claim that its teaching represented the apostolic faith.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The letter itself claims to be written by a presbyter (elder; 5.1) of the Roman church—the "Babylon" of 5.13 was a common cryptogram for Rome at the end of the first century (cf., e.g., Rev 17.5,9; 18.2,10,21). The references to Silvanus and Mark, both known companions of Paul (1 Thess 1.1; Philem 24), are part of a literary picture that combines elements of Pauline tradition with the figure of Peter. First Peter contains numerous points of contact with Paul's letters (compare, e.g., 2.1–5 and Rom 12.1; 2.7–10 and Rom 9–11; 2.13–14 and Rom 13.1–7). The Pauline letter form, including its distinctive structure and expressions, is adopted by 1 Peter (see 1.1–2n.; 4.10n). The letter thus represents the combination of Pauline and Petrine traditions in the church of Rome at the end of the first century, set forth in a pastoral letter to churches struggling in difficult social situations.

STRUCTURE

The structure of First Peter is an adaptation of the Pauline letter form: epistolary greeting (1.1–2); thanksgiving (1.3–12); the body of the letter (1.13–5.11); epistolary conclusion (5.12–14). The body of the letter portrays the new identity of the people of God (1.13–2.10), Christian conduct in the given structures of society (2.11–3.12), and responsible suffering in the face of hostility (3.13–5.11).

CONTENTS AND INTERPRETATION

First Peter is a real letter, a cohesive composition, and not, as some scholars once thought, a baptismal homily to which epistolary elements were added secondarily. Recent rhetorical analyses highlight its literary unity as a form of deliberative oratory, intended to evoke a decision from the readers. The letter addresses a critical situation in the lives of the recipients, who once participated in the social and cultural life of their communities, but since their conversion to Christ have become marginalized and abused. The society to which they once belonged now considers them an unwelcome, even dangerous sectarian movement (cf. Acts 28.22—"this sect . . . that everywhere is spoken against"). While Christians are called to suffer "for the name" (4.15–16), the abuse is mostly verbal (2.22–23; 3.9–12,16). The positive attitude toward the state (2.13–17) suggests that there is as yet no overt government persecution, except perhaps for occasional arbitrary acts by lower-level officials. First Peter offers realistic encouragement and instruction to Christians attempting to live faithfully in such a situation.

The author has not composed a theological essay, but gives instructions that are based on theological reflection, expressed indirectly by the narrative chronology in the letter: God created the world (4.19), God chose an elect people (2.9–10), God sent Christ who was rejected by humans but exalted by God (2.4), God sent the Spirit and Christian evangelists who established a new people of God and converted the addressees (1.12), and God will send Christ in the near future to conduct the final judgment (1.7,13; 4.7). Christians live their lives in the time between Christ's resurrection and return.

The christological pattern of suffering and rejection is foundational for the ethic 1 Peter commends: just as Christ was misunderstood and suffered unjustly for the sake of others, so Christians are now called to follow "in his steps" (2.21). Just as all Christians are instructed to respect the government authorities (2.13–17), so the most vulnerable Christians, slaves of unbelieving masters and wives of unbelieving husbands, are instructed to fit uncomplainingly into the given structures of society as a testimony to the faith (2.18–3.6). Such behavior may convert the oppressor (3.1–2), but if not following the example set by Christ will be vindicated soon at the last judgment (4.5–7).

M. Eugene Boring

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus,
Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,
2 who have been chosen and destined by God
the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be
obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled
with his blood:

May grace and peace be yours in abundance.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given
us a new birth into a living hope through the
resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable,
undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for
you, **5** who are being protected by the power of
God through faith for a salvation ready to be
revealed in the last time. **6** In this you rejoice,[a]
even if now for a little while you have had to
suffer various trials, **7** so that the genuineness
of your faith—being more precious than gold
that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may
be found to result in praise and glory and hon-
or when Jesus Christ is revealed. **8** Although you
have not seen[b] him, you love him; and even
though you do not see him now, you believe
in him and rejoice with an indescribable and
glorious joy, **9** for you are receiving the outcome
of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

10 Concerning this salvation, the proph-
ets who prophesied of the grace that was to
be yours made careful search and inquiry,
11 inquiring about the person or time that the
Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it
testified in advance to the sufferings destined
for Christ and the subsequent glory. **12** It
was revealed to them that they were serv-
ing not themselves but you, in regard to the
things that have now been announced to you
through those who brought you good news
by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things
into which angels long to look!

13 Therefore prepare your minds for
action;[c] discipline yourselves; set all your
hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring

[a] Or *Rejoice in this*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *known*
[c] Gk *gird up the loins of your mind*

1.1–2: Salutation. The author adapts the form used by Paul (see Rom 1.1–7n.). **1:** An *apostle* is an authorized representative. *Exiles of the Dispersion*, applying images of Israel to Christians (see Jas 1.1n.). *Pontus . . . Bithynia*, Roman provinces in Asia Minor. **2:** A proto-Trinitarian formula. *Obedience* and being *sprinkled with Christ's blood* are covenant language (see Ex 24.3–8).

1.3–12: Thanksgiving. As in 2 Cor 1.3 and Eph 1.3, the customary thanksgiving (see Rom 1.8–15n.) becomes a doxological expression of praise that constitutes the theological basis for the imperatives to follow. **3:** *Hope* expresses the present confidence in the reality of future redemption founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *New birth* is related to baptism (see 1.23; 2.2; 3.20–22; Jn 3.3–5). **5:** *Salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*. The present experience has a future consummation. The believer does not go "up" to heaven, but "forward" to the future reward to be revealed at the end time. **8:** The contrast is not between the author who has seen and the readers who have not, but is a statement about Christian faith as such (as in Jn 20.29; Rom 8.23–24; 2 Cor 4.18; 5.7; Heb 11.1–40). **12:** The readers' Christian lives, though beset with difficulties (1.6; 2.19–24; 3.14–15; 4.12–19; 5.10), represent the climax of God's plan for the ages, which even the prophets and the angels could only long to share.

1.13–5.11: Body of the letter, calling the readers to disciplined thinking and action (1.13; 4.7; 5.8).

1.13–2.10: The new identity as the elect and holy people of God. The preceding indicative statements of God's mighty acts lead to imperatives for the Christian life. **1.13:** In the Greek text, the first imperative in the

you when he is revealed. 14 Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. 15 Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; 16 for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

17 If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. 18 You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. 20 He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. 21 Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

22 Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth[a] so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply[b] from the heart.[c] 23 You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.[d] 24 For

"All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
25 but the word of the Lord endures
forever."

That word is the good news that was announced to you.

2 Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and 5 like living stones, let yourselves be built[e] into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in scripture:

"See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;
and whoever believes in him[f] will not be
put to shame."

7 To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the
corner,"

8 and

"A stone that makes them stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,[g] in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

10 Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

[a] Other ancient authorities add *through the Spirit*
[b] Or *constantly*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *a pure heart*
[d] Or *through the word of the living and enduring God*
[e] Or *you yourselves are being built*
[f] Or *it*
[g] Gk *a people for his possession*

letter is the command to *hope* for Christ's triumphal appearance. **15:** The second imperative to *be holy* means to live a life set apart for God's service, though in the midst of the world. **16:** Quoting Lev 11.44–45; 19.2; 20.7. **17–18:** The third imperative is to *live* in reverent fear of God rather than of the oppressive culture (cf. 2.17; 3.14). **19:** *Lamb without . . . blemish,* see Ex 12.5; Lev 23.12; Num 6.14; etc. **21**: Christian faith is theocentric, in God who has acted definitively in Christ. **22:** The fourth imperative is the command of *love*, unselfish caring for others (see Mt 22.34–40; Rom 13.8–10; 1 Cor 13). **24–25:** Isa 40.6–8. **2.1–10:** The fifth imperative is to *long for* the means of spiritual nourishment so that they may *grow* (2.2). After the new birth comes nurture that leads to maturity. **3:** Ps 34:8. **4:** Ps 118.22; Isa 28.16; Mt 21.42. **5–8:** The imagery shifts from birth and growth to the construction of a *spiritual house* (temple) and then to a *holy priesthood*. The images of the Christian life are communal rather than individualistic. **6:** Isa 28.16. **7:** Ps 118.22. **8:** Isa 8.14–15. **9–10:** Hos 2.23; Ex 19.6. Biblical language for Israel is applied to the readers, who were formerly Gentiles (1.18).

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles
to abstain from the desires of the flesh that
wage war against the soul. 12 Conduct your-
selves honorably among the Gentiles, so that,
though they malign you as evildoers, they
may see your honorable deeds and glorify
God when he comes to judge.[a]

13 For the Lord's sake accept the author-
ity of every human institution,[b] whether
of the emperor as supreme, 14 or of gover-
nors, as sent by him to punish those who
do wrong and to praise those who do right.
15 For it is God's will that by doing right you
should silence the ignorance of the foolish.
16 As servants[c] of God, live as free people,
yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for
evil. 17 Honor everyone. Love the family of
believers.[d] Fear God. Honor the emperor.

18 Slaves, accept the authority of your mas-
ters with all deference, not only those who
are kind and gentle but also those who are
harsh. 19 For it is a credit to you if, being aware
of God, you endure pain while suffering un-
justly. 20 If you endure when you are beaten
for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if
you endure when you do right and suffer for
it, you have God's approval. 21 For to this you
have been called, because Christ also suffered
for you, leaving you an example, so that you
should follow in his steps.

22 "He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth."
23 When he was abused, he did not return
abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten;
but he entrusted himself to the one who
judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his
body on the cross,[e] so that, free from sins, we
might live for righteousness; by his wounds[f]
you have been healed. 25 For you were going
astray like sheep, but now you have returned
to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

3 Wives, in the same way, accept the
authority of your husbands, so that, even
if some of them do not obey the word, they
may be won over without a word by their
wives' conduct, 2 when they see the purity
and reverence of your lives. 3 Do not adorn
yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair,
and by wearing gold ornaments or fine cloth-
ing; 4 rather, let your adornment be the inner
self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and
quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's
sight. 5 It was in this way long ago that the
holy women who hoped in God used to adorn
themselves by accepting the authority of
their husbands. 6 Thus Sarah obeyed Abra-
ham and called him lord. You have become
her daughters as long as you do what is good
and never let fears alarm you.

7 Husbands, in the same way, show consid-
eration for your wives in your life together,
paying honor to the woman as the weaker
sex,[g] since they too are also heirs of the gra-
cious gift of life—so that nothing may hinder
your prayers.

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit,
sympathy, love for one another, a tender
heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay
evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the
contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this

[a] Gk *God on the day of visitation*
[b] Or *every institution ordained for human beings*
[c] Gk *slaves*
[d] Gk *Love the brotherhood*
[e] Or *carried up our sins in his body to the tree*
[f] Gk *bruise*
[g] Gk *vessel*

2.11–3.12: Christian existence and conduct in society. Cf. Col 3.18–4.1; Eph 5.22–6.9; Titus 2.1–10; 1 Tim 2–3; 5.1–3. The Roman Empire, the institution of slavery, and the patriarchal family are accepted as the reality of the existing social order. They are given no divine legitimization, however, but are "human institutions" that are soon to pass away (see 1.17; 2.11; 4.7). **2.11–12:** In the meantime, Christian conduct within social structures is to be a testimony to others. **13–17:** Instructions to all on the proper attitude to God, the state, and each other. *Governors*, of provinces of the Roman empire. **17:** Cf. Rom 13.7. **18–25:** Instructions to slaves, leading to more general comments addressed to a wider audience (cf. 3.8–12n.). Though resembling the typical household codes of Hellenistic moralists, the author's instruction is based on the example of Christ who suffered unjustly, in words that reflect the suffering servant of Isa 53.5–12. **22:** Isa 53.9. **3.1–7:** Instructions to wives and husbands. **1:** Unbelieving husbands may be converted without preaching or argument by the Christian example of their wives; cf. 1 Cor 7.12–16. **6:** See Gen 18.12 (where NRSV translates the word for "lord" as "husband"). **8–12:** Concluding instructions to all. The more vulnerable members of the church, slaves and wives, are examples of the

that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. [10] For

"Those who desire life
and desire to see good days,
let them keep their tongues from evil
and their lips from speaking deceit;
[11] let them turn away from evil and do good;
let them seek peace and pursue it.
[12] For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their prayer.
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

[13] Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? [14] But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear,[a] and do not be intimidated, [15] but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; [16] yet do it with gentleness and reverence.[b] Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. [17] For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. [18] For Christ also suffered[c] for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you[d] to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, [19] in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, [20] who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. [21] And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for[e] a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, [22] who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

4 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,[f] arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), [2] so as to live for the rest of your earthly life[g] no longer by human desires but by the will of God. [3] You have already spent enough time in doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry. [4] They are surprised that you no longer join them in the same excesses of dissipation, and so they blaspheme.[h] [5] But they will have to give an accounting to him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. [6] For this is the reason the gospel was

[a] Gk *their fear*
[b] Or *respect*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *died*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *us*
[e] Or *a pledge to God from*
[f] Other ancient authorities add *for us*; others, *for you*
[g] Gk *rest of the time in the flesh*
[h] Or *they malign you*

conduct required of the whole church, which is in a vulnerable position in a hostile society. The whole church is addressed as "slaves" who are nevertheless "free" (2.16). The point is not culture-conforming submission but faith-empowered mission. **10–12:** Ps 34.12–16.

3.13–5.11: Responsible suffering in the face of hostility.

3.13–17: Suffering for doing good (= doing right). Following the example of Christ's unjust suffering does not mean passivity, but actively doing good. **15:** In word as well as action, Christians are to be able to give a *defense* (Gk "apologia") for the Christian faith, here summarized as "hope" (1.2,13,21).

3.18–22: Christological grounding. 18: *Put to death in the flesh* means that Jesus really died in the human sphere; *made alive in the Spirit* does not refer to a "part" of Christ that survived death, but affirms that God raised Christ to a new life in the divine realm (cf. 1.3; 2.4; 3.21–22). **19–20:** The precise meaning of this fragment of an ancient christological picture is unclear, but probably refers to Christ's preaching to the imprisoned evil spirits after his resurrection to announce his own victory (cf. Gen 6.1–4 as interpreted in *1 Enoch* 10.4–6). The picture is unrelated to 4.6 and the "descent to the world of the dead" of the Apostles' Creed. **20:** *Noah*, see Gen 6–8. *Eight persons*: Noah and his wife, and his three sons and their wives. **22:** See Eph 1.20; Heb 1.3.

4.1–6: Application to the Christian life. 3: As in 2.9–10, the church is the continuing people of God, and outsiders are *Gentiles*. **6:** The *dead* are probably Christians who heard the gospel while they were alive.

proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does.

7 The end of all things is near;[a] therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaining. 10 Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. 11 Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory,[b] which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.[c] 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker. 16 Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name. 17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And

"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?"

19 Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.

5 Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you 2 to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight,[d] not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it[e]—not for sordid gain but eagerly. 3 Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. 5 In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders.[f] And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for

"God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble."

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. 8 Discipline yourselves, keep alert.[g] Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters[h] in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. 10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal

[a] Or *is at hand*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *and of power*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *On their part he is blasphemed, but on your part he is glorified*
[d] Other ancient authorities lack *exercising the oversight*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *as God would have you do it*
[f] Or *of those who are older*
[g] Or *be vigilant*
[h] Gk *your brotherhood*

4.7–11: Eschatological exhortation. 9: Cf. Heb 13.2; 3 Jn 5–8. **10:** *Gift* is the distinctive Pauline word "charisma," found outside the Pauline tradition only here in the New Testament.

4.12–19: Suffering in joy and hope. Suffering is to be a witness to the truth of the faith, not the result of one's own antisocial behavior. *Fiery ordeal* refers to persecutions (1.6–7). On the name *Christian* cf. Acts 11.26; 26.28. **18:** Prov 11.31.

5.1–11: Concluding exhortation. 1: *Elders*, church officials (Acts 14.23; 20.17–38; 1 Tim 4.14; 5.17; Titus 1.5; Jas 5.14; 2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1). **5:** Prov 3.34.

glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. [11] To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

[12] Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. [13] Your sister church[a] in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark. [14] Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.[b]

[a] Gk *She who is*

[b] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

5.12–14: Conclusion of the Letter. *Silvanus* and *Mark* were companions of Paul (Acts 15.22; 2 Cor 1.19; Philem 24). *Babylon,* a cryptographic name for Rome. **14:** Cf. Rom 16.16; 1 Cor 16.20; 1 Thess 5.26.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

NAME AND CONTENTS

Like some other New Testament letters, 2 Peter takes its name from the sender of the letter, along with the information in 3.1 that it is his second letter. Its contents can be outlined as follows:

I. Letter opening: 2 Pet 1.1–15
   A. Salutation: 1.1–2
   B. Theme: 1.3–11
   C. Occasion of letter: 1.12–15
II. Letter body: 2 Pet 1.16–3.13
   A. Two arguments that Jesus will come again: 1.16–2.10a
      1. First argument: 1.16–18
      2. Second argument: 1.19–2.10a
   B. Critique of opponents: 2.10b–22
   C. Purpose and argument of letter restated: 3.1–13
III. Letter closing: 2 Pet 3.14–18

CANONICAL STATUS

The earliest list of New Testament documents, the Muratorian Canon (late second century CE), does not include 2 Peter. Likewise, Irenaeus and Tertullian, writing at about the same time, do not mention 2 Peter. Sometime later, Origen (ca. 253) puts 2 Peter in the category of doubtful writings. The earliest surviving copy of 2 Peter is in Papyrus 72, dating from about 300 CE. Copies of 2 Peter are also included in the biblical Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, written about fifty years later. Athanasius (367) includes 2 Peter in his canon list. Since that time, 2 Peter has been accepted by Greek- and Latin-speaking Christians as part of the New Testament, but it was not accepted by Syriac-speaking Christians until the sixth century.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND LITERARY HISTORY

Second Peter identifies its author as Simeon Peter, who was the leader of the twelve apostles of Jesus. Several other details of 2 Peter are consistent with this identification. According to 1.14 Jesus has revealed that the author will soon die; in Jn 21.18–19 Jesus predicts the death of Peter. According to 1.16–18 the author witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus; in Mk 9.2–8 and parallels, Peter witnesses Jesus's transfiguration. In 3.1 the author says that he is writing a second letter, possibly referring to 1 Peter.

Nevertheless, most New Testament scholars do not think Peter is the actual author of 2 Peter. A possible explanation for the composition of the letter by someone other than Peter is that 2 Peter is a testament in letter form. In a testament, a leader says farewell to his followers and gives them ethical advice and/or revelations about the future to guide the followers after the leader's death. Such testaments are usually composed in the leader's name by someone else.

Second Peter may have been written about 125 CE. That date is suggested by the reference in 3.16 to "all" of Paul's letters that ignorant people misunderstand the way they do the "other scriptures." This implies that at the time 2 Peter was written, there existed a collection of letters of Paul that were regarded as scripture. This might have been true about 125 CE. Second Peter is probably the last writing of the New Testament to have been composed.

The author of 2 Peter has used the letter of Jude as a source. Specifically, 2 Pet 2.1–3.3 is a revision of Jude 4–18, using Jude's language but ordinarily avoiding direct quotation. However, 2 Pet 2.17b quotes Jude 13b, and 2 Pet 3.2–3 quotes Jude 17–18 with several changes.

INTERPRETATION

The argument of 2 Peter is that followers of Jesus should live virtuously as they await his second coming and the fulfillment of his promises. The author warns against false teachers who will scoff at the idea that Jesus will come again and consequently will not encourage virtuous living. In accord with the conventions of the

testament form, the appearance of these false teachers is presented as a future problem, but it may be a problem already confronting the author and addressees.

After the salutation of the letter (1.1–2), the author begins by making this argument in general terms, maintaining that because Jesus has given his followers present benefits and the promise of future ones, it is necessary to live virtuously (1.3–11). After explaining that he writes so the addressees will always remember his teaching (1.12–15), the author directly rejects the argument that the second coming of Jesus is a matter of "cleverly devised myths" (1.16–2.10a) and criticizes the immoral behavior of the false teachers (2.10b–22). The author then resumes his argument against those who scoff at the expectation of Jesus's second coming (3.1–13) and brings his testamentary letter to a close (3.14–18).

Second Peter has not been influential in Christian history. One element of it that has often been taken up by others, beginning with Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose of Milan, is its statement that followers of Jesus will become "participants of the divine nature" (1.4). Another is its expectation that in the end the world will be destroyed by fire (3.7, 10, 12).

Terrance Callan

2 Peter	Jude	2 Peter	Jude
2.1	4	2.13	12
2.4	6	2.15	11
2.6	7	2.17	12–13, 16
2.10a	7–8	3.2	17
2.10b–11	8–9	3.3	18
2.12	10		

1 Simeon[a] Peter, a servant[b] and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:[c]

[2] May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

[3] His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by[d] his own glory and goodness. [4] Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. [5] For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, [6] and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, [7] and godliness with mutual[e] affection, and mutual[e] affection with love. [8] For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the

[a] Other ancient authorities read *Simon*
[b] Gk *slave*
[c] Or *of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *through*
[e] Gk *brotherly*
[f] Gk *brothers*

1.1–2: Salutation. The sender of the letter is *Simeon Peter*. Simeon, a variant of Simon, is the sender's personal name; Peter is the nickname given him by Jesus (see Mt 16.17–18). The addressees are described as those who have received faith. If 3.1 means that 2 Peter is addressed to the same people as 1 Peter, the specification of addressees in 1 Pet 1.1 may be assumed here.

1.3–11: Theme. **3–7:** This is a single, long sentence in Greek. *His* in v. 3 probably refers to Jesus. The sentence argues that because Jesus has given his followers the benefits mentioned in vv. 3–4, they should live the abundantly virtuous lives described in vv. 5–7. **8–11:** The author supports the argument made in vv. 3–7 by arguing that virtuous living will lead to the addressees' entering *the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (v. 11).

1.12–15: Occasion of letter. Jesus has told Peter that his death will come soon; this may refer to the saying of Jesus to Peter found in Jn 21.18. Peter writes so that people will be able to recall the teaching contained in his letter after Peter's death.

knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] For anyone who lacks these things is short-sighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins. [10] Therefore, brothers and sisters,[f] be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. [11] For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.

[12] Therefore I intend to keep on reminding you of these things, though you know them already and are established in the truth that has come to you. [13] I think it right, as long as I am in this body,[a] to refresh your memory, [14] since I know that my death[b] will come soon, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. [15] And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

[16] For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. [17] For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved,[c] with whom I am well pleased." [18] We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

[19] So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. [20] First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, [21] because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.[d]

2 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive opinions. They will even deny the Master who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. [2] Even so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers[e] the way of truth will be maligned. [3] And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation, pronounced against them long ago, has not been idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

[4] For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell[f] and committed them to chains[g] of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment; [5] and if he

[a] Gk *tent*
[b] Gk *the putting off of my tent*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *my beloved Son*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *but moved by the Holy Spirit saints of God spoke*
[e] Gk *because of them*
[f] Gk *Tartaros*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *pits*

1.16–18: First argument that Jesus will come again. Peter appeals to the transfiguration of Jesus as proof that expectation of Jesus's power and coming does not derive from *cleverly devised myths*. The story of Jesus's transfiguration is told in Mk 9.2–8, Mt 17.1–8, and Lk 9.28–36; according to these accounts Peter was one of three witnesses of the transfiguration. The words of the voice in 2 Pet 1.17b are close to the words of the voice in Mt 17.5b, which may be their source.

1.19–2.10a: Second argument that Jesus will come again. The author appeals at greater length to the prophetic message of scripture, implying that it predicts the second coming of Jesus. **1.19:** The author supports this appeal by comparing the prophetic message to *a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns*. Just as one relies on a lamp during the night, one should rely on scripture during the darkness of the present age. **2.1:** The author acknowledges the existence of *false prophets* as well as true ones, and says there will similarly be *false teachers* among the addressees who will teach something different than the author and *even deny the Master who bought them*. The *Master* is probably Jesus; he *bought* the false teachers, and all of his followers, by means of his death and resurrection. The false teachers deny him especially by denying his second coming. **2.4–10a:** The author summarizes three scriptural accounts of God's punishment of the unrighteous, two of which also describe salvation of the righteous (vv. 4–8), and concludes that God knows how to rescue the godly and punish the unrighteous (vv. 9–10a). In this way scripture predicts that Jesus will come again to do both of these things. In 2.1–10a the author of 2 Peter rewrites Jude 4–8a to describe the false teachers (2 Pet 2.1–3) and make his argument from scripture (2 Pet 2.4–10a). **4:** *The angels . . . sinned,* see Gen 6.1–4; *1 En.*6–12. *Cast . . . into hell* (Gk "tartarōsas"). Tartaros is the prison of the Titans of Greek myth. **5:** See Gen 6.5–9.29. *Seven others,* Noah's wife and his three sons and their wives (Gen 6.18). **6–8:** See Gen 18.20; 19.1–25.

did not spare the ancient world, even though
he saved Noah, a herald of righteousness,
with seven others, when he brought a flood
on a world of the ungodly; 6 and if by turning
the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes
he condemned them to extinction[a] and made
them an example of what is coming to the
ungodly;[b] 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous
man greatly distressed by the licentiousness
of the lawless 8 (for that righteous man, living
among them day after day, was tormented
in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds
that he saw and heard), 9 then the Lord knows
how to rescue the godly from trial, and to
keep the unrighteous under punishment un-
til the day of judgment 10 —especially those
who indulge their flesh in depraved lust, and
who despise authority.

Bold and willful, they are not afraid to
slander the glorious ones,[c] 11 whereas angels,
though greater in might and power, do not
bring against them a slanderous judgment
from the Lord.[d] 12 These people, however,
are like irrational animals, mere creatures of
instinct, born to be caught and killed. They
slander what they do not understand, and
when those creatures are destroyed,[e] they
also will be destroyed, 13 suffering[f] the penalty
for doing wrong. They count it a pleasure
to revel in the daytime. They are blots and
blemishes, reveling in their dissipation[g] while
they feast with you. 14 They have eyes full
of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice
unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in
greed. Accursed children! 15 They have left the
straight road and have gone astray, following
the road of Balaam son of Bosor,[h] who loved
the wages of doing wrong, 16 but was rebuked
for his own transgression; a speechless don-
key spoke with a human voice and restrained
the prophet's madness.

17 These are waterless springs and mists
driven by a storm; for them the deepest
darkness has been reserved. 18 For they speak
bombastic nonsense, and with licentious
desires of the flesh they entice people who
have just[i] escaped from those who live in
error. 19 They promise them freedom, but
they themselves are slaves of corruption; for
people are slaves to whatever masters them.
20 For if, after they have escaped the defile-
ments of the world through the knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are
again entangled in them and overpowered,
the last state has become worse for them
than the first. 21 For it would have been better
for them never to have known the way of
righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn
back from the holy commandment that was
passed on to them. 22 It has happened to them
according to the true proverb,

"The dog turns back to its own vomit,"

and,

"The sow is washed only to wallow in the
mud."

3 This is now, beloved, the second letter I
am writing to you; in them I am trying to
arouse your sincere intention by reminding
you 2 that you should remember the words
spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and
the commandment of the Lord and Savior
spoken through your apostles. 3 First of all

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *to extinction*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *an example to those who were to be ungodly*
[c] Or *angels*; Gk *glories*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *before the Lord*; others lack the phrase
[e] Gk *in their destruction*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *receiving*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *love-feasts*
[h] Other ancient authorities read *Beor*
[i] Other ancient authorities read *actually*

2.10b–22: Critique of opponents. The author adapts Jude 8b–16 to elaborate the negative description of the false teachers presented briefly in 2 Pet 2.1–3. In both passages the accusations against the false teachers are conventional. They may not be simple descriptions of the false teachers' behavior, but mainly intended to communicate and encourage a negative evaluation of them. **15–16:** See Num 22–24. **22:** The first quotation is from Prov 26.11; the second is from *The Story of Ahiqar* 8.15/18.

3.1–13: Purpose and argument of letter restated. 1–4: The author rewrites Jude 17–18 as he predicts the coming of *scoffers*, probably another name for the false teachers mentioned in 2.1, who will doubt the second coming of Jesus. **5–13:** The author offers various arguments against doubting the second coming of Jesus: the

you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts [4] and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died,[a] all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!" [5] They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, [6] through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. [7] But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless.

[8] But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. [9] The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you,[b] not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.[c]

[11] Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, [12] waiting for and hastening[d] the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? [13] But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

[14] Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; [15] and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, [16] speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. [17] You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. [18] But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.[e]

[a] Gk *our fathers fell asleep*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *on your account*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *will be burned up*
[d] Or *earnestly desiring*
[e] Other ancient authorities lack *Amen*

precedent of the flood in the time of Noah (vv. 5–7; cf. Gen 6.5–9.29), the different meaning of time for God and humans (v. 8; cf. Ps. 90.4), God's provision of an opportunity for repentance (v. 9), and the unknown time of the second coming, *the day of the Lord* (vv. 10–13; cf. 1 Thess 5.2). **13:** *New heavens and a new earth,* Isa 65.17; 66.22; Rev 21.1.

3.14–18: Letter closing. The author maintains that the letters of Paul agree with what he has said (vv. 15–16). His reference to *ignorant and unstable* people's twisting of these letters *to their own destruction* (v. 16) suggests that the views he opposes may depend on a different interpretation of Paul's letters.

THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

NAME

Ancient manuscripts title the work "the first letter of John" even though it does not follow the literary form of the ancient letter (see pp. 1611-12). It lacks an opening greeting identifying its author and addressees as well as the customary letter closing. The repeated references to writing (1.4; 2.1,7–8,12–14,21,26) and familiar address to its audience along with verbal similarities to two short letters (2–3 John) led scribes to use the title "letter."

CANONICAL STATUS AND AUTHORSHIP

First John has an opening resembling that of the Gospel of John (cf. 1.1–14 and Jn 1.1–18). Its ethical teaching focuses on the command to love one another which Jesus gave the disciples at the Last Supper in the Gospel (Jn 13.31–35; 1 Jn 3.11–17,23; 4.7–21). It came into the Christian canon as an authoritative interpretation of the Gospel.

The anonymous author was identified as the fourth evangelist by the end of the second century CE (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17; *Muratorian Canon*, lines 26–31; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.16.5). Since the Gospel was attributed to John the son of Zebedee, early Christian writers concluded that he wrote 1 John near the end of a long life (Jn 21.22–23). Modern scholars have a more complex view of the development of the Johannine community and its writings. The opening verses of 1 John employ a first-person plural "we" as witnesses to the truth revealed in Jesus (1 Jn 1.1–4). That "we" probably refers to a circle of teachers faithful to the apostolic testimony of the Beloved Disciple and the evangelist. A prominent member of that group composed this instruction as well as the letters 2 and 3 John.

DATE

The earliest allusions to 1 John occur in the mid-second century CE (Polycarp, *To the Philippians* 6.3; 7.1, compare 1 Jn 4.2–3; also by Papias according to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.36,1–2). Irenaeus (ca. 180 CE) cites 1 John explicitly. The date of 1 John depends upon its relationship to the Gospel of John. Its author employs language and themes familiar from the Gospel but never quotes it. Therefore it is possible that the Gospel as we know it had not yet taken its final written form when 1 John was written. A date around 100 CE would be plausible. Some scholars focus on the fact that 1 John appears less theologically developed than the Gospel in some respects. Attributes such as "light" and "life" are associated with God rather than the Son. Concern for forgiveness of sin and salvation in the final judgment has not been transformed by the Gospel's picture of the presence of eternal life in the believer. They conclude that 1 John should be dated earlier than the Gospel.

Yet although theological differences make 1 John appear to be earlier, the author's concerns suggest a historical context later than that of the Gospel. Jews and their hostility to faith in Jesus as Son of God, a major element in the Gospel (see Jn 9.13–41; 10.31–39), have disappeared from the discussion as have quotations from the Hebrew Bible. Instead the community has been shaken by schism (1 Jn 2.18–19). Those who have departed from the fellowship are said to deny the reality of Jesus's coming in the flesh (1.1–4; 4.1–3) and the saving significance of the death ("blood") of Jesus (5.6). In addition, 1 John describes a communal discipline of prayer for members who sin (5.16–17). Therefore 1 John speaks to a historical setting later than the Gospel. A community that had once been unified in the face of exclusion from the synagogue and persecution by outsiders (see Jn 16.1–4a) has split over interpretation of Jesus and salvation. The author seeks to reassure readers that they possess the truth revealed through Jesus.

LITERARY HISTORY

The rhetorical power of 1 John stems from its appeals to received tradition shared by its author and readers. The phrase "what was from the beginning" (1.1) not only imitates the Gospel opening (Jn 1.1), it applies to the teaching which follows (2.7,21,24; 3.11). Since 1 John does not speak to specific details of the readers' situation as letters usually do, or develop a sustained theological argument as Paul does in his letters, some scholars suggest that it was assembled from earlier written traditions. For example a core that concluded at 1 Jn 2.29 might

have been supplemented with homiletic reflections on love and polemic against the dissidents in the remaining chapters. First John 5.13 concludes the work in a fashion similar to the Gospel. 1 John 5.14–21 appears to be an epilogue added to the completed work.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

First John lacks a clearly defined structure that carries its argument from the opening witness to shared tradition (1.1–4) to the concluding statement of purpose (5.13) and appended remarks (5.14–21). Fellowship with the author and other Johannine witnesses requires belief in the teachings presented, which alternate between truths about the coming of Jesus and ethical exhortations focused on holiness and love within the community. Both aspects of the tradition are threatened by dissidents, who are characterized as "antichrists" emblematic of the evils predicted for the last days (4.1–6). The author often concludes one reflection and begins the next in the same sentence, so it is not entirely clear how to divide units within the work even looking at verbal clues such as "I am writing," "this is the message," or direct address to the readers as "little children" or "beloved." Another proposal finds the macrostructure of the Gospel in 1 John: prologue (1.1–4; Jn 1.1–18); God's light, truth, and life present in darkness (1.5–2.29; Jn 1.19–12.50); the Father's beloved children, love one another, and the Spirit abiding in the community (3.1–5.12; Jn 13.1–17.26); blood and water at the cross (5.6–8; Jn 19.34–35); conclusion (5.13; Jn 20.31); and epilogue (5.14–21; Jn 21).

INTERPRETATION

First John speaks only indirectly about the views of dissidents denying truths about Jesus as messiah (2.22–23), as coming in the flesh (4.2), and as bringing salvation through his death (5.6). The author treats their departure from the communion of Johannine believers as a violation of the love command equivalent to Cain murdering his brother (3.11–12). In addition 1 John corrects false understandings of sin, holiness, and forgiveness (1.5–2.6). Christians are reminded that their obligation to love one another is grounded not only in God's command (2.7–17) but in God's nature as love (4.7–12). At least some readers need to be reassured about their salvation on the day of judgment (3.18–24). The community is urged to rely on the Spirit it has received from God (2.26–27). Interpreters face the problem of how to fit these varied concerns into a framework. Should they all be considered as responses to the false teaching of dissidents? Or is the author speaking to diverse concerns? In the latter case, the schism may be viewed as a crisis that had undermined confidence in other areas that had not been challenged by false teachers.

Even if the false teachers had claimed the Spirit as basis for an interpretation of Jesus that in some way denied his humanity and his saving death, it remains difficult to decide how to situate such claims theologically. Irenaeus employed 1 John to refute the sharp divide between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Savior/Christ of various Gnostic teachers. Some scholars see the opponents of 1 John in the figure of Cerinthus (ca. 100 CE). He argued that the divine Christ descended upon the righteous man, Jesus, at his baptism and bestowed the Spirit, enabling Jesus to work miracles. Jesus also revealed a previously unknown Father, the true God, superior to the creator of Gen 1. Since the divine cannot suffer, he departed from Jesus prior to his death on the cross (see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.26.1). Such a theological position suits the hints that false teachers deny that Jesus is a messiah in the flesh as well as the comment that dissidents accept a coming in water (= baptism) but not "water and blood" (= cross). But if 1 John had a Gnostic such as Cerinthus in view, one would expect some opposition to the depiction of God as "unknown Father" distinct from the creator. Perhaps the best one can say is that the opponents' views about Jesus and salvation must have been presented as a teaching based on the Fourth Gospel.

Even without quoting the Gospel, the thick texture of Johannine allusions in 1 John provides its readers with an authentic understanding of the evangelist's message. But since the most important part of the Gospel for readers of 1 John is the Farewell Discourses (Jn 13–17), their emphasis on unity (15.1–10; 17.6–19) must have heightened the crisis of faith posed by a schism. Did the breakup among believers undermine the promise of eternal life through union with the Father and the Son at the heart of their faith? First John replies by denying that those who have left ever really belonged to the community. Their departure broke the mutual bond of love that lies at the heart of its union with God. The author also retrieved an apocalyptic tradition depicting the rise of false prophets, schism, and even false messiahs in a satanic attempt to delude the righteous in the last days (2.22; 4.3; cf. Mk 13.22). A number of other concerns found in 1 John, such as authenticating one's faith so as to

be confident in God's judgment, may reflect the consequences of the schism rather than the theological views which provoked it.

Use of 1 John in the cycle of Christian liturgical readings during the Christmas season focuses on the positive notes rather than polemic: Jesus as messiah come in the flesh, and the love command grounded in the love God has shown in the Son. This tradition of reading goes back to St. Augustine, who commented, "in it John speaks at length and almost the whole time about love" (*In Epistolam Ioannis,* prologue). First John 3.1–3 is a popular selection at funerals, particularly when the Gospel reading is from John, because it highlights another motif in the work, the confidence that believers should have in eternal life.

Pheme Perkins

1 We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— [2] this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— [3] we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. [4] We are writing these things so that our[a] joy may be complete.

[5] This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. [6] If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; [7] but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. [8] If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10] If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; [2] and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

[3] Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments. [4] Whoever says, "I have come to know him," but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; [5] but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: [6] whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked.

[a] Other ancient authorities read *your*

1.1–4: Introduction. 1–2: *From the beginning* echoes the opening of John's Gospel (Jn 1.1–18) in which Jesus is the Word made flesh, life and light. Here *beginning* refers to the beginning of Christian faith. *We,* teachers in the community, charged with handing on the tradition. *Heard, seen, looked at, touched* insist on the human reality of the Son against false teachers (see Introduction). **3–4:** Fellowship with the Father and the Son and abiding joy are signs of genuine Christian community in the Johannine tradition (Jn 15.11; 17.13).

1.5–10: Holiness in the community. 5: Light is a common symbol for the holiness and perfection of God (Ps 4.6; Isa 60.1–2). God's light guides the righteous (Ps 27.1). **6–7:** No one can claim fellowship with God who does not follow God's commands (2.11; Jn 3.19). Jesus's death has brought forgiveness of sins (cf. Rev 1.5; 5.9). **8–10:** False teachers, who reject the saving death of Jesus (see Introduction), may have claimed that true believers were sinless. Such teaching makes God a liar (v. 10). The wicked have false views about God and sin (Ps 53).

2.1–6: Christ our advocate. 1–2: A similar image of the risen Christ interceding for believers describes Christ as high priest in Heb 4.15–5.4. Here Christ is the *advocate*, who defends the faithful in the divine court (for the Holy Spirit as *advocate* see Jn 14.15–16). **3–5:** Knowledge of God requires obedience to God's commandments (cf. Ezek 36.26–27). **6:** Jesus exemplifies the love which is God's commandment (Jn 13.1; 15.11–13).

7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because[a] the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 Whoever says, "I am in the light," while hating a brother or sister,[b] is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves a brother or sister[c] lives in the light, and in such a person[d] there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But whoever hates another believer[e] is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness.

12 I am writing to you, little children,
because your sins are forgiven on
account of his name.
13 I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the
beginning.
I am writing to you, young people,
because you have conquered the evil
one.
14 I write to you, children,
because you know the Father.
I write to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the
beginning.
I write to you, young people,
because you are strong
and the word of God abides in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; 16 for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 And the world and its desire[f] are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever.

18 Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge.[g] 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and you know that no lie comes from the truth. 22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?[h] This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 Let

[a] Or *that*
[b] Gk *hating a brother*
[c] Gk *loves a brother*
[d] Or *in it*
[e] Gk *hates a brother*
[f] Or *the desire for it*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *you know all things*
[h] Or *the Messiah*

2.7–11: The love commandment. 7: *I am writing you* repeats 2.1. Fidelity to Christ's *new commandment* to love one another (Jn 13.34) is freedom from sin. **8:** The true *light is already shining* echoes Jesus as light of the world in John's Gospel (Jn 8.12; 9.5; 12.35–36).

2.12–17: Victory over evil. 12–14: A rhythmic series of phrases reminds all from the youngest (or newest) members to the most senior (*little children . . . fathers . . . young people*) that they share Christ's victory over the world and its ruling power, *the evil one* (see Jn 12.31; 16.11,33b). **15–17:** Jesus came to save the world (2.2; Jn 3.16), but the world also represents false values, love of wealth or honor, and passions that separate people from God and one another (3.17).

2.18–29: Victory over false teaching. 18–23: *Many antichrists have come* refers to the secessionists as agents of the evil one, trying to deceive God's people (v. 18; 4.1–3). The appearance of such false prophets signals the *last hour* in apocalyptic texts (Mt 24.4–5,24; CD 5.20; *T. Moses* 7.4; Rev 20.10). The term "antichrist" occurs in the New Testament only in 1–2 John. It may be a variant of the "false messiah" (Gk "pseudochristos") in the Synoptic apocalypse (Mk 13.22; Mt 24.24). The figure of an opponent of God who arises in the last days combines images of the mythical chaos monster defeated by God (Isa 27.1; 51.9; Ps 74.13; Job 26.12), the figure of Satan as an angelic adversary (Zech 3.1; *Jub*. 1.20; 1 QS 1.18; 3.20–21), a human ruler who embodies evil (Dan 8.25; Ezek 38.1; 39.6; 2 Macc 9.12; 2 Esd 5.6–13), and false prophets (Deut 13.2–6; 18.30). **24–27:** The Holy Spirit ("the Holy

what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he has promised us,[a] eternal life.

26 I write these things to you concerning those who would deceive you. 27 As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him.[b]

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming.

29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has

3 been born of him. 1 See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he[b] is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. 3 And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

4 Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them;[c] they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. 10 The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters.[d]

11 For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. 13 Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters,[e] that the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 All who hate a brother or sister[d] are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. 16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. 17 How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister[f] in need and yet refuses help?

[a] Other ancient authorities read *you*
[b] Or *it*
[c] Or *because the children of God abide in him*
[d] Gk *his brother*
[e] Gk *brothers*
[f] Gk *brother*

One," v. 20) present within the community ("anointing that you received") enables believers to distinguish true faith from lies about Jesus (Jn 14.26; 16.13). **28–29:** *At his coming* refers to Christ coming in judgment. Those who remain true to the Johannine teaching have nothing to fear (cf. Jn 3.36).

3.1–10: God's children are holy. 1–3: As God's children, believers become like Christ (Jn 1.12–13; 13.15–16; 17.16–19). **4–6:** Jesus's coming has taken away the sin of those who remain faithful (1.5–2.2). **7–8:** Those who are deceived about sin (2.1) become children of the devil (cf. Jn 8.44). **9–10:** *God's seed:* the Holy Spirit (2.26–27) and mutual love (Jn 13.35) distinguish God's children.

3.11–18: Moral examples. 11: See 2.7. **12:** Cain shows that hating a brother leads to murder (Gen 4.8). **13–14:** Though righteous like Abel, believers should expect to be hated by outsiders (Jn 15.18–19). **15:** The phrase *do not have eternal life abiding in them* invites readers to apply this lesson to the secessionists. Their break with the community is equivalent to murder (4.5; cf. Mt 5.21–22). **16–18:** Jesus's death is the supreme example of love (Jn 13.1; 15.9,13).

18 Little children, let us love, not in word
or speech, but in truth and action. 19 And
by this we will know that we are from the
truth and will reassure our hearts before
him 20 whenever our hearts condemn us; for
God is greater than our hearts, and he knows
everything. 21 Beloved, if our hearts do not
condemn us, we have boldness before God;
22 and we receive from him whatever we ask,
because we obey his commandments and do
what pleases him.

23 And this is his commandment, that we
should believe in the name of his Son Jesus
Christ and love one another, just as he has
commanded us. 24 All who obey his com-
mandments abide in him, and he abides in
them. And by this we know that he abides in
us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit,
but test the spirits to see whether they
are from God; for many false prophets have
gone out into the world. 2 By this you know
the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses
that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is
from God, 3 and every spirit that does not
confess Jesus[a] is not from God. And this is
the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have
heard that it is coming; and now it is already
in the world. 4 Little children, you are from
God, and have conquered them; for the one
who is in you is greater than the one who
is in the world. 5 They are from the world;
therefore what they say is from the world,
and the world listens to them. 6 We are from
God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and
whoever is not from God does not listen to
us. From this we know the spirit of truth and
the spirit of error.

7 Beloved, let us love one another, because
love is from God; everyone who loves is born
of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not
love does not know God, for God is love.
9 God's love was revealed among us in this
way: God sent his only Son into the world so
that we might live through him. 10 In this is
love, not that we loved God but that he loved
us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice
for our sins. 11 Beloved, since God loved us
so much, we also ought to love one another.
12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one
another, God lives in us, and his love is per-
fected in us.

13 By this we know that we abide in him
and he in us, because he has given us of his
Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that
the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of
the world. 15 God abides in those who confess
that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide
in God. 16 So we have known and believe the
love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love
abide in God, and God abides in them. 17 Love
has been perfected among us in this: that we
may have boldness on the day of judgment,
because as he is, so are we in this world.
18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love
casts out fear; for fear has to do with punish-
ment, and whoever fears has not reached
perfection in love. 19 We love[b] because he
first loved us. 20 Those who say, "I love God,"
and hate their brothers or sisters,[c] are liars;

[a] Other ancient authorities read *does away with Jesus* (Gk *dissolves Jesus*)
[b] Other ancient authorities add *him*; others add *God*
[c] Gk *brothers*

3.19–24: Love as confidence before God. 19–20: Love is the basis for God's judgment despite the doubts caused by the schism (2.28). **21–22:** Jesus promised that God would answer believers' prayer (Jn 16.23–24). **23–24:** Belief in the Son and love establish a permanent relationship between believers and God (Jn 16.26–27).

4.1–6: Testing spirits. 1–3: Since false teachers can appear genuine (cf. Mt 7.15–23), Christians must test their faith in Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 12.1–3). The dissidents have changed the Johannine tradition by denying that Christ *has come in the flesh.* **4–6:** The Holy Spirit verifies 1 John as testimony to the true Johannine tradition (cf. Jn 16.13–14). **5:** *The world listens* could imply that the dissident teachers have enjoyed more success than those in the Johannine circle (cf. Jn 15.19).

4.7–21: God's love as the basis of salvation. 7–9: Believers are to imitate the love God has shown in sending the Son to give life (3.16–22; Jn 3.16). **10–12:** God's love has been shown in the death of Jesus (Jn 13.1). It is the basis of the love command (Jn 15.12–13). **12:** See Jn 1.18; 6.46. **13–16a:** See 3.23–24. **14:** See Jn 4.42. **16b–18:** *God is love,* 4.8; cf. Rom 8.32,39; 1 Cor 3.11. When Christian life corresponds to the nature of God (1.5–7), there is no reason to fear God's judgment (2.1–6,28; 3.18–20). **19:** 4.7,11. **20:** Love shown to others demonstrates true knowl-

for those who do not love a brother or sister[a] whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. 21 The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters[b] also.

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ[c] has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, 4 for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. 5 Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. 7 There are three that testify:[d] 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree. 9 If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. 10 Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God[e] have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. 11 And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

14 And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him. 16 If you see your brother or sister[f] committing what is not a mortal sin, you will ask, and God[g] will give life to such a one—to those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin that is mortal; I do not say that you should pray about that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not mortal.

18 We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them. 19 We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one. 20 And we know

[a] Gk *brother*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Or *the Messiah*
[d] A few other authorities read (with variations) *7 There are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. 8 And there are three that testify on earth:*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *in the Son*
[f] Gk *your brother*
[g] Gk *he*

edge and love for God (2.3–11; 3.23–24). **21:** *Those who love God must love their brothers and sisters* is a Johannine formulation of the command to love God and neighbor (Mt 22.34–40 quoting Deut 6.5 and Lev 19.18).

5.1–13: Concluding appeal to keep the true faith. 1–3: Belief in Jesus as the messiah (*the Christ*) (4.2–3; Jn 1.12–13; 20.31) and mutual love (4.20–21; Jn 13.35) are the hallmarks of the true Johannine community. **2:** *We know that we love the children of God, when we love God* reverses 4.12. It serves as polemic against the dissidents, since schism implies hating God's children (3.11–16). **4–5:** See 2.12–14; 4.4. **6–8:** *One who came by water and blood* refers to the death of Jesus as atonement for sin (1.7; 2.22; 4.10; Jn 1.29); see Introduction. **9–12:** The true faith is not based on human testimony alone (1.1–4; Jn 1.7–8) but on God's as well (cf. Jn 5.31–38; 16.6–11). **13:** *I write . . . that you have eternal life* echoes Jn 20.31.

5.14–21: Epilogue. Sin and forgiveness in the community. 14–15: God's children can be certain that God will hear their prayers (3.21–22; Jn 14.14–16; 15.16; 16.23–24; Mt 18.19–20). **16:** *Sin that is mortal* distinguishes a category of sin that cannot be forgiven. Elsewhere such sin is denying that God's Spirit is working through Jesus (Mk 3.28–30) or apostasy (Heb 6.4–6). Here the expression probably refers to those who have separated themselves from the Johannine community. They no longer dwell with God or have the Spirit (2.19–25). **18:** See 3.8–10. **19:** See 2.12–15; 5.4–5. **20:** *Him who is true* probably refers to knowledge of the true God as some manuscripts

that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true;[a] and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.[b]

[a] Other ancient authorities read *know the true God*
[b] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

suggest (see textual note *a* and cf. Jn 1.18; 14.9–10). Knowledge of the *true God* (Father and Son) confers *eternal life* (Jn 17.3). **21:** In a general sense, *keep yourselves from idols* probably refers to the false gods of non-Christian neighbors (Jn 10.14). Traveling missionaries were instructed to reject hospitality from non-Christians (3 Jn 7). The polemic in 1 Jn probably intends the phrase to forbid any association with the secessionists (2 Jn 7–9).

THE SECOND LETTER OF JOHN

NAME, CANONICAL STATUS, AND AUTHORSHIP

Titled "the second (letter) of John" in ancient codices, this short letter belonged to a collection led by 1 John. By the fourth century CE (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23–25) the Christian canon included three Johannine "letters" along with four others said to be written by apostles that were designated "catholic" or universal epistles. Some second-century Christians identified the "elder" (v. 1) with John the son of Zebedee, who was thought to be the author of both the Gospel and first letter of John (cf. Peter as "fellow elder" in 1 Pet 5.1). However, Papias distinguished between the evangelist John and the "elder" who wrote the Johannine letters. Most contemporary scholars accept this view. Some question the common authorship of all three Johannine letters.

DATE AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Since 2 John refers in v. 7 to the same dissident teaching as that opposed in 1 John, it must belong to the same period (ca. 100 CE). Because it warns against any association with those who hold these views, some scholars think that it was written before the schism that had split Johannine Christians into the separate communities indicated in 1 John. Others explain the difference as an indication that the schism that divided Christians in urban churches addressed in 1 John had not yet reached more distant rural areas.

STRUCTURE

Second John follows the conventions of a private letter: opening greeting identifies sender and addressees (vv. 1–3); letter body, beginning with an expression of joy at how recipients are faring, and concluding with future plans (vv. 4–12); final greeting from sender and associates to recipients (v. 13).

CONTENTS AND INTERPRETATION

The letter opens with a summary of the mutual love that was the hallmark of Johannine Christians (Jn 13.34–35). It serves the rhetorical function of enlisting the goodwill of one's audience. The business of the letter follows, namely, a warning against false teachers and the demand that no one associate with them in any way (vv. 7–11).

The elder's harsh treatment of false teachers strikes modern readers as contradicting the Johannine ethical teaching of mutual love. If the impact of the schism was as serious as the language of 1 John suggests when it treats false teachers as "antichrists," then 2 John might represent a type of quarantine measure to protect other communities from this disease. Some scholars think that a copy of 1 John was sent along with this letter.

Pheme Perkins

[1] The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth, [2] because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:

[3] Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from[a] Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love.

[4] I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father. [5] But now, dear lady, I ask you, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning, let us love one another. [6] And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment just as you have heard it from the beginning—you must walk in it.

[7] Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist! [8] Be on your guard, so that you do not lose what we[b] have worked for, but may receive a full reward. [9] Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God; whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. [10] Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching; [11] for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person.

[12] Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

[13] The children of your elect sister send you their greetings.[c]

[a] Other ancient authorities add *the Lord*
[b] Other ancient authorities read *you*
[c] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

1–3: Letter opening. *Elect lady* refers to a local church. *Love in the truth* sets out the Johannine vision of the church as a community whose members are united by Jesus's command to love one another (vv. 4–6; 1 Jn 2.7–10; 3.23) and reject false teaching about the Son (vv. 7–9).

4–11: Letter body. 4–6: The *new commandment* to love one another was central to Johannine Christianity (Jn 13.34–35; 1 Jn 2.7–10). **7–9:** False teachers do not *abide in the teaching of Christ* because they reject the humanity of Jesus (v. 7; see 1 Jn 4.2) and have destroyed Christian fellowship (1 Jn 2.19). False teaching is a sign that the *antichrist* is at work in the world (1 Jn 2.18–23n.; 4.1–3). **10–11:** The severity of this demand, *do not receive into the house* church anyone connected with the secessionists, follows from the view that their activities are Satan's final effort against God's people.

12–13: Letter closing. Ancient letters frequently end with a notice of the sender's future travel plans (cf. Rom 15.22–32).

THE THIRD LETTER OF JOHN

NAME, CANONICAL STATUS, AND AUTHORSHIP

The title given in ancient manuscripts identifies this private letter with 1–2 John, which circulated more widely. Although included in canon lists from the fourth century CE, 3 John was not widely cited, perhaps because it is addressed to an individual rather than a community. Since its conclusion is nearly identical with that of 2 John, scholars presume that the same individual composed both letters. In antiquity all the Johannine letters were attributed to John the son of Zebedee, as was the Gospel. Modern scholars distinguish the author of 1–3 John from the evangelist.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Third John reflects a social setting of a group of loosely associated churches of the Johannine tradition that is comparable to that of 1–2 John. But there is no hint here of the secessionist controversy that so troubled 1–2 John. The author appears to live in a city (perhaps Ephesus) that serves as a node from which emissaries were dispatched to other churches in the region. Such missionaries depended upon hospitality in the house churches when they traveled (cf. Rom 16.1–2). The elder is seeking support for his emissaries from a house-church leader, Gaius, because another well-known Christian leader, Diotrephes, refuses to accept anyone associated with the author.

STRUCTURE, CONTENTS, AND INTERPRETATION

Third John follows the standard model for a private letter: an opening greeting from sender to recipient followed by a wish for the recipient's health (vv. 1–4); letter body (vv. 5–12); conclusion with travel plans and additional greetings (vv. 13–15). Rhetorically the body opens with praise for the recipient's well-known hospitality to traveling Christians (vv. 5–8) before addressing the issue at hand (vv. 9–12).

In ancient diplomacy, refusing hospitality to an envoy was an insult to the sender. Third John does not indicate what led Diotrephes to prohibit members of his house church from having anything to do with persons sent by the elder (vv. 9–10). Some scholars have suggested a dispute between a charismatic teacher in the Johannine tradition, "the elder," and Diotrephes, whose leadership was based on the beginnings of a monarchic episcopate (as in 1 Tim 3.1–7). Others observe that Diotrephes could have taken the elder's rule in 2 John 10 against giving hospitality to false teachers to its logical conclusion: do not welcome any outsiders. Though Gaius may have heard about the Diotrephes incident, he does not have any direct connection with that community.

Whatever caused Diotrephes to reject envoys from the elder, 3 John provides a glimpse into the early Christian mission ca. 100 CE. Personal networks of hospitality maintained by traveling envoys linked small house-church communities together. Travelers preferred the hospitality of believers to that of outsiders.

Pheme Perkins

[1] The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I
love in truth.

[2] Beloved, I pray that all may go well with
you and that you may be in good health, just
as it is well with your soul. [3] I was overjoyed
when some of the friends[a] arrived and testi-
fied to your faithfulness to the truth, namely
how you walk in the truth. [4] I have no greater
joy than this, to hear that my children are
walking in the truth.

[5] Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you
do for the friends,[a] even though they are
strangers to you; [6] they have testified to your
love before the church. You will do well to
send them on in a manner worthy of God;
[7] for they began their journey for the sake of
Christ,[b] accepting no support from non-
believers.[c] [8] Therefore we ought to support
such people, so that we may become co-
workers with the truth.

[9] I have written something to the church;
but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first,
does not acknowledge our authority. [10] So if I
come, I will call attention to what he is doing
in spreading false charges against us. And not
content with those charges, he refuses to wel-
come the friends,[a] and even prevents those
who want to do so and expels them from the
church.

[11] Beloved, do not imitate what is evil but
imitate what is good. Whoever does good is
from God; whoever does evil has not seen
God. [12] Everyone has testified favorably about
Demetrius, and so has the truth itself. We
also testify for him,[d] and you know that our
testimony is true.

[13] I have much to write to you, but I would
rather not write with pen and ink; [14] instead
I hope to see you soon, and we will talk to-
gether face to face.

[15] Peace to you. The friends send you their
greetings. Greet the friends there, each by
name.

[a] Gk *brothers*
[b] Gk *for the sake of the name*
[c] Gk *the Gentiles*
[d] Gk lacks *for him*

1–4: Letter opening and health wish. This opening follows the pattern found in routine private correspondence (contrast 2 Jn 1–3), indicating that the letter involves only the two individuals and is not to be read in the church community (contrast Philem 1–3). **4:** *My children* is the elder's designation for Christians who share his teaching.

5–12: Letter body. 5–8: The elder uses a rhetorical strategy to enlist the goodwill of Gaius, whom he does not know personally, by praising Gaius for the reports that traveling missionaries give about his hospitality. It was an axiom in early Christian circles that those who offered hospitality shared in the good work of evangelization (see Phil 4.10–20; Mt 10.40–42). **9–11:** The elder asks Gaius to supply his associates with the hospitality that Diotrephes has recently refused. **9:** *Does not acknowledge our authority* is diplomatic language for not receiving the envoy sent by an authority. It does not mean that the elder himself claimed to have authority over Diotrephes or his house church. **12:** A note of recommendation for Demetrius, who may have carried the letter (cf. Rom 16.1–2).

13–15: Letter closing. See 2 Jn 12–13.

THE LETTER OF JUDE

NAME AND CONTENTS

Like some New Testament letters, Jude takes its name from the sender of the letter. Its contents can be outlined as follows:

I. Letter opening: (1–4)
   A. Salutation (1–2)
   B. Occasion of letter (3–4)
II. Letter body: (5–23)
   A. Critique of opponents by recalling five events or sets of events and explaining their application to the opponents (5–19)
      1. Three biblical precedents (5–8)
      2. Dispute about the body of Moses (9–10)
      3. Three more biblical precedents (11–13)
      4. Prophecy of Enoch (14–16)
      5. Predictions of the apostles (17–19)
   B. Appeal (20–23)
III. Letter closing: doxology (24–25)

CANONICAL STATUS

The earliest list of New Testament documents, the Muratorian Canon (late second century CE), includes the letter of Jude. Likewise, Tertullian, writing at about the same time, mentions Jude. Irenaeus, however, another contemporary writer, does not mention Jude, and sometime later Origen (ca. 253) puts Jude in the category of doubtful writings. The earliest surviving copy of Jude is in Papyrus 72, written about 300. Copies of Jude are also included in the biblical Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, written about fifty years later. Athanasius (367) includes Jude in his list of New Testament writings. Since that time, Jude has been accepted by Greek- and Latin-speaking Christians as part of the New Testament, but it was not accepted by Syriac-speaking Christians until the sixth century.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The author of the letter identifies himself as Jude. The English "Jude" translates the Greek "Judas" (*Ioudas*), the rendering of Hebrew *Judah* (*Yehudah*). The New Testament mentions six men named Judas who are associated with Jesus or his early followers, including Judas Iscariot and another Judas included in Luke's list of the twelve apostles (Lk 6.16). Since the author of Jude calls himself the brother of James, this Judas is most likely the one identified as a brother of Jesus, along with James, Joses, and Simon (Mk 6.3).

Some scholars doubt that Judas the brother of James and Jesus is the actual author of the letter; others think there is no sufficient reason to deny this. If he is the actual author, the letter would have been written between 50 and 80 CE, during the probable lifetime of Judas the brother of James. If the letter is pseudonymous, it probably dates to the end of the first century, certainly before the composition of 2 Peter, which dates to the early second century and uses Jude. The letter does not indicate the geographical location of its author or addressees.

INTERPRETATION

Jude is an appeal to those it addresses to "contend for the faith" (v. 3) as they confront the influence of intruders who threaten that faith (v. 4). The author supports this appeal by implying that the intruders are destined to be punished by God like those who have behaved similarly in the past (vv. 5–8). The author also supports the appeal by criticizing the intruders as behaving differently than the archangel Michael (vv. 9–10) and behaving like notorious wrongdoers of the past (vv. 11–13). In addition, the appearance and destruction of these intruders were prophesied (vv. 14–19). In light of all this, the author urges the addressees to follow a different way of life than that of the intruders (vv. 20–23).

Apart from being used as a source for 2 Peter, Jude has not been influential. Martin Luther thought that Jude was a pseudonymous extract from 2 Peter and thus not an apostolic writing, but few have adopted this view.

Terrance Callan

1 Jude,[a] a servant[b] of Jesus Christ and
brother of James,
To those who are called, who are beloved[c]
in[d] God the Father and kept safe for[d] Jesus
Christ:
2 May mercy, peace, and love be yours in
abundance.

3 Beloved, while eagerly preparing to write
to you about the salvation we share, I find
it necessary to write and appeal to you to
contend for the faith that was once for all
entrusted to the saints. 4 For certain intruders
have stolen in among you, people who long
ago were designated for this condemnation
as ungodly, who pervert the grace of our God
into licentiousness and deny our only Master
and Lord, Jesus Christ.[e]
5 Now I desire to remind you, though you
are fully informed, that the Lord, who once
for all saved[f] a people out of the land of
Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did
not believe. 6 And the angels who did not
keep their own position, but left their proper
dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in
deepest darkness for the judgment of the
great day. 7 Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah
and the surrounding cities, which, in the
same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust,[g] serve
as an example by undergoing a punishment
of eternal fire.
8 Yet in the same way these dreamers
also defile the flesh, reject authority, and
slander the glorious ones.[h] 9 But when the
archangel Michael contended with the devil
and disputed about the body of Moses, he
did not dare to bring a condemnation of
slander[i] against him, but said, "The Lord
rebuke you!" 10 But these people slander
whatever they do not understand, and they
are destroyed by those things that, like
irrational animals, they know by instinct.
11 Woe to them! For they go the way of Cain,
and abandon themselves to Balaam's error
for the sake of gain, and perish in Korah's

[a] Gk *Judas*
[b] Gk *slave*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *sanctified*
[d] Or *by*
[e] Or *the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *though you were once for all fully informed, that Jesus* (or *Joshua*) *who saved*
[g] Gk *went after other flesh*
[h] Or *angels*; Gk *glories*
[i] Or *condemnation for blasphemy*

1–2: Salutation. The sender of the letter is *Jude* (= Judas), probably the man mentioned in Mk 6.3. The addressees are described as *those who are called,* etc.; this could apply to any followers of Jesus.

3–4: Occasion of letter. *Intruders have stolen in among* the addressees. These intruders are obviously followers of Jesus, but ones whose faith and life the author considers deficient. *Saints,* lit., "holy ones." **4**: The author anticipates the main themes of his argument against the intruders: their appearance and condemnation were predicted, and they *deny . . . Jesus* by behaving immorally.

5–8: Three biblical precedents. God punished the wilderness generation of the Israelites (v. 5; see Num 14.1–24), the angels who left their proper dwelling (v. 6; see Gen 6.1–4; *1 En.* 6–12), and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (v.7; see Gen 18–19). **8**: *These dreamers* who behave the same way (i.e., the intruders) can also expect to be punished.

9–10: Dispute about the body of Moses. The intruders *slander whatever they do not understand*, unlike *the archangel Michael* who did not slander the devil but instead quoted Zech 3.2 to rebuke him. The story of a dispute between Michael and the devil about *the body of Moses* is not found in the Bible and may come from an apocryphal document called *The Testament of Moses*.

11–13: Three more biblical precedents. 11: The intruders' bad behavior, later described in a series of vivid images (vv. 12–13), is similar to that of *Cain* who murdered his brother Abel (see Gen 4.8), *Balaam* who prophesied

rebellion. 12 These are blemishes[a] on your
love-feasts, while they feast with you
without fear, feeding themselves.[b] They are
waterless clouds carried along by the winds;
autumn trees without fruit, twice dead,
uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting
up the foam of their own shame; wandering
stars, for whom the deepest darkness has
been reserved forever.

14 It was also about these that Enoch, in
the seventh generation from Adam, proph-
esied, saying, "See, the Lord is coming[c] with
ten thousands of his holy ones, 15 to execute
judgment on all, and to convict everyone of
all the deeds of ungodliness that they have
committed in such an ungodly way, and of all
the harsh things that ungodly sinners have
spoken against him." 16 These are grumblers
and malcontents; they indulge their own
lusts; they are bombastic in speech, flattering
people to their own advantage.

17 But you, beloved, must remember the
predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus
Christ; 18 for they said to you, "In the last time
there will be scoffers, indulging their own
ungodly lusts." 19 It is these worldly people,
devoid of the Spirit, who are causing divi-
sions. 20 But you, beloved, build yourselves
up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy
Spirit; 21 keep yourselves in the love of God;
look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus
Christ that leads to[d] eternal life. 22 And have
mercy on some who are wavering; 23 save
others by snatching them out of the fire; and
have mercy on still others with fear, hating
even the tunic defiled by their bodies.[e]

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from
falling, and to make you stand without blem-
ish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing,
25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus
Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power,
and authority, before all time and now and
forever. Amen.

[a] Or *reefs*
[b] Or *without fear. They are shepherds who care only for themselves*
[c] Gk *came*
[d] Gk *Christ to*
[e] Gk *by the flesh*. The Greek text of verses 22-23 is uncertain at several points

for gain (see Num 22–24), and *Korah* who rebelled against Moses (see Num 16). **12:** *Love-feasts,* lit., "loves." This is the earliest instance in which the word "love" (Gk "agapē") is used to designate the Christian fellowship meal.

14–16: Prophecy of Enoch. The author cites *1 En.* 1.9 as a prophecy that will be fulfilled by the judgment of the intruders.

17–19: Predictions of the apostles. The author quotes a prediction of the apostles that is fulfilled by the presence of the intruders in the addressees' midst. The source of this quotation is unknown.

20–23: Appeal. The author concludes by appealing to the addressees to avoid the intruders and their defective form of Christianity.

25–25: Doxology. The letter ends with one of the most elaborate prayers praising God found in the New Testament.

THE REVELATION TO JOHN

NAME

The Revelation to John is also known as the Apocalypse or the Apocalypse of John, from the Greek word *apokalypsis* meaning "disclosure" or "unveiling." The book presents itself as a work of prophecy (1.3; 22.10). The word "apocalypse" is used to describe a large number of Jewish writings from as early as 250 BCE as well as for later Christian writings that share similarities with Revelation.

CANONICAL STATUS

With its vivid visions of the consummation of God's divine plan of judgment and salvation, the book of Revelation brings the canon of the New Testament to a close. Though Revelation is not the only early Christian apocalypse, it is the only one that was included in the canon of the New Testament. The question of whether it should be considered orthodox and canonical was a matter of controversy in the early centuries of Christianity. Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 263–339 CE), for example, writes that some reject Revelation but that others accept it as genuine (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.4–5). The third-century writer Dionysius of Alexandria maintained that Revelation could be considered orthodox only if read allegorically.

AUTHORSHIP

The author of the book of Revelation identifies himself by name as John (1.1,4,9; 22.8). This distinguishes Revelation from other Jewish and Christian apocalypses, which are pseudonymous, that is, written in the name of some revered figure from antiquity (e.g., *Apoc. Bar*., *Apoc. Zeph*.). While some ancient authorities (e.g., Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 81.4) suggested that this author is the apostle John, the son of Zebedee (see Mk 3.17), internal evidence from the book itself is inconclusive. Among ancient interpreters, Dionysius of Alexandria maintained that Revelation could not have been written by the same John to whom the Gospel according to John was attributed.

The author's familiarity with the Jerusalem Temple and its rituals and furnishings, the depth of his knowledge of the Hebrew Bible (of the 405 verses in Revelation, some 275 include allusions to passages in the Hebrew Bible, or to its Greek translation, the Septuagint), as well as his adoption of a literary genre that was familiar in late Second Temple Judaism, combine to suggest that the John of Revelation may have been a Jewish Christian who fled to the Diaspora as a consequence of the First Jewish Revolt against the Romans (66–73 CE). His self-identification to the "seven churches that are in Asia" (1.4) as "your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance" (1.9) suggests that he was well known to his audience, probably because he exercised a prophetic ministry among them (see 22.9). He mentions the twelve apostles as figures from the past (21.14), and does not refer to himself as one of them. This makes an identification of the John of the book of Revelation with the apostle of that name highly questionable, as is any connection of the John of the Revelation with the Gospel according to John or with the Letters of John.

DATE OF COMPOSITION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

There are two main positions regarding the date of the Revelation to John. The first is that the book was composed between 64 and 70 CE, prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, and was prompted by the persecution of Christians toward the end of the reign of the Roman emperor Nero (54–68 CE). The second view is that while the book of Revelation draws on traditional material and on sources written prior to the fall of Jerusalem (e.g., chs 11 and 12), it probably reached its final form toward the end of the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (81–96 CE). The book is addressed to "the seven churches that are in Asia" (1.4), Christian communities in the Roman proconsular province of Asia, located in the western portion of present-day Turkey (see map on p. 1810). The book demonstrates its author's familiarity with the specific situation of each of the seven communities, beginning with Ephesus, the administrative capital of the province. The seven cities were complex and diverse in economic, social, political, and religious terms. There is no clear evidence that Christians faced organized and widespread persecution sanctioned by Roman imperial authorities at the time the book was written. Yet, more locally, it seems that Christians in the province of Asia lived under the

threat of oppression, even the danger of being "slaughtered for the word of God and the testimony they had given" (6.9). One such victim was Antipas, identified by name in the message to the church at Pergamum (2.13). John establishes his own solidarity with his audience's predicament, sharing with them "the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance" (1.9), finding himself on the island of Patmos "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (1.9). According to many commentators, including a number of early Christian writers (e.g., Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.18), John had been exiled to Patmos as punishment for his testimony to Jesus. However, because there is no evidence that Patmos served as a place of exile, others suggest that John simply traveled to Patmos in the course of his prophetic activity.

A variety of competing viewpoints vied for the attention of the late first-century communities to whom the book of Revelation was originally addressed. John exhorts them to stand firm in their convictions, to resist "with patient endurance" (2.2,19; 3.10) and at any cost the overwhelming pressures to accommodation and compromise with the dominant culture. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE gave John ample cause to identify Rome as Babylon, recalling the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. The breadth and depth of Rome's political and economic power found religious expression in the widespread worship of the emperor in the provinces of Asia, with temples built in honor of the emperor and of Rome personified as the goddess Roma. The book of Revelation takes sides in a battle over sovereignty, where the Roman emperor competes with God and Christ in a contest for the allegiance of the faithful. Warning that those who worship the emperor, symbolized by "the beast" (13.1–10), will suffer ultimate defeat, the book urges its audience to "hold fast to the faith of Jesus" (14.12) and thereby to share in Jesus's victory over death.

LITERARY HISTORY

Interpreters of the book of Revelation through the centuries have puzzled over how to explain the many parallel passages and apparent repetitions throughout the book. For example, the number seven figures prominently throughout the book as a way of ordering the sequence of the book's visionary narratives: seven seals, seven bowls, seven trumpets. Some interpreters understand this as a matter of recapitulation, the repeated description of the same events from several different vantage points. Thus the series of seven trumpets (8.16–9.21; 11.14–19) and seven bowls (16.1–21) furnish two parallel perspectives on God's cataclysmic judgment against the world and its inhabitants. Other interpreters have sought to unravel the complex literary structure of the Apocalypse by appealing to source theories, arguing that the book is a composite that reflects significant editorial work by a final author who drew on earlier material, including some written sources.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The structure of the Revelation to John is widely debated, yet there is general agreement that it involves a series of parallel, interconnected, and yet ever progressing sections. It begins with a prologue (1.1–3), an epistolary salutation (1.4–8), and an inaugural vision (1.9–20), which are followed by messages to each of the seven churches (2.1–3.22). There follows (4.1–5.14) a vision of God enthroned and of Jesus depicted as a Lamb (5.6) *having seven horns and seven eyes*, who receives the seven-sealed scroll from the hand of God. A series of sevenfold visions commences at 6.1, beginning with the opening of each of the seven seals (6.1–8.5), followed by the sounding of each of seven trumpets (8.6–11.19). The sounding of the seventh trumpet is followed by the vision of the woman, the child, and the dragon (12.1–17), the vision of the two beasts (13.1–18), and a threefold vision of the victory, and vindication of the faithful (14.1–20). These are followed by a final sevenfold series, the outpouring of the bowls of divine wrath (16.1–21). 17.1–18.24 presents the vision of the fall of Babylon, followed by the great doxology of 19.1–10 that also looks forward to the eschatological victory (19.11–21), the defeat of Satan (20.1–10), the last judgment (20.11–15), and the vision of the new Jerusalem (21.1–22.5). The book concludes with an epilogue (22.6–21).

INTERPRETATION

Over the centuries, the book of Revelation has been understood from a wide variety of approaches, ranging from literal readings of the book as predictive prophecy to readings that recognize in its utopian language the promise of hope in the midst of present-day situations of suffering and oppression. There have been three main tendencies in the interpretation of Revelation: historical, predictive-prophetic, and symbolic. For those who interpret the book historically, Revelation refers to events that took place during the first century CE, taking a stance in opposition to the power and influence of the Roman Empire. The predictive-prophetic interpretation

of the book reads Revelation for clues about the future, especially with regard to God's impending judgment on the world. Those who prefer a symbolic interpretation of the book understand the book neither as a window to the past nor as a visionary presentation of what is yet to come in the future, but instead as a work that offers to readers of every time and place the vision of a universe symbolically transformed.

Revelation is a work of extremes, ranging from soaring heights of hymnody inspired by biblical psalms and canticles to the gruesome language of plagues, warfare, and bloodshed. It uses the dualistic language characteristic of the apocalyptic genre to paint vivid portraits of the opposing sides in the eschatological conflict that will culminate in the definitive victory of God and the final defeat of all who oppose God. With its symbolic numbers and colors, animals, and angelic and demonic beings, replete with echoes and images drawn from the literature of the ancient Near East, the Jewish scriptures, Greece, and Rome, the book of Revelation is so notoriously complex that Jerome (345–420 CE) remarked that it contains as many mysteries as it contains words. Origen (185–254 CE) exclaimed, "Who can read the revelations granted to John without being amazed at the hidden depth of the ineffable mysteries, a depth apparent even to the person who does not understand what the text says?" (*First Principles* 4.2.4). Many centuries later, the English author D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930) wrote, "When we read Revelation, we feel at once there are meanings behind meanings."

The symbolic visions of the book are hardly self-explanatory, and even John reports the need for the intervention of an angelic mediator to explain the meaning of the mystery disclosed to him (17.7). This characteristic, common in other works of the same literary genre, serves to emphasize that there are transcendent levels of meaning that must be carefully discerned. The true significance of events on earth is to be sought above and beyond what is immediately apparent, and it is ultimately to God that believers must turn to strengthen their resolve to resist accommodation and persevere in the face of adversity.

Jean-Pierre Ruiz

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants[a] what must soon take place; he made[b] it known by sending his angel to his servant[c] John, **2** who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near.

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,

[a] Gk *slaves*
[b] Gk *and he made*
[c] Gk *slave*

1.1–3: The prologue. The chain of transmission comes from God through Jesus Christ, as communicated to John by an angel (referred to again in 22.16). **1:** *Revelation* (Gk "apokalypsis"; see Dan 2.28–30,45), a literary form in which a vision from God, often under the guidance of an angel, communicates in symbolic language God's hidden plan for history. Apocalypses often include visions of the heavenly realm. **2:** *The testimony of Jesus Christ* can be understood both as testimony given by Jesus Christ and as testimony about Jesus Christ. **3:** *Blessed is . . .* , the first of seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation (cf. 14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 20.6; 22.7,14) is pronounced on the reader of this prophetic book and on those who hear it read and who heed its message. In antiquity, texts were commonly read aloud even among those who were literate. *The time is near* (repeated in 22.10) motivates obedience by announcing the imminence of the accomplishment of God's plan.

1.4–8: Epistolary salutation to seven representative Christian communities in the Roman province of Asia (in western Asia Minor, present-day Turkey). *Seven*, a number associated with heavenly realities, suggests the divine authority of the message delivered by John. **4:** *Grace . . . and peace* (see 2 Thess 1.2), combining the conventional Gk and Heb salutations, though John offers not his own greetings but those of God; *is . . . was . . . is to come*, literally (according to the idiosyncratic Gk usage of the book) "the being . . . the was . . . the coming." The seven spirits are either a symbolic reference to the manifold energies of the spirit of God (Isa 11.2), or a reference to the seven principal angels of God (Tob 12.15; *1 En.* 20.1–8). Seven, the number of completion (of the days of

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,
the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the
kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed[a] us from our
sins by his blood, 6 and made[b] us to be a king-
dom, priests serving[c] his God and Father, to him
be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

7 Look! He is coming with the clouds;
every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the
earth will wail.
So it is to be. Amen.

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the
Lord God, who is and who was and who is to
come, the Almighty.

9 I, John, your brother who share with you
in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom
and the patient endurance, was on the island
called Patmos because of the word of God
and the testimony of Jesus.[d] 10 I was in the
spirit[e] on the Lord's day, and I heard behind
me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying,
"Write in a book what you see and send it to
the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to
Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadel-
phia, and to Laodicea."

12 Then I turned to see whose voice it was
that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven
golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the
lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man,
clothed with a long robe and with a golden
sash across his chest. 14 His head and his hair
were white as white wool, white as snow; his
eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were
like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace,
and his voice was like the sound of many wa-
ters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars,
and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged
sword, and his face was like the sun shining
with full force.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as
though dead. But he placed his right hand
on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the
first and the last, 18 and the living one. I was
dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever;
and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.
19 Now write what you have seen, what is, and
what is to take place after this. 20 As for the

[a] Other ancient authorities read *washed*
[b] Gk *and he made*
[c] Gk *priests to*
[d] Or *testimony to Jesus*
[e] Or *in the Spirit*

creation in Gen 1.1–2.4a; of a ritual in Lev 4.6; of divine punishment in Lev 26.27–28) or wholeness, is the most important symbolic number in the book of Revelation. **5:** *Faithful witness*, Jesus is the model for Christians who died as "witnesses" (2.13; 11.7; 17.6). *Firstborn . . . ruler of the kings*, Ps 89.27. He *loves* continually; he *freed* us once for all by his death (Rom 6.10). **6:** *Kingdom, priests*, the vocation promised to Israel (Ex 19.6; Isa 61.6) is extended to the followers of Jesus (1 Pet 2.9). *Glory and dominion*, Dan 7.14. **7:** Dan 7.13; Zech 12.10–12. *So it is to be. Amen*, a formal affirmation of this prophetic oracle announcing the coming of Christ. **8:** *Alpha and Omega*, the first and last letters of the Gk alphabet (like "A" and "Z" in English); hence, the beginning and end of all things (see v. 17; 22.13; Isa 44.6; 48.12).

1.9–20: Inaugural vision and commission on Patmos, an island in the Aegean Sea where John found himself (see Introduction), ca. 55 mi (90 km) southwest of Ephesus (see map on p. 1810). **10:** *In the spirit*, in a temporary condition of altered consciousness, a state of prophetic ecstasy (also 4.2; Ezek 2.2). *The Lord's day*, the weekly day of Christian worship, Sunday. **11:** *The seven churches*, see 2.1–3.22. **12–16:** In the midst of the churches (see v. 20) stands the exalted Christ, whose royalty, eternity, wisdom, and immutability are suggested by means of symbols; the effect is that of terrifying majesty (cf. v. 17 with Isa 6.5). *Seven golden lampstands*, reminiscent of those that stood in the wilderness tabernacle and in the Jerusalem Temple (cf. Zech 4.1–14). *Son of Man* (cf. 14.14; Mk 2.10), a title Jesus used of himself in the Gospels, had two meanings: a typical human being in accordance with a common extended meaning of "son of" (see Mt 5.45); and a reference to the heavenly figure of Dan 7.13–14 who was to embody God's rule over the nations. **13–15:** *Golden sash*, Dan 10.5; *white . . . snow*, Dan 7.10; *eyes . . . fire*, Dan 10.6; *feet . . . bronze*, Dan 10.6; *sound of many waters*, a frequent accompaniment of theophanies; see Pss 29.3; 93.4; Ezek 1.24; 43.2; cf. Dan 10.6. The figure is a combination of attributes of the heavenly messenger from Dan 10 and the Ancient One from Dan 7. *From his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword* (cf. 19.15,21), the word of God (Isa 49.2; cf. Heb 4.12). **18:** *Hades*, used here with its synonym *Death*, is the abode of the dead; Jesus has the keys to release those confined within its gates (Mt 16.18; Jn 5.25–29).

mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

2 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands:

[2] "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. [3] I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. [4] But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. [5] Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. [6] Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. [7] Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.

[8] "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life:

[9] "I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. [10] Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. [11] Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.

20: *Mystery*, hidden meanings that human beings cannot grasp without the assistance of divine revelation (Rev 1.20; 10.7; 17.5,7; Dan 2.29,45). Angel guardians are assigned to the seven churches, as also to nations (Dan 10.20–21; 12.1) and individuals (Dan 11.1).

2.1–3.22: The messages to the seven churches, each containing an address, a descriptive phrase referring to the risen Christ, a commendation or condemnation of the church addressed, an admonition, and a concluding promise and exhortation to the faithful. For the location of the seven churches, see The Seven Churches map.

2.1–7: The first message is appropriately addressed to followers of the Christian movement in the seaport city that was the administrative and commercial hub of the Roman province of Asia; Paul had labored there (Acts 19.8–10; 1 Cor 15.32; 16.8; cf. Eph 1.1). **1:** Jesus *walks among* the churches (1.20). **2:** *Evildoers*, compare the warning to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20.29–30; cf. 2 Cor 11.13. **6:** *To hate evil* is the counterpart of the love of what God approves (Isa 61.8; Zech 8.17; 1QS 1.4). The *Nicolaitans* (probably not connected with the Nicolaus of Acts 6.5, contrary to Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. 1.26.3) are also mentioned in the message to the church in Pergamum (v. 15). What their *works* were, or what they may have taught, is unknown, though it is possible that they permitted some accommodation to the local religious practices that Revelation opposes. **7:** *What the Spirit is saying*, speaking through Jesus to John, and through John to the churches (cf. 2.11,17,29; 3.6,13,22). *Conquers*, a military term, with the present tense suggesting continuous vigilance. *Tree of life*, Gen 2.9; 3.24; cf. Rev 22.2,14.

2.8–11: The second message commends followers of the Christian movement in Smyrna for their perseverance amid affliction and poverty. Smyrna (modern Izmir) was a port city 30 mi (50 km) north of Ephesus. **8:** See 1.17–18; Isa 44.6; 48.12. **9:** *Rich*, in spiritual things. *Those who say that they are Jews and are not*, this accusation reflects first-century CE struggles over identity, with some groups contesting the claims to Jewish identity made by other groups and claiming authentic Jewish identity for themselves. The word translated "Jew" (Gk "Ioudaios") could refer both to someone from Judea, and to an adherent of Judaism whether from birth or by conversion. *Synagogue of Satan* (cf. 3.9) likewise reflects significant tensions (cf. Jn 8.44; 1QH 2.22 refers to apostate Jews as "a congregation of Belial"). *Synagogue* can refer to a congregation or to a meeting place for a congregation. **10:** *Ten days*, a limited period of trial (Dan 1.12). *Crown of life,* the reward of eternal life (Jas 1.12; 1 Pet 5.4). **11:** *The second death*, the final condemnation of the unfaithful (20.14).

Chs 2–3: The seven churches.

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword:

13 "I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me[a] even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication. 15 So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

[a] Or *deny my faith*

2.12–17: The third message is directed to Pergamum, a city that was a noted center of Roman emperor worship ca. 60 mi (80 km) north of Smyrna. **12:** *Sharp two-edged sword*, 1.16n. **13:** *Where Satan's throne is* (in contrast to God's throne in ch 4), this may be a reference either to the temple of the Roman emperor or to the monumental altar of Zeus, both of which were located in Pergamum. *Antipas* is otherwise unknown; he is the only martyr named in the book. **14–15:** *The teaching of Balaam*, here the author criticizes an opponent by comparing him to the diviner Balaam of Num 22.5–24.25. After Balaam's oracles, the Israelites engaged in both sexual relations with outsiders and the worship of foreign gods (see Num 25; 31.16). To *eat food sacrificed to idols* meant either to participate in ritual banquets or to purchase and then consume meat that had been sacrificed in the temples of Pergamum (1 Cor 8; 10). *Practice fornication* can also be understood metaphorically, with unauthorized sexual conduct symbolizing religious infidelity (Wis 14.12). **15:** *Nicolaitans*, see v. 6n. **17:** *Hidden manna*, spiritual nourishment reserved exclusively for those who avoid food sacrificed to idols (Ex 16.33–34; Ps 78.24). *White*, the color symbolizing victory and joy. *A new name*, Isa 62.2.

18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira
write: These are the words of the Son of God,
who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose
feet are like burnished bronze:
19 "I know your works—your love, faith,
service, and patient endurance. I know that
your last works are greater than the first.
20 But I have this against you: you tolerate that
woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet
and is teaching and beguiling my servants[a] to
practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed
to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she
refuses to repent of her fornication. 22 Be-
ware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those
who commit adultery with her I am throw-
ing into great distress, unless they repent of
her doings; 23 and I will strike her children
dead. And all the churches will know that I
am the one who searches minds and hearts,
and I will give to each of you as your works
deserve. 24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira,
who do not hold this teaching, who have not
learned what some call 'the deep things of Sa-
tan,' to you I say, I do not lay on you any other
burden; 25 only hold fast to what you have
until I come. 26 To everyone who conquers
and continues to do my works to the end,
I will give authority over the nations;
27 to rule[b] them with an iron rod,
as when clay pots are shattered—
28 even as I also received authority from my
Father. To the one who conquers I will also
give the morning star. 29 Let anyone who has
an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the
churches.

3 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis
write: These are the words of him who
has the seven spirits of God and the seven
stars:
"I know your works; you have a name of
being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and
strengthen what remains and is on the point
of death, for I have not found your works
perfect in the sight of my God. 3 Remember
then what you received and heard; obey it,
and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come
like a thief, and you will not know at what
hour I will come to you. 4 Yet you have still
a few persons in Sardis who have not soiled
their clothes; they will walk with me, dressed
in white, for they are worthy. 5 If you conquer,
you will be clothed like them in white robes,
and I will not blot your name out of the book
of life; I will confess your name before my Fa-
ther and before his angels. 6 Let anyone who
has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to
the churches.

7 "And to the angel of the church in Phila-
delphia write:

[a] Gk *slaves*
[b] Or *to shepherd*

2.18–29: The fourth message is addressed to Thyatira, a commercial center renowned for its many trade guilds, ca. 70 mi (110 km) north-northeast of Ephesus. Lydia, one of Paul's converts, was a dealer in purple cloth from Thyatira (Acts 16.14–15). **18:** Dan 10.6. **20:** *That woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet*, John's characterization of an opponent at Thyatira is here identified contemptuously with the Phoenician wife of King Ahab, the queen who worshiped Baal and who opposed the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 16.31; 19.1–2). **22:** *I am throwing her on a bed*, punishment with serious sickness is threatened for the Thyatiran Jezebel. *Those who commit adultery with her* are those who are complicit in her worship of other gods. In the Hebrew Bible marital infidelity is a frequent metaphor for worship of gods other than the Lord (Deut 31.16; Judg 2.17; 1 Chr 5.25; Jer 3.6–11); see also vv. 14–15n. **23:** *Her children*, those who follow her teachings. **24:** *Deep things of Satan*, a sarcastic reference to her teachings (contrast 1 Cor 2.10). **26–27:** The conquerors will share in Jesus's rule (Ps 2.8–9). **28:** *The morning star* is Jesus himself (22.16; cf. Num 24.17).

3.1–6: The fifth message is addressed to Sardis, a prosperous city located ca. 55 mi (85 km) northeast of Ephesus that had been the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. **1:** *Seven spirits*, see 1.4n. *Seven stars*, 1.20. *You have a name*, its commitment in faith was only nominal. **3:** *Received and heard*, the gospel. *Like a thief*, just when unexpected (16.15; Mt 24.42–44; 1 Thess 5.2). **4–5:** *Soiled . . . white*, not impurity/purity, but surrender/conquest (see 2.17n.). *White robes* are a frequent image; see 3.18; 4.4; 6.11; 7.9; 19.14; cf. Zech 3.3–5. **5:** *Book of life*, the heavenly register containing the names of the redeemed (13.8; 17.8; 20.12,15; Ex 32.32; Ps 69.28; Dan 12.1; Mal 3.16; Lk 10.20).

3.7–13: The sixth message is addressed to the church in Philadelphia, a small town 80 mi (50 km) southeast of Sardis. **7:** *Key of David*, a symbol of authority (Isa 22.22). **8:** *An open door*, of opportunity (1 Cor 16.9; 2 Cor 2.12).

These are the words of the holy one, the
true one,
who has the key of David,
who opens and no one will shut,
who shuts and no one opens:
8 "I know your works. Look, I have set
before you an open door, which no one is able
to shut. I know that you have but little power,
and yet you have kept my word and have not
denied my name. 9 I will make those of the
synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews
and are not, but are lying—I will make them
come and bow down before your feet, and
they will learn that I have loved you. 10 Be-
cause you have kept my word of patient en-
durance, I will keep you from the hour of trial
that is coming on the whole world to test the
inhabitants of the earth. 11 I am coming soon;
hold fast to what you have, so that no one may
seize your crown. 12 If you conquer, I will make
you a pillar in the temple of my God; you
will never go out of it. I will write on you the
name of my God, and the name of the city of
my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down
from my God out of heaven, and my own new
name. 13 Let anyone who has an ear listen to
what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

14 "And to the angel of the church in Laodi-
cea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful
and true witness, the origin[a] of God's creation:
15 "I know your works; you are neither
cold nor hot. I wish that you were either
cold or hot. 16 So, because you are lukewarm,
and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit
you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, 'I am
rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.'
You do not realize that you are wretched,
pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 Therefore
I counsel you to buy from me gold refined
by fire so that you may be rich; and white
robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of
your nakedness from being seen; and salve
to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 I
reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be
earnest, therefore, and repent. 20 Listen! I am
standing at the door, knocking; if you hear
my voice and open the door, I will come in to
you and eat with you, and you with me. 21 To
the one who conquers I will give a place with
me on my throne, just as I myself conquered
and sat down with my Father on his throne.
22 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what
the Spirit is saying to the churches."

4 After this I looked, and there in heaven
a door stood open! And the first voice,
which I had heard speaking to me like a
trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show
you what must take place after this." 2 At once
I was in the spirit,[b] and there in heaven stood
a throne, with one seated on the throne!
3 And the one seated there looks like jasper

[a] Or *beginning*
[b] Or *in the Spirit*

9: *Synagogue of Satan*, see 2.9n. On tension between followers of Jesus and Jews in Philadelphia, see Ignatius, *Philad.* 6.1. *Bow down before your feet*, Isa 43.4; 60.14. **10:** Despite its weakness (v. 8), the Philadelphian church will be safeguarded during the eschatological tribulation. **11:** *I am coming soon*, 22.7,12,20. **12:** *A pillar*, steadfast and permanent (Gal 2.9). *New Jerusalem*, 21.2. *The name of my God*, marking the one inscribed as God's possession and as specially dedicated to God. *The name of the city of my God*, signifying citizenship in the new Jerusalem; see 21.2,10.

3.14–22: The seventh message is directed to the church in Laodicea, a wealthy city located near Colossae (Col 2.1; 4.13–16), 95 mi (155 km) east of Ephesus. **14:** *The Amen* is Jesus Christ (2 Cor 1.20). *The faithful and true witness*, 1.5. This list of titles may derive from a Gk translation of Isa 65.16. *The origin of God's creation*, Jesus Christ is the principle and source of all creation (Jn 1.3; Col 1.15,18). **15–16:** Their lukewarm commitment is nauseating: *spit you out of my mouth*. **17:** Complacent and self-satisfied, they are spiritually poverty-stricken (Hos 12.8). **18:** *Buy from me gold refined by fire*, an idiom for removing sin from one's life (Job 23.10; Prov 27.21). A commercial transaction is used here as a metaphor for accepting salvation. *Eyes*, Laodicea was noted for its manufacture of a medication for ophthalmic diseases. **19:** God's chastening has beneficent motives (Prov 3.12; Heb 12.5–11). **20:** An invitation to participate in the messianic banquet in the coming age (cf. Mt 26.29). **21:** *A place with me*, a promise of reigning with Jesus in glory (22.5; Lk 22.30).

4.1–5.14: Vision of God enthroned and of the Lamb. 4.1: *The first voice,* the voice of the exalted Jesus mentioned in 1.10. *Come up,* John is invited to ascend to heaven, to behold visions of God (Ezek 3.12; 8.3; 11.1). *What must take place*, Dan 2.29. **2:** *A throne,* Ezek 1.26–28; Dan 7.9. **3:** The glory of the divine presence is described

and carnelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. [4] Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. [5] Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God; [6] and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal.

Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: [7] the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. [8] And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

"Holy, holy, holy,
the Lord God the Almighty,
who was and is and is to come."

[9] And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, [10] the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

[11] "You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created."

5 Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed[a] with seven seals; [2] and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" [3] And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. [4] And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. [5] Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

[6] Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. [7] He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. [8] When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. [9] They sing a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slaughtered and by your
blood you ransomed for God

[a] Or *written on the inside, and sealed on the back*

in terms of precious gemstones; cf. Ex 24.10. **4:** *Twenty-four elders,* attendants around God's heavenly throne, probably symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. **5:** *Flashes of lightning,* expressive of the majesty of God (Ex 19.16; Ezek 1.13; Rev 11.19). *Seven flaming torches,* Zech 4.2–3. *Seven spirits,* 1.4. **6:** *A sea of glass,* Ex 24.10; Ezek 1.22. *Four living creatures,* heavenly beings representing humankind and all animals (Ezek 1.5,10). *Full of eyes,* symbolizing unceasing watchfulness (Ezek 1.18). **8:** *Six wings . . . "Holy, holy, holy,"* Isa 6.2–3. **10:** *Cast their crowns,* an act of homage and submission, acknowledging that all power comes from God. **11:** *Our Lord and God,* titles that were also attributed to the Roman emperor (Suetonius, *Domitian* 13). **5.1:** *A scroll,* containing the divine plan of judgment and salvation (Ezek 2.9–10). *Sealed,* therefore both unalterable and unknown to others (Dan 12.4). **3–5:** No created being is worthy to carry out God's plan; only the messiah can do so. *Lion of . . . Judah,* Gen 49.9–10. *Root of David,* Isa 11.1,10. *Has conquered,* the paradoxical victory of the cross and resurrection (Jn 16.33). **6–9:** The *Lamb . . . slaughtered,* the crucified messiah, a reference to Jesus's death, by which God's purposes contained in the scroll are accomplished (Isa 53.7; Jn 1.29,36; 1 Pet 1.19). *Seven horns,* fullness of power (Deut 33.17; Ps 89.17; Dan 7.7–8.24; *1 En.* 80.6–12,37). *Seven eyes,* Zech 3.9; 4.10; 2 Chr 16.9. *Seven spirits,* 1.4. **8:** *Harp and golden bowls,* objects used in worship. *The prayers of the saints* on earth are joined with the worship rendered to the *Lamb* by the heavenly creatures. **9–10:** A *new song* is sung because Jesus by his death has inaugurated a new era

saints from[a] every tribe and language
and people and nation;
10 you have made them to be a kingdom
and priests serving[b] our God,
and they will reign on earth."
11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of
many angels surrounding the throne and the
living creatures and the elders; they num-
bered myriads of myriads and thousands of
thousands, 12 singing with full voice,
"Worthy is the Lamb that was
slaughtered
to receive power and wealth and wisdom
and might
and honor and glory and blessing!"
13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and
on earth and under the earth and in the sea,
and all that is in them, singing,
"To the one seated on the throne and to
the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might
forever and ever!"
14 And the four living creatures said, "Amen!"
And the elders fell down and worshiped.

6 Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures call out, as with a voice of thunder, "Come!"[c] 2 I looked, and there was a white horse! Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer.

3 When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature call out, "Come!"[c]
4 And out came[d] another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another; and he was given a great sword.

5 When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature call out, "Come!"[c] I looked, and there was a black horse! Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand, 6 and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's pay,[e] and three quarts of barley for a day's pay,[e] but do not damage the olive oil and the wine!"

7 When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature call out, "Come!"[c] 8 I looked and there was a pale green horse! Its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him; they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the wild animals of the earth.

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for

[a] Gk *ransomed for God from*
[b] Gk *priests to*
[c] Or *"Go!"*
[d] Or *went*
[e] Gk *a denarius*

(14.3). New hymns of praise were composed to celebrate special occasions (Pss 33.3; 40.3; 96.1; 98.1; 144.9; 149.1; Isa 42.10). The *Lamb* is adored in terms similar to the adoration rendered to God (4.11). *A kingdom and priests,* see 1.6n. **11–12:** The sevenfold praise of *myriads* (tens of thousands; Dan 7.10) in heaven honoring the sacrificed *Lamb.* **13:** Universal praise to God and to the *Lamb* as equal in majesty.

6.1–17: The opening of the first six seals of the scroll, and the enactment of what is written in it.

6.1–8: Four seals of destruction. 1: *Come!* Addressed successively to each of the four riders (Zech 6.1–8) who accomplish God's purposes. **2:** The *white horse* symbolizes a conquering power that none can resist; in 19.11–13 the reference is to Jesus. The *crown* given to the rider as he is sent forth suggests a guarantee of victory. **4:** The *red horse* symbolizes war and bloodshed. *Permitted to take peace from the earth,* effectively annulling the "pax Romana," the self-congratulatory designation of Roman imperial rule as "the Roman peace." **5:** The *black horse* symbolizes famine, which follows upon war. **6:** *A quart of wheat . . . three quarts of barley,* sold at exorbitantly inflated prices because of war and famine (cf. 2 Kings 6.24–25). The prohibition against harming the *olive oil* and the *wine* (neither olive trees nor grape vines are newly planted each year) suggests that the famine is limited. **8:** The *pale green horse* symbolizes pestilence and death. *Hades,* the Greek god of the underworld; cf. 1.18. A *fourth* part indicates wide but not total devastation. *Pestilence,* Ex 9.3; 2 Sam 24.13; Ezek 5.12. *Wild animals,* Ezek 6.17; 29.5; 33.27.

6.9–8.1: Three seals of judgment.

6.9–11: The fifth seal describes the appeal for divine justice and retribution by the martyrs (v. 10) and the heavenly response to their plea (v. 11). **9:** The *souls* of the martyrs are said to be *under the altar* because they

the testimony they had given; [10] they cried out with a loud voice, "Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?" [11] They were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number would be complete both of their fellow servants[a] and of their brothers and sisters,[b] who were soon to be killed as they themselves had been killed.

[12] When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and there came a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, [13] and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. [14] The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. [15] Then the kings of the earth and the magnates and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, [16] calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; [17] for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

7 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on earth or sea or against any tree. [2] I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage earth and sea, [3] saying, "Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants[a] of our God with a seal on their foreheads."

[4] And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel:

[5] From the tribe of Judah twelve thousand sealed,
from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,
[6] from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,
[7] from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand,
[8] from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand sealed.

[9] After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm

[a] Gk *slaves*
[b] Gk *brothers*

were killed for the sake of Jesus (2.10; Mt 24.9; Phil 2.17; 2 Tim 4.6). **10:** *How long?* is a cry for divine vindication pronounced by those who have suffered unbearable oppression (e.g., Pss 6.3; 13.2; 90.13; Zech 1.12–16). *Avenge our blood,* God is the one who takes up the cause of those killed for the sake of justice (Ps 79.10 [LXX]). **11:** *White robe,* see 2.17n.; 3.4–5n.; 7.9n.

6.12–17: The opening of the sixth seal unleashes *a great earthquake,* and its catastrophic effects on the cosmos and on human society are described. **12:** *Black as sackcloth . . .* , Joel 2.30–31. **13–14:** Isa 34.4; Mk 13.25. **15–17:** All classes of society seek to escape from the wrath of God (Isa 2.10,19). **16:** *Fall on us,* Hos 10.8; Lk 23.30. **17:** *The great day of their wrath,* the time of judgment (Joel 2.11).

7.1–17: An interlude between the sixth and seventh seals: two visions that provide assurance of divine protection for the faithful during the time of tribulation (vv. 1–8) and assurance of ultimate salvation (vv. 9–17). **1:** *The four winds* are destructive forces to be unleashed by God (Jer 49.36). They correspond to the four horsemen in 6.1–8 (see Zech 6.5). **3:** A *seal* (Ezek 9.4–6) marks those under God's protection. Seals were used to signify ownership or authorship. **4:** The symbolic number 144,000, which is the square of 12 multiplied by 1,000, has been interpreted variously as a reference to the faithful remnant of Israel; the church; the martyrs; the remnant of Christians who survive the eschatological turmoil; all the redeemed (14.1,3). *Every tribe,* but the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are not mentioned. **9:** *A great multitude* (see Dan 7.14), in contrast with the 144,000 in v. 4 (5.9).

branches in their hands. [10] They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

"Salvation belongs to our God who is
seated on the throne, and to the
Lamb!"

[11] And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, [12] singing,

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor
and power and might
be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

[13] Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" [14] I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

[15] For this reason they are before the
throne of God,
and worship him day and night within
his temple,
and the one who is seated on the throne
will shelter them.
[16] They will hunger no more, and thirst no
more;
the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat;
[17] for the Lamb at the center of the throne
will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of the
water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from
their eyes."

8 When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. [2] And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

[3] Another angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar; he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that is before the throne. [4] And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. [5] Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

[6] Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them.

[7] The first angel blew his trumpet, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were hurled to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

[8] The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea. [9] A third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

[10] The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. [11] The name of the

White robes and *palm branches* symbolize righteousness and victory (see 3.4–5n.; Dan 11.35). **12:** A sevenfold ascription of praise to God. **14:** *The blood of the Lamb* cleanses from sin (Jn 1.29; 1 Jn 1.7); in the symbolism of the book, *blood* (violent death) can make *robes . . . white* (lead to victory); cf. Isa 1.18. **15:** *Before the throne of God,* in God's presence because of their faithfulness. Their constant *worship* takes place in God's temple in heaven. *Shelter them,* lit. "spread his tabernacle over them." **16:** Isa 49.10; Ps 121.6. **17:** A paradox: The *Lamb* is a *shepherd* (Ps 23.1–2; Ezek 34.23–24; Jn 10.11). *Springs of . . . life,* 21.6; 22.1,17; Jn 4.10; 7.37. *Wipe away every tear,* 21.4; Isa 25.8.

8.1–5: The seventh seal is opened. The opening of the last of the seven seals (5.1; 6.1) leads to an awesome and reverent *silence,* as response to divine judgment (Hab 3.3–6; Zech 2.13–3.2). A return to "primeval silence" prior to the judgment appears in 2 Esd 7.30. **2:** The seven angels *stand before God* ready to do God's will (Tob 12.15). **3:** *Incense . . . prayers,* Ps 141.2. **5:** Ezek 10.2. The *earthquake* announces the divine judgment about to be executed; cf. 4.5.

8.6–9.21: The first six trumpets unleash new convulsions of nature, patterned after the plagues inflicted on Egypt in the book of Exodus (Ex 7.14–10.23).

8.6–13: Four trumpets of destruction. 7: *Hail and fire,* Ex 9.23–25; both destroyers of crops. *A third,* the devastation wrought by the trumpet plagues is partial, not total. **9:** Ex 7.20. **11:** *Wormwood,* a bitter herb, poisons

star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter.

12 The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light was darkened; a third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise the night.

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew in midheaven, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

9 And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit; 2 he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. 3 Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given authority like the authority of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to damage the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 They were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion when it stings someone. 6 And in those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will flee from them.

7 In appearance the locusts were like horses equipped for battle. On their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, 8 their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; 9 they had scales like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. 10 They have tails like scorpions, with stingers, and in their tails is their power to harm people for five months. 11 They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon,[a] and in Greek he is called Apollyon.[b]

12 The first woe has passed. There are still two woes to come.

13 Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four[c] horns of the golden altar before God, 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of humankind. 16 The number of the troops of cavalry was two hundred

[a] That is, *Destruction*
[b] That is, *Destroyer*
[c] Other ancient authorities lack *four*

the waters into which it falls (Jer 9.15; 23.15). It is associated with the constellation Scorpio. **12:** Ex 10.21–22; cf. Joel 3.15; Am 8.9. **13:** *An eagle* announces impending judgment. The threefold *woe* refers to the plagues unleashed at the sounding of the next three trumpets.

9.1–11.19: Three trumpets of woe.

9.1–12: The plague of monstrous locusts, evokes the terrors of invading cavalry (perhaps a reference to the Parthians, an Iranian dynasty that ruled from Mesopotamia to India, at war with the Romans from the first century BCE to the second century CE). **1:** *A star . . . fallen from heaven,* a heavenly being, possibly an angel, identified by name in v. 11 (cf. Isa 14.12; Lk 10.18). The *bottomless pit* is the underworld, the abyss from which the beast arises (11.7; 17.8). **3:** *Locusts,* Ex 10.12–15; cf. Joel 1.4. **4:** God's servants are not to be harmed (7.3). **5:** *Five months*, while this might be a reference to the life cycle of locusts, which are hatched in spring and live until the end of summer, the more likely significance of this time period is symbolic, indicating the limited time span of this plague. **6:** *Will seek death,* in utter despair because of the torments (cf. Job 3.21). **7–10:** These are monstrous locusts, described in anthropomorphic terms (as in Joel 1 and 2), combining human features with the features of other creatures into a terrifying composite. *Teeth like lions'*, Joel 1.6; *iron breastplates*, of a soldier or war horse (Job 39.19–20; *Tg. Nah.* 3.17, compares armor of Assyrian soldiers to locusts). **11:** The name *Abaddon,* which means "Destruction," is a name for Sheol, the abode of the dead (see Job 26.6; Prov 15.11); here, as in Job 28,22, it is personified.

9.13–21: The plague of monstrous cavalry. 14: The *Euphrates* marked the eastern border of the Roman Empire, where invasion by its Parthian enemies threatened. **16–19:** These fire-breathing, lion-headed, serpent-tailed

million; I heard their number. 17 And this
was how I saw the horses in my vision: the
riders wore breastplates the color of fire and
of sapphire[a] and of sulfur; the heads of the
horses were like lions' heads, and fire and
smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths.
18 By these three plagues a third of human-
kind was killed, by the fire and smoke and
sulfur coming out of their mouths. 19 For the
power of the horses is in their mouths and
in their tails; their tails are like serpents,
having heads; and with them they inflict
harm.

20 The rest of humankind, who were not
killed by these plagues, did not repent of the
works of their hands or give up worship-
ing demons and idols of gold and silver and
bronze and stone and wood, which cannot
see or hear or walk. 21 And they did not repent
of their murders or their sorceries or their
fornication or their thefts.

10 And I saw another mighty angel com-
ing down from heaven, wrapped in a
cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face
was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of
fire. 2 He held a little scroll open in his hand.
Setting his right foot on the sea and his left
foot on the land, 3 he gave a great shout, like
a lion roaring. And when he shouted, the
seven thunders sounded. 4 And when the
seven thunders had sounded, I was about to
write, but I heard a voice from heaven say-
ing, "Seal up what the seven thunders have
said, and do not write it down." 5 Then the
angel whom I saw standing on the sea and
the land
raised his right hand to heaven
6 and swore by him who lives forever
and ever,
who created heaven and what is in it, the
earth and what is in it, and the sea and what
is in it: "There will be no more delay, 7 but
in the days when the seventh angel is to
blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be
fulfilled, as he announced to his servants[b] the
prophets."

8 Then the voice that I had heard from
heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take
the scroll that is open in the hand of the
angel who is standing on the sea and on the
land." 9 So I went to the angel and told him
to give me the little scroll; and he said to me,
"Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stom-
ach, but sweet as honey in your mouth." 10 So
I took the little scroll from the hand of the
angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my
mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach
was made bitter.

11 Then they said to me, "You must proph-
esy again about many peoples and nations
and languages and kings."

[a] Gk *hyacinth*
[b] Gk *slaves*

monsters are composite creatures, like the fire-breathing Chimera of Greek and Roman mythology; cf. the description of conquering soldiers in Jer 46.2–23. **20–21:** The trumpet plagues fail to provoke the repentance that is their purpose. Compare the hardness of Pharaoh's heart despite the plagues (Ex 8.15,19). **20:** *Idols,* Dan 5.23. **21:** *Murders . . . thefts,* sins associated with the idolatrous worship of other gods, Wis 12.3–6.

10.1–11.13: An interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets; two visions (10.1–11 and 11.1–13) present a renewal of John's prophetic commission (10.1–11) and describe what becomes of the two prophetic witnesses in the holy city (11.1–13).

10.1–11: The prophetic commission renewed. 1: *Another mighty angel,* in addition to the mighty angel in 5.2. **2:** The *little scroll* is distinct from the seven-sealed scroll in the right hand of God in 5.1. This scroll is in the angel's left hand, since in 10.5 he raises his right hand to heaven to swear an oath (Dan 12.7). *Sea* and *land* indicate the scope of the angel's authority. **4:** John is prohibited from disclosing what the *seven thunders have said,* but he "must prophesy again" (v. 11) after eating the little scroll. **5–6:** See Deut 32:40; Ps 146.6. **6:** There will be *no more delay* in the accomplishment of God's will—the sounding of the seventh trumpet is imminent. **7:** *The mystery of God,* Rom 16.25–26; Eph 1.9; 3.3–9; Col 1.26–27. *His servants the prophets,* Am 3.7. **8–10:** Ezek 2.9–3.3. **10:** *Sweet,* because it contains God's words; *bitter* because it involves God's terrible judgments (Ezek 2.10). **11:** *You must,* an inescapable obligation, in accord with the divine will, *prophesy again*; the second part of the book (chs 12–22) contains these prophecies. *Peoples and nations and languages and kings* (Dan 3.4,7 [LXX]; 7:14; Rev 5.9; 7.9) suggests the broad range of John's prophetic activity.

11 Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, [2] but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months. [3] And I will grant my two witnesses authority to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, wearing sackcloth."

[4] These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. [5] And if anyone wants to harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; anyone who wants to harm them must be killed in this manner. [6] They have authority to shut the sky, so that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.

[7] When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, [8] and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that is prophetically[a] called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. [9] For three and a half days members of the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb; [10] and the inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and celebrate and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to the inhabitants of the earth.

[11] But after the three and a half days, the breath[b] of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and those who saw them were terrified. [12] Then they[c] heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watched them. [13] At that moment there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

[14] The second woe has passed. The third woe is coming very soon.

[15] Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying,

"The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord
and of his Messiah,[d]
and he will reign forever and ever."

[16] Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces

[a] Or *allegorically*; Gk *spiritually*
[b] Or *the spirit*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *I*
[d] Gk *Christ*

11.1–13: The measuring of the temple and the two witnesses. 1: The symbolic act of the measurement of the sanctuary *and those who worship there* emphasizes the protection and preservation of the faithful who are within (as in Zech 2.1–5; cf. Ezek 40.3–42.20). **2:** *The court outside,* the court of the Gentiles. *The holy city,* Jerusalem (Neh 11.1; Isa 52.1; Mt 4.5; 27.53). *Forty-two months* = 1,260 days (v. 3) = 3 1/2 years, a number that symbolizes the period of eschatological tribulation (Dan 7.25; 9.27; 12.7,11–12). As half of seven, the number of completeness, it symbolizes radical incompleteness. **3:** Although the *two witnesses* are unnamed here, they may be prophetic figures who were expected to return in the end-time, possibly Enoch (Gen 5.24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2.1–11; Mal 4.5), or Moses (Deut 18.15,18) and Elijah. They are clothed in *sackcloth,* a sign that their prophetic message was a call to repentance. **4:** *Two olive trees,* supplying oil for the lamps in the temple (Zech 4.3–14). **6:** *Shut the sky,* cause a drought, as did Elijah (1 Kings 17.1). *Authority over the waters . . .* , as did Moses and Aaron (Ex 7.17–21). **7:** *The beast,* 13.1; 17.8. *The bottomless pit,* see 9.1n. *Will make war on them,* Dan 7.21. **8:** *The great city* is identified here *prophetically,* i.e., metaphorically or spiritually rather than literally by its proper name. While the majority of interpreters identify this city as Jerusalem, others suggest that the city is Rome, as is Babylon in 17.1–6. The name *Sodom,* applied to Jerusalem in Isa 1.10; Jer 23.14; Ezek 16.46–56, alludes to that city's legendary wickedness (Gen 18.16–19.29). *Egypt* is associated with idolatry and is the land from which God delivered the enslaved people of Israel. *Where also their Lord was crucified,* Jerusalem. **10:** The *prophets had been a torment,* preaching an unpopular message of repentance. **11–12:** The witnesses are brought back to life (cf. Ezek 37.5,10) and are taken to heaven (2 Kings 2.11). **12:** *Come up here,* 4.1. **13:** *Gave glory to the God of heaven,* a positive outcome of the *great earthquake.*

11.14–19: The seventh trumpet announces (v. 15) the consummation of God's reign (10.7). **16:** *Elders,* 4.4n.

and worshiped God, [17] singing,
"We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty,
who are and who were,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.
[18] The nations raged,
but your wrath has come,
and the time for judging the dead,
for rewarding your servants,[a] the prophets
and saints and all who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying those who destroy the
earth."
[19] Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

12 A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. [2] She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. [3] Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. [4] His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. [5] And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule[b] all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; [6] and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days.

[7] And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, [8] but they

[a] Gk *slaves*
[b] Or *to shepherd*

17–18: A song of triumph. **19:** Divine self-revelation concludes the vision of the seven trumpets and introduces the vision of ch 12. *The ark of [the] covenant* was constructed according to divine instruction at Mount Sinai (Ex 25.10–16) and eventually installed in the innermost room of the Temple by Solomon (1 Kings 8.1–12). It was presumably destroyed when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem in 586 BCE (but see 2 Macc 2.4–8).

12.1–17: The vision of the woman, the child, and the dragon is rich in symbolism drawn from mythological traditions found in ancient Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, as well as in the Hebrew Bible. One well-known version of the story tells of the goddess Leto, pregnant with Apollo, who is menaced by the dragon Python, who pursues her because he knows that Apollo is destined to kill him (Hyginus, *Fabulae* 140). Here this material is reinterpreted in terms of Jewish traditions and expectations as the story of the birth of the messiah. **1:** *A great portent,* a sign or omen *in heaven* that points to a momentous event on earth; see v. 3; 15.1; cf. Lk 21.11; *Didache* 16.6. The *woman* is unnamed, and her precise identity is uncertain. Many scholars understand her as the symbolic representation of Israel, from whom the messiah is born (v. 5); the *twelve stars* thus refer to the twelve tribes. Patristic and medieval Christian interpreters most often took her to be Mary the mother of Jesus, or sometimes the church. Elements of her description are characteristic of several ancient goddesses. **3:** The *dragon,* identified in v. 9 as "the Devil" and "Satan," is Leviathan, the great sea monster of Canaanite tradition and of the Hebrew Bible (Job 40.25; Isa 27.1), one name for the primeval watery chaos. *Seven heads and ten horns,* 13.1; 17.3; cf. Ps 74.13–14. These details are probably drawn from Dan 7.1–8, where they represent various empires and rulers; it is unclear what they symbolize here; cf. 17.9–10. **4:** *A third of the stars,* a proportion analogous to the destruction caused by the trumpet plagues (8.7–9.19; Dan 8.10). *Threw them to the earth,* Dan 8.20. **5:** *Rule . . . with a rod of iron,* an allusion to Ps 2.9, originally concerning the king of Israel, and interpreted as referring to a future anointed ruler (*Pss. Sol.* 17.23–24). The messianic child is *snatched away and taken to God*: The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus denies the demonic dragon victory over its prey. **6:** *The wilderness* is a place where God provides refuge and sustenance amidst adversity (e.g., Gen 21.14–21; Deut 8.15–16; 29.5; 32.10; 1 Kings 17.1–2). *One thousand, two hundred sixty days,* the equivalent of "a time, and times, and half a time" (v. 14), "forty-two months" (cf. 11.2; 13.5), amounts to three and a half years. This symbolic number suggests a period of time limited by divine design. **7–12:** The *war* in *heaven* and its outcome offers, in symbolic language, the reason for the persecution and oppression of believers (v. 17). **7:** *Michael,* an archangel and the champion of Israel (Dan 10.13,21; 12.1; Jude 9) engages in combat against *the dragon and his angels* (Dan 10.20). **8:** *Defeated . . .*

were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. [9] The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

[10] Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming,

"Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Messiah,[a]
for the accuser of our comrades[b] has been thrown down,
who accuses them day and night before our God.
[11] But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony,
for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.
[12] Rejoice then, you heavens
and those who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and the sea,
for the devil has come down to you with great wrath,
because he knows that his time is short!"

[13] So when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued[c] the woman who had given birth to the male child. [14] But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. [15] Then from his mouth the serpent poured water like a river after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. [16] But the earth came to the help of the woman; it opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. [17] Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.

[18] Then the dragon[d] took his stand on the sand of the seashore. [1] And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names. [2] And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority. [3] One of its heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound[e] had been healed. In amazement the whole earth followed the beast. [4] They worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

[5] The beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and

[a] Gk *Christ*
[b] Gk *brothers*
[c] Or *persecuted*
[d] Gk *Then he*; other ancient authorities read *Then I stood*
[e] Gk *the plague of its death*

in heaven, see 9.1–2. Both passages may allude to Isa 14.12–20. **9:** Lk 10.18. *That ancient serpent,* see Gen 3.1–7; Isa 27.1. *Satan* means adversary, accuser (see Job 1.6–12; 2.1–7; Zech 3.1–2). *The deceiver,* 20.10. **10:** *The accuser,* as in Job 1.9–11. **11:** *They have conquered,* the paradoxical victory of the crucified Jesus (see 5.6–9n.) and of the martyrs, who were faithful unto death. **12:** *Rejoice,* Ps 96.11; Isa 49.13. **14:** *Eagle,* Ex 19.4; Deut 32.11. *A time . . . half a time,* see v. 6n. **15:** *Water . . . flood,* the chaos of the primeval sea monster (Isa 27.1; Ps 74.13; see 12.3n.). **16:** *Earth* helps the woman, as in Ex 15.12 the earth swallows up the pursuing Egyptian armies. **17:** The frustrated *dragon* redirects its anger toward *the rest of* the woman's *children,* namely, those who *keep the commandments . . . and hold the testimony of Jesus* (14.12).

12.18–13.18: The two beasts. 13.1–10: The *beast* from *the sea* combines the powers of the four beasts of Dan 7 and represents the Roman Empire, incited by the *dragon* (v. 2) to oppress *the saints* (v. 7). **1–2:** Based on Dan 7.1–7; see also 12.3n. *The sea,* primeval chaos. *Blasphemous names,* Roman emperors were deified, and worshiped as gods. **3:** *Death-blow,* perhaps an allusion to the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE, or a reference to the belief that the emperor Nero, who committed suicide in 68 CE, would be restored to life and rule (see 17.8n.). The *mortal wound* (to the beast as a whole) did not destroy the empire. *Amazement,* as of one captivated by a remarkable victory or portent (Jdt 11.16; 2 Esd 12.3). **5:** The sovereignty of God, even amid the oppression of the

it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. [6] It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. [7] Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.[a] It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation, [8] and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered.[b]

[9] Let anyone who has an ear listen:
[10] If you are to be taken captive,
into captivity you go;
if you kill with the sword,
with the sword you must be killed.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

[11] Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. [12] It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound[c] had been healed. [13] It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of all; [14] and by the signs that it is allowed to perform on behalf of the beast, it deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword[d] and yet lived; [15] and it was allowed to give breath[e] to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast could even speak and cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. [16] Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, [17] so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. [18] This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.[f]

14 Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written

[a] Other ancient authorities lack this sentence
[b] Or *written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered from the foundation of the world*
[c] Gk *whose plague of its death*
[d] Or *that had received the plague of the sword*
[e] Or *spirit*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *six hundred sixteen*

faithful, is implied by the use of passive verbs here and in vv. 7,10,14,15 (cf. 6.4; see 17.17n.). *Forty-two months,* see 11.2n. **8:** *From the foundation of the world,* this phrase would most naturally qualify *slaughtered* (see textual note *b*). A *name* can be removed from *the book of life* (3.5n.); later, judgment seems to depend on one's conduct of life (20.12). The translation here is a harmonization with 17.8. **10:** Jer 15.2; 43.11; Mt 26.52. **11–18:** The *beast* from *the earth,* associated with the false prophet (16.13; 19.20), enforces emperor worship (v. 12) and produces *great signs* (v. 13) or portents to deceive the people (v. 14); cf. Mt 24.24; 2 Thess 2.9–10. **14:** The *image,* a statue of the deified emperor. **16–17:** *Marked* in imitation of the sealing of God's servants (7.2–4). The *mark* of the beast (also 14.9,11; 16.2; 19.20; 20.4) is different from the seal of God with which the faithful are identified (7.3; 9.4). Those who do not bear the mark of the beast suffer economic oppression. *Right hand . . . forehead,* phylacteries or "tefillin" were worn on the left arm and forehead (*Ep. Arist.* 159; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.213). Egyptian Jews were branded by Ptolemy IV (3 Macc 2.28–29). **18:** *This calls for wisdom,* Dan 12.10. *The number of a person* can be understood either as a number that stands for a specific person, or as a number that can be calculated by human beings, not a hidden number known only to God (cf. 21.17). In the ancient practice of gematria, the numerical equivalents of the letters of the Hebrew or Greek alphabets were added together, and the resulting sum was seen as giving a clue to the nature of the name. Thus *the number of the beast* (666) is the sum of the separate letters of its name. Of countless explanations, the most probable is "Neron Caesar" (in Hebrew letters), i.e., Emperor Nero, which, if spelled without the final "n", also accounts for the variant reading, 616 (see textual note *f*). +The number six represents what falls short of the number of completeness, seven.

14.1–20: A series of three visions intended to reassure the faithful of ultimate victory and vindication. **1–5:** *The Lamb* and those redeemed from the earth; as in 7.4, the *one hundred forty-four thousand* is a symbolic expression. **1:** *Mount Zion,* Jerusalem, the center of God's eschatological reign (Heb 12.22). *Written on their foreheads,* 7.3n.; 22.4.

on their foreheads. [2] And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, [3] and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth. [4] It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, [5] and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless.

[6] Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live[a] on the earth—to every nation and tribe and language and people. [7] He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

[8] Then another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

[9] Then another angel, a third, followed them, crying with a loud voice, "Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, [10] they will also drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. [11] And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name."

[12] Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of[b] Jesus.

[13] And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them."

[14] Then I looked, and there was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand! [15] Another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to the one who sat on the cloud, "Use your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." [16] So the one who sat on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

[17] Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. [18] Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over fire, and he

[a] Gk *sit*
[b] Or *to their faith in*

2: *Many waters,* see 1.15n. **3:** *They,* the one hundred forty-four thousand. *New song,* 5.8–10. *Throne,* 4.2n. *Four living creatures,* 4.6n. **4:** *They are virgins,* a characterization of the one hundred forty-four thousand that may be understood metaphorically in terms of the sexual abstinence required before contact with the divine (Ex 19.15; Deut 23.10–14) and of warriors before battle (1 Sam 21.5; 2 Sam 11.9–13). *These follow the Lamb,* who is their shepherd (7.17). *First fruits,* Ex 23.19. *No lie,* cf. Zeph 3.13. **6–13:** Three angels announce the coming judgment. **6:** *Flying in midheaven,* 8.13. *Eternal gospel,* the message or proclamation that follows in v. 7, an announcement that God's judgment is imminent. **7:** *Fear God,* 15.4; Deut 10.12–15. *Judgment,* 16.7; 18.10; 19.2. *Worship* acknowledges God's sovereignty over the cosmos as its Creator. **8:** *Fallen, fallen is Babylon* (Isa 21.9) *the great* (Dan 4.30), an anticipation of 18.2. *Babylon* is a symbolic name for Rome (2 Esd 3.1–2). The association of the two is based on the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 BCE and by Rome in 70 CE. *The wine of the wrath,* 18.3; Jer 51.7. **9–11:** The sentence pronounced against those who *worship the beast* will be worse than what is suffered by those who do not worship it or bear its *mark* (13.15–17). **10:** *Wine of God's wrath,* Jer 25.15–16; 51.7. *Unmixed,* not diluted and therefore more potent (see 3 Macc 5.2). Wine was often mixed with water before being consumed. *Fire and sulfur* (19.20; 20.10; 21.8) are instruments of divine punishment (Gen 19.24; Ps 11.6; Ezek 38.22). *Holy angels,* Mk 8.38. **11:** *Smoke,* 18.9,18; 19.3. **12:** An exhortation to perseverance addressed to those against whom the dragon goes to make war in 12.17. **13:** *Blessed,* see 1.3n. A promise assured by *the Spirit. Their deeds,* 2.2,19; 3.1,8,15. **14–20:** The eschatological harvest, the final judgment of God (Joel 3.13), involves the ingathering of the saints by *one like the Son of Man* (vv. 14–16) and the assembling of the wicked for destruction (vv. 17–20). **14:** *White cloud . . . Son of Man,* Dan 7.13; Mt 24.30; Mk 14.62. **15–16:** A grain harvest. **18–20:** A scene of the grape harvest and

called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Use your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." [19] So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and he threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God. [20] And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles.[a]

15 Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and amazing: seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.

[2] And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. [3] And they sing the song of Moses, the servant[b] of God, and the song of the Lamb:

"Great and amazing are your deeds,
Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways,
King of the nations![c]
[4] Lord, who will not fear
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before you,
for your judgments have been revealed."

[5] After this I looked, and the temple of the tent[d] of witness in heaven was opened, [6] and out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen,[e] with golden sashes across their chests. [7] Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever; [8] and the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended.

16 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

[2] So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and a foul and painful sore came on those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image.

[3] The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing in the sea died.

[4] The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. [5] And I heard the angel of the waters say,

"You are just, O Holy One, who are and were,
for you have judged these things;
[6] because they shed the blood of saints and prophets,

[a] Gk *one thousand six hundred stadia*
[b] Gk *slave*
[c] Other ancient authorities read *the ages*
[d] Or *tabernacle*
[e] Other ancient authorities read *stone*

winemaking. **20:** Metaphorically, *wine* is frequently associated with *blood* (Gen 49.11; Deut 32.14; Sir 39.26; 1 Macc 6.34). The enormous quantity of blood here suggests the vast extent of the divine judgment (cf. Isa 63.3–6). Mention of the *horse's bridle* here foreshadows the combat in 19.11–21.

15.1–16.21: The seven bowls of the wrath of God.

15.1–8: The preparation for judgment. 1: *Portent,* a third heavenly sign (see 12.1n.,3). *The wrath of God,* 14.10,19; 15.1,7; 16.1; 19.15. *Is ended,* accomplished or come to its fulfillment. **15.2–4:** Vision of the victorious martyrs in heaven (8.3–5). **2:** *Sea of glass,* see 4.6n. **3–4:** *Song of Moses, see* Ex 15.1–18; Deut 32. The hymn is actually a collage of phrases taken from many Jewish scriptures. **5:** *The temple of the tent of witness,* the heavenly counterpart of the tent of witness that accompanied Israel's journey through the desert (Num 9.15). *Was opened,* cf. 11.19. On opening the heavenly gates as a prelude to judgment, see 3 Macc 6.18–19. In Rome, the Temple of Janus was opened as a prelude to war (Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.294). **7:** *Golden bowls,* libation vessels used in religious rituals. **8:** *Smoke,* Ex 19.18; 40.34–35; Isa 6.1–4; cf. 1 Kings 8.10–11.

16.1–21: The pouring of the bowls (cf. chs 8–9, and the plagues inflicted on Egypt, Ex 7–12). **2:** *A foul and painful sore,* Ex 9.8–12. **3–4:** 8.8–9; Ex 7.14–24. **5–6:** A judgment doxology; again it is a collage of phrases taken from different scriptures. **5:** *The angel* that has control *of the waters,* implying a cosmology in which different angels preside over different elements of the universe (*1 En.* 60.10–22; Rev 7.1–2, winds; 14.18, fire). **6:** Divine

you have given them blood to drink.
It is what they deserve!"
7 And I heard the altar respond,
"Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty,
your judgments are true and just!"
8 The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire; 9 they were scorched by the fierce heat, but they cursed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.
10 The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness; people gnawed their tongues in agony, 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.
12 The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up in order to prepare the way for the kings from the east. 13 And I saw three foul spirits like frogs coming from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet. 14 These are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. 15 ("See, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and is clothed,[a] not going about naked and exposed to shame.") 16 And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Harmagedon.
17 The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake, such as had not occurred since people were upon the earth, so violent was that earthquake. 19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered great Babylon and gave her the wine-cup of the fury of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found; 21 and huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds,[b] dropped from heaven on people, until they cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague.

17 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore who is seated on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk." 3 So he carried me away in the spirit[c] into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was

[a] Gk *and keeps his robes*
[b] Gk *weighing about a talent*
[c] Or *in the Spirit*

retribution (Isa 49.26). *Blood to drink,* cf. 17.6. **7:** *The altar,* 6.9–11. **10:** 8.12; Ex 10.21. *Throne of the beast,* 13.2. **12:** *Euphrates,* see 9.14n. *Kings from the east,* perhaps a reference to the Parthians, who would be led by the Roman emperor Nero, whom it was thought would be restored to life; see 13.3n.; *Sib. Or.* 4.120,139. **13–14:** *Foul spirits like frogs,* Ex 8.1–15. **14:** *Performing signs,* 13.13. **15:** *Like a thief,* see 3.3n. *Blessed,* see 1.3n. **16:** *They,* the froglike spirits, emissaries of the demonic trio, that is, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. *Harmagedon,* spelled variously in the manuscripts with "gg" and/or "dd"; also "Armageddon." This is likely an allusion to Megiddo, the site of several decisive battles in Israel's history (Judg 5.19; 2 Kings 9.27; 2 Chr 35.22); in Heb "har Megiddo" means "the mountain of Megiddo." Here it is the symbolic assembly point of the forces hostile to God as they prepare for the eschatological battle. **19:** *The great city,* Rome. *Great Babylon,* 14.8. *Wine-cup,* 14.10. **21:** *Hail,* 8.7; Ex 9.13–35; Wis 5.22.

17.1–18.24: The fall of Babylon, which is Rome, the city on seven hills (17.9,18) and the leading persecutor of the saints (17.6).

17.1–18: The vision of the woman. 1: *The great whore,* a symbol that builds both on the fact that cities were grammatically gendered as feminine and on the Hebrew prophets' metaphorical references to cities and nations as brides, wives, or harlots (e.g., Tyre in Isa 23.17–18). **2:** Jer 51.7. *Fornication,* sexual misconduct applied metaphorically to the city's international commercial and political dealings, which are judged illicit and unjust. **3:** *In the spirit,* 1.10; 4.2; 21.10 (Ezek 2.2; 3.12,14,24). *Into a wilderness,* Isa 21.1–20. *Scarlet beast,* the Roman Empire (see 13.1n.). *Blasphemous names,* divine titles given to Roman emperors (see 13.1). **4:** *Gold and jewels and pearls,*

clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; [5] and on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations." [6] And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly amazed. [7] But the angel said to me, "Why are you so amazed? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. [8] The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth, whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will be amazed when they see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

[9] "This calls for a mind that has wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; also, they are seven kings, [10] of whom five have fallen, one is living, and the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a little while. [11] As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. [12] And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. [13] These are united in yielding their power and authority to the beast; [14] they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

[15] And he said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the whore is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. [16] And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the whore; they will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire. [17] For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by agreeing to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. [18] The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

18 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor. [2] He called out with a mighty voice,

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
It has become a dwelling place of demons,
a haunt of every foul spirit,
a haunt of every foul bird,
a haunt of every foul and hateful beast.[a]
[3] For all the nations have drunk[b]
of the wine of the wrath of her fornication,
and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her,

[a] Other ancient authorities lack the words *a haunt of every foul beast* and attach the words *and hateful* to the previous line so as to read *a haunt of every foul and hateful bird*

[b] Other ancient authorities read *She has made all nations drink*

18.16. **5:** *On her forehead,* 13.16; 14.1; 20.4; 22.4. *A mystery,* indicating that the name is symbolic and that it requires interpretation, which the angel offers in vv. 7–18. *Mother of whores,* Hos 2.2–5. **6:** *Drunk with . . . blood,* Ezek 39.19. Persecution took the form of exile (1.9), imprisonment (2.10), or death (2.10,13; 11.3). **8:** *The beast* now probably represents the Roman emperor Nero, who was expected to return to life and power (v. 11). *Was and is not and is to come,* a parody of the designation of God in 1.4,8. *Book of life,* see 3.5n. **9:** *This calls for a mind that has wisdom,* like the formula in 13.18, this expression introduces the interpretation of the symbolism of the preceding verses. The *seven mountains* are the seven hills of Rome. The *seven kings* are Roman emperors (cf. Dan 11.2; 2 Esd 12.22–26), whom interpreters have identified with various emperors from Julius Caesar to Domitian. **12:** *Ten horns* represent subordinate or client rulers (Dan 7.7–8). **14:** The eschatological victory of Jesus Christ. *Lord of lords and king of kings,* 19.16. **16:** Ezek 23.26–29. **17:** The ten kings are unwitting instruments of God's will, fulfilling the divine plan (compare the passive verbs in 6.4; see 13.5n.). **18:** An explicit identification of the woman of v. 1 as *the great city,* i.e., Rome.

18.1–24: Dirge over the fallen city (Rome), with echoes from the taunt songs in Isa 23–24; 47; Jer 50–51; Ezek 26–27. **1–3:** Angelic announcement of judgment (14.8; Isa 21.9; Jer 50.39; 51.8). **1:** *The earth was made bright,* Ezek 43.2. **2:** *A*

and the merchants of the earth have
grown rich from the power[a] of her
luxury."
4 Then I heard another voice from heaven
saying,
"Come out of her, my people,
so that you do not take part in her sins,
and so that you do not share in her
plagues;
5 for her sins are heaped high as heaven,
and God has remembered her iniquities.
6 Render to her as she herself has
rendered,
and repay her double for her deeds;
mix a double draught for her in the cup
she mixed.
7 As she glorified herself and lived
luxuriously,
so give her a like measure of torment
and grief.
Since in her heart she says,
'I rule as a queen;
I am no widow,
and I will never see grief,'
8 therefore her plagues will come in a
single day—
pestilence and mourning and famine—
and she will be burned with fire;
for mighty is the Lord God who judges
her."
9 And the kings of the earth, who commit-
ted fornication and lived in luxury with her,
will weep and wail over her when they see
the smoke of her burning; 10 they will stand
far off, in fear of her torment, and say,
"Alas, alas, the great city,
Babylon, the mighty city!
For in one hour your judgment has come."
11 And the merchants of the earth weep
and mourn for her, since no one buys their
cargo anymore, 12 cargo of gold, silver, jewels
and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet,
all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory,
all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and
marble, 13 cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh,
frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and
wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots,
slaves—and human lives.[b]
14 "The fruit for which your soul longed
has gone from you,
and all your dainties and your splendor
are lost to you,
never to be found again!"
15 The merchants of these wares, who gained
wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of
her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,
16 "Alas, alas, the great city,
clothed in fine linen,
in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold,
with jewels, and with pearls!
17 For in one hour all this wealth has been
laid waste!"
And all shipmasters and seafarers, sailors
and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off
18 and cried out as they saw the smoke of her
burning,
"What city was like the great city?"
19 And they threw dust on their heads, as they
wept and mourned, crying out,
"Alas, alas, the great city,
where all who had ships at sea
grew rich by her wealth!
For in one hour she has been laid waste."
20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, you saints
and apostles and prophets! For God has given
judgment for you against her.
21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like
a great millstone and threw it into the sea,
saying,
"With such violence Babylon the great city
will be thrown down,
and will be found no more;
22 and the sound of harpists and minstrels
and of flutists and trumpeters
will be heard in you no more;
and an artisan of any trade

[a] Or *resources*
[b] Or *chariots, and human bodies and souls*

dwelling place . . . a haunt, Isa 13.21–22. **4–8:** Summons to God's people to leave the doomed city; cf. Jer 51.45; Mt 24.16. **5:** *High as heaven,* Jer 51.9. **6:** Jer 50.29; cf. Isa 40.2. **9–20:** Lamentations of those who have been enriched through their dealings with the corrupt city: kings (vv. 9–10), merchants (vv. 11–16), and mariners (vv. 17–20; cf. Ezek 27.29–36). **13:** *Slaves—and human lives*, through the dehumanizing practice of slavery, the Roman imperial economy reduced people to mere commodities that could be bought and sold like any other merchandise. **20:** *Rejoice over her,* Jer 51.48. **21–24:** Symbolic action representing the total destruction of the city (Jer 51.63–64). **22:** *Sound*

will be found in you no more;
and the sound of the millstone
will be heard in you no more;
23 and the light of a lamp
will shine in you no more;
and the voice of bridegroom and bride
will be heard in you no more;
for your merchants were the magnates of the earth,
and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.
24 And in you[a] was found the blood of prophets and of saints,
and of all who have been slaughtered on earth."

19 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying,
"Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power to our God,
2 for his judgments are true and just;
he has judged the great whore
who corrupted the earth with her fornication,
and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants."[b]
3 Once more they said,
"Hallelujah!
The smoke goes up from her forever and ever."
4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying,
"Amen. Hallelujah!"
5 And from the throne came a voice saying,
"Praise our God,
all you his servants,[b]
and all who fear him,
small and great."
6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out,
"Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.
7 Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready;
8 to her it has been granted to be clothed
with fine linen, bright and pure"—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.
9 And the angel said[c] to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God." 10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant[d] with you and your comrades[e] who hold the testimony of Jesus.[f] Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus[f] is the spirit of prophecy."

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in[g]

[a] Gk *her*
[b] Gk *slaves*
[c] Gk *he said*
[d] Gk *slave*
[e] Gk *brothers*
[f] Or *to Jesus*
[g] Other ancient authorities read *sprinkled with*

of harpists, Jer 25.10; Ezek 26.13. **24:** *Blood of prophets,* Mt 23.34–35; Lk 11.49–51; 13.33–34.

19.1–10: Doxology giving praise to God for the destruction of Rome (vv. 1–5) and for the marriage of the Lamb (vv. 6–9). **1:** *Hallelujah,* Heb for "Praise the Lord," as in Pss 104.25; 106.1; 111.1; etc. **3:** *Smoke . . . forever,* i.e., destruction never to be rebuilt. **4:** See 4.4,6. **5:** Ps 115.13. **7:** *His bride,* the new Jerusalem (21.2,9). **8:** *Fine linen,* in contrast to the attire of Babylon (17.4). **9:** *Blessed,* see 1.3n. **10:** Only God is the appropriate object of worship (cf. 22.8–9).

19.11–21: The victory of Jesus Christ and the heavenly armies over the beast and its cohorts. **11:** *Heaven opened,* Ezek 1.1. *In righteousness he judges,* Isa 11.4. **12:** *Many diadems,* in contrast to the diadems of the dragon (12.3). *A name . . . that no one knows,* because the name stands for a person, knowledge of a name confers power over the person. That his name is known only to himself implies that Jesus's power is sovereign and unlimited (cf. 2.17). **13:** *Robe dipped in blood,* see Isa 63.1–3. As revealer of God Jesus is called *The Word of God* (Jn 1.1,14). **14:**

blood, and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule[a] them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and their riders—flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great." 19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against the rider on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 21 And the rest were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

20 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be let out for a little while.

4 Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus[b] and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years.

[a] Or *will shepherd*
[b] Or *for the testimony of Jesus*

Armies, the angelic host (see Lk 2.13 note *c*). *Fine linen,* 19.8. **15:** 1.16; 2.12,16; 19.21; Ps 2.9. **16:** 17.14; Deut 10.17. **17–18:** *An angel* summons the birds of prey (Ezek 39.4,17–20). **17:** *The great supper of God,* in gruesome contrast to the "marriage feast of the Lamb" (v. 9). **19–21:** The final battle between Jesus and the beast (anticipated in 16.13–16). **20:** *The beast,* the first beast, introduced in 13.1–8. *The false prophet* is the second beast of 13.11–15. *The lake of fire,* see 14.10n.; 20.10,14–15; 21.8; Dan 7.11. *Sulfur* was well known in the ancient world as a noxious substance; it was used to render land infertile (Deut 29.23; Job 18.15), and burning sulfur symbolized God's judgment (Gen 19.24; Ps 11.6; Ezek 38.22). See 9.17; 14.10; 20.10; 21.8. **21:** *The sword of the rider . . . the sword that came from his mouth,* suggesting that the victory is won not by violence but by "The Word of God" (v. 13).

20.1–10: The defeat of Satan.

20.1–6: The temporary imprisonment of Satan and the reign of Christ and the martyrs. 1: *Chain,* 2 Pet 2.4; Jude 6. **2–3:** The period of a *thousand years* is symbolic both here and in vv. 4–7, suggesting a temporary time of righteousness and tranquility before the final eschatological consummation. Cf. Ps 90.4; as the eternal time of blessing in *Jub.* 4:29–30; 23.27–30; a time far greater than the ten days during which the saints endured trials (2.10). **2:** *The dragon . . . serpent . . . Devil . . . Satan,* 12.9n. **3:** Satan is locked into the pit to prevent him from carrying out his demonic work as "the deceiver of the whole world" (12.9). After the *thousand years,* though, *he must be let out for a little while,* but even this limited period is under God's control (Dan 7.25). **4:** *Thrones* of judgment (Dan 7.9,22,27; Mt 19.28; Lk 22.30). *Those . . . beheaded for their testimony,* martyrs (in 6.9–10 the souls of the martyrs, under the altar, cry for vengeance). *Its mark,* 13.16–17; 14.9. *Reigned with Christ a thousand years,* this passage, which gave rise to Christian millennialism, suggests an interim messianic kingdom. **6:** *Blessed,* see 1.3n. *Priests,* 1.6; 5.10; Ex 19.6. *Second death,* see 2.11n.; 20.14; 21.8.

7 When the thousand years are ended,
Satan will be released from his prison 8 and
will come out to deceive the nations at the
four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog,
in order to gather them for battle; they are
as numerous as the sands of the sea. 9 They
marched up over the breadth of the earth
and surrounded the camp of the saints and
the beloved city. And fire came down from
heaven[a] and consumed them. 10 And the devil
who had deceived them was thrown into the
lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and
the false prophet were, and they will be tor-
mented day and night forever and ever.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and the
one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven
fled from his presence, and no place was
found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great
and small, standing before the throne, and
books were opened. Also another book was
opened, the book of life. And the dead were
judged according to their works, as recorded
in the books. 13 And the sea gave up the dead
that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the
dead that were in them, and all were judged
according to what they had done. 14 Then
Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of
fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire;
15 and anyone whose name was not found
written in the book of life was thrown into
the lake of fire.

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new
earth; for the first heaven and the first
earth had passed away, and the sea was no
more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jeru-
salem, coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne
saying,

"See, the home[b] of God is among mortals.
He will dwell[c] with them;
they will be his peoples,[d]
and God himself will be with them;[e]
4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no
more,
for the first things have passed away."

5 And the one who was seated on the
throne said, "See, I am making all things
new." Also he said, "Write this, for these
words are trustworthy and true." 6 Then he
said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and
the Omega, the beginning and the end. To
the thirsty I will give water as a gift from
the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who
conquer will inherit these things, and I will
be their God and they will be my children.
8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless,[f] the
polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the
sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their

[a] Other ancient authorities read *from God, out of heaven,* or *out of heaven from God*
[b] Gk *the tabernacle*
[c] Gk *will tabernacle*
[d] Other ancient authorities read *people*
[e] Other ancient authorities add *and be their God*
[f] Or *the unbelieving*

20.7–10: The release of Satan and the final conflict. *Gog and Magog,* gathering with the nations for war against Israel in Ezek 38–39 (a prophecy alluded to in 16.14–16 and 19.17–21). **9:** *The beloved city,* Jerusalem (Sir 24.11) or the city representing the whole land (Ezek 38.11 [LXX]). *Fire,* Ezek 38.22; 39.6; 2 Kings 1.9–12. **10:** *Was thrown into the lake of fire,* the final overthrow of Satan (*T. Jud.* 25.3).

20.11–15: The last judgment. 11: The *great white throne,* 4.2; 20.4. **12:** *Books* of deeds, ledgers that record what everyone has done (Dan 7.10). The *book of life* is distinguished from the books of deeds just opened (see 3.5n). *Judged according to their works,* Mt 16.27; Rom 2.6; 2 Cor 5.10. **13–14:** Personified *Death and Hades* (see 1.18n.; 6.8n.) are the last enemies to be defeated. **14:** *The second death,* see 2.11n.; Mt 25.41.

21.1–22.5: Vision of the new Jerusalem.

21.1–8: The renewal of creation. 1: *A new heaven and a new earth,* Isa 65.17; 66.22. All creation will be renewed, freed from imperfections, and transformed by God (Rom 8.19–21). *The sea,* the primeval force of turbulence and unrest (Gen 1.2; Ps 29.3,10), ceases to exist. **2:** *New Jerusalem,* 21.9–10; Heb 11.10. *Coming down out of heaven,* 3.12; Gal 4.26; 2 Esd 13.35–36. *Prepared as a bride,* 19.7–9; Isa 61.10. The image of the eschatological Jerusalem as a *bride* contrasts with the image of Rome as the whore Babylon in chs 17–18. **3:** Ezek 37.27. **4:** 7.16; Isa 25.8; 35.10. **5:** The speaker here is God (1.8). **6:** *Alpha* and *Omega,* see 1.8n. *Water of life,* Isa 55.1; Jn 4.13; 7.37. **7:** *Those who conquer,* compare the concluding words of each of the seven messages in chs 2 and 3. **8:** *Polluted,* . . .

place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And in the spirit[a] he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 The angel[b] who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles;[c] its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits[d] by human measurement, which the angel was using. 18 The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

[a] Or *in the Spirit*
[b] Gk *He*
[c] Gk *twelve thousand stadia*
[d] That is, almost seventy-five yards

murderers . . . idolaters, a list of vices, commonly associated with idolatry (Ps 106.36–38), which also threaten the churches (2.14,20–21). *The second death,* contrasted to the water of life in v. 6 (see 2.11n.).

21.9–27: The measuring of the city. Cf. Ezek 40–42. The measurements of the city (which are multiples of 12) are symbolic. **9:** *The seven bowls,* see ch 16. *The bride, the wife of the Lamb,* 19.7; 21.2. Israel is portrayed as the bride of God in Isa 54.5; Hos 2.19–20; the antithesis of Babylon in 17.1–3. **10:** *In the spirit,* see 1.10n. *High mountain,* Ezek 40.2. *Jerusalem . . . out of heaven,* v. 2n. **11:** *Jasper,* 4.3; *glory of God* (Ezek 43.2–5). **12:** Ezek 48.30–34. **14:** See Eph 2.20. *Twelve apostles* added to the twelve tribes of Israel yields the symbolic number twenty-four (4.3–4). **15–18:** *The city* that *lies foursquare,* i.e., with streets that intersect at right angles, unlike the irregular walls of many ancient cities (Ezek 42.20). The cube is a perfect, symmetrical shape (for the ideal Temple as a square, see Ezek 40.5; 45.1–5). This description of a city with a river running through it resembles ancient accounts of Babylon (Herodotus, *Hist*. 1.178–79). The precious stones, with the names of the twelve tribes, adorned the high priest's breastplate (Ex 28.17–20). **19:** Isa 54.11–12. **21:** *The street of the city is pure gold,* even more impressive than stone-paved Roman roads. **22–23:** Unlike the cities of the Roman province of Asia, where monumental temples to the deified emperor reminded the population of the pervasive power of the distant imperial capital, in the new Jerusalem *no temple . . . no . . . sun will be* needed because the presence and glory of God pervade the entire community (Isa 24.23; 60.1,19; 2 Esd 7.39–42). *Its lamp is the Lamb,* Ps 132.17. **25:** City gates would be closed at night and at the approach of enemies; perpetually open gates symbolize complete safety and security; see Isa 60.11; Zech 14.7; 1QM 12.13–15. **27:** *Book of life,* see 3.5n.

22 Then the angel[a] showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb [2] through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life[b] with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. [3] Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants[c] will worship him; [4] they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. [5] And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

[6] And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants[c] what must soon take place."

[7] "See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

[8] I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; [9] but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant[d] with you and your comrades[e] the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

[10] And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. [11] Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

[12] "See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. [13] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

[14] Blessed are those who wash their robes,[f] so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. [15] Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

[16] "It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

[17] The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."
And let everyone who hears say, "Come."
And let everyone who is thirsty come.
Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

[a] Gk *he*
[b] Or *the Lamb.* [2]*In the middle of the street of the city, and on either side of the river, is the tree of life*
[c] Gk *slaves*
[d] Gk *slave*
[e] Gk *brothers*
[f] Other ancient authorities read *do his commandments*

22.1–5: The river and the tree of life. 1: *The river,* cf. Gen 2.10; Ps 46.4; Ezek 47.1; Zech 14.8. **2:** *The tree,* a collective reference to many trees *on either side of the river* (Ezek 47.12; see 2.7n.). **3:** *The throne of God and of the Lamb* is one throne, 3.21. **4:** To *see* God's *face,* full awareness of God's immediate presence (Job 33.26; Ps 10.11; 42.2), an eschatological blessing (Ps 84.7; Mt 5.8; 1 Jn 3.2). *On their foreheads,* see 7.3n.; 14.1; contrast 13.16; 17.5. **5:** Those who *worship* God (v. 3) *will reign* with God in eternal triumph (Dan 7.18,27).

22.6–21: Epilogue, consisting of warnings and exhortations. **6:** *He said,* an angel (v. 8), perhaps the one referred to in 1.1. *These words,* the contents of this book. *The God of the spirits of the prophets,* the one who inspired the spirits of the prophets (1QH 20.11–13). **7:** A parenthesis, reporting the words of Jesus (cf. 16.15). *Blessed,* see 1.3n. **8–9:** 19.10. **10:** *Do not seal,* cf. Isa 8.16; Dan 12.4. This book is to remain unsealed because the end is imminent. **12:** *My reward is with me,* Isa 40.10; Jer 17.10. **13:** Jesus applies God's title to himself (see 1.8n.). **14:** *Blessed,* the seventh beatitude of the book; see 1.3n. *Wash,* 7.14. *The city,* the heavenly Jerusalem. **15:** A list of those who are not permitted to enter the city, characterized generally as *everyone who loves and practices falsehood.* **16:** *Root . . . of David,* Isa 11.1,10; Mt 1.1. *Morning star,* see 2.28n. **17:** *The bride,* 21.2,9. *Come,* singular in Gk, is addressed to

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of
the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to
them, God will add to that person the plagues
described in this book; 19 if anyone takes away
from the words of the book of this prophecy,
God will take away that person's share in the
tree of life and in the holy city, which are
described in this book.

20 The one who testifies to these things
says, "Surely I am coming soon."
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!
21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all
the saints. Amen.[a]

[a] Other ancient authorities lack *all*; others lack *the saints*; others lack *Amen*

Jesus, as in v. 20. **18–19:** A stern warning against altering the teachings of *this book* (cf. Deut 4.2; 12.21). **20:** *The one who testifies,* Jesus Christ; see 1.2. *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus,* a response, with liturgical echoes (1 Cor 16.22), to *surely I am coming soon.* **21:** An epistolary postscript, corresponding to the epistolary salutation in 1.4–8.

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THE CANONS OF THE BIBLE
THE HEBREW BIBLE

Different religious communities have different Bibles. Most significantly, the Christian Bible includes the New Testament while the Jewish Bible does not. But even collections that at first seem shared between communities, upon closer inspection are not. For example, the Jewish Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament are not identical, and different Christians have different Old Testaments (see chart on p. 1839). The following discussion will explain, within the limits of what scholars now know, how the Bible came into being within the Jewish and Christian communities.

DEFINITIONS

"Canon," a Greek word meaning "reed," came to refer to any straight stick that could be used for measuring. This basic meaning was extended to refer to any rule or standard by which things could be compared or judged. The Alexandrian grammarians, classical Greek writers from Alexandria, Egypt, who were also literary critics, used "canon" as their term for the list of standard or classic authors who were worthy of attention and imitation (e.g., Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*). This was not a closed category, and ancient authorities debated adding or removing works from the list. Inclusion on a list recognized a work's quality or central importance, but did not confer upon it any new status.

When used with reference to the Bible, canon has come to have a different connotation: It marks a closed, unchangeable set of texts of central religious significance. Other, noncanonical texts are relegated to a lesser role. A more radical notion of religious canon, expressed in a rabbinic comment on Eccl 12.12, suggests that the Bible (with its interpretation) is the single sufficient text for the religious community. The biblical text reads:

> Of anything beyond these [Heb *mehemah*], my child, beware. Of making many books there is no end.

The rabbinic comment states:

> Those who bring more than twenty-four books [the standard number in the Hebrew Bible; see below] into their house introduce confusion [Heb *mehumah*] into their house (*Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 12.12).

THE HEBREW BIBLE

Unlike the canonization of the New Testament, which took place at a series of councils or synods, the process of the canonization of the Hebrew Bible is obscure and unattested in contemporaneous sources. Much of the material from early Jewish sources (for instance, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the first-century CE historian Josephus, and rabbinic texts,) and early Christian sources (for instance, the New Testament and church fathers) is ambiguous and conflicting, and does not offer a clear picture of how the Hebrew Bible came into being. Until the mid-twentieth century, many scholars thought that the Hebrew Bible was canonized in the same fashion as the New Testament, and they posited an early rabbinic council at Jabneh (Jamnia), a city near the Mediterranean coast, west of Jerusalem, which was a center of Jewish learning after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE). According to this theory, a group of rabbis met there in about 90 CE and voted on whether certain books were canonical; at the end of this meeting, the official contents of the Hebrew Bible were established for perpetuity. This reconstruction is now recognized as based on a misunderstanding of rabbinic texts and an improper analogy between how the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible canons were formed. In fact, some scholars prefer not to use in reference to the Hebrew Bible the word "canon," which derives from New Testament studies, preferring to speak instead of how the Hebrew Bible *became* the Hebrew Bible. Scholars have also emphasized that it is improper to speak of the (Hebrew) Bible until after it was firmly and finally canonized; for that reason, the remainder of this essay will use quotation marks around "(Hebrew) Bible" when referring to the early centuries of the Common Era; this is as a shorthand to refer to the books or the collection that *later* became the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew Bible did not develop at a single moment in time but rather in stages. Most scholars agree that the Torah or Pentateuch (the five books from Genesis through Deuteronomy) functioned as the earliest Jewish "Bible," though exactly when this happened is uncertain. Many scholars had associated this development with Ezra, and they saw the "law of your God" (Ezra 7.14), with which Ezra was entrusted in the fifth century BCE, as the Pentateuch. We now recognize, however, that this assertion goes beyond the evidence. Though the Jewish community had recognized the Torah as central by the Persian period (sixth to fourth centuries BCE), a conclusion suggested by citations of Torah material in "biblical" books from this period (e.g., Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah), it is unclear exactly how this happened, or whether this development should be associated primarily with a single individual such as Ezra, or should be seen as part of a larger, more complicated process.

According to rabbinic tradition, the Torah is the first part of a tripartite (three-part) canon, followed by Nevi'im (prophets) and Ketuvim (writings), forming a work that much later was known by the acronym Tanak(h), *T*orah, *N*evi'im, *K*etuvim. Nevi'im is composed of Joshua, Judges, Samuel (seen as one book), Kings (seen as one book)—historical works known as "the former prophets"—and "the latter prophets," consisting of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor (i.e., shorter) prophets (Hosea through Malachi, seen as one book). The order of these eight books has been relatively stable. Ketuvim is comprised of the following eleven books, which, by contrast, appear in a wide variety of orders in various book lists and biblical manuscripts: Psalms, Proverbs, Job; the "five scrolls" ("Megillot") whose order has been especially variable, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther; Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (seen as one book), and Chronicles (seen as one book). The number of canonical books according to traditional Jewish sources is thus twenty-four (five in the Torah, eight in Nevi'im, eleven in Ketuvim).

The origin of the tripartite canon has been a topic of debate, with several scholars suggesting that it developed from a two-part structure comprised of the Torah and other works. This bipartite structure may be reflected, e.g., in Mt 7.12 (cf. 11.13), which refers to "the law and the prophets," where the later category may refer to all books outside the Torah. On the other hand, evidence for the tripartite canon may appear in such sources as Lk 24.44, which refers to "the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms," where "psalms" may be shorthand for Ketuvim, and in a possible parallel expression in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The tripartite canon may reflect the canonization process, with Nevi'im canonized before Ketuvim. This would explain why the Ketuvim contain the book of Daniel (dating from the second century BCE), and several late historical books, such as Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, which would seem more appropriately to belong with similar works such as Joshua and Kings. According to this model, the Torah was canonized in the Persian period, followed by the canonization of Nevi'im in the late Persian or early Greek period, while the Ketuvim were canonized last, perhaps around the time of the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE).

Different canons, and different organizations of the canon, existed in the first centuries of the Common Era. Josephus refers to twenty-two biblical books (*Ag. Ap.* 1.42). It is not clear if he simply had a smaller canon or if, instead, his canon had the texts in a different order, combined in different ways, perhaps following a tradition found in the Septuagint (see "Canons of the Bible," on the Greek Bible, p. 1840), which places Ruth after Judges and Lamentations after Jeremiah, treating these smaller books as appendixes to the ones they follow. Such an arrangement would yield twenty-two books, a number that conveniently corresponds to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. According to this tradition, mentioned by some early church fathers and reflected in the arrangement of the earliest comprehensive Septuagint manuscripts (fourth century CE), the Hebrew Bible is divided into four parts: Torah, Histories, Poetical and Wisdom Books, and Prophets (see the Introduction to the Poetical and Wisdom Books, p. 729). This order continues to be used by Christians in their organization of the Old Testament. Older scholarship spoke of this four-part, twenty-two-book arrangement as the Alexandrian canon, in contrast to the tripartite, twenty-four-book Palestinian canon, but the association of this structure specifically with the Jewish community in Alexandria is now disputed.

It is difficult to know if the Dead Sea Scroll community had a conception of Bible—they do not, for example, use the earliest rabbinic term for the Bible, "holy writings" (cf. Rom 1.2). No copy of Esther has survived among the thousands of fragments discovered there, while many manuscripts of *Jubilees*, a reworking of Genesis and part of Exodus, have survived. Given this work's affinities with the practices of the Dead Sea community, and the fact that it is cited in the same way that texts that would later be biblical are cited, it probably had within that community the same status as "biblical" books. Within rabbinic literature, the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach (Sirach or Ecclesiasticus) is sometimes cited with the same formula used for texts that we consider biblical texts, suggesting that it had the same status for some rabbis as those texts; Sirach is also found at Qumran and Masada. This evidence all implies that Judaism writ large did not have a single canon at this period, and that at least through the early first millennium CE, different Jewish groups had different "Bibles," with different contents in different orders. It is even possible that the Jewish canon was finalized after the Christian canon was determined, in reaction to that development.

This flexibility was not only in what comprised "the Bible" but in what the biblical text itself looked like. Manuscripts from Qumran, from translations of the Hebrew Bible in the Septuagint and elsewhere, and to a lesser extent from early rabbinic citations, differ from each other and from the later "official" Hebrew Bible text, the Masoretic Text (MT). These differences are sometimes small, such as variant spellings, but are often major and affect the meaning of the text. Some books are found in two or more different recensions—identifiably different versions, which may vary the order of materials, may exhibit fundamentally different text-types (e.g., short types

CANONS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

JEWISH CANON	PROTESTANT CANON	ROMAN CATHOLIC/ORTHODOX CANON
Torah (LAW)	PENTATEUCH	PENTATEUCH
Genesis	Genesis	Genesis
Exodus	Exodus	Exodus
Leviticus	Leviticus	Leviticus
Numbers	Numbers	Numbers
Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy
Nevi'im (PROPHETS)	HISTORIES	HISTORIES
FORMER PROPHETS	Joshua	Joshua
Joshua	Judges	Judges
Judges	Ruth	Ruth
Samuel (1 & 2)	1 & 2 Samuel	1 & 2 Samuel
Kings (1 & 2)	1 & 2 Kings	1 & 2 Kings
	1 & 2 Chronicles	1 & 2 Chronicles
LATTER PROPHETS	Ezra	Ezra
Isaiah	Nehemiah	Nehemiah
Jeremiah	Esther	Tobit
Ezekiel		Judith
The Twelve	POETICAL/WISDOM BOOKS	Esther
Hosea	Job	1 & 2 Maccabees
Joel	Psalms	
Amos	Proverbs	POETICAL/WISDOM BOOKS
Obadiah	Ecclesiastes	Job
Jonah	Song of Solomon	Psalms
Micah		Proverbs
Nahum	PROPHETS	Ecclesiastes
Habakkuk	Isaiah	Song of Solomon
Zephaniah	Jeremiah	Wisdom of Solomon
Haggai	Lamentations	Sirach
Zechariah	Ezekiel	
Malachi	Daniel	PROPHETS
	Hosea	Isaiah
Ketubim (WRITINGS)	Joel	Jeremiah
Psalms	Amos	Lamentations
Proverbs	Obadiah	Baruch
Job	Jonah	Ezekiel
(Five Scrolls):	Micah	Daniel
Song of Solomon	Nahum	Hosea
Ruth	Habakkuk	Joel
Lamentations	Zephaniah	Amos
Ecclesiastes	Haggai	Obadiah
Esther	Zechariah	Jonah
Daniel	Malachi	Micah
Ezra-Nehemiah		Nahum
Chronicles (1 & 2)	THE APOCRYPHA	Habakkuk
	1 & 2 Esdras	Zephaniah
The Hebrew Bible has no Apocrypha	Tobit	Haggai
	Judith	Zechariah
	Esther (with additions)	Malachi
	Wisdom of Solomon	
	Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)	Orthodox Canons generally include
	Baruch	1 & 2 Esdras
	Letter of Jeremiah (Baruch ch 6)	Prayer of Manasseh
	Prayer of Azariah and Song of Three	Psalm 151
	Daniel and Susanna	3 Maccabees
	Daniel, Bel, & Snake	4 Maccabees (as an Appendix)
	Prayer of Manasseh	
	1 & 2 Maccabees	

versus expansive types, as with the text of Jeremiah; see the Introduction to Jeremiah, p. 1069), and may contain blocks of material not found in the MT (e.g., the Greek versions of Esther and Daniel). The types of rabbinic exposition that paid a great deal of attention to the exact spelling of the individual word would eventually bring about textual stability, though here too this was a gradual process, and the means by which it was accomplished—through which "alternative" versions were suppressed—are largely unknown.

Canonization is fundamentally a process of selection, but we cannot reconstruct why particular texts were canonized while others were not. The Hebrew Bible itself mentions more than twenty books that are no longer extant, such as The Book of the Wars of the LORD and the Book of Jashar; many others, not mentioned in the Bible, certainly existed as well. Perhaps some excluded texts were seen as too heterodox, while others were seen as too recently composed. Many more texts were excluded than included; some of the former were translated in the Septuagint and were therefore canonized in the Christian community (see "Canons of the Bible," on the Greek Bible, p. 1840); others were lost, or survived as pseudepigrapha (writings falsely attributed to major biblical figures), or were preserved (typically in fragmentary form) in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Whether a book or group of books is canonized is often discussed in terms of the community's views on their centrality, authority, sacredness, and inspiration. These terms are not identical, and each is murky. Sometimes these characteristics became connected. The Song of Solomon, for instance, was originally an erotic love poem; by the early rabbinic period, it came to be interpreted allegorically as a love poem between God and Israel. It was also seen as the inspired composition of Solomon himself. Was it canonized before it was seen as a holy, allegorical text? In that case, its canonization might reflect a central role that it held in culture or ritual. Or was it canonized only after it was viewed as allegorical and as a composition of Solomon? In that case its significance, whether of authorship or of ideas, could have played a more important part. It is impossible to judge between these two paths to canonization that more broadly reflect the problems in dealing with issues of canonization in general.

Despite such major uncertainties in our understanding of the process of canonization, however, several points seem likely. The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE played an important role in Jews becoming the people of the Book. Second, it is unlikely that canonization represents a purely top-down process, through which a small group of leaders (rabbis) determined the canon; instead, the formation of the Hebrew Bible was more likely the official recognition of the works that a large or influential segment of the community had already held to be central, holy, or authoritative. Finally, the act of canonization was remarkably inclusive, creating a body of works richly textured by a wide variety of genres, ideologies, and theologies. This is, fundamentally, a typical ancient Near Eastern process: Instead of creating a small, highly consistent text, as we perhaps might now do, those responsible for the process included many of the viewpoints in ancient Israel, incorporating differing and even contradictory traditions into this single, and singular, book—the Hebrew Bible.

Marc Z. Brettler

THE CANONS OF THE BIBLE
THE GREEK BIBLE

THE GREEK BIBLE

When Christian writings began to circulate, during the second half of the first century CE, the Bible that the early Christians used for reading and quotation was a Greek translation and expansion of the Hebrew Bible produced in Alexandria and other Diaspora communities for the use of Greek-speaking Jews. This Greek version is commonly referred to as "the Septuagint" ("seventy"; LXX) after the seventy-two translators sent to Alexandria from Jerusalem to provide its famous library with an authentic version of the Jewish Torah in Greek. According to legend all seventy agreed, providing divine confirmation of their work (*Letter of Aristeas*). Greek translations of other writings in the Hebrew scriptures followed. Probably as a result of the as yet unsettled matter of which works were canonical for the Jewish community, the Septuagint included further works: historical books (1 and 2 Maccabees, 1 Esdras); wisdom writings (The Wisdom of Solomon, The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach); short works of fiction, or novellas (Tobit, Judith); an apocalypse (2 Esdras); historical legend (3 Maccabees); philosophical diatribe (4 Maccabees); an addendum to Jeremiah (Baruch

and the Letter of Jeremiah); and expansions to Esther, Daniel (the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon), and Psalms (Prayer of Manasseh and Psalm 151).

Greek-speaking Jews in the Diaspora granted this Greek Bible an authority equivalent to that of the Hebrew texts. The legend that God had directly inspired its seventy translators was familiar to Alexandrian Jews (Philo, *Life of Moses,* 2.40). Manuscripts discovered at Qumran include Greek texts as well as a Hebrew text closer to the Septuagint than to the Masoretic Text (e.g., 4QSam[a]; 4Q121 Num 3.30–4.14; see "Textual Criticism," The Hebrew Bible: Texts and Versions, p. 1845, for information about the Masoretic Text). Toward the end of the first century BCE, some books of the Septuagint were revised in Palestine to bring them closer to the known Hebrew text. Some New Testament citations whose wordings are between the Greek and Hebrew texts that we have today may also reflect local revisions.

Evidently the various Jewish communities in the Greek-speaking Diaspora knew their Greek Bible in different versions. Jewish revisions in the second century CE sought to bring the Greek text closer to the Hebrew and in some cases to replace terms that Christians had seized upon in disputes with Jews, such as "virgin" in Isa 7.14. The Theodotion version of the second century CE forms the text of most surviving manuscripts. Citations in Christian writers of the fourth century CE, as well as the Old Latin versions, suggest that there were Christian recensions of the Greek Bible during this period as well. The Septuagint, therefore, is really an anthology of translations and revisions.

Although some early Christians were aware that the Greek Bible they used was more extensive than the Hebrew Bible, its authority remained intact. Origen (185–254) recommended Judith, Tobit, and Wisdom to beginning Bible readers before the Gospels and Epistles. Athanasius (296–374) may have shared this view: He includes Wisdom, as well as the *Didache* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* (two noncanonical early Christian writings) in his list of works to be used in the instruction of catechumens. Jerome (ca. 345–420) continued to cite the Greek Bible, though arguing for the superiority of the Hebrew text and canon. It was Jerome who first separated these additional works in the Greek Bible from those for which he had Hebrew originals, placing them at the end of the Old Testament.

The result of this history was that the Christian church ended up with a set of writings for its Old Testament that differed from those that for Jews formed the Hebrew Bible. Without definitive specification, Christians in the Western (Latin, later Roman) and Eastern (Greek, later Orthodox) churches used not only works regarded as canonical by the Jewish community but also those additional works, or a selection of them, included in the Septuagint. Most Christians naturally were unaware of the differences among the biblical books; most were illiterate, and of the literate, very few could read Hebrew, the language of the original texts. The Christian churches therefore entered the second millennium with an expanded Old Testament, whose books were in an order different from that of the Hebrew Bible.

The Protestant Reformation coincided with a greatly increased interest in the study of ancient languages other than Latin. Among the leaders of the Reformation churches there was, along with a desire to make the Bible itself the standard of theological inquiry, a heightened effort to go behind the Latin text to the original languages in which the Bible had been written, since the Bible alone, and not the Bible plus its traditional interpretation, was being given much more importance in Reformation thought. This effort reopened the issue of the status of those Old Testament books that were not accepted by the Jews and did not have original Hebrew texts. The result was a sharp demarcation between those texts in the Hebrew Bible and all the others, with the reformers granting clear privilege to the Hebrew texts—though retaining the order of the Septuagint for listing them. In Martin Luther's translation, the additional works were assigned a separate section, as Jerome had originally intended, between the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament. Luther wanted these texts to be available for reading and meditation, but he did not regard them as scripture. The position of the Calvinist reformers was even more definitive: None of these additional works were acceptable, and therefore they were excluded from the Bible entirely. The Anglican church, while retaining most of them (and using some in lectionary readings and services of prayer and worship), also held that though these additional books were valuable for reading and study, they could not be used to establish doctrine.

In response to this critique of their canonical status, the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation position was to declare these works definitively a part of the Bible. The Catholic church to this day maintains the canonical status of Tobit, Judith, the longer version of Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch (including the Letter of Jeremiah), and the Additions to Daniel. The Orthodox churches also maintained the canonical status of these works, and in addition regarded some or all of the following books as canonical: 1 Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151, 3 Maccabees, 2 Esdras, and (in an appendix) 4 Maccabees. The NRSV includes headings within the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books calling attention to the varying canonical status of these works.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The early Christian community soon began to produce writings dealing with its own history, beliefs, and traditions. By the end of the first century CE and the beginning of the second, various gospels, narratives, letters, didactic discourses, and apocalyptic writings circulated among regional Christian communities. The practice of reading from these works, along with selections from the Greek version of the Jewish scriptures, soon arose in Christian worship. Use in this public setting initiated the process of attributing to these Christian writings an authority analogous to that of the Jewish scriptures. When disputes broke out, as they inevitably would, about beliefs or traditions, the canonical or noncanonical status of the various Christian writings became important.

The authority of smaller collections, the four Gospels and a ten-letter compilation of Pauline letters, was accepted by the second century CE. Other writings, Acts, Hebrews, Revelation, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and 2 Peter are not as widely attested in the early period. Still other Christian writings also appear as authorities in the second and third centuries. Official lists appear only in the fourth century CE as a consequence of theological debates (see Athanasius, *Festal Letter* 39; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.3.5; 3.25.3–4). Christian canon lists remained fluid through the sixth century with such inclusions as the *Shepherd of Hermas* or the spurious *Epistle to the Laodiceans* among the Pauline letters. The Muratorian canon, whose date and provenance are disputed (second-century Rome to fourth-century East), includes Wisdom of Solomon in the New Testament. Other collections omit Hebrews. (See the chart for a comparison of three New Testament canon lists, p. 1839.)

Arguments over apostolic authorship emerge as a consequence of second-century CE challenges to general Christian practice. Valentinus and other Gnostics—who taught an esoteric form of Christianity—asserted that the Jewish God was ignorant of the highest divine realms, and that therefore both the Jewish scriptures and Christian writings, based on them, mislead naïve believers. Such teachers claimed to possess esoteric wisdom that Jesus had given to a few disciples including Peter, Thomas, James the brother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene. In the second and third centuries, Gnostics produced several works said to contain that secret apostolic teaching. Another second-century teacher, Marcion, established a church that excluded the Old Testament claiming that its God was not the father of Jesus. He proposed a "New Testament" comprised of the Gospel of Luke and ten Pauline epistles that opened with Galatians, evidence for the difference between the Law and the gospel. Marcion's texts of the gospel and epistles were edited to eliminate passages contrary to his theological perspective. Against both Gnostics and Marcionites, Irenaeus argued that the Spirit poured out on the Church enabled her to write scripture (*Adv. Haer.* 3.21.3–4) and affirmed the unity of the Old Testament and New Testament (*Adv. Haer.* 4.28.1–2). Tertullian refers to reading the "books of God" in Christian worship with no differentiation between Jewish and Christian writings (*Apology* 39.3).

Besides disputes, in which different contents of authoritative writings clearly reflected underlying theological differences, the physical character of Christian texts contributed to the emergence of canon. From the beginning Christians used the codex (pl. codices) format—a bound volume of pages, similar to a present-day book—rather than the more traditional scroll for their writings. In antiquity codices were the medium of early drafts, assembled notes, and the like. Finished literary works and sacred texts like the Torah were copied onto scrolls. Scholars disagree over whether early Christian use of codices reflects the moderate socioeconomic status of most Christians, or makes a statement about their contents. Perhaps the first- and second-century Christians thought that their writings had a different authority from that of the Torah and the prophets. Use of the codex made possible the smaller groupings that were combined in the larger canon of twenty-seven writings at the end of the fourth century CE. Early collections of Paul's letters were initially seen as specifically directed to individual churches. Gospel collections were viewed as representative of the oral teaching of the apostles, not as formal literary compositions. The codex would have been an appropriate form for such writings. Use of readings from the Gospels along with the prophets in Christian worship indicates that the Gospels came to enjoy equal authority with the Torah and the prophets by the mid-second century (see Justin Martyr, *1 Apology* 67.3–5).

Scrolls were made of papyrus or leather pieces glued or sewn together, and lengthy ones became inconvenient to handle: The average length is about 20–26 ft (6–8 m), though longer scrolls are known. The codex can accommodate much more text, so that several writings could be bound into one volume. Codices containing the Old Testament and later the entire Christian scripture were produced from the fourth century CE on. There was not a uniform number of books or a uniform order of presentation in the earliest codices, however. Individual Christian congregations may not have possessed copies of all writings included in canon lists. It would have been difficult to distinguish these official texts from other early Christian writings also found in codices. Some Christians turned over apocryphal writings to imperial officials charged with destroying "sacred books" during the Dio-

cletian persecution (303 CE). Confusion over unofficial and authorized writings in Christian worship persisted into the mid-fourth century CE. Canon 59 of the Synod of Laodicea (360 CE) decreed, "Private psalms should not be read in church, neither uncanonized books, but only the canonical ones of the new and old covenant."

Origen's advice to those privately reading scripture presumes that the educated Christian elite had copies of deuterocanonical writings, Gospels, epistles, psalms, and the Torah. He proposes an order of reading designed to overcome the difficulty of approaching biblical literature. First, he suggests, Esther, Judith, Tobit, or Wisdom. Then, the Gospels, epistles, and Psalms. Finally, the reader can tackle books that are difficult or seemingly without reward, such as Leviticus or Numbers (*Homilies on Numbers* 27.1). The biblical codices of the fourth and fifth centuries CE include different selections of Jewish apocrypha. In Codex Sinaiticus one finds Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, 1 and 4 Maccabees; in Codex Vaticanus, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Wisdom, Sirach, Judith, Tobit; in Codex Alexandrinus, Psalms of Solomon, 3 and 4 Maccabees. Athanasius's *Festal Letter* 39 omits the deuterocanonical writings from the Old Testament but accepts them for private reading. Though Athanasius includes all twenty-seven New Testament writings, the issue was not settled everywhere. Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389) omits Revelation from his catalogue as do the lectionaries of the Eastern church. Didymus of Alexandria omits 2 and 3 John but cites the apostolic fathers as authoritative. Such evidence indicates that despite consensus on the four Gospels and Pauline epistles, regional variations about the rest persisted.

By the end of the fourth century, however, there was widespread agreement about which books had scriptural status. Among the large number of early Christian writings in a diversity of genres, including gospels, letters, acts, apocalypses, and didactic treatises, a smaller number had come to be widely accepted. The criteria that were implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, operative were apostolic authority—that a work was written by or attributed to one of the first generation of Christian leaders, especially Paul and the twelve apostles—and consistency with their teaching, especially as determined by ecclesiastical authorities in major centers like Rome, Alexandria, Ephesus, and Byzantium. As a result, some of the writings that had come to be considered noncanonical were lost and rediscovered only in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Pheme Perkins

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

THE NEED FOR TEXTUAL CRITICISM

No original manuscript of any biblical book has survived. This situation, which may seem unusual to us, is actually quite normal for ancient writings, and even for those from only a few centuries ago. For instance, none of Shakespeare's plays is available in the original manuscript from Shakespeare's hand, and for most of them there are two or more early printed versions with many differences between them. For the biblical books, numerous copies or partial copies, varying greatly in age and quality, have been preserved in various parts of the world. Occasionally, as with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (the Qumran documents) in the mid-twentieth century, new copies turn up. Nevertheless, for the entire text of the Bible, scholars are faced with a situation in which they have multiple manuscripts that have been copied by hand so that each is a unique product, unlike a modern printed or electronic book, and therefore the copies differ among themselves in many places, some differences being trivial and some important. Given this situation, scholars have had to develop a methodology for deciding which wording should be followed in cases where the copies disagree. This methodology is called "*textual criticism*" because it is a way of assessing a text through critical comparison of its different copies.

Textual criticism is not used only on religious writings. Any important text where there is not a definitive, printed edition backed up with an author's manuscript or corrected by the author may need to undergo textual criticism. Confused letters, omitted words, even graphic elements like incorrect indentions of poetic lines, can all mean that a text does not reflect the original author's intentions completely. The methods may have to be adapted to differing circumstances, but the principles have been developed over centuries and have been checked when manuscripts have been found that can confirm or refute reconstructions of a text. Most important, there is widespread agreement among textual scholars on the methods and procedures that should be used, even when the results remain in dispute.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

DEFINITIONS

Establishing a critical edition of the biblical text involves the collection of all the differences between manuscript copies of any text, and the publication of all significant ones. The manuscripts are in the form of collections of biblical books, usually bound leaves, called *codices* (the plural of *codex*); *scrolls*, or long strips of papyrus or parchment rolled up, of individual books, such as those found at Qumran near the Dead Sea; *lectionaries*, or passages excerpted from texts in order to be read in worship services; and *citations*, or quotations in ancient works, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic literature, and early church writings. These sources, taken all together, are called *witnesses* or *authorities*, and the differences among them are called *variant readings* or simply *variants*. Also important are ancient translations, or *versions*, of the Bible, which provide indirect evidence for the original text. More details on these different forms of the texts are given below under the specific discussion of the texts for the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament.

REASONS FOR VARIANTS

Variants can be of several kinds. The copyist may have misseen or misheard a word, producing a simple spelling error, or perhaps a different word. For example, in Eph 4.32 (cf. 5.2), the variants alternate between the pronouns "us" and "you." In Greek these two words are quite close (*hēmin* and *humin*), differing by only one letter, and when pronounced aloud they are almost indistinguishable. In other places, the copyist's eye may inadvertently have skipped a phrase or sentence, thereby leaving out a sequence of words. In Sir 30.11–12, for example, some manuscripts omit two lines ending " … in his youth," possibly because the immediately preceding line also ends " … in his youth" and the copyist picked up after the second occurrence, omitting what came in between. Conversely, the copyist may inadvertently have gone over a phrase twice, producing a repetition. Although it may be difficult to determine when these errors took place in particular instances, there is nothing complex about them, and many variants are of this kind.

Sometimes, however, copyists seem to have tried to improve the text they were reproducing. They might have done this in several ways. They may have tried to change a word or phrase that was unacceptable for one reason or another by substituting a more acceptable word or phrase. At 1 Tim 5.16, for example, the text reads "believing woman," and the translators' note says that some manuscripts have "believing man or woman," others "believing man." Here the translators have chosen the variant that is the most unusual, assuming that a copyist would more likely expand the phrase, or substitute "man" for "woman," rather than the reverse, in a cultural context that tended to treat women as less important than men. Copyists might also have been aware of a similar passage in another biblical book, and tried to make the passage they were copying conform to that. For example, Lk 11.2, the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, has variant readings that are probably an effort to make it conform to Mt 6.9. Copyists might also have tried to make the text support a particular theological view or belief. For instance, at Deut 32.8, some manuscripts read "according to the number of the sons of God" (NRSV "the gods," a paraphrase), while others read "according to the number of the sons of Israel" (NRSV "Israelites"). There is general agreement that the second variant was introduced by a scribe trying to avoid a polytheistic wording. Copying a manuscript was not simply a mechanical process, but could involve deliberate changes for a number of reasons.

ANCIENT TRANSLATIONS

These methods of trying to determine the correct reading do not always provide enough evidence, or it may be that none of the existing manuscripts seems to have preserved the exact wording of the original author. Another source of information that scholars turn to is very early translations of the Bible. These early translations are often called "*versions,*" and they were in use among Jews or Christians whose primary languages were other than the ones used in the original writings. They include translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (for instance, the Septuagint or LXX), Aramaic (translations and paraphrases called "Targums"), Syriac (the Peshitta), and Latin (the Vulgate), and translations of part or all of the Christian scriptures into Syriac, Coptic, and other languages.

These versions are useful to translators because the early stage at which they were made provides insight into forms of the biblical text that may be closer to the original writings. They can therefore be consulted for help in determining what is more likely to be an original reading, or when the best manuscripts of the original language texts have gaps or obvious errors. In many translations, including the NRSV, these ancient versions are cited in the footnotes to explain where and why the translators have chosen an alternative reading or translated something other than the text that has come down to us. For readers unfamiliar with the nomenclature of these ancient documents, however, such notes may not convey very much information.

THE PROCESS OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

In order to establish the best possible text, scholars must first collect all of the significant variants and information

about the manuscripts in which they occur. As a practical matter, a *critical text*—one with a version of the Greek or Hebrew on the page and an *apparatus*, usually footnotes giving variants and their source manuscripts—is published. Scholars must then determine whether they will accept the readings in the text or adopt instead one of the alternatives.

They may first rely on external evidence. This would include matters such as the age of the manuscript in which the variant occurs, since older manuscripts are generally closer to the original than later ones; or whether the variant occurs in manuscripts from only one region or in those from widely different regions. They will also use internal evidence: In general, shorter readings are preferable to longer ones, since scribes are more likely to add to a text than to delete materials (though, in the case of offensive or theologically challenging texts, deletion must be considered); difficult readings, including awkward phrases, coarse words, and poor grammar, are preferable to smoother ones, since scribes might try to correct such difficulties; and stylistic considerations can help judgments about how a particular author would have written.

The task would be difficult enough if scholars could be sure that the original wording in any place with a variant reading was preserved in at least one manuscript; but even that is not necessarily the case. There are instances where no existing manuscript is likely to preserve the original wording: where none of the variants seem to be right, or where the original text does not make sense as far as current scholarship can determine. In such cases scholars must assume that the original wording of the text has been lost or distorted in the course of the copying process. They then have several options open to them. One (called "*conjectural emendation*") is to conjecture, based on the text as it now stands, what the original wording might have been. This can often be based on a scholar's general knowledge of the ancient languages, just as an English speaker can notice, and mentally correct, a typographical error in a modern book without having access to the author's manuscript. Another possibility is to consult the ancient versions. Finally, scholars may have to admit defeat and acknowledge that, given the current state of our knowledge, it is impossible to determine what the original wording might have been. For instance, at 1 Sam 13.1, the translation shows, by the use of ellipsis, that a word (the age of Saul when he began to reign) is missing. The translators' note points out that this number is not in the Hebrew text, and that the obvious second place to look for it, the ancient Greek translation known as the Septuagint, does not include any part of the verse. It is therefore impossible to recover the original wording unless some other ancient manuscript source is discovered.

The translators' notes in the NRSV call attention to all of these matters and many others as well. These notes, printed in italic type and keyed to the text by superscript letters, can be found at the bottom of the right-hand column of the translation on each page. The abbreviations used in these notes are given in the discussion below, and are listed on p. xxi.

THE HEBREW BIBLE: TEXTS AND VERSIONS

The Masoretic Text

The basic text for the Hebrew Bible today is called the *Masoretic Text* (MT), an edition of the Hebrew that was standardized in the fifth to tenth centuries CE by rabbinic scholars (called *masoretes,* from Heb *massorah,* probably "what is handed down," that is, "tradition"). The Masoretic Text accomplished two things: It settled upon a *consonantal* text, that is, it established specific choices for the consonants of the Hebrew words in the text; and it "*pointed*" those letters with a system of markings that indicated which vowels should be read with the Hebrew letters. This two-part decision was necessary because classical Hebrew writing was in effect a system of consonants, with only a few ways of indicating vowel sounds. Words with the same consonants but different vowels would look the same, as would the English words "untrained" and "interned" if they were both spelled "ntrnd." In the notes to the Hebrew Bible of the NRSV, "Heb" may refer to the consonantal (unpointed) Hebrew text, and MT to the same text with the vowel pointings included. The distinction is an important one, because the consonants are more likely to represent the original text than are the vowel sounds, which were added later, though based on older traditions. If the same consonants will make more sense with different vowels, the NRSV (and most other modern translations) will assume that those different vowels yield a word that is closer to the original text.

When ancient scholars had gotten the Masoretic Text into its final form, it became the standard text-form and alternative text-traditions were lost. Therefore, all copies of the Hebrew Bible that were known were based upon this Masoretic Text, and although there were variants among the different copies, there was no way to check independently on the textual basis of most of the Hebrew Bible. With a few exceptions, this remained the case until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (the library of the Qumran community) in 1947. Among the scrolls were manuscripts of most books of the Hebrew Bible that were more than a thousand years older than the oldest manuscripts available up to that point. These more

ancient copies of the Hebrew text have shed light on some passages in the traditional form of the biblical text. For example, at 1 Sam 10.27–11.1 in the traditional text there is no indication of the background to the conflict between King Nahash of Ammon and the men of Jabesh-gilead. But in a Qumran manuscript of 2 Samuel there is a continuation of 10.27 and an opening phrase for 11.1 that explains the context, and the NRSV includes them.

Ancient Versions of the Hebrew Bible

In cases where no form of the Hebrew text gives a reading that is satisfactory, scholars can turn to the ancient versions. The assistance these ancient versions give to textual critics and translators is partly due to the situation with regard to the text of the Hebrew Bible explained above. These early translations were made from Greek or Hebrew texts that, for the most part, are earlier than those copies of the Masoretic Text that have survived to the present. They therefore can give guidance to scholars about the state of the text, and even choices of wording, that are not represented in existing manuscripts. They can also confirm readings as being more likely. Of course, these ancient translations are themselves preserved only in copies, so that all of the considerations that apply to the original language texts of the Bible also apply to them: It is necessary to establish a critical text for them by comparing variant readings. They must therefore be used with caution, and they cannot be relied upon absolutely. This is, of course, a standard of comparison at one remove from the text itself: Scholars must look at the Greek, for instance, in the Septuagint, and conjecture or assume what the Hebrew would have been in order to result in a particular rendition into Greek. Nevertheless, it is a valuable source of clues.

For example, at 1 Sam 10.1, the text of the Septuagint is longer than that of the Hebrew Bible. In examining the difference, scholars have theorized that a copyist of the Hebrew text inadvertently omitted part of the verse because the same phrase occurs twice in it, and the copyist went directly from one to the other, omitting what was in between.

Names and Character of the Ancient Versions

The ancient versions of the Bible are referred to in a variety of ways by scholars. Following is a list, by language, of the chief versions.

Greek: The most prominent Greek version, and the oldest surviving translation of the Hebrew Bible, is the Septuagint, which was translated beginning in the third century BCE for use of Jews who were living in the Diaspora in Alexandria, Egypt, and other places around the Mediterranean after the conquests of Alexander the Great, and who therefore spoke Greek. The Septuagint, from a word meaning "seventy" because of a legend that seventy or seventy-two scholars worked on it, is abbreviated LXX (the Roman numeral for seventy) and, in the notes to the NRSV of the Hebrew text, is referred to as "Gk." Three later Greek versions—by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion—were produced for the use of Jews after Christians had adopted the Septuagint as their scripture, and the increasing conflict between Jews and Christians about the interpretation of the Jewish scriptures had led Jews to stop using the Septuagint. These versions are also sometimes used by translators, but none of them has survived in its entirety.

Aramaic: Aramaic was the official language of the Persian Empire, and the Jewish people who lived under Persian domination spoke Aramaic, which eventually supplanted Hebrew as the ordinary language of Jews. Aramaic is a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew, and shares some vocabulary with it, but Aramaic speakers cannot easily understand Hebrew. It was therefore necessary to provide translations of the Hebrew Bible for Aramaic speakers. Read aloud in liturgical contexts, after the Hebrew had been read (see Neh 8.7 for an early example), these translations, called Targums, are often more paraphrases than literal translations. Most date to the early centuries of the Common Era. They nevertheless provide useful information about earlier forms of the Hebrew text. In the NRSV notes they are abbreviated "Tg."

Syriac: The Syriac language is a form of Aramaic and was spoken by Jews in northern Syria who translated their Bible into it. The *Peshitta* (which means "simple," that is, a plain translation without textual comments) was prepared for the use of Jews and later adopted by Syriac-speaking Christians, who added a Syriac version of the New Testament to it. In the NRSV notes it is abbreviated "Syr." There is also a Syriac translation of the Septuagint that was part of a "*hexapla*" or "sixfold" Bible; in the NRSV notes this is abbreviated "Syr H."

Latin: Two Latin translations are used by scholars. The first, the Old Latin version, was actually a Latin translation of the Septuagint and of the New Testament dating from before the fourth century CE. More useful is the Vulgate, the translation prepared in the fourth century by the great Christian biblical scholar Jerome. Jerome, in translating his Old Testament, worked directly from the Hebrew text of the time, and his version therefore can be helpful in determining original readings in that text. In the NRSV notes the Old Latin version is abbreviated "OL," and the Vulgate is abbreviated "Vg."

THE APOCRYPHAL/DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS: TEXTS AND VERSIONS

For most of the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, the translational basis is the Septuagint text. Various

manuscripts of the Septuagint have survived, and the complete text is available in a critical edition prepared by Alfred Rahlfs and published in 1935. A newer critical text is in process of publication—the Göttingen Septuagint project—but it is not yet complete. The NRSV used the newer text when it was available, for example in Esther and Sirach. The translators used Theodotion's version for the Additions to Daniel. For the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira (Sirach or Ecclesiasticus), Hebrew manuscripts of large parts of the text have been discovered, and the NRSV therefore used the Hebrew text instead of the Greek when it seems to offer a better alternative; in addition, there are Syriac and Latin versions of this book that also shed light on the text. For 2 Esdras, scholars agree that the best text is the Latin; they also consult versions in Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian.

THE NEW TESTAMENT: TEXTS AND VERSIONS

New Testament Manuscripts

Text critics must evaluate the evidence of thousands of manuscripts in order to establish the wording of the Greek New Testament. (See "Textual Criticism," p. 1844.) This is a very large number of surviving copies for a collection of ancient documents; many classical texts survive in only a few copies. The overwhelming majority of these New Testament manuscripts (ca. 2,400) contain full or partial Gospel texts, followed by texts containing all or portions of the Pauline epistles (ca. 800). Revelation survives in only 287 copies. The manuscripts consist of papyrus fragments (some of only a few pages, some even shorter, preserving only a few verses); *uncials*, very early manuscripts written in letters unconnected to each other and similar to uppercase letters; and *minuscules,* later manuscripts written in a script that connects the letters and in which lowercase letters predominate. In addition to manuscript evidence, citations in Christian writers, lectionaries (excerpted passages for liturgical reading), and translations into other languages may shed light on the earliest wording of the text. With such a wealth of evidence, there is no phrase in the New Testament for which there is not some variant. Most involve issues of grammar, style, or copyists' corrections. Textual variants that affect the theological meaning of the text are fewer.

With such a wealth of information about the New Testament text, scholars have had to develop ways of classifying not only individual manuscripts but groups of copies so that they can more readily deal with all of the variants. If they can determine, for example, that a group of copies all descended from a common ancestor, they can assess the variants for that group together and compare them with other groups that descend from different early copies. Variants that occur in two or more of these distinct "families" have a much higher probability of being original than variants that may have arisen within only one group, for instance.

Most of the known variants to the text of the New Testament originated in the first two centuries of its existence. As Christianity spread throughout the Mediterranean, different groups had their own copies of the various New Testament documents, in some cases excluding books that are now included, or including books that are now excluded (see the essay on "The Canons of the Bible," p. 1837). In addition, as the Greek copies began to diverge, they were being translated into other languages: Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. The Latin text, because of the dominance of the Latin language in the western Roman Empire, became the most prevalent, and the Greek text was used consistently only in the east, in the area around Constantinople (modern Istanbul). This Greek text, preserved and copied in the Orthodox churches of the East, became known as the *Byzantine* text, and for many centuries it was the only or main version of the Greek text available. Beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, scholars began to discover other early texts. Early in the twentieth century, text critics proposed families or text-types linked to the major regions of Christianity: Alexandria in Egypt, to the south; the east represented by Caesarea, on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean; and the west represented by Italy/Gaul and Africa. At first scholars assumed that the Byzantine text resulted from combinations of these types, but such a genealogy of the various text-types could not explain the mixture of readings found in the papyri and the oldest surviving codices. The so-called *Alexandrian* tradition, texts from the area of Egypt that included many of the most ancient papyrus copies (preserved in the very dry climate of that area), became in the nineteenth century a favored basis for establishing original readings. But the complexity of variants has increasingly made this approach untenable.

Since papyri evidence from the earliest centuries represents only individual books of the New Testament, it is likely that the fourth-century scribes charged with producing codices containing the entire Bible had a variety of different text-types for the individual books. No single codex, therefore, is of uniform reliability. Codex Alexandrinus (early fifth century CE) is, as it turns out, a poor witness for the Gospels, but many critics consider it the best text of Revelation, even superior to a third-century papyrus copy. The age of a manuscript, therefore, does not necessarily determine the value of its readings, although it is one factor among many that scholars take into account. Revelation and the shorter catholic epistles (2 and 3 John; Jude; 2 Peter), which were not widely used as scripture until the fourth century, have a different textual tradition than the Gospels and the Pauline epistles.

Consequently, most text critics do not begin with a particular manuscript and correct it to establish the text. Instead, the wealth and diversity of manuscript evidence have enabled critics to produce a Greek text based on *eclectic* principles: choosing the best readings from a variety of manuscript sources. This range of choice has also meant that New Testament scholars do not need to make conjectural emendations of the text, a practice common in the editing of other ancient texts, including the Hebrew Bible, where few early manuscripts are available. The best text for a particular passage requires detailed study of all preserved variants. Internal principles of textual criticism include consideration of readings that are more likely to be scribal corrections or errors, that fit the theological biases of an author or later editors, or that could have given rise to the other known variants.

The NRSV translation is based on a modern eclectic edition of the Greek text, *Nestle-Aland* 26th ed. (or the equivalent *United Bible Societies Greek New Testament* 3rd ed., but incorporating information from the 4th ed. as well). Textual variants in wording, both stylistic and theologically significant, are indicated in the translators' notes as "other ancient authorities." In order to understand the basis for these alternative translations, readers should consult the text-critical notes in the Greek text or a commentary on the Greek text.

Versions of the New Testament

The early Christian focus on the written word led to translation of the Bible into other languages for converts who did not speak Greek. Evidence from Old Latin, Syriac, and Coptic translations from the late second and third centuries CE figures in text criticism. Ethiopic (mid-fourth century), Armenian (early fifth century), and Old Slavonic (late ninth century) translations form key moments in the cultural life of the people. Many of the apocryphal writings are preserved in Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian, thus providing a wider literature associated with the Bible.

Often manuscript evidence for the earliest translations is scanty or only derived from quotations. Tertullian's quotations appear to be his own translation into Latin, so the first evidence for the Latin text appears in Cyprian (250 CE). Augustine and Jerome both complain about the large number of poor translations in circulation. Jerome was commissioned by Pope Damasus to produce a Latin Bible (ca. 383). His revised Gospels and translation of the Hebrew Bible were combined with other translations for the remaining books of the Old and New Testaments to produce a Latin version known as the Vulgate. The Vulgate enjoyed wide circulation from the seventh century CE on and was officially promulgated as the text of the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Sixtus V (1590). A neo-Vulgate with alterations in the text, style, and corrections to bring the translation closer to the Greek text was promulgated by Pope John Paul II (1979).

The earliest evidence for the Syriac New Testament comes from a harmony of the Gospels, *The Diatessaron*, composed by Tatian in the second century CE. It is the source of citations in the commentary by Ephraem (310–373). Texts from Antioch contributed to revisions of the Syriac New Testament, the Peshitta or common version (earliest manuscripts from the mid-fifth century), and a translation by Philoxenus (507/508). The oldest versions of the New Testament translated into the Sahidic dialect of Coptic emerge in the third century. In the fourth century the whole Bible was translated into the Bohairic dialect, which became the official language of Coptic Christianity. A number of manuscripts found in the twentieth century remain to be assembled, catalogued, and incorporated into editions of the Coptic text.

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LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

The languages of the Bible as it exists today for Jews and Christians are Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. This article will first discuss the languages themselves, and then consider them as they are found in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament.

THE LANGUAGES

Hebrew

Hebrew, the predominant language of the Hebrew Bible, is a member of the Semitic language family. This family is divided into eastern and western branches. Hebrew is part of the northwestern subgroup, related to Phoenician, Ammonite, Edomite, Moabite, and more distantly to Ugaritic. Nonbiblical inscriptional evidence indicates that Hebrew was a written language as early as the tenth century BCE (the Gezer Calendar). Other inscriptional evidence for Hebrew in the Iron Age includes the Kuntillet Ajrud pithoi (large ceramic jars), the Khirbet el-Qom tomb inscriptions, the Samaria ostraca, and the Siloam Tunnel inscription (all from the eighth century BCE); the

Arad letters and the Lachish letters from the sixth century BCE; and seals and seal impressions from the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE. The oldest fragment of a text containing verses now in the Bible is a silver amulet dating to the sixth century BCE from a burial cave at Ketef Hinnom outside Jerusalem, which contains a version of the priestly blessing from Num 6.24–26. Hebrew continued to be both spoken and written through at least the second century CE, after which it became a language of worship and scholarship, referred to as "the holy language" ("leshon haqqodesh," *m. Sot.* 7.2). In the nineteenth century, Hebrew was revived as a spoken language by the Zionist movement in Europe and Palestine, and is now one of the official languages of the modern State of Israel.

In the Hebrew Bible the language is referred to as *yehudit* ("Judahite"; 2 Kings 18.26//Isa 26.13; 2 Chr 32.18; Isa 36.11; Neh 13.24). In Isaiah 19.18 the term "language of Canaan (lit., "lip of Canaan)" is used. The earliest use of the term "Hebrew" for the language is found in the (Greek) prologue to Sirach (late second century BCE).

All Hebrew inscriptions from the Iron Age are written in the ancient Israelite script, often called Paleo-Hebrew. This script was written from right to left, using twenty-two consonants and without vowels. This script largely fell out of use in the Persian period with the rise of the Aramaic square script (see Hebrew Bible, p. 1850), but it was revived in the nationalistic fervor surrounding the Maccabean revolt in the second century BCE. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran are fragmentary manuscripts of the books of the Torah and Job written in Paleo-Hebrew script. Coins of the Hasmonean period are also inscribed in Paleo-Hebrew, as are coins of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66–73 CE) and the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132–35 CE.

The ancient Israelite script also continued in use after the Iron Age in the northern Israelite community, which came to be known as the Samaritans. Inscriptional evidence from Mount Gerizim, where a Samaritan sanctuary stood until the late second century BCE, shows the use of the ancient Israelite script in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The Samaritan Pentateuch, the canonical text of the Samaritan community, is copied in a Paleo-Hebrew script dated to the second century BCE.

Aramaic

Aramaic is a northwest Semitic language closely related to Hebrew; it was the main chancellery language of the Persian Empire (sixth–fourth centuries BCE) and became the language of governance, commerce, and day-to-day interaction among its subject peoples, including the Jews. Surviving in multiple dialects, Aramaic continued to be used as the common language of Syria-Palestine until the Muslim conquest when it was replaced by Arabic, although it survives as a spoken language in isolated pockets in Syria, Turkey, and Iraq. There is much nonbiblical evidence for Aramaic as a common language among Jews from the Persian period on; the earliest is the fifth-century BCE archive of the Jewish military colony at Elephantine, an island in the Nile near Aswan. Approximately fifteen percent of the Qumran scrolls are in Aramaic, including the Enoch corpus, the Genesis Apocryphon, and the Aramaic Levi Document. Other Judean Desert texts written in Aramaic include the archives of Babatha and Salome Komaise, demonstrating that Aramaic continued as the preferred legal language among Palestinian Jews in the second century CE.

Because it was the common spoken language among Jews beginning in the Persian period, Aramaic is extremely important for the study of the Hebrew Bible. Aramaic is found in short passages in Daniel and Ezra (see Hebrew Bible, p. 1850); more importantly, two of the major ancient translations of the books of the Hebrew Bible were made into Aramaic: the Jewish Targums and the Syriac (a dialect of Aramaic) Peshitta. The necessity for translation into Aramaic may have been felt by the Jewish community as early as the fifth century BCE; according to Neh 8.7–8, when Ezra reads the book of the law at the Water Gate, "the Levites helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading." This may imply translation into Aramaic. The oldest known Targum is of the book of Job from the early first century CE, discovered in Qumran Cave 11.

Jesus and his disciples, according to the Gospels, spoke Aramaic, and Aramaic words survive in some sayings of Jesus (see Hebrew Bible). Arguments have occasionally been made that some parts of the New Testament were translated from Aramaic; even if this is not the case, they are strongly influenced by Aramaic in their diction. Many early Christians in the eastern Roman Empire were Aramaic speaking, and their literature survives in the corpus of Syriac Christian literature.

Aramaic was written in what is called "Aramaic [or "Assyrian"] square script," an alphabet consisting of twenty-two consonants without vowels, and written from right to left. It was adopted as the common script for manuscripts of the books of the Hebrew Bible by the Hellenistic period; the earliest Qumran manuscripts, 4QSam^{b} and 4QExod-Lev^{f} (mid-third century BCE) are both written in Aramaic square script. The square script continued as the chosen script for the sacred text; today all Hebrew manuscripts of the Jewish canon are copied in

the Aramaic square script with the addition of the Masoretic vowels (and cantillation marks).

Greek

Greek is an Indo-European language originating in the Aegean region; it became the language of the Hellenistic empires that controlled the ancient Near East after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the late fourth century BCE. The territories of biblical Israel were conquered by Alexander the Great and ruled by his successors, first by the Ptolemies in Egypt (fourth to third centuries BCE) and then by the Seleucids in western Asia (third to late-second centuries BCE). Under the Hellenistic rulers, Greek was introduced as the language of government, diplomacy, and commerce, and became the second most common spoken language in Jewish territories after Aramaic during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

The form of Greek used in this period is called "Koinē" ("common") Greek. Koine Greek became the primary spoken and written language of the Jewish diaspora in both Egypt and Syria after the establishment of the Hellenistic kingdoms, and was also used in Palestine. Inscriptional evidence for the use of Greek in the Jewish community in Palestine includes the "Temple Warning" inscription, discovered in the late nineteenth century. It warns non-Jews (who would not have spoken or read Hebrew) that they were not allowed beyond the balustrade surrounding the Temple and its enclosure.

By the time of Jesus, Greek had become a common spoken language, at least among the educated elites. The majority of inscriptions on Jewish ossuaries found in Palestine from the first century CE, for example, are in Greek rather than Hebrew or Aramaic. Further, it is clear that most Jews, even those from the lower classes including Jesus and his disciples, spoke at least some Greek in addition to Aramaic and Hebrew. The language of the early church centered in Asia Minor and Greece proper was Greek, and the early church fathers wrote in Greek. After the Muslim conquest in the seventh century CE, Greek, like Aramaic, was replaced by Arabic. However, the Greek Orthodox Church preserves its liturgy in the Greek of the Byzantine Empire.

HEBREW BIBLE

Hebrew is the principal language of all the books of the Hebrew Bible. Scholars have attempted to identify different periods of the language within the books of the Hebrew Bible, although they disagree about whether real differentiations can be made. Exodus 15, Judges 5, and Psalm 68, for example, are thought to be written in a more archaic form of Hebrew. Most of the Torah and the prophets are composed in what is known as Classical Hebrew (i.e., the Hebrew of the preexilic period); a few books (e.g., Esther, Ecclesiastes) are composed in the late biblical Hebrew of the Persian period. The book of Job is a special case, being composed in a rare dialect of Hebrew.

Small portions of the Hebrew Bible are actually in Aramaic. The largest is Dan 2.4–7.28, about half of the book of Daniel. The text signals the change to Aramaic at 2.4 by including the word *aramit* ("Aramaic"), followed by an empty space before the first Aramaic word, but does not signal the change back to Hebrew at the end of ch 7. Daniel in its canonical form consists of two parts: the royal courtier tales in chs 1–6 and the apocalyptic visions in chs 7–12. It is generally held that the royal courtier tales were originally composed in Aramaic as part of a larger cycle of Daniel tales, while the apocalyptic visions were composed in Hebrew. As the book presently stands, however, the language division does not correspond to the content division.

Other Aramaic passages in the Hebrew Bible include Ezra 4.8–6.18, which contains a series of royal decrees reportedly from the Persian royal archives. Ezra 4.7 indicates the change to Aramaic by saying, "The letter was written in the Aramaic script and set forth in the Aramaic language." The change back to Hebrew in 6.19 is not marked linguistically, although the Masoretic Text contains a paragraph marker. Ezra 7.12–26 is also purportedly a copy of an Aramaic letter from King Artaxerxes. The change from Hebrew to Aramaic and back again is not marked, except by paragraph markers.

Jeremiah 10.11 is a single verse in Aramaic. Genesis 31.45 contains two words in Aramaic, spoken by Jacob's Aramean uncle Laban.

Loan words from other ancient Near Eastern languages also appear in the Hebrew Bible. Since Hebrew shares common ancestry with the Semitic languages, it is important to distinguish between words that occur across the Semitic family and have a shared etymology, and actual loan words. From Akkadian (the language of Assyria and Babylonia) words having to do with government or commerce are likely to be actual loans, such as "saris" (a high official or "eunuch"; e.g., Gen 37.36; Dan 1.3), and "rab shaqeh" (a high-ranking army officer; e.g., 2 Kings 18.17//Isa 36.2). A loan word that comes into Hebrew from the language of the Philistines is "seren," meaning "tyrant, lord." It refers to the rulers of the five Philistine cities on the southwest coast of Canaan (e.g., Josh 13.3). Persian loan words occur in later biblical books. The word "dat" ("law, decree") appears only in books with a Persian setting, i.e., Esther and Ezra (both Hebrew and Aramaic). The word *pardes* (a term for a planned garden or park; cf. English "paradise") is used in Neh 2.8; Song 4.13; and Eccl 2.5. A Persian coin, the daric, appears in 1 Chr 29.7 and Ezra 8.27.

Greek loan words appear sporadically in the Hebrew Bible. The word for ethnic Greeks, *Yawan* (cf. "Ionian"), appears in Gen 10.4; Ezek 27.13; and Joel 4.6, while Dan 8.21 identifies Alexander the Great as "the king of Yawan." Dan 3.5–7 mentions four Greek instruments, *kithara*, *sambykē*, *psaltērion*, and *symphōnia*. A type of Greek coin, the drachma (Neh 7.69–71), is also mentioned.

Beginning in the third century BCE with the five books of the Torah, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, the language of the Jewish diaspora. According to the *Letter of Aristeas*, a Jewish literary work from the second century BCE, this translation was done by scribes sent to the Egyptian king by the high priest in Jerusalem. Although *Aristeas* is historical fiction, it does testify to a high level of Greek knowledge among Jewish elites in the third century BCE. Collectively this translation of the Hebrew scriptures is known as the Septuagint (LXX), and it became the scriptural text of the nascent Christian community in the first century CE.

APOCRYPHA

The books of the Apocrypha are preserved in Greek, since they are all part of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of Jewish religious texts. However, some were composed not in Greek but in Hebrew or Aramaic. The books composed in Greek are the Wisdom of Solomon, 2 Maccabees, the Prayer of Manasseh, 3 Maccabees, the parts of 2 Esdras known as 5 Ezra (chs 1–2) and 6 Ezra (chs 15–16), and 4 Maccabees.

For several books, manuscripts in Hebrew or Aramaic are known.

- Manuscripts of Tobit in both Aramaic (its language of composition) and a Hebrew translation were found in Qumran Cave 4.
- The LXX version of Esther is a translation of a Hebrew text close to the Hebrew text of Esther found in the Masoretic Text. LXX Esther also contains six large Additions, A–F. Additions A, C, D, and F are most likely translations from a Semitic original, while Additions B and E were composed in Greek.
- The Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach is, by its own testimony, a translation from Hebrew into Greek (see The Prologue). Hebrew fragments were found in Qumran Cave 2 and at Masada, and six later Hebrew manuscripts were recovered from the Cairo Genizah.
- Psalm 151 has been discovered in a Hebrew Psalms scroll from Qumran (11QPs^{a}).

Finally, seven apocryphal books may have had Semitic originals, although no manuscript evidence currently exists. These are Judith (Hebrew, although Jerome claimed to have translated an Aramaic text), Baruch (Hebrew), the Letter of Jeremiah (Hebrew or Aramaic), the Additions to Daniel (Hebrew), 1 Maccabees (Hebrew), 1 Esdras (Hebrew), and chapters 3–14 of 2 Esdras, known as 4 Ezra (Hebrew).

NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament books were all written in Koine Greek, the language of the Greco-Roman Jewish diaspora and the eastern Gentile population in which the Christian message first took hold. Although the language of the western Roman Empire was Latin, no NT books were written in it, not even Paul's Letter to the Romans. The only possible exceptions are Matthew, which one early church tradition (Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16) held was originally written in Hebrew, and the book of Revelation. Although Matthew's Greek shows Semitic influence, most scholars now agree that it is not a translation but was composed in Greek. There is still disagreement concerning Revelation. Many of the New Testament books are written in a sophisticated Koine, including the letters of Paul, James, and the letter to the Hebrews. On the other hand, the book of Revelation is written in a very poor Greek, containing many Semitisms.

Some Aramaic words survive in the Gospels, preserved in sayings of Jesus, whose native language was Aramaic. These include:

- "Talitha cum" ("Little girl, get up!), Mk 5.41
- "Ephphatha" ("Be opened"), Mk 7.34
- "Abba" ("Father"), Mk 14.36; see also Rom 8.15; Gal 4.6
- "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani" ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"), Mk 15.34 //Mt 27.46. This is Jesus's cry from the cross, echoing Ps 22.1.
- "Raca" (an obscure term of abuse), Mt 5.22.

In addition, 1 Cor 16.22 preserves the Aramaic phrase "Maranatha" ("Our Lord, come!"), an opening or closing prayer formula of the early church, also found in Rev 22.20.

Finally, there are Latin loan words found in the Greek New Testament, as might be expected from texts that date to the period of the Roman Empire. Many of these words have to do with either commerce or government. The word "denarius," a Roman unit of money, is one example from the language of commerce, while "centurion," "census," and "legion," are words originating in the Roman administration, whether civil or military.

Sidnie White Crawford

TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO ENGLISH

PRINCIPLES OF TRANSLATION

Bible translation, though in principle the same as any other translation, is distinguished from it by two considerations: First, the reverence in which adherents of Judaism and Christianity hold the text, leading to concerns whenever a new translation is published that the text be treated with the respect it deserves; and second, the great popularity of the Bible, which has led to the proliferation of translations to meet every conceivable need and audience. In order to find one's way among the great variety of Bible translations available today, it is important to understand the principles underlying all efforts at translation.

In any translation from one language to another—the source language, or the original, and the target language, or the translation—two basic approaches define the limits at either end of a continuum of methods. The technical names for these translation approaches are "*formal equivalence*" and "*dynamic equivalence*." Formal equivalence is usually explained as word-for-word translation, and dynamic equivalence as sense-for-sense or meaning-for-meaning. In general, formal equivalence places more importance on the qualities of the source language, and dynamic equivalence is more concerned with readability in the target language.

Except where the source and the target languages are closely related, however, a purely word-for-word approach would be almost unreadable. Such is the case with translations of the Bible: ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin (the languages of the original texts) are very different from modern English. Here, for example, is Mt 6.9–10 in a word-for-word rendering of the original Greek:

> Father of us who in the heavens, be holy the name
> of you;
> come the kingdom of you;
> become the will of you as in heaven and upon earth.

While it would be possible to puzzle out some meaning from this, it is clearly not English, and an entire Bible translated along these lines would never be read. Most translations, therefore, move in the direction of dynamic equivalence, at least far enough to make sure that their representation of the original text makes sense in English. Some are more strict, for example always trying to use the same English word to translate a given Greek or Hebrew word (a characteristic known as "consistency"); some are freer, trying to achieve a more colloquial English style and using what seems to be the best English word for a Greek or Hebrew word in each separate context, regardless of how the same Greek or Hebrew word might be translated elsewhere. The result is a great range of translation choices for the Bible in English, from those suited to close study to those designed for readability, and readers can usually find a translation that fits their needs.

In the case of ancient documents, and especially those of religious significance like the Bible, there are further complicating factors. Translations must find ways to deal with cultural differences between the worlds of the ancient writers and modern readers; they often try to accommodate traditional phrasing or translations, especially in key passages; and they must take into account the actual uses to which the translation will be put, including uses on formal and significant occasions.

Cultural differences come into consideration when a passage to be translated presents, not a puzzle about the dictionary definition of a word, but one about the way the word was used in its original cultural environment. An example occurs in the following passages: "the two kidneys with the fat that is on them" (Lev 3.4); "he slashes open my kidneys" (Job 16.13); and "In the night also my heart instructs me" (Ps 16.7). The word translated "heart" in the psalm and "kidneys" in Leviticus and Job is the same Heb word, *kelayot* (or *kilyotay,* "my kidneys"). Literally it means the bodily organs, and in the passage from Leviticus that is clearly its meaning: The passage is discussing which parts of an animal will be burnt as a sacrifice. As a metaphor, however, it means the inner life of the human person, and that meaning is represented in the psalm. The verse from Job falls somewhere in between. In its context, it is part of a catalogue of images of physical torture, intended to express spiritual or psychological suffering, many of which cannot be taken literally. There is a question whether it should be translated literally here. An ancient Israelite listening to these passages would have differentiated among this range of meanings, just as we would differentiate among "stomach trouble" and "I have no stomach for that job," or "heart surgery," "My heart stood still," and "Have a heart." In the case of the Hebrew word, the translation has to make that distinction for us, since the literal rendering "kidneys" in the passage from Psalms would make no sense, or the wrong sense, to a modern reader.

A related problem sometimes arises when translators have to consider whether to add a word to the text to make something clear to a modern reader that the ancient audience would have understood without explanation. For example, in 2 Pet 2.14, the literal translation "children of a curse" is rendered in the NRSV as "Accursed children!" This conveys the correct meaning in idiomatic English, but it does not convey to the modern reader what ancient hearers would assume, that the curse is from God. The New English Bible translation does this effectively by adding a word to make this implicit meaning explicit: "God's curse is on them."

An example of a translation trying to accommodate traditional understanding occurs in Jn 1.18, where the NRSV translates a Greek phrase as "God the only Son," and a footnote calls attention to two other possibilities. The Greek in actuality has three textual variants: *monogenēs theos*, "only God"; *ho monogenēs theos*, "the only God"; and *ho monogenēs huios*, "the only Son." The translators first must decide how to render the Greek adjective *monogenes*. Older versions translate it as "only-begotten," but it really means something like "only one of its kind," i.e., "unique." Then they must determine which noun—"God" or "Son"—this adjective is supposed to modify. The manuscript evidence tends to support "God," since that variant appears in two papyri from the early third century CE, and also in manuscripts and citations from the fourth century. The variant "Son" appears only in the fifth century, in Codex Alexandrinus, and in later manuscripts. Since "only God" is present earlier, closer to the original time of writing, and since it is awkward, whereas "only Son" could be an effort to smooth out the text, "only God" seems to be the original reading. The NRSV effort to combine the two phrases is probably not correct.

Variety of use affects Bible translation particularly because many translations are intended for audiences outside the classroom or the scholar's study. In particular, Bible translations are intended to be read aloud in worship services, and bearing this in mind, many translators will try to use an English style that is sometimes more formal or elevated than that in the underlying text. Passages from the Bible are used in ceremonies marking significant life events, like marriage; on important national occasions, like the inauguration of a president; and to help express and channel great communal emotions, as in the funeral of a national leader. A translation that is too colloquial would seem jarring in such contexts.

Translations, thus, rather than being static, fixed creations that plug in one word in English for one word in the original language, are dynamic mediations between different and sometimes opposing tendencies. Insofar as they take the original language seriously as a controlling factor, they will tend to be word-for-word renderings; insofar as they take English seriously, they will tend more toward a meaning-for-meaning approach. They will try to represent not just the language, but the thought and cultural background of the original writers and audiences; but they must also be sensitive to, and aware of, the great variety of needs among contemporary readers.

ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

Prior to the sixteenth century, translations of the Bible into English were made from the Latin Vulgate instead of from Hebrew or Greek, and existed only in manuscript copies. The first English versions of the entire Bible were the two associated with John Wycliffe, translated from the Vulgate between 1380 and 1397. Part of the work on the first version was done by Wycliffe himself, and the rest, including all of the second, by his immediate associates. Nicholas Hereford was largely responsible for the first version, which was completed before Wycliffe's death. John Purvey, Wycliffe's secretary, was responsible for the second version, which was completed by 1397. In the "General Prologue" to the second version Purvey states that it is best "to translate after the sentence and not only after the words, so that the sentence be as open, or opener, in English as Latin"—that is, so that the meaning be as clear, or clearer.

The sixteenth century brought the Bible in English to the common people as a printed book. The first English version directly translated from the Hebrew and Greek was the work of William Tyndale: the New Testament was published in 1526, the Pentateuch in 1530, and Jonah in 1531. In 1534 and 1535 he published revised versions of the New Testament, which were the basis of all later revisions and the main source of the authorized versions of the New Testament in English. Tyndale was finally accused of heresy for his opposition to King Henry VIII's annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and in October 1536 was strangled and burned at the stake.

Miles Coverdale's translation appeared in 1535, the first complete Bible in English. It was not a direct translation from the original languages, but was based on two Latin versions and the translations by Tyndale into English, and by the European reformers Luther and Zwingli into German. In 1537 Matthew's Bible was published. "Thomas Matthew" was a pseudonym of John Rogers, a friend of Tyndale, who took Tyndale's manuscript translations of the books of the Old Testament from Joshua to 2 Chronicles, together with Tyndale's printed translations of the Pentateuch and the New Testament, and published them in this one volume, which he completed by adding Coverdale's version of the rest of the Old

Testament and the Apocrypha. In 1539 Richard Taverner, a layman and a lawyer, published a revision of Matthew's Bible, one edition of which was issued in parts so that people who could not afford to purchase the whole Bible might buy one or more parts. Taverner was a good Greek scholar and made some changes in the translation of the New Testament that have been kept in later versions. Meanwhile at Paris, in early 1538, Miles Coverdale had begun a new revision of Matthew's Bible, which had been commissioned by Sir Thomas Cromwell, Secretary to King Henry VIII and Vicar General. The Great Bible, as this was called, was published at London in 1539. It was the first authorized English version, and a copy was ordered to be placed in every church. Until very recently, the Psalms in the *Book of Common Prayer* were from this translation. A revision of the Great Bible under the auspices of the Anglican bishops, the Bishops' Bible, was published in 1568 and revised in 1572. This revised edition was to become the basis of the King James Version.

Under the Roman Catholic Queen Mary the printing of the English Bible ceased, and its use in the churches was forbidden. Many English Protestants sought refuge on the Continent, and a group in Geneva undertook the revision of the English Bible. The Geneva version appeared in 1560. It was a convenient size not an unwieldy folio, and was the first English version to use numbered verses, each set off as a separate paragraph. The Geneva Bible was never authorized, but it became the household Bible of the English-speaking nations for three-quarters of a century. It was the Bible of Shakespeare, John Bunyan, and the Puritans.

In 1582 an English translation of the New Testament was published at Rheims in France, made from the Latin by Roman Catholic scholars who had been forced to leave England led by Gregory Martin, who had been trained at Oxford University. A similar translation of the Old Testament was published at Douay in France in 1609.

On February 10, 1604, after a conference "for hearing and for the determining things pretended to be amiss in the church," King James I ordained: "That a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service." He appointed fifty-four translators, forty-eight of whom are named in the surviving records. They worked in six companies, to each of which was assigned a section of the Bible. Two companies met at Oxford, two at Cambridge, and two at Westminster. Each company would consider the work of the other companies, and differences would be resolved by correspondence if possible, and if not, be referred to the general meeting at the end. This was a meeting at London of a committee of six, made up of two representatives from the companies at each of the three centers, which devoted nine months to final editing. Dr. Myles Smith, of Oxford University, wrote an informative preface, "The Translators to the Reader." This Bible, with a dedication to King James, was published in 1611.

An outstanding merit of the King James Version is the music of its cadences, the result of a sure instinct for what would sound well when read aloud. For example, here are the successive translations of Prov 3.17, in praise of wisdom, where Coverdale, the Great Bible, and the Bishops' Bible agree in reading: "Her wayes are pleasant wayes and all her paths are peaceable." The Geneva Bible has: "Her wayes are wayes of pleasure and all her pathes prosperitie." The King James Version gives to the verse a perfect rhythm: "Her wayes are wayes of pleasantnesse, and all her pathes are peace."

The English Bible owes more to William Tyndale than to anyone else because the basic structure of his translation has endured. It has been estimated that about sixty percent of the text of the English Bible achieved its final literary form before the King James Version appeared, and that in the King James Version at least one-third of the New Testament is worded exactly as in Tyndale's New Testament, while the sentences of the remaining two-thirds follow Tyndale's general pattern.

For two and a half centuries the King James Version maintained its place as the Authorized Version of the English-speaking peoples, without any serious consideration of its revision, but in 1870 the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury appointed a committee to undertake a revision. The Revised Version of the New Testament was published in 1881, the Old Testament in 1885, and the Apocrypha in 1895. The American Standard Version, containing the renderings preferred by the American scholars who had cooperated in the work of revision, was published in 1901. In 1928 the copyright of the American Standard Version was acquired by the International Council of Religious Education, and thus passed into the ownership of the churches of the United States and Canada that were associated in this Council through their boards of education and publication. The Council appointed a committee of Protestant scholars to have charge of the text of the American Standard Version and to undertake inquiry as to whether further revision was necessary. After more than two years of study and experimental work, this committee decided that there was need for a thorough revision of the version of 1901, which would stay as close to the King James tradition as it could in the light of present knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek texts and their meaning on the one hand, and present usage of English on the other. In 1937

the revision was authorized by the Council. The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published in 1946, the Old Testament in 1952, and the Apocrypha in 1957. The Revised Standard Version took full account of the new knowledge of the history, geography, religions, and cultures of Bible lands, and of rich new resources for understanding the vocabulary, grammar, and idioms of the ancient languages. It also returned to the basic structure and more natural cadence of the Tyndale-King James tradition.

The second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century saw the publication of many translations and revisions of the English Bible. In fact, between 1952 and 1990, when the New Revised Standard Version was published, no fewer than twenty-six different renderings of the complete English Bible were issued, with twenty-five additional translations and revisions of the New Testament. Among these the following Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic translations are of special note.

In 1955 the Jewish Publication Society, whose first translation of the Hebrew scriptures had appeared in 1917, initiated a new translation. *The Torah, The Five Books of Moses*, was published in 1962, *The Prophets* (*Nevi'im*) in 1978, and *The Writings* (*Kethuvim*) in 1982. These three volumes, with revisions, were brought together in 1985 under the title *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. The *Tanakh* has useful footnotes of three kinds—textual, translational, and explanatory—and is notable for its perceptive handling of Hebrew vocabulary and syntax in contemporary English.

A newer rendering of the Hebrew Bible, still in process, is that of Everett Fox, which tries to preserve as much as possible of Hebrew idiom in its English style. Portions that have so far appeared are Genesis (In the Beginning), 1983; Exodus (Now These are the Names), 1986; Torah (The Five Books of Moses), 1995; 1–2 Samuel (Give Us a King! Samuel, Saul, and David), 1999; Early Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings), 2014.

In the year that the RSV New Testament was published (1946), British Protestant churches embarked on a totally new translation of the scriptures, The New English Bible; the New Testament appeared in 1961, and a revised New Testament, along with the Old Testament and Apocrypha, in 1970. At that time, C. H. Dodd, director of the enterprise and chairman of the New Testament translation panel, stated that this was "not another revision of an old version, but a genuinely new translation of the original, which should be frankly contemporary in vocabulary, idiom, style and rhythm—not to supersede the Authorized Version, but as a second version alongside it." The rendering is free and vigorous, tending at places to be periphrastic. Here and there the translators have rearranged the sequence of verses and sections of the text. A revision, under the chairmanship of W. D. McHardy, was published as the Revised English Bible in 1989.

The first English Bible made from the original Hebrew and Greek languages that received Roman Catholic approval was The Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, of which the New Testament was published in 1965 and the complete Bible in 1966. In it the Deuterocanonical Books were placed among the Old Testament books in accord with the Catholic canon. It was prepared by the Catholic Biblical Association of Great Britain with the consent of the Revised Standard Version Bible Committee and the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. There are no changes in the Old Testament text; the sixty-seven changes in the New Testament, made for liturgical and theological reasons, are carefully noted in an appendix. A significant further advance toward a Common Bible was achieved with the publication of the RSV without any changes whatever in the Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (1966), to which Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston granted the imprimatur.

The first English translation of the Bible made from the original languages by Catholic scholars was The Jerusalem Bible, published in 1966. With close comparison with the Hebrew and Greek, it is based on the French translation made under the direction of l'École Biblique of Jerusalem by a committee of scholars headed by Père Roland de Vaux, O.P., and popularly known as La Bible de Jérusalem. The English translation was made by a British Committee headed by Alexander Jones, L.S.S., of Christ's College, Liverpool. The translation is well done and has been warmly received. At the same time it must be acknowledged that occasionally French idiom intrudes. "Yahweh" is used instead of the substitute, the LORD. The volume is provided with useful introductions and notes, and "thee," "thou," and "thine" disappear from the text. A full revision was published in 1985 as The New Jerusalem Bible under the supervision of Henry Wansbrough of Ampleforth Abbey, York.

The New American Bible, a translation by members of the Catholic Biblical Association of America sponsored by the U.S. Bishops' Conference, was published in 1970, which rendered the text into modern American English. A revision of the New Testament appeared in 1986, and of the Psalms in 1991. The rest of the Old Testament (including yet another revision of Psalms) and the Apocrypha were published as The New American Bible Revised Edition in 2011.

For readers new to English, the American Bible Society issued "Good News for Modern Man," a translation of

the New Testament by Robert G. Bratcher, in 1966. Also called Today's English Version, it uses simplified syntax and a limited vocabulary. The Old Testament, prepared by a committee, came out in 1976, and the Deuterocanonical/Apocryphal books in 1979. The popularity of the Good News Bible spurred the preparation of another modern-speech Bible. This is the New International Version, sponsored by the New York Bible Society (subsequently the New York International Bible Society). The New Testament was published in 1973 and the complete Bible in 1978. Less colloquial than Today's English Version, and more literal than the New English Bible, the version was prepared by twenty teams of translators from evangelical Protestant traditions in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain. In 2005, a revision known as Today's New International Version appeared, to be superseded in 2011 by a new revision of the original New International Version. In 2013 a new translation in colloquial English, The Common English Bible, appeared. It was sponsored by a consortium of American Protestant publishers.

The ecumenicity of our times is in various degrees represented in these newer translations, but perhaps most of all in the New Revised Standard Version. The committee that produced the Revised Standard Version is a continuing committee, holding meetings at regular intervals and having charge of the RSV text, and it has become both international and ecumenical, with the appointment of Catholic and Protestant members from Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. Since 1946 an American Jewish scholar had been a member of the Old Testament section. More recently a Greek Orthodox scholar joined. In 1974 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches directed that the Committee undertake a revision of the RSV Bible with the Apocrypha, mandating that necessary changes be made (1) in paragraph structure and punctuation; (2) in the elimination of archaisms while retaining the flavor of the Tyndale-King James Bible tradition; (3) in attaining a greater degree of accuracy, clarity, and euphony; and (4) in eliminating masculine-oriented language relating to people, so far as this could be done without distorting passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture. Within the constraints set by the original text and the mandates given by the Division, the committee followed the maxim, "As literal as possible, as free as necessary." As a consequence, the New Revised Standard Version (1990) remains essentially a literal translation. Paraphrastic renderings were adopted only sparingly, and then chiefly to compensate for the lack of a common-gender third-person singular pronoun. The NRSV contains all of the books that are regarded as authoritative by Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox churches.

Michael D. Coogan and Pheme Perkins

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE
THE HEBREW BIBLE'S INTERPRETATION OF ITSELF

The typical terms used to describe how the Bible interprets itself—inner-biblical interpretation or inner-biblical exegesis—are misleading. They suggest that one text in the Bible is interpreting an earlier biblical text. Newer understanding of canon, however, suggest that it is problematic to speak of "the Bible" until the early centuries of the common era (see "The Canons of the Bible," 2238). Thus, when we speak of Deuteronomy interpreting Exodus or of Daniel interpreting Jeremiah, for example, this is only inner-biblical interpretation from our later perspective; for the author of Deuteronomy, Exodus was not Bible nor was Jeremiah Bible for the author of Daniel—the term, and perhaps even the concept Bible is anachronistic for the authors or Deuteronomy or Daniel. These are instead cases of later texts that were eventually incorporated into the biblical canon (e.g., Daniel) interpreting earlier texts (e.g., Jeremiah) that were eventually incorporated into the biblical canon.

In other words, since the different books that make up the Bible were written at various times, later books refer in various ways to earlier ones. Typically, these earlier works are not merely quoted, but interpreted. This is a natural process; texts, especially religious texts, are not read purely in the abstract, since religious communities bring their lives and experiences to the text and often attempt to bring the text closer to their lives. It is thus not surprising that according to Neh 8.8, when sections of the biblical text were read to the postexilic community

in the fifth century, "They read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading." Like any book, the text read by Ezra and his assistants required interpretation. Since "the law of God" suggested legal norms or common stories that the community should share, the people needed to hear not only the text itself but also its correct interpretation. This was because the text is at points ambiguous, like most other literary works, or self-contradictory, like other books that are anthologies.

The covenant-making ceremony alluded to in Neh 8 occurred in the fall, and that text suggests that the reading from the Torah included some form of Lev 23.33–43, which outlines the commemoration of the fall harvest festival of booths (Sukkot), beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (counting from Nisan, in the spring). According to Lev 23.40, proper commemoration of the festival includes the following: "On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days." This passage is ambiguous on at least two points: What should the worshipers do after they "take" these various greens? And what is meant by "the fruit of majestic trees" and "boughs of leafy trees," which are interspersed with very specific tree names ("palm," "willow")?

The treatment of Lev 23.33–43 in the later passage in Neh. 8.14–15 shows how this postexilic community interpreted Leviticus, resolving these ambiguities: "And they found it written in the law [Heb *torah*], which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the people of Israel should live in booths during the festival of the seventh month, and that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem as follows, 'Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.'" Thus, the term "take" from Lev 23.40 is interpreted in the context of the immediately following legislation (v. 42)—"You shall live in booths for seven days"—to mean "take" for the construction of "booths." Furthermore, the ambiguous trees are stipulated as olive trees and myrtles. The way in which this later text clarifies how the earlier text should be understood is not at all remarkable: The types of branches to be used are clarified and, naturally enough, the broader context of the fall festival laws of Lev 23 is used to explicate the purpose for which these branches are taken.

The process of interpretation, where a later text interprets an earlier one, began before the Bible was canonized, as noted earlier. It is especially obvious in Deuteronomy, which in both its legal and its narrative sections reuses and interprets earlier traditions now found in Exodus and Numbers. One example from each genre will illustrate the pervasive interpretive nature of Deuteronomy.

The law of a Hebrew slave is found in Ex 21.2–11, the Covenant Collection (or Covenant Code), in Deut 15.12–18 as part of the Deuteronomic Law Collection, and in Lev 25.39–43. A quick glance indicates that the texts in Exodus and Deuteronomy are closely related and interdependent. Moreover, biblical scholars agree that the Deuteronomic Law Collection (D) is later than the Covenant Collection (C); this means that that slave law in Deuteronomy is dependent on that in Exodus. It is thus significant that the words "without debt" from Ex 21.2, concerning the release of the slave at the seventh year, are missing in D's retelling of this law. Instead we find the following, which, based on its placement and context, is most likely D's interpretation of C's "without debt": "And when you send a male slave out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the LORD your God has blessed you" (Deut 15.13–14). The Deuteronomist has naturally subsumed C into his own intellectual framework, which includes the idea that the underprivileged must be looked after carefully. Thus for the Deuteronomist, "without debt" could not be interpreted literally and narrowly; instead it suggested that slaves must be released with resources to enable them to be self-sufficient so that they will not immediately find themselves in debt again—thus they must be provided for. While this is not an obvious interpretation of Exodus and is not what the author of Exodus intended by the phrase, it offers a good example of how a word may be reinterpreted by a later writer to fit a later ideological worldview.

This particular reinterpretation is mild when compared with other, more radical reworkings in Deuteronomy of the earlier law, including that the same law applies to both male and female slaves, in contrast to Ex 21.2–6,7–11. The ear-piercing ceremony, which transpires if the slave opts to stay with the master, must take place at the owner's house (Deut 15.17), while Exodus suggests that it happens "before God," namely at the local shrine (Ex 21.6). This change is motivated by Deuteronomy's fundamental assumption that the local shrines were illegitimate, and worship was permitted only at the Jerusalem Temple—thus an originally sacred ritual becomes a profane one, accomplished at home. This suggests that later writers, facing differing circumstances, did not always feel bound by the letter of earlier laws and could "interpret" them into new laws that the earlier legislators would hardly have recognized.

These same tendencies can be seen in Deuteronomy's reinterpretation of earlier narratives. Both Ex 18 and Deut 1.9–18 narrate the establishment of a judicial system in ancient Israel so that Moses would not be responsible for all legal cases. The theme and vocabulary of the two stories are so similar that it is clear that Deuteronomy has created its story by interpreting Exodus. Some of this interpretation is quite reasonable; for example, Deut 1.17, "Any case that is too hard for you," clarifies the somewhat ambiguous "every important [lit., "great"] case" of Ex 18.22. However, the change of Ex 18.21, "able men … who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain" to Deut 1.13, "individuals who are wise, discerning, and reputable," is not based on a straightforward interpretation of the earlier text. It is as if the author of this passage in Deuteronomy thought: Is it reasonable that righteousness in religious observance is the most important quality of judges? Surely not. Surely Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, meant "wise" when he said "men who fear God"! Other cases of interpretation in this passage by the Deuteronomist are more radical; he, for example, ignores the fact that this judicial system was set up at the instigation of Jethro and transfers the initiative to Moses, the central character of Deuteronomy. Like any reader, the Deuteronomist interprets the story within his own framework, even if this means that a new story, distinct from the original, is created.

The previous illustrations show how ambiguities in texts are resolved, and how a text can be (consciously or unconsciously) reinterpreted within the framework of the later reader's context and beliefs. They reflect cases where the later interpreters are acting as readers, and thus interpreters of texts. These readings, though at points radical, have parallels to the way contemporary readers might engage secular works, often reading or interpreting them in a manner that differs from their original context or meaning. As a composite canonical text, however, the Bible presents challenges of interpretation that are different from contemporary literary works. In particular, the Bible contains diverse traditions that are ultimately incorporated into a single work and thus somehow need to be reconciled. Additionally, particular parts of the Bible, especially some prophetic texts, present themselves as divine truths; when these seem not to have come true, they must be reinterpreted.

A simple case where laws contradictory laws are reconciled occurs in the legislation concerning the cooking of the Passover lamb. Exodus 12.8–9 notes, "They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs." Deuteronomy 16.7, however, insists, "You shall boil it [NRSV "cook it" reflects an incorrect attempt at harmonizing the various laws] and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose." These differences are not at all surprising within a source-critical model, which suggests that they reflect different practices of different groups at different times. But what should be done when both texts become part of the same Torah?

This problem was already felt, for example, in the postexilic book of Chronicles, for which the Torah (more or less in the form that we know it) was an authoritative legal text. The Chronicler depicts the Passover celebration under King Josiah (2 Chr 35.13): "They boiled the passover lamb with fire according to the ordinance" [a literal translation; NRSV is harmonistic and inaccurate]. The Chronicler has thus reconciled the two traditions by choosing elements from both: The offering is "boiled," following Deut 16.7, but "with fire" reflects the "roasted over the fire" of Ex 12.8–9. Through the brilliant (but problematic) expression "boiled … with fire," the two variant traditions are retained, and in some sense reconciled.

The manner in which various problematic prophecies are already interpreted within books that became part of the Bible, so that they become true, is remarkable. The clearest example of this is from one of the latest texts of the Hebrew Bible, Dan 9. The background of this text is the earlier prophecy in Jer 25.11, which suggests that Babylon will be given dominion over the world for seventy years; Jer 29.10 builds upon that prophecy, suggesting that after these seventy years are completed, Israel will be restored. This presented a serious problem for the author of Dan 9, living during the reign of the (Seleucid) Greek king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who persecuted the Jews and forbade them to follow the most fundamental laws (see Introduction to Daniel, p. 1249). In this period, between 167 and 164 BCE, it seemed that Jeremiah's word, which claimed that a complete restoration would transpire, was false. But also by that time it is likely that Jeremiah was already considered a true prophet, and his book circulated widely. How could this true prophet utter an oracle that was so patently and painfully false?

This explains why Daniel "intensively consulted [NRSV "perceived in" is inaccurate] the books concerning the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years" (9.2). Because Jeremiah's prophecy seemed not to be true, intensive consultation was needed, so that the real meaning, the proper interpretation of the seemingly unambiguous "seventy years" [Heb *shibʾim shanah*] could be deciphered. The angel Gabriel (v. 21) finally offers Daniel

the correct interpretation (v. 24): "Seventy weeks [Heb *shabuʿim shibʿim*] are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place." The consonants of Jeremiah's *shibʿim* ("seventy"), are read twice, first as *shabuʿim*, ("weeks"), then, as *shibʿim* ("seventy"). (In the period when Daniel was written, Hebrew was written with consonants only, so the same word could be pronounced, and understood as, different words with different vowel sounds.) The result of this intensive consultation is that Jeremiah's "seventy" means "seventy weeks of years": seventy times seven or four hundred and ninety years. Thus, Daniel updated the prophecy and gave Jeremiah a four-hundred-twenty-year extension so that his prophecy could still be true, as it was awaiting fulfillment after Daniel's time.

The author has here engaged in what has been called (in reference to similar rabbinic texts) "creative philology," reading and interpreting words in a highly creative fashion. Here, as in later rabbinic texts, this is not done to maintain the status of Jeremiah and his prophecies. Closely related to creative philology is "creative historiography," where an interpreter revises or adds to earlier texts, thereby creating a fundamentally new historical tradition. This may be seen very often in Chronicles, which frequently and ingeniously reworks or adds to its sources, typically the books of Samuel and Kings. A classic example of this type of interpretation through creative historiography may be seen in 2 Chr 8.2, which claims that "Solomon rebuilt the cities that Huram [a variant spelling of Hiram] had given to him, and settled the people of Israel in them." This is an imaginative revision, indeed a reversal of 1 Kings 9.11–12, which tells of cities that Solomon gave to Hiram! The Chronicler read his source within his own interpretive framework and theology, which included the notion that the righteous Solomon could not possibly give away cities from the holy land of Israel; 2 Chr 8.2 is an interpretive attempt to deal with this theological problem.

These examples illustrate how later passages interpret earlier passages. Many other examples from almost every biblical book could be offered, including more subtle cases where the interpretation is accomplished through textual juxtaposition, or the interpretive tradition is not found in a separate text (like Chronicles), but has entered as a type of gloss in the original text that it is interpreting. The examples cited are meant to illustrate the range of inner-biblical interpretations; some are rather straightforward, clarifying ambiguities, while others are remarkably radical, transforming legal or narrative traditions in an extreme fashion. Finally, when seen in combination with the essay on Jewish interpretation in the Premodern Era (p. 1863), these illustrations highlight the continuity between inner-biblical interpretation and early rabbinic interpretation.

Marc Z. Brettler

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE
THE NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETS THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES

SCRIPTURE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The second-century CE satirist Lucian of Samosata, in Asia Minor, attacked the early Christian movement in the person of a charlatan prophet, Peregrinus. Peregrinus feigned conversion, rose to the position of local bishop, and gained considerable prestige among his naïve coreligionists when he was imprisoned for the faith, before assuming another career. How did Peregrinus achieve his exalted position? According to Lucian, "He interpreted and explained some of their books and even composed many and they revered him as a god, made use of him as a lawgiver" (*On the Death of Peregrinus* 11). By the mid-second century CE, then, Christians could be mocked for their preoccupation with interpreting sacred texts as well as for composing their own writings. At least in part, such interpretation was understood to involve rules for Christian conduct. Whether "a lawgiver" pronounced legal rulings on community discipline or codified ethical norms is not clear. From the point of view of the educated elite, Christians who followed unlearned bishops could be duped because they, as well as their leaders, lacked the advanced rhetorical training required for the interpretation of texts.

Similar objections are expressed within the New Testament. In the Gospel of John, local Pharisees scorn the blind man's confession that Jesus is from God, on the

grounds that he has no standing to interpret the Torah (Jn 9.24–34). Matthew has the scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven able to bring from his storehouse both new things and old ones (Mt 13.52). He defends Jesus's understanding of the Torah and the prophets as attending to the substantive matters—justice, mercy, and faithfulness—rather than making burdens of details about tithing as the Pharisees do (Mt 23.23–24). Paul insists that the true meaning of the law remains veiled, like Moses's face, from his fellow Israelites. They can understand its meaning only by turning to Christ (2 Cor 3.7–18).

Thus, most biblical interpretation in the New Testament serves a polemical or apologetic purpose: to defend Christian claims about Jesus. Neither the assertions themselves nor the presuppositions employed to derive them from scripture would be acceptable to those who did not share Christian beliefs. Nevertheless, the interpretative methods used, especially by Matthew and Paul, have much in common with those used by other Jews in the same period.

Though mid-second century Christians began to treat their own writings as sacred texts, that was not yet true in the first century. Only the latest of the New Testament texts, 2 Peter, suggests that a collection of Paul's letters was regarded as authoritative (2 Pet 3.15–16). Thus, whenever a New Testament writer refers to or quotes scripture, he is interpreting texts so regarded by the Jewish community. The scriptures were not known to these writers in their original Hebrew, but in Greek translation, the Septuagint (see "Textual Criticism," The Hebrew Bible: Texts and Versions, p. 1845 and "Canons of the Bible," the Greek Bible, p. 1840). In many cases, the text that a New Testament author quotes or interprets differs from that found in a modern translation of the Hebrew Bible. We cannot tell if the author is quoting from memory, misquoting, or altering the text to suit his argument until we have compared it with the Septuagint as well as the Hebrew.

Scripture for the New Testament writers consists of those writings that they held in common with Diaspora Jews: the Torah, prophets, Psalms, and assorted texts from the Writings. In frequency of quotation and allusion in the New Testament, Psalms and Isaiah predominate, followed by Deuteronomy and other passages from the Torah. Some are introduced with a formula such as "it is written" (Mt 2.5; Lk 20.17; Acts 15.15–18) or "it was said" (Mt 5.21). In other cases, the expression "that is" combined with application of the text to reading the community's experience as part of God's eschatological plan resembles the interpretation of prophetic passages in the interpretive commentaries ("pesharim") among the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran (e.g., Mt 3.3; 11.10; Jn 6.31,50; Acts 2.16; 4.11; Rom 9.7–9; 10.6–8; Heb 7.5; 1 Pet 1.24–25; see 1 QpHab 12.6; CD 7.14–15; 4Q174 1.11–14). Use of an adversative expression to correct a prior tradition of interpretation, as in Matthew's "you have heard … but I say" (Mt 5.21–22,27–28,31–32,33–34,38–39 43–44) resembles a rabbinic formula (*Midr. Pss.* 119.26). Matthew does not continue in the rabbinic mode, however, which would require that Jesus establish his interpretation by appealing to other texts from scripture.

CHRISTOLOGICAL READING OF SCRIPTURE

The primary focus of New Testament biblical interpretation is the belief that Jesus is God's messiah, the agent of God's eschatological salvation. Some texts are repeatedly interpreted with a strong messianic meaning: Ps 2; 8; 110; Deut 18.15,18–19; and 2 Sam 7.14. Prophecies from Joel 2–3 (Acts 2.16–21), Zech 9–14 (Mk 11.1–2; Heb 10.19), Dan 7 (Mk 13.26), and Dan 12 (Jn 5.29) play a major role in understanding the risen and exalted Jesus as the one who has inaugurated the end-time. Daniel 7.13–14 lies behind the Christological confession of Jesus as the Son of Man who will come in judgment (see Mk 14.62). In many cases, the reference to Daniel is not explicitly marked. Readers who do not recognize the allusion—or are not aided by the notes found in a modern edition—may miss the use of allusions or partial quotations to support a claim about Jesus.

Even when the text being employed is evident, one cannot always determine whether the author is using the passage as an isolated prooftext or intends readers to incorporate elements from its larger biblical context into the interpretation. Among the Qumran texts, testimony collections gather biblical passages on a particular topic. Some combine references to a future prophet (4Q175: Deut 5.28–29; 18.18–19; 33.8–11; Num 24.15–17; 4Q174: 2 Sam 7.10–14; Ps 1.1; 2.1–2). If early Christians used similar collections of texts on a theme, the larger context of any quotation (which would not have been given in the collection) is irrelevant. When the same texts are quoted in the same combination by different authors, such a source may well be behind all of them. Christ as the stumbling stone based on Isa 8.14; 28.16; and Ps 118.22 appears in several places (Mt 21.42; Acts 4.11; Eph 2.20; 1 Pet 2.6). A collection of prooftexts may have been the source of Matthew's set of fulfillment quotations, which assert that events in the life of Jesus were foretold by the prophets: 1.23 (Isa 7.14; 8.8); 2.6 (Mic 5.2), 18 (Jer 31.15), 23 (source uncertain; see Judg 13.5,7; Isa 11.1; 53.2); 4.14 (Isa 9.1–2); 8.17 (Isa 53.4); 12.17–21 (Isa 42.1–4); 21.4–5 (Zech 9.9). They exemplify the particular significance of Isaiah in early Christian understanding of the suffering and death of Jesus.

Christians, using the Septuagint translation, were able to read Isaiah's original reference to a young woman

who will soon bear a child as a reference to the miraculous birth of God's messiah from a virgin (Isa 7.14). When Matthew embedded this text into the story of Jesus's birth, he fixed its Christian interpretation in the imagination. Similar reinterpretations arose in dealing with the end of Jesus's life: The necessity of explaining how Jesus's death fit into God's plan drew Christian attention to passages describing God's suffering righteous one. Early interpretation matched details in the story of Jesus's passion to passages in Isaiah (for example, abuse of the prisoner from Isa 50.6 and 53.5; see Mt 27.67–68). Some scholars think that Jesus himself may have begun this process by applying texts concerning the suffering righteous one and the coming "son of man" (Dan 7.13–14) to his ministry.

Isaiah's prophecies about the salvation that is coming to Zion also play an important role in the Gospel narratives. The announcement of salvation to the suffering ones in Isa 61.1–3 has been embedded in an inaugural speech of Jesus (Lk 4.17–19). The same passage is reflected in Matthew's Beatitudes (Mt 5.3–12). Images of the day of salvation from Isaiah dominate the Christian liturgical celebrations of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. So firmly are these passages fixed within a Christological interpretive tradition that many Christians find it impossible to imagine that they could refer to anything other than the coming of salvation in Jesus.

As Christians came to articulate claims about Jesus's identity as the unique Son of God, they used biblical texts to support this view in a more polemical way. Jesus is shown to prove his own superiority to the human descendants of David with a clever twist on Ps 110.1 (Mk 12.35–37): David himself (the presumed author of the Psalm) uses the title "Lord" of the messiah. Hebrews 1.5–14 attaches other Psalm texts to Ps 2.7 as evidence that Jesus is God's Son and as such exalted above the angels. John 10.31–39 has Jesus cite Ps 82.6 in self-defense when he is accused of blasphemy for claiming to be the unique representative of God. In all of these examples, interpreting the Bible is not pursued for its own sake. Rather, Christian beliefs about Jesus are prior to the biblical passages produced to support them. The result, however, is that many passages from the prophets and Psalms have become so embedded in the gospel narrative that for the Christian imagination they belong to the story of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE AND CHRISTIAN PRACTICE

Matthew 5.17–20 defends the teaching of Jesus against the charge of dissolving the Torah and the prophets. The Torah is identified with the exact words of the written Hebrew, and Matthew affirms its divine authority in every particular. The Christian understanding represents the fulfillment of the Torah and prophets by establishing a righteousness superior to that taught by scribes and Pharisees. What principle underlies the adversative readings that follow in Mt 5.21–28? A common explanation attributes to Jesus the authority of a messianic interpreter of the law. He can determine its intent with an authority greater than that of those Jewish interpreters who appeal to the oral tradition that was said to have been given by Moses. Disputed points are to be resolved once and for all based on the "prophet like Moses" of Deut 18.15–18 (see Jn 4.19,25). In what follows, Jesus and his followers are to do more, not less, than the Torah requires. The debate over divorce in Mt 19.3–13 employs a related argument. Though the Torah contains provisions for granting a divorce (Deut 21.1), Jesus claims that Moses introduced such stipulations as a concession. They do not reflect the will of God as revealed in Gen 1.27. The Genesis text also figures in a critique of social laxity about divorce in the Dead Sea Scrolls (see CD 4.19–21). Thus it was used to indicate God's intention concerning marriage prior to the time of the Qumran community (second century BCE through first century CE). The Qumran tradition, however, does not use it, as the New Testament does, to negate the legal standing of another text of the Torah. This passage from Matthew implies that the point of "messianic" interpretation is to restore the intention of the original lawgiver, namely God. Matthew 5.48 concludes on a similar note: Righteousness implies assimilation to God's own perfection.

New Testament authors do not interpret the details of legal traditions found in the Jewish scriptures. Rather, a series of "summary principles" serves to demonstrate that the intention of the Torah has been realized in the Christian community. Matthew 7.12 uses the "golden rule" as such a summary, for instance. The most common Christian summary focuses on the injunction to love God and neighbor, the love command (see Mk 12.28–34; Jn 13.34–35; Rom 13.8–10; Gal 5.14; Eph 5.1–2; 1 Thess 4.9–10; Heb 13.1; Jas 2.8). Matthew 23.23–24 employs the distinction between attention to observance of detailed precepts concerning tithing and the "weightier matters"—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. This passage has, apparently, been reformulated from Matthew's Jewish-Christian perspective, since it presupposes the development of the law on tithing (Deut 14.22–29, later taken to include dill and cumin). The parallel in Lk 11.42 fits the more common New Testament pattern. Those condemned fail in justice and love of God, that is, the obligation to love God and neighbor. Though the text is not quoted exactly, Matthew's formula probably reflects Mic 6.8.

Christians also presume that the stories concerning Israel provide instructional examples for their community. Tales of unfaithfulness or grumbling in the wilderness were particularly popular (see 1 Cor 10.1–13; Heb 3.7–4.13). Abraham serves as an example of the works (such as hospitality) appropriate to faith (Jas 2.21–26 includes Rahab as an example). The heading "faith" introduces a catalogue of biblical models in Heb 11.1–40, which serves as a summary of the biblical story from Abel through the prophets. Though "by faith" has been inserted into each example, the particular story that follows does not always represent faith, at least not in the same way. The Christological exegesis by which Hebrews argued that Jesus as exalted Son of God was foreseen by the Psalms and prophets and that the sacrificial death of Jesus ended the need for Jewish sacrificial rituals (Heb 7.1–10.18) shapes this catalogue as well. Each of the heroes in the catalogue merits a promised reward for fidelity to God, which has been deferred until the establishment of a heavenly people of God through Jesus (11.13–16).

SCRIPTURE IN CHRISTIAN POLEMIC

The Christian conviction that scripture spoke to and about their community even when it was made up largely of Gentiles (as in 1 Pet 1.10–23) resulted in polemical use of the biblical text against a simplistic, literal reading. The strategies employed in several striking rereadings became fixed principles of early Christian exegesis: typology, allegory, and the distinction between the "spirit" and the "letter" of the text. Typology is a method of reading a text that sees characters, incidents, or themes within it as representing "types," or impressions, of a central form, the "antitype." When a coin or medallion was struck, the copies produced were called types, and the name therefore came to signify all of the related images based on one master design. Typological readings already occurred in the Hebrew Bible; the prophet known as Second Isaiah, for instance, interpreted the return from exile typologically as a second Exodus (Isa 48.20–21, alluding to Ex 17.1–7). In the New Testament, interpreting a biblical text typologically presumes that persons or events in the narrative provide a pattern of Christian experience; for instance, Israel's passage through the Red Sea and eating manna foreshadow Christian baptism and Eucharist (1 Cor 10.1–4). In other cases, the relationship of the Christian person, idea, or event may be antithetical to the person, idea, or event found in scripture; for instance, Paul contrasts Adam and Christ (Rom 5.12–21), part of Paul's argument for faith rather than observance of the law as the principle of salvation.

Paul's use of the Abraham story to defend the thesis moves into terrain foreign to the apparent meaning of the story. Genesis 15.6 is taken to mean that Abraham's righteousness depends only on faith (Rom 4.1–25). Some scholars call this type of argument "midrash," a traditional Jewish form of interpretation, in which one text is supplemented by others to extract a further meaning. Psalm 32.1–2 plays this role in Rom 4.7–8. John 6.30–51 contains a lengthy dispute in which the incarnate Christ is said to be the meaning of Exodus. Biblical references in the Fourth Gospel are notoriously indefinite. John 6.31 reflects some combination of Ex 16.4,15; Ps 78.24; and Wis 16.28. Such typologies do not deny that scripture refers to persons and events that belong to Israel's past. Their significance in God's plan of salvation, however, requires that they be recognized as prefiguring the Christian reality.

Paul's treatment of the Abraham story in Gal 4.21–31 moves beyond simple typology to a method of interpretation that becomes more prevalent in later Christian writers: allegory. Allegory in its pure sense is an extended comparison between two different levels, usually a narrative level and a psychological or spiritual level, in which the writer, speaking directly about the narrative incidents and characters, intends and is understood to mean to speak about the symbolic level. This kind of reading had already been adapted from Greek interpretive practice by the Jewish writer Philo of Alexandria (ca. 15 BCE–50 CE). In Galatians, the son born of a slave woman is rather shockingly associated with the Sinai covenant and all those who seek to be bound by it. Descendants of Isaac are not physical descendants of Abraham but children of a promise. Paul concludes that since Gen 21.10 permits the slave woman and her son to be cast out, his audience should do the same to any Christians who insist upon belonging to Israel "according to the flesh." Even in what appears a blatant misreading of the Abraham story, Paul presumes that the text has a literal sense as well. Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, and Hagar are not merely symbolic figures representative of the two parties to the conflict in Galatia.

Later theories of allegorical meaning found support in Paul's distinction between "the letter that kills" and the life-giving "Spirit" in 2 Cor 3.6. The polemical context of this passage sets Paul and his preaching over against what appear to have been Jewish Christian missionaries. Again Paul's version of Ex 34.28–35 in the argument which follows inverts the Jewish traditions of the Targums. The standard Jewish explanations of this passage assume that the splendor on Moses's face either remained permanently or increased. For Paul's Jewish contemporaries the glory on Moses's face and the eternity of the Sinai covenant are closely associated (see Pseudo-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities* 11.5; 19.10–16; 32.7; 1Q34 2.5–8). Israel's sin makes it impossible for the people to

look upon the glory reflected in the face of Moses. Paul instead assumes that the veiling of Moses's face was a means of hiding the evidence of a fading glory, that is, an impermanent covenant. He asserts that he is the servant of a new, eternal covenant established through the Spirit (Jer 31.18,33; Ezek 36.26), not the letters carved on the tablets of stone.

With the Latin rendering of Greek *gramma* ("letter") as *littera*, its identification with the carved tablets of Torah gave way to "letter" as meaning the entire written text. Paul's antithesis of Spirit and letter was taken to be a hermeneutical principle rather than a polemical attack on the eternity of the law (also see Rom 2.27–29; 7.6). From this perspective, a literal reading of the text fails to convey its deepest truth. Only the spiritual interpretation that associates scripture with the revelation of God in Christ conveys life. Israel may then stand for any persons who are trapped by the literal sense of the text and who therefore fail to interpret all of the scriptures in light of Christ.

Pheme Perkins

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE
JEWISH INTERPRETATION IN THE PREMODERN ERA

There are many points of continuity between the inner-biblical interpretation of the Hebrew Bible (see "The Hebrew Bible's Interpretation of Itself," p. 1856) and its interpretation in later Jewish tradition. The later interpreters faced the same issues as those from the end of the biblical period: the ambiguity of many words and the desire to bring the text closer to Jewish life. In addition, most faced a new reality: the Bible was canonized as a fixed set of books, closed to further additions. Not surprisingly these later interpreters adopted and adapted many earlier solutions, especially the use of creative philology and creative historiography, in order to give the closed canon greater elasticity. Some interpretive innovations appeared at particular periods, either as creative breakthroughs within the Jewish tradition or as a response to outside influences. For example, some Jewish interpreters reacted against Christological biblical interpretations, while others were influenced by the Muslim interpretation of the Qur'an and the interpretation of the Bible by the Karaite community, which accepted the Hebrew Bible but not its Talmudic interpretation.

Although the practice of interpreting the text by rewriting it, as reflected (e.g., in Chronicles), continued after the canonization of the Hebrew Bible, for example in the second century BCE pseudepigraphic composition Jubilees, a retelling of Genesis through part of Exodus, it was largely replaced by commentaries of various sorts. Commentary, which by definition differentiates between text and interpretation, is fundamentally different from inner-biblical interpretation. For clear theological reasons, these commentaries were interested in differentiating between the canonical biblical text and its interpretation—the text cited and the commentary offered have different statuses.

TRANSLATION AS INTERPRETATION

The earliest postbiblical interpretive traditions, however, are found in another new genre, Bible translation. Aramaic was the lingua franca of the postexilic period, and many Jews were no longer fluent in Hebrew; the Bible was therefore translated into Aramaic. Though these earliest translations are no longer extant, we do have later Aramaic translations of sections of the Bible that predate the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) from the Dead Sea community of Qumran, as well as a set of Aramaic translations, called Targums, that crystallized in both Babylon and Palestine. In addition, the Bible was translated into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt, beginning in the third century BCE. This translation, called the Septuagint (the translation of the seventy—abbreviated using the Roman numeral LXX), is of great value and is supplemented by a variety of other Greek translations, some of which were found at Qumran, dating from the first century BCE and later (See "Textual Criticism," p. 1843.)

These translations illustrate the truism that all translations are interpretations. More particularly, they demonstrate the range of translation approaches, from literal interpretation to free paraphrase. (See "Translation of the Bible into English," p. 1852, for a discussion of translation approaches.) For example, the Septuagint and the Aramaic translation called Targum Onqelos are typically word-for-word, literal versions, as far as that is possible

between languages. Yet even these literal translations show nonliteral tendencies at points. For example, Onqelos was aware of the fact that the biblical verse, "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Ex 23.19; 34.26; Deut 14.21), was generalized in early Jewish tradition and served as the basis for the prohibition of eating dairy products and meat together. For this reason, Onqelos renders the biblical text, "Do not eat meat with milk." The interpretive nature of the Septuagint is especially obvious in the longer superscriptions that this version adds to psalms. Following an interpretive tendency that already existed in the Hebrew Bible, whereby several psalms were given (secondary) historical superscriptions that contextualized them in the life of David (e.g., Ps 51, "To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba"), superscriptions were added to many additional psalms (e.g., Ps 27, introduced in the Septuagint with "A Psalm of David, before he was anointed"). Thus, a biblical model was followed, and new introductions, which provided new interpretive "Davidic" frameworks for these psalms, were composed and appended to the biblical text.

In other cases, nonliteral translations were offered because the theology of the translator and his community disagreed with what the text explicitly said; this is the theological equivalent of the translation by Onqelos of "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk" as "Do not eat meat with milk." For example, Num 12.8 says of Moses, "he beholds the form of the LORD," a notion that was very disturbing to the translator of the Septuagint, for whom the predominant image of Deuteronomy, that God has no form (see esp. Deut 4.12,15), was normative. The translator thus assimilated what the text explicitly says into his theology, which more closely matched the Priestly notion that God is manifest through his "glory," and rendered this section of the verse as "and he saw the glory of the LORD." This was the same sort of change discussed in the essay "The Hebrew Bible's Interpretation of Itself" (p. 1856) when both Deuteronomy and Chronicles rewrote (rather than translated) earlier texts, changing them so that they conform to a later theology.

These cases of nonliteral, exegetical translations are rather tame when compared to some of the highly expansionistic translations seen in the Targums, especially those originating in Palestine. Most remarkable is the case where the Targums "translate" the *Akedah* or the binding of Isaac (Gen 22). In the biblical account, Isaac has a relatively minor role and is a character who is acted upon rather than one who acts. Many of the Targums, however, interpret the story in such a way that Isaac now plays a major role. For example, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan glosses v. 10 ("And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son") as follows: "Abraham put forth his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. Isaac spoke up and said to his father: 'Tie me well lest I struggle because of the anguish of my soul, with the result that a blemish will be found in your offering, and I will be thrust into the pit of destruction.' The eyes of Abraham were looking at the eyes of Isaac, and the eyes of Isaac were looking at the angels on high. Isaac saw them but Abraham did not see them. The angels on high exclaimed: 'Come, see two unique ones who are in the world; one is slaughtering, and one is being slaughtered; the one who slaughters does not hesitate, and the one who is being slaughtered stretches forth his neck'" (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* [trans. Michael Maher; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992] p. 79). (The translation in Targum Neofiti, another Palestinian Targum, is similar.)

The Targum to Song of Solomon is even more remarkable in the way in which it assimilates the text to its general understanding that the book should be interpreted as a historical allegory. Thus, its "translation" of 1.2, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine," reads: "Solomon the prophet said: 'Blessed be the name of God who gave us the law via Moses the scribe, a law inscribed on two tablets of stone, and six orders of the Mishnah and the Talmud by oral tradition, and spoke to us face to face as a man kisses his companion, from the abundance of the love with which he loved us, more than the seventy nations'" (Marvin Pope, *Song of Songs* [*Anchor Bible;* New York: Doubleday, 1977] p. 299). A similar, very expansionistic translation of Genesis may also be seen in the much earlier Aramaic Genesis Apocryphon, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls; for example, it fills in the laconic biblical notice of Sarah's beauty with a long description of her attractive attributes.

PESHARIM

The type of rabbinic commentary that typically separates the biblical text from its interpretation did not originate with the rabbis, but shows much continuity with one form of postbiblical interpretation seen in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This genre is called Pesher literature; the name of the genre, "Pesher," derives from the word it frequently uses, which means "actualized interpretation." Pesher literature is distinct, however, from rabbinic literature (though not from the type of Jewish interpretation evidenced in much of the New Testament) in that it typically applies (mostly prophetic) texts to the author's current situation with the assumption that the biblical text, though written long ago, refers to the later author's time period. For example, Pesher Habakkuk quotes (in a slightly different form than the standard

Hebrew text) the words of the seventh-century prophet Habakkuk (2.15), "Alas for you who make your neighbors drink, pouring out your wrath until they are drunk, in order to gaze on their nakedness," and then continues: "Its interpretation concerns the Wicked Priest who pursued the Teacher of Righteousness [the leader of the Qumran community] to consume him with the ferocity of his anger in the place of his banishment, in festival time, during the day of Atonement. He paraded in front of them, to consume them and make them fall on the day of fasting, the sabbath of their rest (trans. Florentino García Martínez and Elbert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* [Leiden: Brill, 1977], vol. 1, pp. 19,21). After quoting a section of the biblical text, it updates it by applying it to its own time period.

An example of (proto)rabbinic interpretation of legal material already found in this pre-rabbinic Qumran community is illustrated by the following interpretation from the Damascus Covenant, another key text of the Qumran community: "No one should do work on the sixth day, from the moment when the sun's disc is at a distance of its diameter from the gate [= the horizon], for this is what it says [Deut 5.12], 'Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy'" (CD X.15) (*Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, pp. 567, 569). This legal text is quoting the Decalogue from Deuteronomy, and is interpreting the first word, *shamor*, "observe," in a more literal sense as "guard"; it continues by suggesting that the way in which one guards the sabbath day is by ceasing from work a bit before the sabbath actually begins, the time when the sun is one diameter away from setting. This would, of course, help to prevent violation of the sabbath, which, according to the Bible, is a capital offense. Yet such stringent observance is never actually required by the biblical text; rather, it is "found" in the text by using (only mildly) creative philology on the Hebrew word *shamor*, "observe," which is understood as "guard." The same regulation is found in rabbinic literature, though it is derived differently.

CREATIVE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Pre-rabbinic texts are also useful in terms of tracing the notion of "creative historiography" from the late biblical through the early rabbinic periods. *Jubilees*, a pseudepigraphic book written in the second century BCE, at about the same time as Daniel, is filled with examples of creative historiography. For example, in retelling the creation story, *Jubilees* supplements the biblical text, noting among other additions that angels are fashioned on the first day of creation. Law is of paramount importance for this author, and he therefore retrojects many legal obligations from Exodus-Deuteronomy into his retelling of the book of Genesis, so that Genesis would not be merely a narrative work. (This shows, incidentally, that the emphasis on "law" was not a rabbinic or Pharisaic innovation.) For example, he inserts laws from outside of Genesis into the sabbath narrative of Genesis 2.2–3 (see *Jub.* 2.26–30). In addition, because the Torah was canonical for the author of *Jubilees*, the two different creation stories, which critical scholars see as separate (Gen 1.1–2.4a; 2.4b–3.24), are read canonically as a single story by one divine author. As a result, the second (Yahwistic) story is used to fill in the details of the more laconic first (Priestly) story; for example, Eve, only created in the second story, becomes the woman created in the first (*Jub.* 3.8). There is nothing remarkable about this development: once the Bible is read canonically and the existence of sources forgotten, it becomes natural to interpret the stories in this fashion.

Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century CE, also offers many examples of creative historiography in his *Jewish Antiquities*. He often remolds biblical characters so that they better fit the ideals of his Greco-Roman audience. He also restructures biblical texts, so that problems inherent in the text as it is currently ordered are resolved. For example, Gen 10 contains a genealogical description of the nations of the world that recounts their dispersion. Yet this is followed by the Tower of Babel story, which begins with the geographical unity of humanity. In his retelling of the Torah, Josephus brilliantly solves this problem by reversing the order of these chapters, putting the genealogies after the story of the Tower of Babel. This is an early example of what would later become a fundamental principle of Jewish interpretation, that the narrative order of the biblical text does not necessarily represent the chronological order of the events it is depicting.

Jubilees and Josephus are also important because they offer explicit justifications for their radical rewriting of earlier traditions. *Jubilees* presents itself as revealed to Moses on Sinai with the help of a mediating angel. Josephus notes in the introduction to *Antiquities*: "The precise details of our Scripture records will, then, be set forth, each in its place, as my narrative proceeds, that being the procedure that I have promised to follow throughout this work, neither adding nor omitting anything" (Josephus, *Ant., Proem 3* trans. Henry St. John Thackeray [Loeb Classical Library 242; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967] p. 9). If these two ideas may be combined, we have much of the basis for the rabbinic interpretation of the Bible, which understood itself as (1) the legitimate (oral) law revealed to Moses on Sinai, which was passed down from generation to generation; and (2) the authoritative law, which might differ from the literal phraseology of the biblical text, but is, in reality, "neither adding nor omitting anything."

Jubilees, Josephus, the Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scrolls were not the only pre-rabbinic interpreters of the Bible. The prolific interpretations of Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE–ca. 50 CE) are characterized by his allegorical understanding of both biblical narrative and law; this tendency is later followed by Paul, who was Jewish. This may be seen as an additional form of creative historiography. Such radicalizing allegorization played a minimal role in later rabbinic texts, in part as a reaction against the early Christian allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament. But Jewish allegorical interpretation of the laws and narratives of the Bible would reemerge in the Middle Ages. In contrast to Christian allegory, Jewish allegorical interpretations of laws never replaced keeping the law, but complemented that observance by referring to the law's deeper meaning.

RABBINIC INTERPRETATION

There is a final, crucial assumption of the classical rabbinic world, which is best represented by the Mishnah (codified ca. 200 CE), the Babylonian Talmud (ca. 500), and the slightly earlier Jerusalem Talmud, as well as the various *Midrashim* (commentary or homily collections) from these periods: the Bible is divine speech, and as such should not be limited to the normal rules of human speech. The interpretation of Jer 25.11 in Dan 9 (see p. 1858) already partakes in this idea. It was likely fostered already by the creation from various sources of a "unified" Torah. How else but through the assumption that divine speech is fundamentally different from human speech can we explain, for example, why the two versions of the Decalogue (Ex 20, Deut 5) are different? God, and only God, can speak two things simultaneously! How else can we explain the fact that there "seems" to be a contradiction between various texts concerning slavery, about whether a Hebrew slave may remain a slave forever, or must be released at the jubilee (see next column). Obviously, this apparent contradiction must be reconciled by creative reinterpretation, based on the assumption that God does not use words in the same way we do.

The rabbis, in expressing this assumption, typically insisted that there is a superconcentration of meaning in the Bible as divine word. This meant for them that it cannot be interpreted as a "normal" text, which might have a stable meaning; rather, it has seventy (an indeterminate, but large, number of) "faces" or meanings. The rabbis also compare interpretation to striking a rock with a hammer: many different types of pieces, each of which is a legitimate part of the whole, are broken off. Also, as divine speech superendowed with meaning, it contains no extra words, nor, for some, not even extra letters—all is significant as the word of God.

Not all rabbis subscribed to these views to the same degree, and it is possible to isolate a group who saw the Bible as composed in more normal language. As a result, a tension developed that continued throughout later Jewish interpretation between the desire to take the text at its face value and the desire to see it as overendowed with meaning. Yet all agreed that as a divine text, the Bible should not be interpreted just like any other text. This is true whether the rabbinic comments are found in a Midrash (Midrashim, pl.), where they are organized around a particular text, or whether they are found in the Talmud and thus are organized (more or less) according to legal topics.

A particular interest of classical rabbinic interpretation was reconciling what critical biblical scholars would consider divergent legal traditions found in the Torah, and expanding the Torah through creative interpretation. This expansion allowed ambiguities to be clarified and the text to be contemporized despite its antiquity For example, a Midrash to Ex 21.6, which states that the Hebrew slave under some circumstances shall stay with his master "for life," is glossed "until the jubilee year." The Midrash is almost forced into this reading, using creative philology, because Lev 25.40 says: "They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee." The Torah, as the unified word of God, cannot contain different ideas of when a slave is released, so the "forever" of Ex 21.6 must really mean until the jubilee. Again, though this interpretation might seem forced to us, it is almost natural within the framework of a society that reads the Torah as a unified, divine work.

As noted earlier, the rabbis also often extend and clarify biblical laws. Thus, the biblical text states that "work" is prohibited on the sabbath day, and anyone who works has committed a capital offense (e.g., Ex 31.14–15). But what is work? The problem is the same as that discussed earlier in reference to the festival of booths, where Lev 23.40 says that you must "take" branches of various trees but does not explicitly say what should be done with them (see p. 180). In the case of the branches, the context was used to provide the answer, and thus Neh 8.15 suggested that the branches should be taken to build booths, most likely based on the fact that the booth legislation (Lev 23.42) immediately follows the branch legislation. Similarly, Ex 31.12–17, which concerns the general sabbath prohibition, is found immediately after the instruction to construct the tabernacle; the classical rabbis adduced from this juxtaposition that "work" is any type of labor involved with the construction of the tabernacle, thereby creating thirty-nine categories of prohibited work. This is a reasonable, though not fully compelling, interpretation, which takes the text in its final form very seriously, where the juxtaposition of adjacent units yields meaning.

The vast literature of the classical rabbinic period is replete with examples of creative historiography, many of which are based on what some might consider overreading the biblical text; but of course it is impossible to read a divine text too carefully. For example, the binding of Isaac opens with the phrase, "After these things God tested Abraham" (Gen 22.1). Most modern critical commentators see the phrase "After these things" as a type of filler, or paragraph marker, but this was an unlikely choice within the rabbinic mindset. This created a problem, since Gen 22 is not obviously related to the previous chapter. Thus, "these things" must be discovered through creative historiography. As is typical, there is no single rabbinic answer to what "these things" were. Various Midrashim, preserved both in Midrashic collections like Genesis Rabbah and in the Babylonian Talmud, create a dialogue between Isaac and Ishmael in which Ishmael boasts that he endured the pain of circumcision at the age of thirteen (Gen 17.25), while Isaac was circumcised at eight days; Isaac counters by saying that Ishmael just gave a single organ to God, whereas he, Isaac, is willing to give all of his organs to God. It is, according to this view, "after these things," namely after Isaac expressed his willingness to be sacrificed, that God tested Abraham. Another view creates a dialogue between God and Satan, in which God says that Abraham would even be willing to sacrifice his son. This brings Genesis closer to the dialogue between God and the Satan (adversary) in Job 1–2; indeed, it is common for the rabbis to use one canonical story to fully explore the meaning of another based on their belief that the entire Hebrew Bible is a unified whole. These two different expansions of Gen 22.1 are not merely silly, nor do they simply "fill in" the details lacking in the original story; they both help explain the major problem of the text: How could a good God make such a request of Abraham?

Although the Midrashic inclination was deeply attuned to the text and its connection to the life of the community, it accomplished these goals with some violence to the context of the text. Thus, many rabbinic interpretations concentrate on the meaning of the individual word and the significance of the single letter (for example, the comments in the Midrash Genesis Rabbah, which explain why the Bible opened with a "*bet*" (*Bereshit*), the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet), so that the broader contextual story is often lost. The eleventh century saw a reaction against this type of interpretation in the development of the *peshat* school of interpretation.

MEDIEVAL COMMENTATORS

Beginning in the ninth century, medieval Jewish biblical commentary is often characterized by peshat, a notoriously difficult term to define, which often changes meaning depending on the commentator involved. For Rabbi Solomon (Heb *Shelomoh*) son of Isaac, or Rashi, who lived in France from 1040 to 1105, *peshat* (or more precisely, the related phrase he preferred: *peshuto shel miqra*, the *peshat* of the biblical text) meant "contextual meaning." Rashi's commentary, covering almost the entire Hebrew Bible, is a type of medieval *Reader's Digest* of classical rabbinic interpretation. Little in Rashi is original; his brilliance, and extreme popularity (Rashi on the Torah was the first Hebrew book printed, before the Torah itself!) lay in his ability to select and rework rabbinic traditions, largely ignoring many that overly strained the context of the text and those which used the text as a type of peg on which to hang various ideas that are not at all connected to the context. More than that, the traditional Midrashim were so atomistic and filled with diverse opinions that it is almost always impossible to answer a simple question of how the Midrash understood the text. Rashi, through his judicious selection process, chose Midrashim that were relatively close to the text and were mutually reinforcing. Thus, this created a somewhat consistent reading of the larger unit. The commentary of Rashi, especially on the Torah, is broadly considered one of the most important postbiblical Jewish texts; it profoundly influenced Jewish understanding of the Bible, especially in European communities, as well as that of medieval Christians, for whom Rashi epitomized Jewish exegesis.

The method of *peshat* was taken one step further by Rashi's son-in-law, Rabbi Samuel (Heb *Shmuel*) son of Meir, or Rashbam (1080–1174), who understood *peshat* in a more radical sense as the simple meaning of the text. Rashbam, though a leading scholar of Jewish law, felt free to offer interpretations of the text in his commentary on the Torah that disagreed with rabbinic law. For example, in contrast to his father-in-law who, following the rabbinic tradition, interprets the words "for life" concerning the Hebrew slave in Ex 21.6 as until the jubilee year, Rashbam glosses "according to the *peshat*, all the days of his life." It remains unclear how Rashbam would have reconciled this *peshat* with what he understood to be the requirements of rabbinic law. In any case, the type of very literal, non-Midrashic way of reading the text, which characterized Rashbam, found new followers.

Rashbam is also noteworthy for the way in which some of his comments are clearly the product of a reaction against Christians, especially the persecution of Jews during the Crusades. Though some mild anti-Christian polemic is found in Rashi, the Crusades, which marked a significant change in the status of the Jews in medieval Europe, would leave a deep impact on many later commentators. Nevertheless, Jewish commentary should not be seen as predominantly reactive.

Much of the rest of medieval Jewish interpretation may be understood within the context provided above, as a continuum on which the classical atomistic Midrashim and the search for *peshat* existed as opposite poles. Several additional influences are noteworthy. Especially in countries where Arabic was spoken, a new serious study of the Hebrew language was begun, likely in an effort to counter the Muslim claim that the Arabic of the Koran is the most beautiful language. The best-known scholars in the Arab orbit include Sa'adya (882–942) in Babylon and Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164) in Spain and elsewhere; their commentaries were more philological in nature, exploring the meaning of grammatical forms and lexical terms. The early modern thinker Spinoza offers a picture of ibn Ezra as a medieval radical. In reality, despite some atypical positions that include doubting the Mosaic origin of some verses in the Torah and the suggestion that Isa 40–66, what scholars now call Second and Third Isaiah, are not by the same author as chs 1–39, ibn Ezra was traditional in his outlook and deeply philological in his perspective. Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak), who lived in Provence from 1160 to 1235, systematized many of these interpretations, and his understanding of biblical grammar was deeply appreciated by the later Christian Hebraists, and continues to have a major influence on the scientific study of Hebrew. More than any other medieval exegete, Radak also showed a deep interest in what would later be called textual criticism, namely deciding what the correct text of the Bible was, and many of his views in this area are remarkably modern.

The world of premodern interpretation is, of course, much richer than indicated here. It included a very significant strain of mystical interpretation, exemplified in the Zohar (late thirteenth century), and in the commentary of Nachmanides, Rabbi Moses son of Nachman (active in the thirteenth century). Philosophical interpretations also developed; most notable are those found in *The Guide to the Perplexed* by Maimonides (1135–1204). With the Renaissance, Jewish scholars were influenced by the new science; this is especially seen in the extremely lengthy commentary by Don Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508), who also synthesizes and to an extent harmonizes the many commentators of all types and from various geographical locations who preceded him.

Postbiblical Jewish exegesis does not neatly divide into the schools through which medieval Christian interpretation is often defined, and is essentially different from much of the work of its Christian counterparts. Part of this is because they were studying different works: the Hebrew Bible studied alone, or in relation to rabbinic traditions, is significantly different from the Old Testament as part of a larger Bible including the New Testament. Each community also studied the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament in different languages; only the Jewish community studied it in its original language, allowing interpretations based on close engagement with Hebrew to develop. The allegorical and especially the typological methods, which had a very significant role in Christian interpretation, played a much less weighty role in Jewish interpretation.

Despite these differences, which are very significant, most premodern Jewish and Christian interpretation shares a set of basic assumptions that make them fundamentally premodern. These include the idea that the Bible is an authoritative canonical work, which is revealed divine speech, and, as such, must be interpreted in a special way. Though set in history, it is in a sense timeless, speaking to every generation and to every individual. Although several medieval interpreters cast some small doubts on one aspect or another of these premises of interpretation, only in the seventeenth century would these shared assumptions begin to erode, paving the path for the slow movement from premodern to modern biblical interpretation.

Marc Z. Brettler

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE
CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION IN THE PREMODERN ERA

As the essay, "New Testament interprets the Jewish Scriptures" (p. 1859) indicates, Christian interpretation of scripture begins in the New Testament. The New Testament writers developed two of the interpretive approaches that remained central to Christian biblical interpretation until the rise of modern historical criticism: (1) a Christocentric focus, that is, a tendency to interpret Hebrew Bible texts, especially prophetic texts and the Psalms, as referring to Christ; and (2) typology, the recognition of a person or event in the Hebrew Bible as a type or figure of Christ or Christian salvation. A third approach, allegory, is also present in rudimentary form.

In order to understand the development of early Christian interpretation, it is important to consider the contexts within which and the purposes for which Christians interpreted the scriptures. First, teaching and pastoral care of Christian communities was one important focus, and much early interpretation occurs in the context of sermons and pastoral letters (e.g., the letters of Ignatius [ca. 35–ca.107 CE] and the homilies of Melito [d. ca. 190]). Second, missionary activity and Christian apologetics (the defense of Christianity before pagan detractors) provided a quite different context. In this situation the biblical writings had to be interpreted to an audience that often found these texts crude and out of keeping with the intellectual tastes of Greek-speaking culture. This fostered a strong impetus to interpret the scriptures in a way that would enhance their intellectual respectability. For this purpose Christian apologists used the tradition of allegorical interpretation that had been developed within Greek philosophical circles as a means of interpreting Homer and the other early Greek poets. Even before the rise of Christianity, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE–42 CE) had undertaken a detailed nonliteral interpretation of Jewish scriptures, including both typological and allegorical exegesis. Philo's influence upon the Alexandrian school of Christian interpreters was profound.

A third context for interpretation emerged from Christianity's attempts to define itself in comparison to Judaism. Since both religions laid claim to the same body of scripture, Christian interpretation addressed itself to the competing interpretations made by Judaism and Christianity. The harshly polemical *Epistle of Barnabas* (early second century) rejects the claims of Judaism to the covenant and so does not even begin to struggle with the interpretive problem that engages other Christian writers of the early centuries, the problem of the nature of the relationship between the old and new covenants, and the scriptures that witness to them. Much richer and more reflective is *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* by Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165). The work takes the form of a long conversation between Justin and Trypho, a learned Jew, each of whom tries to persuade the other of the superiority of his claims and the interpretation of the scriptures upon which they are based. Justin attempts to establish a unity for the Old and New Testaments by arguing that the eternal Logos, fully revealed as Christ in the New Testament, was already the revealer of God's will to the prophets. Though the old covenant was valid, Justin claims that the Jewish scriptures themselves foresee its being superseded by a new covenant. Justin's approach, which anticipates the classic Christian understanding of the Old Testament, exhibits a historical perspective absent from Barnabas, but it is equally Christocentric.

The fourth context for early Christian interpretation was provided by disputes among Christians. For early Christian communities, two questions above all others exercised exegetical and theological thought: how does Jesus relate to God, and subsequently, how does Jesus's relationship to God affect his status as a human being? Since many biblical texts seem to present quite different answers to these questions, interpreters pored over any hint at a theological solution. The debate surrounding the former question, termed the "Trinitarian controversy," centered on analyzing and systematizing texts that mention God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit at the same time, such as Jesus's baptism in Mk 1.10–11, for instance, and in triadic formulations such as in 2 Cor 13.13 and Mt 28.19. Justin Martyr argued that, according to biblical texts, Jesus was "another God and Lord," thus sacrificing clear monotheism to preserve Jesus's divinity. By contrast, monarchianists such as Callistus (d. ca. 222) and adoptionists such as Theodotus of Byzantium (late second century) emphasized biblical texts that supposedly revealed Jesus's humanity in order to protect monotheism.

For the most part, early Christian theologians worked with a clear assumption of a unified and coherent witness of the entire canon of scripture as well as an expectation that exegesis results in necessarily logical and

systematic doctrine. These hermeneutical guidelines, inherited in part from Jewish sources, enabled early Christian exegetes to resolve the various discrepancies found in the disparate texts within and between both Old and New Testaments. For example, early Christians recognized that a coherent doctrine of God and a definitively unambiguous statement of Jesus's relationship to God are not found in the Bible. Thus, the Bible's various ways of presenting God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit were reconciled by formulations hammered out by the councils of Nicaea (325 CE), Constantinople (381 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE). From its very beginnings, Christian biblical interpretation thus became the driving force of theological reflection throughout the history of Christianity.

Although Christian theological disputes often focused upon biblical interpretation, other arguments focused on the extent of scripture itself. One challenge was posed by Marcion (mid-second century), who rejected the Hebrew Bible entirely, claiming it was the revelation of a lesser god, and accepted only the Gospel of Luke and ten Pauline epistles as the authentic "Gospel and apostle." Even these texts, he insisted, were corrupted by interpolations. To argue his case, Marcion invoked the principles of text criticism developed for the study of Greek poets. He also argued for a literal rather than an allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament (especially Genesis) in his attempts to discredit it as a crude and offensive book. Even more than the debate with Judaism, Marcion's claims required the church to articulate clearly its understanding of the revelatory significance of the Old Testament and its relationship to the New. A further challenge was posed by various Gnostic Christians. In contrast to Marcion, they engaged in highly developed forms of allegorical and typological interpretation of the Old Testament, which appealed strongly to one type of Hellenistic intellectualism.

Some of the liveliest of early Christian writings are those composed to refute Marcion and the Gnostics. The most notable is *Against Heresies* (*Adv. Haer.*) by Irenaeus (ca. 130–ca. 200). Irenaeus argued for the validity of the revelation of God in the Old Testament and its law but also claimed that in the New Testament God is revealed in a new way. He demonstrated the unity of the scriptures by means of typology, so that the Old Testament serves as a witness to the New. Irenaeus also attacked the interpretive methods of his Gnostic opponents, especially the Ptolemaic Gnostics, objecting that they ignored the context of passages, overlooking the clear and obvious in favor of the obscure, and reading into the text their fanciful theories. Significantly, Irenaeus not only argued on the basis of interpretive principles belonging to ancient literary and rhetorical theory but also invoked what comes to be known as "the rule of faith." As a defense against an anarchy of interpretation, Irenaeus claimed that a standard of correct interpretation has been preserved in those churches that stand in the apostolic succession. Interpretation that differs from that of the apostolic churches cannot be deemed true.

The argument for the authoritative interpretation of the church was definitively established by Tertullian (ca. 160–ca. 225) in the early third century in *The Prescription against Heretics* (*De praescriptione haereticorum*). In making orthodoxy the norm for the interpretation of scripture, Tertullian may have thought that he was establishing a narrow and simple standard. But even as the threat from heretical interpretation receded, philosophically oriented Christian interpreters, such as Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254) and Augustine (354–430), developed more profound and supple understandings of the nature of interpretation and the relation of scripture to orthodox theology.

Questions also arose concerning the definitive and authoritative version of the biblical texts. In the second century, some theologians worried about the conflicting accounts of the four canonical gospels; one popular solution was the creation of Gospel harmonies. For example, Tatian's *Diatesseron* (ca. 150) was a second-century synthesis of the four canonical gospels so as to present one unified story. While Tatian's harmony was very popular in the East through the fifth century, other early Christian exegetes such as Irenaeus urged Christians to hold to all four canonical gospels. Retaining the separate works requires exegetical energy, since the conflicts must be explained in some way, but the tradition of four separate gospels continues to this day.

Another conflict developed concerning the textual source from which one should translate the Bible. Until the last decades of the fourth century, most early Christian interpreters assumed the priority of the Greek Septuagint and its derivative translations. When Jerome moved to Palestine about 390 CE, he decided to retranslate his Latin version of the Old Testament from the Hebrew text instead of the Greek, reasoning that the Hebrew text was closer to the original version, and thus was more authoritative. In response, Augustine confronted him with a series of letters imploring him to retain the Greek text as his source, since switching texts could cause great theological confusion, disrupt the seeming prophetic continuity of Old and New Testaments, and perhaps cause a schism between Greeks and Latins within the Church. Jerome retained his view that his translation gained access to the "Hebrew Truth" (Latin *Hebraica veritas*) and eventually his new version, known as the "Vulgate," rose to prominence in the Latin West. Though Jerome often relied upon the

Greek version of traditionally Christological texts in his new, and ostensibly Hebrew-based, translation (cf. Isa 7 and Job 19.25–27), the Vulgate required that at least nominal deference be paid to the Hebrew text as the "true" text of the Hebrew Bible.

In addition to looking at early Christian biblical interpretation in the light of various contexts for interpretation, one should also take into account the different modes of interpretation that existed during the early Common Era. As noted earlier, the sophisticated intellectual environment of Alexandria was already home to a lively tradition of allegorical exegesis before the emergence of Christianity. Thus it was not surprising that Christians would adapt this method of interpretation to their scriptures. Among the most eminent of the Alexandrian exegetes were Clement (ca. 150–ca. 215) and Origen. Allegorical interpretation reads a text as if the narrative incidents, characters, and other elements of its literal meaning are all intended to convey to the reader, by means of an extended comparison, another level of meaning entirely, usually a moral or spiritual one. Although many different types of interpretation may be called allegorical, all share a conviction that the authoritative text being interpreted has a deeper meaning than what appears on the surface, the literal reading. Thus allegory assumes that a text has multiple meanings, though interpreters may differ as to their worth. (Origen, for example, distinguished among literal, moral, and spiritual meanings.) Typically, allegorical interpretation shows little interest in meanings that are historically specific, preferring those that disclose timeless truths. Allegory is often invoked as an interpretive method when an ancient text that is undeniably authoritative has come to seem alien to the cultural sensitivities, moral standards, or understandings of God of a later age. Since the revered text must contain truth (which is often unconsciously equated with the highest and best values of the interpreter's own time), a method must be employed that will allow those truths to be found in the text. In this manner the Christian allegorists of the Alexandrian school interpreted those aspects of the scriptures that seemed morally offensive, obscure, or simply of little literal interest. Thus Origen could interpret the narrative of the Exodus as an allegory of the journey of the soul as it leaves the sensual world (Egypt) and journeys toward the promised land of blessedness (Canaan). Origen was among the most sophisticated of the allegorists. Moreover, he was one of the first Christians to compose what can properly be called a commentary on a biblical book, a mode of interpretation that flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Despite the prestige that allegorical exegesis enjoyed in some circles, it was also the subject of strong criticism. In part, it attracted suspicion because it was the method of interpretation favored by Gnostics. But allegory was also vulnerable to the charge that it was arbitrary and obscure. Some of the strongest critiques of the allegorical method came from exegetes associated with the Syrian city of Antioch. Like Alexandria, Antioch was also heir to a long tradition of Hellenistic scholarship. But Antioch was influenced more by Aristotelian traditions and by Jewish rabbinic exegesis. Thus, even though the Antiochene interpreters sought a spiritual meaning in the text, they also emphasized a grasp of the historical context within which the texts were written, as well as an appreciation of the literal sense of the text. Diodore of Tarsus (d. ca. 390), for example, sought to arrange the Psalms in historical sequence, using information found internally and in their titles. Similarly, he understood the Song of Songs as love poetry written by Solomon for the queen of Sheba.

The most radical and most creative interpreter of the school of Antioch was Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350–428). Theodore challenged the inspired character of several books of the canon, including Job, Song of Songs, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah, claiming that they reflected only human wisdom and learning. Unfortunately, the Second Council of Constantinople, in 553, ordered his exegetical works to be burned, so his work is not known in detail. At times suspicion surrounded Antiochene exegesis because several church leaders judged heretical, most notably Nestorius (d. ca. 451), were associated with it. Despite opposition to the more radical interpreters, however, many of the insights and understandings of the Antiochene approach were popularized by the influential sermon collections of the moderate John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) and by the manuals of biblical interpretation written by Adrian (425) and Junilius Africanus (550).

The figurative and literal modes of interpretation were not mutually exclusive, and many interpreters employed both methods. Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate, used allegory early in his career but increasingly preferred a more literal interpretive method. Even so, he never entirely abandoned allegory in his writings. Similarly, Augustine was troubled by the Manichean use of a literal-historical approach to discredit the Jewish scriptures on the grounds that they contained immoralities. He was unable to embrace Christianity until he saw how the allegorical method could provide a spiritual interpretation for such troubling passages. Like Jerome, however, Augustine moved beyond allegory to a more nuanced position that recognized the place of allegory but required the interpreter to distinguish between passages that can be understood in a literal interpretation and those requiring a figurative one. Moreover, all interpretation

must be guided by the rule of faith and the law of love: "If it seems to anyone that he has understood the divine scriptures, or any part of them, in such a way that by that understanding he does not build up that double love of God and neighbor, he has not yet understood" (*On Christian Teaching*, 1.36.40; cf. Mt 22.35–40 par.).

Examples of early Christian biblical interpretation are also evident well beyond the writings of professional theological exegetes. From the production of visual art, liturgy, and music to the realms of ethics, politics, and legal theory, biblical interpretation in some sense undergirded, was filtered through, and occurred within almost every cultural practice of the Christian movement from its inception until the early modern period. For example, early Christian visual art generally depicts biblical narratives, characters, and themes, and as such reflects the basic typological and Christological patterns explored by biblical exegetes. While Christian images often reveal common interpretive motifs, at times fresh exegetical thought emerges from creative iconographic juxtapositions. It is clear that Christians employed images exegetically as early as the second century, when Clement of Alexandria exhorted Christians to choose pagan iconographies carefully, presumably in order to attribute biblical themes to the generic motifs. In one classic example, the pagan iconography of the "Good Shepherd" provided an easily recognizable but also inconspicuous mode of presenting the Johannine theme of Christ as the Good Shepherd. Around the year 200 CE, Christians in Rome developed the earliest known identifiably Christian art as they began to paint the walls of their newly acquired catacombs. Generally, they juxtaposed elements from a limited catalogue of pagan images, scenes from the Old Testament, and imagery derived from the New Testament. A third-century mosaic in the necropolis underneath St. Peter's Basilica in Rome depicts a beardless Christ with a cross-nimbus imaged as Helios, the sun god, driving a chariot surrounded by grape vines. Surrounding this figure are an image of a shepherd with a sheep around his neck, an image of Jonah emerging from the belly of the fish, an image of fish and fishing lures, and another image of Christ telling Peter to "fish for people" (Mt 4.19). Together, these images offer a complex network of biblical exegesis, theology, and pastoral care. The pagan theme of the sun-chariot's daily ascent from the realm of darkness at daybreak recalls Christ's resurrection and ascension, as does Jonah's deliverance from the fish's belly. The good shepherd invokes Christ's mission to find and care for the lost, while the vines of Dionysius are implicitly reinterpreted as the vine of Christ (Jn 15). In the funerary context of the catacomb, this program of images offers hope for the deceased in the final resurrection by depicting biblical themes, characters, and narrative scenes. While extant images from the first few centuries of the Christian era are rare, Christian art quickly became widespread after the imperial sponsorship of Christianity by Constantine the Great in the fourth century.

Similarly, early Christian liturgy relied upon biblical exegesis for the production and justification of its practices while offering interpretations of the Bible within its rites. By the second century, there are well-established manuals for church leadership and liturgy, such as the Syrian Didache; its baptismal liturgy, for example, is a pastiche of biblical texts designed to interpret, legitimate, and actualize the baptismal act. Like the ubiquitous Christian act of writing hymns, liturgy has also been an important space for reenacting and recontextualizing biblical texts, thus offering new meanings for various communities.

THE MIDDLE AGES

During the early Middle Ages scholars of the Bible not only preserved and transmitted the understandings of earlier centuries but also developed their own. In the West most interpreters were no longer able to read Greek, the Irish scholar John Scotus Erigena (ca. 810–ca. 877) being a noteworthy exception. Moreover, there was no significant interchange with Jewish interpreters, such as had been possible at Antioch and Alexandria and in the Holy Land. The works of Jerome, Augustine, and other patristic writers, however, were widely studied. As in earlier centuries, both literal and allegorical exegesis was practiced. Most commonly, four senses of scripture were recognized: the literal or historical, the allegorical, the anagogical (a mystical sense signifying heaven, the afterlife, or communion with God), and the moral or tropological. Thus "Jerusalem" could signify, literally, the historical city; allegorically, the church; anagogically, the heavenly city; and morally, the human soul. The influence of this four-level interpretive method extended beyond scriptural interpretation; most notably, Dante deliberately constructed his *Divine Comedy* in order to allow, as far as possible, all four levels of interpretation to be applied to it.

The primary institutional context for the study of the Bible in the early medieval period was the monastery. Among the early monastic scholars the most prominent was the Venerable Bede (ca. 673–725) in England, who composed commentaries and biblical aids as well as his influential *Ecclesiastical History*. An important impetus to the study of the Bible came from the religious and educational reforms sponsored by the Carolingian monarchs. Charlemagne (ca. 742–814) and his grand-

son Charles the Bald (d. 877) attracted the best scholars of the day, including Alcuin (ca. 735–804) and John Scotus Erigena (ca. 810–ca. 877), to supervise education at the palace and cathedral schools. The growth of such schools created a demand for resources, and the scholars of the Carolingian renaissance produced an impressive number of biblical manuscripts, annotations and aids to study, commentaries, and historical works, largely digests and compilations of glosses on the biblical text drawn from writings produced in late antiquity by the Latin fathers. The culmination of this type of scholarship was the production of the *Glossa ordinaria*, compiled by Anselm of Laon (d. 1117) in collaboration with other scholars.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw the beginning of a more creative phase of medieval biblical scholarship, located first in the cathedral schools and subsequently in the universities. One important innovation was the division of the biblical books into chapters, first developed in England by Stephen Langton (d. 1228). (The numbering of the verses, or smaller units within the chapters by both Jewish and Christian scholars , followed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.) This system was used in another innovation, the production of concordances or alphabetical indexes of words in the Bible, the most influential of which was that prepared by the Dominicans of St. Jacques in Paris, under the supervision of Hugo of St. Cher (ca. 1195–1263). Perhaps the most important of the cathedral schools was that of the Abbey of St. Victor, also in Paris, where a series of influential scholars taught during the twelfth century. The school, which was known for the rigor of study under the direction of its founder, Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1142), fostered both literal and allegorical (or mystical) exegesis. Later teachers tended to emphasize one or the other, Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) developing allegorical interpretation, and Andrew of St. Victor (d. 1175) emphasizing the careful investigation of the literal and historical sense. Significantly, Andrew knew Hebrew and was influenced by Jewish scholars and traditions of Jewish exegesis. During the following centuries, an appreciation of the importance of such knowledge became more common among Christian exegetes of the Bible. Although the presence of significant Jewish communities in the major medieval cities made the study of Hebrew and Jewish exegesis somewhat more accessible, such knowledge was rare among Christian biblical scholars until the Renaissance. Greek was still relatively little known at this time, although Robert Grosseteste (ca. 1175–1253) translated several works, including the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, from Greek into Latin.

Along with the development of important schools in the twelfth century, there was also a shift in the form in which biblical study was presented. In contrast to the earlier compendia of glosses, which were organized as running comments on the text of the Bible itself, in the twelfth century a different form of commentary developed, one that was organized according to theological topics and issues. This change in literary form both signaled and facilitated a closer relationship between the study of scripture and the development of theological doctrine. The most significant of these works, the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard (ca. 1100–1160), eventually became the standard theological textbook during the Middle Ages.

The establishment of universities in the thirteenth century marks an important shift in the social location of biblical study. Biblical interpretation became more specialized and was drawn even more closely into dialogue with theology and philosophy. Although some scholars continued to engage in allegorical exegesis, both the prominence of Aristotelian thought in the universities and the emphasis on doctrinal theology pushed biblical interpretation more strongly in the direction of literal exegesis. Albertus Magnus (1193–1280) and especially Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274) were the most eminent of these Aristotelian-influenced scholastic theologians and biblical interpreters. The harvest of this form of literal biblical exegesis can best be appreciated in the *Postilla literalis* of Nicholas of Lyra (ca. 1270–1349), which covers the entire Bible. Lyra's knowledge not only of biblical Hebrew, but also of the commentaries of Rashi (1040–1105) and other Jewish scholars (see "Jewish Interpretation in the Premodern Era"), gives his work a linguistic and exegetical precision lacking in most other medieval commentaries.

THE RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

The emphasis on original languages and a respect for the role of reason in interpretation, which had already become influential in late medieval scholarship, became the hallmarks of the new humanistic learning of the Renaissance. These values, however, which had previously been invoked in the service of scholastic theology in the Middle Ages, led in some rather different directions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The scholar Erasmus (ca. 1466–1536) is something of a transitional figure. Though he used his incomparable humanistic knowledge to produce a new edition of the Greek New Testament and drew on classical Roman rhetorical traditions in his interpretation of Ecclesiastes, he also defended allegorical interpretation of scripture and had a high regard for scholastic theology, that of Thomas Aquinas in particular.

For the most part, the Christian humanist scholars did not set out to challenge the authority of the church. Yet sometimes the claims of reason brought them into conflict with church authority and traditions. In 1440 Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) published his *Declamation on the Donation of Constantine*, in which he used reason to argue that the so-called donation of Constantine, which had underwritten papal authority in Rome, was in fact a forgery. Similarly, he demonstrated that a letter supposedly written by Jesus to Abgar, king of Edessa, which had been considered genuine at least since the fourth century, was in fact spurious. His approach to such ancient documents, and to the New Testament itself in his other writings, anticipated the critical study of the Bible that was to develop in later centuries. The audience for such critical works on the text of the New Testament text was facilitated by the publication of several Greek grammars between 1495 and 1520.

Fueling the explosive growth in Renaissance scholarship was the new availability of texts and critical works made possible by the development of the printing press. Following the publication of Johannes Gutenberg's Latin Bible in 1454, a wide range of books became available, not only in Latin and vernacular languages but in Greek and Hebrew as well. During the early sixteenth century several polyglot Bibles were published, that is, Bibles in which Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts of the Bible were printed side by side to facilitate critical comparison.

The characteristic Renaissance interest in ancient languages and texts led some scholars, such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), and Guillaume Postel (ca. 1510–1581), to explore the esoteric traditions of Jewish kabbalistic mysticism. Postel even translated the *Bahir* and the *Zohar* into Latin. These Christian kabbalists drew together elements of Jewish mysticism, Neoplatonic philosophy, Christian theology, and the Renaissance interest in the occult into a spiritual synthesis, which, not surprisingly, was condemned by church authorities. Reuchlin, however, can be called the father of Christian Renaissance study of Hebrew. He published an influential Hebrew grammar, based on the work of the medieval Jewish Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak) (see "Jewish Interpretation in the Premodern Era," p. 1863), and other aids that facilitated the increasing interest in the study of Hebrew by some Christians. Reuchlin also played an important role in resisting some attempts by the church to suppress Jewish writings, including the Talmud.

With the Reformation, biblical interpretation increasingly took place within an intense debate about the role of scripture in relation to Christian faith. To a large extent, however, both the early Protestant reformers and the scholars who remained within the Catholic tradition, such as Erasmus, incorporated the new linguistic and philological training in their interpretation of the Bible. Though Martin Luther (1483–1546) was not the first to argue that the Bible is the ultimate authority in matters of doctrine, the Protestant movement is distinctive in insisting that the Bible is the sole foundation for faith, doctrine, and church practices. In their refutation of the Protestants, Catholic scholars also appealed to biblical exegesis in support of the authority of the church and the papacy. Thus in the sixteenth century biblical interpretation reflects both the rich legacy of Renaissance humanism's linguistic and philological knowledge and a context of highly charged theological argument.

Although Protestant biblical interpreters in general rejected allegory in favor of the literal-historical sense, their interpretation of the Hebrew Bible was usually Christological and typological. Luther, for example, attended both to the literal-historical sense and to the literal-prophetic sense of scripture (i.e., the typological meaning foreshadowed in the text). Thus, since David was considered to be a prophet, the Psalms referred not only to David's life and circumstances but also to Christ who was to come. Luther's writings also reflect both continuity and discontinuity with the medieval tradition in his treatment of the tropological or moral meaning of scripture. Traditionally, this concern had been with the way in which the text addressed the nature and practice of the virtue of love. For Luther, the moral meaning is that aspect of the text that has to do with the nurture of faith, that is, trust in God's promises. Other Protestants, however, such as Zwingli and Bucer, follow Erasmus in understanding the moral meaning of scripture as providing paradigms for human behavior.

The issue of the relation of the two testaments also provoked a variety of responses among Protestant interpreters. Given Luther's theological distinction between law and gospel, his interpretation tends to posit a significant degree of tension between the testaments. In contrast, many other Protestant theologians saw an essential continuity between the testaments. Henrich Bullinger (1504–75), for example, treated covenant as a hermeneutical principle that unifies the scriptures. Before the advent of Christ the sign of the covenant is circumcision; after the advent, baptism. But the covenant is one and the same, the New Testament only presenting it with greater clarity. The nature and extent of the canon of the Old Testament also became an issue of controversy between Protestants and the Roman Catholic Church. Like

Jerome before them, the Protestant reformers argued that the church's Old Testament canon should be that of the Hebrew scriptures, that is, without the Apocrypha. At the Council of Trent (1546), the Roman Catholic church reaffirmed the inspired nature of some of these books, which were termed "deuterocanonical." The term does not denote a difference in status from the "protocanonical" books but signifies that their canonical status was clarified at a second stage. (See the essay "The Canons of the Bible," p. 1840, and the introductions to individual books among the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books for more details on the canonical status of particular books and the development of the differing canons of the Old Testament among the various Christian communities.)

Concern for historical context and for an understanding of biblical rhetoric was also prominent in early Protestant interpretation. The biblical interpretation of John Calvin (1509–64), who had legal training, was influenced by Renaissance humanism's approach to clarifying ancient law by means of an appeal to the original historical contexts and the intentions of the authors. As Calvin observes in the dedicatory preface to his commentary on Romans, "almost [the commentator's] only task [is] to unfold the mind of the writer whom he has undertaken to expound." Calvin's interpretation thus tends to be contextual rather than atomistic and attends not only to history but also to the cultural institutions and background of biblical texts and to the rhetorical forms in which biblical language expresses itself. Indeed, disagreement over a proper understanding of biblical rhetoric lies at the heart of one of the most important doctrinal disputes within early Protestantism. Luther contended that the word "is" in the biblical phrase "this is my body" (Mt 26.26) is to be interpreted literally, whereas Zwingli (1484–1531) argued that its natural sense must be understood rhetorically as nonliteral, "this signifies my body." Out of that interpretive dispute emerged two different theological understandings of the Eucharist.

Although Protestant theology's emphasis on scripture as the sole foundation of belief provided the impetus for intense interpretive activity, Roman Catholic scholars also produced a large amount of biblical scholarship, some provoked by controversies with Protestants and some not. Cardinal Cajetan (Thomas de Vio, 1469–1534) shared several views with Protestants, such as the preference for the Hebrew text over the Vulgate, the advocacy of a shorter canon (excluding the Apocrypha), and a literal form of interpretation. But much of his exegetical work was devoted to demonstrating biblical support for papal authority and traditional church doctrine.

The spread of literacy, the increased availability of translations of the Bible into European languages, and the Protestant emphasis on the sufficiency of scripture alone contributed to the spread of biblical interpretation not only among those trained in theological institutions and having linguistic skills but also among laity with modest training or only a bare literacy. Thus in the sixteenth century and beyond one begins to see an increase in nonscholarly interpretations, often of a millenarian slant. Although Luther and the other reformers had believed that the Bible was so clear that all reasonable readers would agree as to its meaning, as matters actually developed the democratization of interpretation led to a bewildering array of readings of scripture, nowhere more so than in England in the late sixteenth century. From the plowmaker Matthew Hamond to the clerk John Hilton, those who claimed that the New Testament was "a mere fable" were seen as a threat to decency and social order. Later, during the English Revolution and the period of the Commonwealth (1640–60), biblical interpretation became a primary mode of political argument among partisans of all factions.

THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

At the same time that Protestant orthodoxy was developing a complex and minute exegesis of the Bible in support of various church doctrines, rationalists of diverse theological allegiances were developing ideas that many saw as challenging traditional understandings of the Bible. Both the new scientific discoveries and those resulting from the exploration of previously unknown lands raised questions about how this new knowledge was to be understood in relation to the Bible. The conflict between the astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) and the Roman Catholic Church over the heliocentric view of the universe is only the most famous example. The perplexing problem of how to account for the existence of nations and peoples not mentioned by the Bible prompted the French reformer Isaac de la Peyrère (ca. 1596–1676) to suggest that Adam was not in fact the first human but was only the ancestor of the Israelites (*The Pre-Adamites … By which are prov'd that the first men were created before Adam*). At about the same time, along with others the philosopher Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651) questioned Moses' authorship of the entire Pentateuch and in general emphasized the human mediation between God's word and the scriptures as they are available to be read in the Bible. The French Catholic scholar Richard Simon (1638–1712), often called the father of modern biblical scholarship, wrote a *Critical History of the Old Testament* (1678), in which he discussed the various versions of the Bible with respect to their relationship and authority.

Empirical in his approach, Simon also denied Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch and suggested that national archives preserved by prophets and scribes provided the sources from which the biblical books were composed long after the date of the events described in them. A similar rationalist criticism of the Bible was developed by the Jewish philosopher Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza (1632–77).

Moral criticism of the Bible, which had in part given rise to the allegorical method of interpretation in antiquity, was also practiced. Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), a French Protestant, published a highly influential historical and critical dictionary that contained an article on David widely perceived as scandalous, since it drew attention to the themes of adultery, murder, treachery, and injustice in the story of the "man after God's own heart" (see 1 Sam 13.14). Both moral and rational criticism of the Bible, including a critique of the claims to miraculous events, is found to varying degrees in the Deists of the eighteenth century, some of the more radical of whom challenged even the resurrection of Christ. In France, Voltaire (1694–1778) popularized some of the more extreme notions concerning the Bible and its claims, and a similar radical stance was taken by the American Thomas Paine (1736–1809).

Although discussion and interpretation of the Bible was conducted by intellectuals of every stripe, as well as at a more popular level, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw an enormous development of technical biblical scholarship, which was almost always related to theological and cultural debates. For instance, the controversy as to the date and origin of the vowel points in the traditional Hebrew text of the Bible was fueled largely by disputes concerning the inspiration of the Bible and the relative reliability of the Hebrew text versus the Septuagint and the Vulgate. The study of text criticism was significantly advanced by the publication of the London Polyglot (1655–57), which included Hebrew, Greek, Vulgate, Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Persian versions, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and several Targums, along with a wealth of critical notes and aids. A large number of critical and historically oriented commentaries were published during the seventeenth century.

The eighteenth century saw the initial development of modern criticism of the Bible. The theory of the composition of the Pentateuch from a number of still identifiable sources, an idea that has been central to modern criticism, was first advanced by French scholar Jean Astruc (1684–1766). Bishop and Oxford professor Robert Lowth (1710–87) in England developed an analysis of the nature of Hebrew poetry, which is still widely accepted. But it was German scholarship that systematized and gave a distinctively modern character to historical-critical study of the Bible. Two landmarks of this emergent discipline were J. D. Michaelis's (1717–91) introduction to the New Testament and J. G. Eichhorn's (1752–1827) introduction to the Old Testament.

Carol A. Newsom

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE FROM THE NINETEENTH TO THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURIES

THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD

The philosophical developments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had prompted an approach to the Bible that is often characterized as critical. It was critical not in a negative sense, although that sometimes seemed to be the case, but in the sense that it was free of presuppositions, especially those derived from either theology or tradition. To fully understand the Bible, scholars increasingly adopted an inductive approach, interpreting the Bible in an almost secular way, setting aside received views of its authority and authorship. This critical approach, an outgrowth of attitudes fostered during the Enlightenment, was very much in the spirit of the times and, like other legacies of the Enlightenment, was influenced by larger intellectual currents, such as Romanticism and the theory of evolution.

The overriding goal was historical: to determine what had actually taken place, and to recover the actual persons and events of the Bible as they had been preserved in the various stages of biblical tradition. The nature and development of these stages were to be understood through critical scholarship. This was the aim of "higher criticism," as distinguished from "lower," or textual criticism, and this higher criticism was essentially the historical-critical method.

With its many subdisciplines, the historical-critical method dominated biblical interpretation through the mid-twentieth century, and it continues to be influential. The scholars whose work is surveyed in the following pages were immensely learned, often experts in a variety of fields, including philology, textual criticism, comparative literature, and the study of ancient cultures contemporaneous with the biblical traditions. Moreover, also in keeping with the intellectual mood of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were optimistic, in retrospect even overconfident, operating on the assured conviction that with sufficient data and careful analysis of the data an objective, accurate, and complete understanding of the Bible was possible.

SOURCE CRITICISM

The critical study of the Bible had been begun in the seventeenth century by Hobbes, Spinoza, and Richard Simon, and it continued to gain momentum during the Enlightenment. In many respects the conclusions of scholars working on the Hebrew Bible were paralleled by those who worked on the New Testament, and the methods and preoccupations of both were similar to those of classical scholarship. In all three disciplines there was a concentration on historicity. And scholars in all three disciplines recognized that historical reconstruction needed to begin with a careful analysis of sources.

This was true first of all of the analysis of the Pentateuch into several literary strands. Jean Astruc had proposed in 1753 that the different names used for God in different parts of the book of Genesis were due to different sources that were used (by Moses) in writing it. Astruc's insight was elaborated and refined in the nineteenth century mainly by German scholars, especially W. M. L. de Wette and K. H. Graf, who extended the analysis of sources to the rest of the Pentateuch (and in some cases to the book of Joshua, leading to the term "Hexateuch"; see "Redaction Criticism" on p. 1880).

The results of more than a century of this source criticism were brilliantly synthesized in 1878 by the German Old Testament scholar Julius Wellhausen in his book (*Prolegomena to*) *The History of Israel*. Wellhausen's goal was to write a history of ancient Israel, especially its religion, and he followed an evolutionary model. The religion of Israel, Wellhausen argued, had developed in three stages: a primitive, spontaneous phase in the era before the monarchy; an ethical monotheism expressed especially by the preexilic prophets; and a sterile legalism characteristic of the Second Temple period. To support this reconstruction, he engaged in a careful analysis of the biblical traditions and, drawing especially on the earlier work of de Wette and Graf, gave the classic formulation to what is called the Documentary Hypothesis. According to the Documentary Hypothesis as elaborated by Wellhausen, the Pentateuch was an unreliable source for reconstructing the history of the time periods it narrated, but the traditions that comprised it, identified as J, E, D, and P, were datable and important evidence for the periods in which they were compiled. (See further "Introduction to the Pentateuch," p. 3). These "documents" are hypothetical, that is, they do not actually exist, but they are the best explanation of the evidence—the parallels, repetitions, and inconsistencies in the final form of the Pentateuch.

Wellhausen's historical reconstruction is clearly a product of its time, and it reflects the biases of the late

nineteenth century. His view of early Israel as a fresh, undefiled religious spirit has a Romantic flavor, and his characterization of postexilic Judaism as a decline into dead legalism has an anti-Semitic cast. But his formulation of the Documentary Hypothesis became a classic statement, the theory that subsequent scholars up to the present have built upon, accepted, modified, or rejected. Despite initial and continuing conservative opposition, and, in the case of Roman Catholics especially, institutional interdict, it was widely adopted by liberal Protestant scholars and eventually by Roman Catholic and Jewish scholars as well, resulting in a large consensus that prevailed until late in the twentieth century.

Source criticism (often misleadingly called "literary criticism") was not an end in itself but a method to be used in historical reconstruction. It recognized the inherent complexity of biblical traditions, and attempted to disentangle the prior stages of their development. Among the many significant results of source criticism was the recognition that the book of Isaiah is a composite work. The isolated insights of earlier scholars, including Rabbi Ibn Ezra in the twelfth century, and J. G. Eichhorn and others in the eighteenth, were expanded and elaborated in the commentary on Isaiah by Bernhard Duhm in 1892. The book of Isaiah, Duhm argued, was in effect an anthology spanning several centuries. First Isaiah (chs 1–39) was largely a product of the preexilic period and was itself a composite, including authentic oracles of the eighth-century BCE prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem, additions to those oracles and biographical materials added by his disciples, and historical narratives spliced in from 2 Kings. Chapters 40–55 (Deutero- or Second Isaiah) were a product of the mid-sixth century BCE, as the historical references in those chapters indicated. And the remainder of the book (Third Isaiah, chs 56–66) was to be dated a century or more later, despite similarities of language and themes to chs 40–55. In the Romantic spirit, Duhm was motivated to distinguish the genuine words of Isaiah himself, as well as those of the anonymous prophets responsible for the latter two divisions of the book, especially the author of the "Servant Songs" (Isa 42.1–4; 49.1–6; 50.4–9; 52.13–53.12).

Similar preoccupations and approaches characterized the study of the New Testament. Drawing on the work of earlier scholars, especially Richard Simon (again!) and H. S. Reimarus, in 1835 David F. Strauss published his "life of Jesus critically examined," soon after translated from German into English by George Eliot, in which he attempted to strip the Gospels of the miraculous and mythical in order to recover the "real" Jesus. This inaugurated a "quest" for the historical Jesus that continued in the work of Ernst Renan in the mid-nineteenth century and Albert Schweitzer at the beginning of the twentieth, and that remains unfulfilled, as current lack of consensus demonstrates.

This quest was accompanied by a source-critical analysis of the Synoptic Gospels. While debate about which Gospel was written first was never fully resolved, the literary priority of Mark was argued by a succession of scholars in the nineteenth century. According to this view, held by a majority of New Testament scholars today but by no means all, Mark was used as a source by both Matthew and Luke (or, more properly, the authors of the Gospels to whom those names are traditionally given). Many passages in Matthew and Luke other than those based on Mark also share a verbatim correspondence, and another source was hypothesized for them. Known as Q, from the German word *Quelle* ("source"), it consists almost entirely of sayings of Jesus and, though hypothetical, is the earliest source for the life of Jesus. This "Two-Source Hypothesis" was given classic formulation in English by B. H. Streeter in 1924. (See further "Introduction to the Gospels," p. 1379.)

Source criticism in the New Testament was also applied to the Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles. Careful analysis of the letters attributed to Paul led to the conclusion that some of them, especially the "Pastoral Epistles" (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), and probably Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians as well, had not been written by Paul himself, and that others (such as 2 Corinthians) may be combinations of two or more originally distinct writings.

THE RECOVERY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

The recovery of extensive written remains from the ancient Near East, and also to a lesser extent from the classical world, the latter especially in the form of papyri that document ordinary life, coincided with the development of the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and folklore. Both new data and new methods were applied to the biblical communities, resulting in works of extraordinary insight and, in retrospect, often of considerable naïveté. Biblical studies, however labeled, became a subject not just in denominational, seminary curriculums but a discipline recognized in larger university contexts as well, often as part of religious studies or the history of religion.

The process of recovery began with the decipherment of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic writing in the early nineteenth century, which was made possible when a member of Napoleon's army discovered the Rosetta

Stone in Egypt in 1799. This opened up the vast literature of Egypt, including valuable historical texts that provided synchronisms with biblical data relating especially to the first millennium BCE, and provided the basis for what would eventually be a comprehensive absolute chronology of the ancient Near East. Egyptian literature also provided parallels to such biblical genres as love poetry and wisdom literature.

In the mid-nineteenth century, British and French explorers began to unearth hundreds of thousands of cuneiform texts in Mesopotamia, and these too were rapidly deciphered, giving access to the literature and written remains of ancient Babylon, Assyria, and Persia. Like the Egyptian texts, they could often be correlated with biblical history, but their impact on biblical studies was more profound. In 1872 George Smith, working in the British Museum, discovered on one of the tablets that had been sent to London a flood narrative remarkably similar to the account in Genesis. While some took this as a simple historical confirmation of the Flood, it soon became clear that the biblical account was a literary descendant of earlier Mesopotamian accounts. Further discoveries provided many other parallels between Babylonian and Israelite literature, law, institutions, and beliefs, and in most cases Babylon again appeared to be the source. Sparked by a series of lectures by the German Assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch in 1902–04, a heated controversy developed, pitting "Babel" against the Bible. Ultimately many of the simplistic conclusions concerning the priority, and the superiority, of the traditions of "Babel" were rejected, and in retrospect they seem clearly anti-Semitic. But the controversy not only marks the emergence of Assyriology (the study of the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia) as an independent discipline but also established the importance of nonbiblical materials for the understanding of the Bible.

For the study of the New Testament, the most important discovery was the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, a large collection of documents dating to the early centuries of the Common Era. Among the thousands of mostly Greek texts excavated between 1897 and 1934 were fragments of very early manuscripts of parts of the New Testament, along with three collections of sayings of Jesus, some of which, though not found in the canonical Gospels, are apparently authentic. The latter were of considerable importance in the debate about the prehistory of the Gospels, that is, the reconstruction of the stages between Jesus himself and the earliest written traditions about him. The papyri also included hundreds of documents from ordinary people, illuminating both the form of Greek used in the New Testament and the social world of its writers and audiences.

FORM CRITICISM

While source criticism became a dominant interpretive method, the influx of nonbiblical data prompted a more nuanced investigation of the prehistory of the written biblical traditions. The pioneer in this work was the German scholar Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932), perhaps the most influential biblical interpreter of the twentieth century. While accepting Wellhausen's analysis as valid, Gunkel incorporated evidence both from Babylonian literature and from comparative folklore to propose a shift in emphasis from history to the history of literature. He proposed that to the formation of the Pentateuchal "documents," there was discernible a long process of development and transmission of "forms," or genres, which had parallels in nonbiblical sources. These forms, which have their own history and chronological and cross-cultural continuity, were also vehicles for preserving very ancient traditions.

Central to the study of these forms, known as "form criticism," was the identification of their *Sitz im Leben* ("setting in life"), the original and subsequent contexts in which they were developed and used. Gunkel first applied form criticism to the book of Genesis in his commentary published in 1901, in which he isolated such forms as saga, legend, taunt, curse, hymn, etiology, and proverb. His studies on the Psalms (1928–33) were also groundbreaking, setting the terms of the discussion for the rest of the century by his classification of the various genres (hymn, individual and communal laments, individual and communal thanksgivings, royal psalms, wisdom psalms, etc.). Although there is a kind of idealism about the definition of the forms, parallels from outside the Bible confirmed their applicability and enhanced the understanding of smaller units in the Bible.

Gunkel had not hesitated to apply his insights to the New Testament, as in his important monograph on creation and chaos as central themes in prophetic and especially apocalyptic literature, including the book of Revelation. Two of his students, Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann, applied the principles of form criticism more systematically to the Gospels. They refined the definitions of forms such as parables and miracle stories, and Bultmann especially identified similar forms in other ancient sources. Although the question of the historical Jesus was still an issue, New Testament form criticism moved beyond what could be hypothesized about the original setting in the life of Jesus himself and focused more on the role that the forms played in various settings in earliest Christianity.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Serious exploration of the Levant began in the early nineteenth century, and notable advances were made in

mapping the region and identifying ancient sites. In the decades before World War I, extensive and, by the standards of the time, scientific excavations were undertaken by British, German, French, and American archaeologists. In Palestine attention was focused on the major cities of ancient Israel, as Jerusalem, Samaria, Megiddo, Shechem, Jericho, Taanach, and Gezer were all partially excavated. An overriding preoccupation of the excavators was historical, even apologetic: to verify, by independent data, the historicity of biblical traditions.

In the 1920s and 1930s many more projects were initiated, and excavation techniques were improved. Greater accuracy in dating excavated remains was made possible through the refinement of ceramic typology, especially as elaborated by the American scholar W. F. Albright in his excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim. But very little of the vast amount of material that was excavated and published could be related directly to the Bible, and debates often ensued about how to synthesize archaeological and biblical data.

When work resumed after World War II in the 1950s and 1960s, new projects were undertaken and many sites that had been earlier—and fortunately only partially—excavated were redug, especially by British, American, and Israeli archaeologists. In part because of the flood of material from periods long before and after biblical times or having little direct relevance to the Bible, archaeology began to develop as an independent discipline, as had already happened in the classical world. More attention was given to what archaeologist actually found, the material culture of the region in various periods, and in some circles there developed a theoretical tension between archaeology and biblical studies, for many earlier archaeologists were also biblical scholars. Now, more and more archaeologists were acquiring interest and expertise in periods and regions not directly relevant to biblical history. The result, by the late twentieth century, was that some archaeologists lacked sufficient expertise to connect what they excavated with the written sources, and many biblical scholars simply ignored the potential contributions of archaeology to the interpretation of the Bible. This was especially true in the case of the New Testament. Apart from continuing efforts since the late nineteenth century to identify sites associated with the life of Jesus, until the 1970s the study of the New Testament was largely restricted to texts, with little attention to the growing body of information about Palestine and the entire eastern Mediterranean world derived from archaeology.

ETHNOGRAPHY, SOCIOLOGY, AND ANTHROPOLOGY

As explorers and archaeologists began to make the ancient Near East known, they also observed those living there in the present. While many of the descriptions published were little more than naïve catalogues of perceived parallels between Arab customs and details of life in biblical times, there were serious works of scholarship, including W. Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889) and Gustaf Dalman's extensive survey of Palestinian social life and customs (*Arbeit* [work] *und Sitte* [customs] *in Palästina*, 1928–39). At the same time, the disciplines of sociology and anthropology were becoming more sophisticated. An early sociological interpretation of the Hebrew Bible was Max Weber's *Ancient Judaism* (1917–19), and there were sporadic applications of sociological method to early Christianity as well. Not until the later twentieth century, however, would it become important in biblical interpretation.

Anthropological research had a more immediate impact. Typical of early efforts was the encyclopedic work of James G. Frazer. In *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (1890; revised and abridged by Theodor Gaster in 1959) and subsequent works such as *Folk-lore in the Old Testament* (1919), Frazer organized a staggering amount of data in support of his understanding of the evolution of society from primitive beginnings to civilization. His principal focus was on myth and rituals, especially the essential role of the king in the welfare of the larger society, and he included both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament in his analysis.

While Frazer's work was subsequently criticized for its failure to pay sufficient attention to specific cultural contexts and for his cavalier treatment of data to fit his theories, his influence was considerable. In particular, British and Scandinavian scholars developed and refined his approach, developing what has been called a "myth and ritual" school. The work of Sigmund Mowinckel of Norway is representative. Using form criticism as a method (he had been Gunkel's student) and the function of the king as an organizing principle, and drawing heavily on Babylonian sources, his study of the Psalms (1921–24) focused on their use in what he suggested was an annual enthronement festival of Yahweh, like the Babylonian New Year festival. He also identified the individual speaker in many of the psalms as the king himself, and found evidence for prophets giving oracular messages to the king or to the community as part of the New Year ceremony. In *He That Cometh* (1951), Mowinckel examined the reuse of these royal ritual traditions in postexilic Judaism and in the New Testament.

REDACTION CRITICISM

The impression left by source criticism was that the final forms of the Pentateuch and other biblical books

or collections for which multiple sources were hypothesized were pedestrian compilations with little literary merit. Beginning in the 1930s, again mainly in Germany, attention began to be paid to the larger units as creative works in their own right. In several influential essays, and in his commentaries on Genesis and Deuteronomy, Gerhard von Rad argued that the Hexateuch (the Pentateuch plus Joshua) was itself a literary form. Its *Sitz im Leben* was the feast of weeks (see Deut 16.9; 26.1–2), where the key events of the nation's "salvation history"—the Exodus, the conquest of the land, and the covenant—were recited and reenacted. The Hexateuch for von Rad is the final, literary product of a long development of such narrative creeds, earlier forms of which are found in such texts as Deut 26.5–9; Ps 136; Ex 15.

One reason that von Rad included the book of Joshua in his analysis was that the promise of the land, a central theme especially in J and P, was unfulfilled in the Pentateuch. Martin Noth took another approach. The original conclusion to the Pentateuch, he proposed, had been replaced by a "Deuteronomistic History." With the book of Deuteronomy as a kind of theological preface, the books of Joshua through 2 Kings comprised a carefully written history of Israel in the Promised Land. Since 2 Kings ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of Israel's autonomy, Noth argued that this history was an exilic composition, which explained the catastrophe as the inevitable result of Israel's failure to live up to the obligations of its covenant with God as detailed in Deuteronomy. Subsequent scholars revised Noth's views, suggesting that while the final form of the Deuteronomistic History was, as he had suggested, a product of the mid-sixth century BCE, it had its own literary history and had existed in one or more editions during the monarchy before the exile. But his essential insight concerning the underlying unity of the books of Deuteronomy through 2 Kings remained the foundation for subsequent interpretation of the historical books.

Attention to larger units developed in the study of the New Testament as well, beginning in the 1950s. In important commentaries on Matthew and Mark, Günther Bornkamm and Willi Marxsen understood those Gospels as creative literary works, with distinctive theologies and themes. In his study of the theology of Luke, Hans Conzelmann showed how the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts together formed a carefully composed narrative, with thematic unity provided by an understanding of the life of Jesus as the center of history and Jerusalem as the geographical center of the story. Similar approaches were undertaken for the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul, and for both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, redaction criticism's focus on larger units anticipates the methods of literary criticism and canonical criticism later in the twentieth century.

DISCOVERIES OF TEXTS BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS

The discovery and decipherment of cuneiform texts of ancient Assyria and Babylon during the second half of the nineteenth century had profoundly changed the understanding of the Hebrew Bible. On the historical level, the repeated references especially in Assyrian annals to kings of Israel and Judah and to events mentioned in the Bible enabled the construction of a detailed chronology. But for the most part, connections between the cuneiform texts and biblical traditions were indirect. This is not surprising, given the distance and often the time that separated those Mesopotamian cultures from ancient Israel. And apart from a scattering of inscriptions in Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Moabite, there were no significant written remains from Israel itself or its most immediate neighbors. That changed in the 1920s and 1930s, as excavations uncovered more collections of ancient texts, and further decipherment shed light on such groups as the Sumerians, the Hittites, and the Hurrians. While there were seldom direct correlations with the Bible, the tablets from Nuzi in northern Iraq and Mari and Ugarit in northern Syria were especially important in expanding the knowledge of the larger world to which ancient Israel belonged.

In many respects the mythological texts from Ugarit, on the Mediterranean coast of Syria, are the most important because of their geographical proximity to ancient Israel and the direct light they shed on the Hebrew Bible. Written in a previously unknown Semitic language belonging to the same subfamily as Hebrew, they are composed in poetry that is often remarkably close in diction and in form to biblical poetry. The myths feature gods and goddesses such as El, Baal, and Asherah, all frequently mentioned in the Bible but hitherto incompletely known, largely because of the biblical writers' antagonism toward gods other than Yahweh. Moreover, similar motifs—for example, the childless patriarch, the theophany of the storm god, the council of the gods, the sacred mountain—and innumerable smaller details illustrate the shared culture of Israel and its neighbors. Despite undeniable chronological and geographical discontinuities, the literary, religious, and institutional traditions of the Levant, including ancient Israel, are best understood as part of a cultural continuum that, allowing for local particularities, is remarkably consistent and pervasive.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Another discovery that sent scholarship in new directions was that of a cache of manuscripts in caves near Qumran at the northwest corner of the Dead Sea. Over the course of several years, beginning in 1947, the remains of hundreds of manuscripts were discovered, first by local Bedouin and subsequently by archaeologists. Some of the manuscripts were largely intact, including an almost complete scroll of the Hebrew text of the book of Isaiah, and others were preserved only in fragments. Written mostly in Hebrew and Aramaic, with a few in Greek, they are generally agreed to have been a library deposited in the caves for safekeeping during the First Jewish Revolt (66–73 CE) by the inhabitants of the nearby settlement. Most scholars identify these inhabitants as Essenes, one of the major groups within Judaism in the Roman period, according to the first-century CE Jewish historian Josephus. Among many important aspects of the scrolls, three may be highlighted here. First are the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, more than a thousand years older than any previously known, giving new impetus to textual criticism (see p. 1843). Second is their contribution to the understanding of both Hebrew and Aramaic in the Roman period. And third is the glimpse they provide—especially in what have been termed "sectarian documents," that is, various community regulations, hymns, eschatological texts, and biblical commentaries (*pesharim*; see p. 1864)—of one group within Judaism around the turn of the era. What had earlier been oversimplified as a kind of monolithic Judaism is now, on the basis of these texts and other sources reexamined in their light, understood rather as a complex spectrum of various "Judaisms," one of which was earliest Christianity. And while there are no direct links between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, they do reveal a rich and complicated background for the emergence of Christianity as well as for the development of rabbinic Judaism after 70 CE.

THE NAG HAMMADI TEXTS

In 1945 at Nag Hammadi, some 300 mi (500 km) south of Cairo, Egyptian peasants unearthed a large jar containing thirteen codices. Most of the texts contained within these volumes were Christian Gnostic texts, and although written in Coptic many had been translated from Greek. One of the most important was *The Gospel of Thomas*, a collection of the sayings of Jesus perhaps originally compiled before the end of the first century CE. Fragments of *The Gospel of Thomas* had earlier been found among the Oxyrhynchus Papyri (see "The Recovery of the Ancient World", on p. 1878). Less than half of the sayings attributed to Jesus in this text are paralleled in the New Testament, and the *Gospel of Thomas* thus provides both an important independent source and an example of how earliest Christian tradition was collected and expanded by a particular writer within a specific community, a process more and more recognized in the study of the canonical Gospels.

CONCLUSION

With few exceptions, until after World War II historical-critical scholarship was engaged in by Protestant scholars. With the promulgation of the papal encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943, Roman Catholic scholars began to become practitioners as well. Likewise, both in the United States and in Israel, with the development there of the Hebrew University and later other institutions of higher education, Jewish scholars also made significant contributions. Facilities at major denominational graduate centers increasingly recruited scholars without regard to their religious affiliations. By the mid-twentieth century it was possible to speak of a consensus of interpretation: a general agreement on methods and results that largely transcended national and confessional differences. That consensus was evidenced in important ecumenical endeavors, especially in the United States, including several ongoing translation and commentary projects. In the next several decades that consensus would begin to unravel.

Michael D. Coogan

CONTEMPORARY METHODS IN BIBLICAL STUDY

In its development during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, biblical scholarship was often in conversation with other disciplines, including linguistics, anthropology, the history of religion, sociology, philosophical hermeneutics, and literary aesthetics, as well as with theology. Yet as biblical studies became a discipline in its own right, it developed a set of methods and questions that set the parameters for research. These were largely concerned with the history of the text and of the cultures that produced the texts. The consensus that these were the relevant questions and the methods by which they should be pursued lasted until well after the middle of the twentieth century. Since the 1970s, however, many biblical scholars have questioned the adequacy of an almost exclusive orientation to questions with a historical focus. Also, in keeping with a trend characteristic of most of the humanities and social sciences, there has been a strong movement toward interdisciplinary conversation. Although it is difficult to give a simple overview of the proliferating approaches to biblical studies since the 1970s, they can be roughly grouped under the categories of literary, social-scientific, and cultural hermeneutical approaches.

LITERARY APPROACHES

A popular appreciation of the narrative art of the Bible has always existed. Its stories were represented in the sculpture and stained-glass windows of medieval churches, and Western literature has been profoundly influenced by its characters, themes, and symbols. In both Judaism and Christianity the reading and retelling of some biblical stories in devotional and liturgical contexts made them deeply familiar. Yet even though biblical Hebrew poetry had been the subject of academic study since the eighteenth century (most notably in Bishop Robert Lowth's *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*), little attention had been paid to the poetics of biblical narrative. One impetus to the interest in biblical narrative that developed in the 1970s can be traced to a development in American higher education: the creation of departments of religious studies in nondenominational colleges and public universities in the 1960s and 1970s. In such contexts the study of the Bible "as literature" was deemed especially appropriate to a secular curriculum. Such interest was not restricted to scholars in secular contexts, however. In 1968 James Muilenberg, who for much of his career had been a professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, delivered a presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature titled "Form Criticism and Beyond." Here he called for a type of literary-theological approach to the poetry and prose of the Bible, which he referred to as "rhetorical criticism." Giving further impetus to literary study of the Bible was the work of several scholars of English and comparative literature, who extended their expertise in the analysis of literature to biblical texts. Most prominent were Northrop Frye (*The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*), Robert Alter (*The Art of Biblical Narrative* and *The Art of Biblical Poetry*), and Frank Kermode (*The Genesis of Secrecy,* a study of the Gospel of Mark). Alter and Kermode later collaborated to edit *The Literary Guide to the Bible*.

This literary approach differed from historical study in significant ways. Whereas historical study tended to be concerned with the prehistory of the text (oral traditions and written source materials) and with its development through successive redactions, literary study focused on the final form of the text. Whereas historical study was interested in the world referred to by the text, literary study directed its attention to the world constructed in the text. Nevertheless, there have continued to be historical dimensions to this work on biblical literature. Both Alter and Meir Sternberg attempted to isolate distinctive features of ancient Israelite narrative art (e.g., modes of characterization, the use of type-scenes, techniques of repetition, forms of plot development), which were not necessarily the same as the techniques used in modern Western narrative. More recently scholarship has again turned to comparative analysis of ancient literatures to identify the development of distinctive elements of ancient Israelite narrative and poetry. Similarly, New Testament literary study has included a strong interest in the comparative analysis of Greco-Roman literary genres and techniques and those used in the Gospels, Acts, and early noncanonical Christian literature.

Much of the early literary study of the Bible was influenced by the "New Criticism," an approach that had dominated Anglo-American literary scholarship from the 1930s through the 1950s. In New Criticism the literary text was considered an autonomous work of art, to be studied independently of its author's intentions and of the sociopolitical currents of the time in which it was produced. New Criticism was a reaction both to a methodology arising out of the history of literature, in which new literary movements are seen as developing from those of

previous eras, and to biographical criticism, which reads literary texts as expressions of the life experiences of the writers. The focus in New Criticism is rather on the way in which the text itself is structured so as to produce the observed or expected effects and understandings. Thus, the plot, characters, setting, point of view, and other aspects of the story's rhetoric and structure are analyzed. As the literary study of the Bible was gaining ground, however, rapid changes were taking place in the larger field of literary study, changes that were reflected in biblical studies.

Structuralism was the first of these new movements to make an impact. The origins of structuralism are in the work of the early twentieth-century linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who attempted to analyze the system of relationships within a language that make acts of speech possible. In particular, he stressed that meanings are produced not so much by simple definition as by a network of contrasts (e.g., a tree is a woody plant that is not a bush or a shrub). In a parallel development A. J. Greimas attempted to use Saussure's insights to develop a "grammar" of narrative in much the same way as Saussure attempted to develop a grammar of sentences. Biblical scholars, anthropologists, and literary theorists were quick to apply these approaches to the Bible. The mythic narratives and genealogical accounts of Genesis, the symbolic geography of the Gospel narratives, and even the theological vocabulary of Paul offered opportunities for analyzing the patterns of binary opposition that structuralists argued were the key to the meaning of the texts.

Even as structuralism was being adapted for the study of biblical literature, its assumptions and claims were being challenged in the wider world of philosophical and literary studies. Structuralism claimed that the binary oppositions that structure human thought are essentially universal and unaffected by culture or history. Though the surface features of texts might vary with different societies and over time, the underlying structures did not. Such claims proved difficult to sustain. Just as structuralism dispensed with history, so it also had no place for the reader in the production of meaning. Structuralism understood itself as a kind of scientific method. Yet different readers regularly reached different understandings of the same text. Finally, although structuralism seemed to lend itself well to myths, folktales, and highly formulaic narratives, it seemed unable to deal with more complex narratives.

Against the focus on a supposedly objective and stable text in narrative criticism and against structuralism's focus on impersonal and universal codes, reader-response criticism argued for the essential role of the reader in the process of making meaning. Structuralism tended to display its results in terms of charts, an implicitly spatial understanding of the text. But reader-response theory insisted that reading is essentially a temporal affair. In reading, one only gradually gathers information that is progressively organized and reorganized by the reader to produce meaning. Moreover, the text often contains "gaps" that the reader, consciously or unconsciously, fills in (e.g., details concerning characters, aspects of motivation or causality, connections between events). As the reader becomes actively involved in the process of reading, what the reader engages is not simply the issues of plot and character but also matters of norms and values, which the reader may embrace or resist. Reader-response criticism thus accounts for the different understandings of and reactions to the "same" text by different readers by claiming a necessary place for the subjective element in reading. Subjectivity is limited, however, by what the reader's community considers to be a plausible or implausible inference. Thus it is not so much individual readers as "interpretive communities" who set the parameters according to which interpretation takes place.

Although important reader-response studies of Hebrew Bible texts have been produced, the method found its most enthusiastic reception in the study of the New Testament Gospels and Acts. Yet it has remained controversial. Historical critics oppose narrative approaches for neglecting the intentions of the author and the horizon of the original audience. From the opposite end of the methodological spectrum, postmodern critics object to its failure to break decisively with such historical assumptions as the understanding of the text as a stable "object" opposed to the readerly "subject." One positive consequence of reader-response criticism's focus on the role of interpretive communities, however, has been a renewed appreciation for the forms of interpretation practiced by Jewish and Christian communities before the rise of modern biblical studies during the Enlightenment. Instead of seeing such traditional readings as naive or simply wrong, interpreters began to ask about the assumptions and values that governed the reading practices of Christian typological and allegorical exegesis and of Rabbinic midrash. In recent years a broad interest in the reception of the Bible from antiquity to contemporary culture has become one of the most prominent new directions for scholarship. This area of research is no longer distinctively "literary" in its approach but perhaps can be seen as a logical extension of tradition criticism, that is, the interest in how older traditions are reworked to meet changing needs of religious communities. Although the eventual fixing of the canon meant that traditions were no longer reworked within the text of the Bible, new

forms of reception (commentary, extra-biblical narrative, liturgy, art, etc.) provided a context for transforming received traditions.

If reader-response criticism represented one reaction to the limitations of traditional narratology and to structuralism, a more pervasive criticism emerged under the rubric of poststructuralism, or deconstruction. This movement, associated with the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, is above all a critique of the metaphysical assumptions of Western philosophy, and only secondarily an analysis of the nature of texts and the interpretive process. Derrida noted the attempt of philosophy to posit a central term (God, reason, the human being) in relation to which all of reality can be organized. This organization characteristically takes place by means of binary oppositions (e.g., rational/irrational, oral/written, presence/absence), in which the first term is accepted as superior to the second. Deconstruction attempts to dismantle such structures in order to show their artificiality and the inevitable ways in which any such structure of thought implicitly "decenters" its central term and undermines itself through internal inconsistency and contradiction. When applied to texts, deconstruction begins with the perception that language is inevitably incomplete and surprisingly fluid and unstable. It then analyzes how even a text's ostensible argument is rendered problematic, if not outright self-contradictory, by extraneous details or slippages in meaning that at first appear peripheral and unimportant. For deconstruction the point of reading is not to restate the meaning intended by the author but to engage the text in creative thought, often by means of punning play with the text. Deconstruction's very style serves to undermine the binary opposition serious/frivolous, for its aim is in part to uncover the ways in which various forms of thought attempt to inscribe power and privilege.

The perspectives of deconstruction have been combined with other intellectual currents (most notably Freudianism and Marxism) to produce a variety of related approaches that are often referred to comprehensively by the term "postmodernism." Along with Derrida's deconstruction, Michel Foucault's study of the complex nature of power and truth and Fredric Jameson's neo-Marxist analysis of ideology have been deeply influential on postmodernism in biblical studies. For an overview of these trends as well as other forms of postmodernism, see *The Postmodern Bible* by The Bible and Culture Collective. Since one feature of postmodernism is its tendency to dissolve boundaries, it is scarcely surprising that its characteristic approaches have combined with a wide variety of other currents within biblical studies, most notably feminist criticism, but also various forms of ideological criticism (see Cultural Hermeneutics, p. 1887).

SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM

Social-scientific criticism applies insights and methods from the fields of sociology, anthropology, and psychology to describe aspects of ancient social life manifested in the biblical texts and to reconstruct the social worlds behind the text. To some extent historical criticism has always had a social dimension, since the objects of its interest included nations, states, social groupings, and religious movements. Yet self-conscious social-scientific investigation, though not unknown in earlier stages of biblical studies, has come into its own since the 1960s.

As early as the Renaissance, students of the Bible sought to make cross-cultural comparisons between ancient Israel and the nations of the ancient Near East. With the development of critical biblical study in the nineteenth century, this interest in cross-cultural study focused particularly on the comparison between Israel and the pre-Islamic Bedouin Arabs, as well as with contemporary Bedouin society, especially in the work of Julius Wellhausen and William Robertson Smith. Similarly, Martin Noth compared Israel's premonarchical tribal confederacy with ancient Greek leagues of cities called amphictyonies. In retrospect, these early attempts at social-scientific analysis were hampered by a lack of rigorous method, by erroneous assumptions about the economic and social organization of ancient Israel, and by an overly static model of ancient culture. More sophisticated was the work of the sociologist Max Weber, whose *Ancient Judaism* (compiled from lectures given in 1917–19) attempted to incorporate the dimensions of historical and institutional change in his account of the social organization of ancient Israel. Sociological investigation was not as prominent in New Testament studies, although the Chicago school of social analysis (leaders of which were Shailer Mathews and Shirley Jackson Case) did investigate the social location of early Christians and attempted to account for the success of Christianity among Gentiles but not among Jews.

These early attempts at social-scientific criticism were largely displaced by interest in other questions and methods, and for almost forty years little was published in this field. By the 1960s and 1970s, however, interest in it revived. Since the issues posed by Hebrew Bible and New Testament materials are significantly different, each literature will be discussed separately. In studies concentrating on the Hebrew Bible, several areas have proven fruitful for analysis. The first issue to be examined, and one still sharply debated, is that of the socioeconomic and political nature of the formation of the Israelite tribal confederacy. Social historians rejected the conquest model of Israel's entry into Canaan as it is described in the book of Joshua. Both George Mendenhall and Norman Gottwald argued

that Israel's origins were to be sought instead in a peasant revolt against urban Canaanite overlords. This revolt was against the hierarchical socioeconomic structure and developed as a retribalization along egalitarian lines in the central highlands. What differentiated Mendenhall and Gottwald, however, was Gottwald's explicit use of Marxist social theory. Although both of their proposals have been sharply criticized for reliance more on presupposed models than on textual or material evidence, they served to open the question of Israel's origins for fresh investigation. Since the 1970s archaeology has also generated increasing information about social organization, population patterns, domestic architecture, agricultural practices, and trade patterns for the period preceding the monarchy. This information, together with a wider array of possible comparative models for the development of noncentralized peasant societies, has begun to generate new ways of understanding early Israel, though none has yet achieved consensus.

Similarly, attempts to understand the movement from a loose tribal confederation to the eventual formation of royal states has been aided by comparative social analysis. Social anthropologists have documented the development of chieftainships as an intermediate stage between these two forms of social organization. A chiefdom is a hierarchically organized society that lacks the strong central governmental apparatus characteristic of a true state. Though some aspects of the process are still debated, it is now widely thought that Saul's "kingship" and at least the early stages of David's rule should be thought of as chieftainships.

Prophecy is another area of Israel's religious and social life that has proven fruitful for social-scientific analysis. Apart from texts of prophetic oracles recovered from neighboring nations, archaeology does not contribute to this question. Rather, the biblical texts are analyzed in light of sociological models and comparative ethnographic evidence. Though the limited evidence makes many conclusions elusive, it has been possible to clarify the social location of the prophets and their relationship or nonrelationship to established religious institutions and to the monarchy. How a prophet secures legitimation, the role of ecstasy and other phenomena of abnormally heightened consciousness, and the relation of oral and written communication have all been examined in social-scientific perspective. The later development of apocalypticism and the question of its social location—whether it was, for example, an outgrowth of prophecy, a scribal phenomenon, or a movement of the social margins or of the priestly elite—has been debated as the biblical texts are reread in light of apocalyptic and millenarian movements in the medieval and modern periods.

The biblical text also contains significant information about purity laws and kinship and family patterns, topics that lend themselves to comparative social analysis. In the 1960s the anthropologist Mary Douglas pioneered such studies with her analysis of the food laws in Leviticus, interpreting them as a symbolic system for organizing the world and correlating purity laws in general with the social concern for boundaries. Subsequently, the ritual texts in Leviticus and the Israelite sacrificial system more generally, have been important areas for the use of anthropological approaches. Similarly, the genealogies and ancestral narratives in Genesis, the family laws in Deuteronomy, and the reports on the postexilic community in Ezra–Nehemiah have been investigated in an attempt to discern the basic structures of family organization, as well as changes over time in the patterns of family life. As modern interest in gender constructs and roles has grown, so has the investigation of such issues in ancient Israel. Although the resources are mainly the texts of the Hebrew Bible, attempts have been made to use the findings of archaeology to determine the patterns of life and activity characteristic of males and females in biblical times (see especially C. Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*).

In the field of New Testament, insights from sociology were first used in the 1970s to analyze the nature of the early Christian movement. The anthropological study of millenarian movements and sociological typologies of sects were employed to clarify the dynamics of the Christian communities that emerged in the first two centuries of the era. One of the watersheds in the use of sociological and anthropological perspectives in New Testament studies was the publication of *The First Urban Christians* by Wayne Meeks, which was a comprehensive attempt to describe the social context and organization of the early Pauline communities. Also significant was the application to biblical texts of cultural anthropological studies of the roles of honor and shame in Mediterranean societies, and the functioning of patron-client forms of social relations. These studies not only illuminated structural aspects of early Christian society and its context but also showed how aspects of discourse and categories of thought were organized in characteristic patterns that reflected these social values and assumptions. In such cases social-scientific and traditional theological investigation of the New Testament may converge, as the latter recognizes the need to understand the meaning and context of key terms by means of social-scientific analysis.

The rich comparative material available from the classical world has facilitated many types of sociological investigation. Slavery, as social phenomenon and as metaphor, has been an important topic, as has the roles

of prophets and prophecy, the practice of magic, and the class status of early converts to Christianity. As in the field of Hebrew Bible, the social study of family structures and gender roles has yielded important insights.

Since much early Christian literature is self-consciously theological or ideological, cultural anthropology and the sociology of knowledge have proven particularly fruitful. Both of these approaches pay attention to the way in which societies create "symbolic universes" by which to negotiate issues of identity, legitimacy, and the creation or resolution of conflict. In recent years developments in the fields of anthropology, social psychology, cognitive theory, and neuroscience have also opened up new ways to study the intersection between the public construction of symbolic universes and the nature of religious experience, along with changing understandings of the body and the sense of self.

CULTURAL HERMENEUTICS

Classical biblical studies, as it emerged from its Enlightenment roots, understood itself as a form of critical analysis that was objective, disinterested, and "scientific." Though biblical theology might make normative claims, even those claims were based on a preliminary act of interpretation that was grounded in objective scholarship. In recent years the claim of classic biblical scholarship to be a scientific enterprise has been questioned by those who insist that the enterprise of historical criticism of the Bible is unconsciously shaped and informed by cultural assumptions specific to the time and place in which that method was developed. Pure objectivity is an illusion. In the interpretation of texts and cultures there is no "view from nowhere." All interpreters, whether or not they are aware of it, frame their questions and perceive the data from some perspective, which helps to shape their understanding of the text or culture in question. Rather than seeing the influence of the interpreter's social and cultural location as a problem, some have claimed it as a positive value. Thus the term "cultural hermeneutics" serves as an umbrella term for a variety of approaches to biblical interpretation (e.g., liberationist, feminist, postcolonial) in which the social location of the interpreter is not only made explicit but serves as a normative principle in interpretation. The primary categories that have figured in such interpretation are those of class, ethnicity, and gender.

The earliest and most methodologically self-conscious of these approaches is that of Latin American liberation theology, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. This approach did not begin as an academic perspective but rather emerged out of the concrete experience of the poor and of those pastors and other religious professionals who lived and worked with them. They insisted that the starting point for reading and interpreting the Bible must not be a stance of "objectivity" but rather the experience of the crushing poverty and oppression of the lowest social classes. Interpreted from the perspective of material poverty, the Bible discloses itself as a text of liberation and serves to further a revolutionary process of emancipation.

Much of the work of liberation hermeneutics took place in the Bible studies of Roman Catholic base-communities, in which groups of the poor were encouraged to read and interpret the Bible for themselves, with the assistance of a priest or teacher. Although this oral interpretation was seldom recorded, Ernesto Cardenal's *The Gospel in Solentiname* provides an example. The interpretation developed in the base communities was paralleled by the work of theologians and biblical scholars, who articulated the principles of liberation hermeneutics in a series of important studies (see, especially, L. Boff and C. Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*; and J. Severino Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading in the Production of Meaning*). Liberation theology has tended to place special emphasis on specific portions of the Bible as the story of the Exodus, the social criticism of the prophets, the figure of Mary (as singer of the Magnificat, with its imagery of social transformation; Lk 1), Jesus's preaching of the kingdom of God in the Gospels, the depiction of the liberating Christian community in Acts, and the struggle against evil in its imperialist and cosmic guise in the book of Revelation.

In the wake of Latin American liberation hermeneutics, religious communities and academics in countries of Africa and Asia have developed analogous forms of biblical interpretation that work from the particular experiences of those nations. A related movement, which is indebted to liberation hermeneutics but which also draws on other sources, is postcolonial hermeneutics (see, e.g., R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*). As European countries colonized various parts of the globe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the Bible was an important aspect of the sometimes forced assimilation of indigenous peoples to European cultural values. The desire of European churches to spread Christianity meant that the Bible, as interpreted by Europeans, accompanied the colonizers. Where conversion took place, the Bible displaced indigenous traditions, even as it buttressed European dominance. In recent years biblical scholars in the developing world (and increasingly in Europe and North America) have examined this complex history and heritage. They have attempted to analyze the roles that the Bible and its interpretation have played in these colonized countries. Not only have the colonizers' interpretations

been examined and critiqued (e.g., the use of the Exodus/Conquest story in North America and South Africa to justify the displacement of the indigenous peoples), but increasingly, attempts have been made to recover the forms of interpretation developed by the newly Christianized indigenous peoples themselves. Elements of "hybrid interpretation," that is, the mixing of indigenous traditions with Christian biblical narratives, are not only identified but often encouraged as a continuing creative practice. Thus, part of the resistance to the effects of the colonization experience is to read the Bible along with rather than above other religious and cultural traditions.

Within North America several ethnic communities, including Latinos/Latinas, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, have also developed self-conscious traditions of biblical interpretation. The earliest and most developed of these is African American biblical hermeneutics. The Bible has played a particularly significant role in the African American community, and popular forms of African American biblical interpretation have been embedded in the songs and sermons of the community for centuries. In the 1960s and 1970s, as the Black Theology movement developed, African American biblical scholars began to turn their attention both to the recovery and analysis of this traditional interpretation and to the development of a critical, academic form of African American biblical interpretation (see C. H. Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*). Afrocentric interpretation has drawn attention to the historical role played by African countries (especially Egypt and Ethiopia) and by Africans in the biblical text. But African American biblical hermeneutics has also attended to texts and issues that have been important to the lives of the African American community: for instance, the Exodus narratives, the place of slavery in Israelite and early Christian reflection, and the preaching of Jesus. African American biblical studies has also been marked by a deep reflection on the nature of interpretation itself, especially the ways in which an oppressed community appropriates for its own liberation a text that also serves as the authorizing document of the society within which its members have been oppressed.

Whereas the various perspectives discussed so far under the rubric of cultural hermeneutics are distinctively Christian, the same cannot be said for feminist biblical hermeneutics. Here, although Christian feminist biblical interpretation emerged slightly earlier, Jewish and Christian feminist interpretation has largely developed in tandem, and the critical conversation between Jewish and Christian feminists has been one of the distinctive features of this movement. In the 1950s and 1960s Protestant seminaries began to admit women in significantly larger numbers than before, followed soon after by an increase in the number of Catholic and Jewish women pursuing theological education. The emergence of the women's movement in the 1960s and its criticism of the role of the Bible in the oppression of women posed a challenge to those who identified themselves as both Christian or Jewish and feminist. One early position, which still continues to be important in the Christian evangelical community, is to affirm that the Bible, when correctly interpreted, affirms women's full humanity. Other feminists, such as Phyllis Trible and Phyllis Bird, more critical of the Bible, have attempted to expose and analyze the patriarchal elements in the biblical text itself in order to show that these patriarchal values can be separated from the essentially liberating values that form the primary message of scripture. More radical feminists, such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, however, have rejected the biblical traditions as thoroughly and irredeemably antifeminist.

Feminist interpretation of the Bible has embraced a variety of methodologies. They include the approaches of historical-critical and sociological biblical scholarship, since it attempts to recover and reconstruct the historical reality of women's lives in ancient Israel and in the Greco-Roman world of early Christianity and early Judaism. Some Christian feminists, in an attempt to make a case for the liberating nature of early Christianity, did so in ways that played off the egalitarian message of Jesus against his Jewish background. Jewish feminists challenged the accuracy of the representation of Judaism, and as a result considerably more nuanced pictures of gender relations in both early Christianity and Judaism have been developed.

Not all feminist interpretation has been concerned with historical reconstruction, however. A significant strand of feminism has used literary methods, exploring the ways in which biblical texts construct and represent an image of women that function in the service of various ideologies. In many instances this literary approach has involved reading against the grain of the text. For instance, a character, often nameless, whom the text treats as a subsidiary character may become for feminist analysis the central character of the text (e.g., Jephthah's daughter in Judg 11 or the Levite's concubine in Judg 19). A particular concern to feminists has been the issue of women and violence, for many of the biblical texts do represent violence against women, and a smaller but significant number represent women engaged in violence. While much of this literary work has also had a historical focus, in that it has been concerned with how the ancient texts have represented women, increasingly attention has been drawn to what is called cultural studies, that

is, how Western traditions in art and, more recently, film have themselves depicted the biblical representations of women.

Since feminism made women aware of their own particular perspective as women in the process of interpretation, it is not surprising that feminism has also become aware that individual women occupy very different positions in society, depending on their social and economic class and their ethnicity. Consequently, it has become more problematic to refer to a single "feminist" movement, for women of color and women of the developing world have insisted that gender, class, and ethnicity must all be considered in their complex interrelationships. African American women, for instance, have complicated the Anglo-European interpretation of the Abraham/Sarah narratives by focusing on the character of Hagar—the ethnic outsider, the slave, the surrogate mother—and her role in creating the narrative's moral complexity. Similarly, Latina, African, and Asian women have taken up the challenge of understanding the ways in which the practices of reading and interpreting the Bible serve to constrain or to emancipate women in their particular social and cultural contexts. Feminism's challenge to biblical studies has also generated a broader interest in gender and sexuality. Queer hermeneutics is an important twenty-first-century example.

Finally, two different types of theological interpretation of the Bible can also be classified as forms of cultural hermeneutics, since they foreground the community context of the formation and interpretation of the Bible. The first of these is canonical criticism. Though the forms of canonical criticism developed by its two major proponents, Brevard Childs and James Sanders, differ, they both focus on how scripture's final form was created within a believing community and how the meanings created by that final form continue to guide the reading practices of the community. The canonical shaping of the Jewish Bible, for instance—which places the Writings in the final position and usually concludes with the call of 2 Chronicles for the exiles to go up to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple—tells a different story from that produced by the shaping of the Christian Old Testament, which places the prophets last and concludes with Malachi's reference to the return of the prophet Elijah to announce the coming Day of the Lord.

In one sense canonical criticism is an extension of interest in the development of traditions as it is manifested in tradition criticism and the history of reception. But in contrast to history of reception, which is largely a descriptive activity, canonical criticism is explicitly theological. Similarly, though tradition criticism tends to investigate the earliest stages of development, canonical criticism explicitly privileges the latest stage, the canon in its final form. This concern with reading the text of scripture in its final form gives canonical criticism some similarity to the literary approaches of the "New Criticism." Thus, where historical criticism, reading the book of Isaiah, tries to distinguish which materials come from the eighth-century prophet, the sixth-century prophet, and the fifth-century prophet, literary and canonical critics focus on how the final form of the book has created the context within which all of its materials are now to be read, as a movement from judgment to salvation. While canonical criticism's self-conscious attention to what it means to read scripture as a member of a religious tradition links it with cultural hermeneutics, it also differs from some of the other forms of cultural hermeneutics discussed earlier. Just as those forms of interpretation make repeated reference to the specific experience of the reader as a guide to interpretation, canonical hermeneutics finds the clues to a proper reading in the ways in which the text of scripture was shaped by the believing community at the time its canon was fixed.

Perhaps closer to other forms of cultural hermeneutics is the type of theological interpretation often called "postcritical." Like canonical criticism, it is a reaction against historical criticism's inability to articulate the meaning of scripture for a believing community. In contrast to canonical criticism, which focuses on the final stages of the composition of the biblical text and the meaning of the biblical books in that context, postcritical interpretation orients itself to the early interpretive practices of rabbinic Judaism and patristic Christianity. Thus rabbinic midrash and Christian allegorical and typological exegesis are reclaimed as valid ways of understanding the biblical texts as scripture. These traditional interpretive practices are also used as patterns for the development of new postcritical ways of reading and interpreting scripture, as one can see in Peter Ochs's *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity*.

In the Christian tradition postcritical interpretation is also deeply influenced by Hans Frei's *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* and George Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine.* Both authors claim that before the rise of historical criticism the normative way of reading scripture in Christianity was as a grand narrative from Genesis to Revelation, with the Old Testament related to the New not only by plot but also by forms of typological interpretation that linked figures and events. Thus scripture does not simply tell a story but is rather a master narrative, that is, a narrative within which persons can live and by means of which they understand reality. The forms of postcritical interpretation that attempt to recover this way of reading scripture not only are self-

consciously literary in orientation but also draw on ethnographic models. Lindbeck characterizes his approach as "cultural-linguistic." That is to say, one learns to enter the world of scripture naturally, as one learns to speak a language or to live in another culture. What makes this approach to scripture postcritical and postmodern is that the symbolic worlds of classical Judaism and Christianity are no longer the native worlds even for most believers. Modernity, with its different forms of critical understanding, has displaced them. The retrieval and reappropriation that is the goal of postcritical interpretation occur self-consciously in the shadow of modernity. Moreover, as Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic analogy suggests, postcritical interpretation is not simply about interpretation but also about participation in the practices of a living religious community shaped by the symbolic world of scripture.

If anything ties together the various strands of emerging approaches to biblical interpretation, it is a concern for the relationship of power to language and meaning. More historically oriented literary and social methods increasingly examine the ways in which issues of conflict and access to power can be traced in the texts of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Cultural hermeneutics, though not uninterested in historical reconstruction, also focuses on the ways in which access to the power to interpret the text and construe its meaning serves to empower those who have traditionally been marginalized. And postmodernism has attempted to underscore the ironies of all such interpretive strategies, since in its view a stable and definitive meaning always eludes the interpreter. Yet its very skepticism about any final and objective understanding is what opens up space for a reappropriation of traditional forms of interpretation that attempt to challenge the interpretive power of modernity itself.

Carol A. Newsom

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE BIBLE

The geographical territory encompassed by the Bible (if one includes all identifiable places that are mentioned in it) includes most countries that border the Mediterranean Sea as well as those to its east. Most narratives of the Hebrew Bible and the Apocrypha, as well as the Gospels in the New Testament, are set in that subregion of the Middle East known as the Levant and now comprising Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. Egypt to the southwest, Asia Minor (modern Turkey) to the north, and Mesopotamia (largely modern Iraq) and Persia (Iran) to the northeast are also part of the biblical landscape.

In Mesopotamia—the Greek term for the region between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers (see color Maps 6 and 14 at the end of this volume)—as in Egypt, urban civilization developed by the fourth millennium BCE in the river valleys that provided the essential water for a region where rainfall was at best seasonal and at worst, especially in the case of Egypt, insufficient for agriculture. The regular summer flooding of the Nile Valley enabled the early and continuous existence of a remarkably long-lasting culture in Egypt, which because of its proximity to the Middle East was an important player in that region's history and the locale for several episodes in biblical narrative, most notably the Exodus. In Mesopotamia the inhabitants had harnessed the two rivers to provide, by means of an elaborate irrigation system, sufficient water for agriculture as well as for consumption. The successive imperial powers that originated in Mesopotamia were able to use this productive region as a base for expansion, especially to the west, over which they exercised control throughout most of the first millennium BCE, until the Hellenistic period.

Although surrounded by vast deserts, there is a narrow stretch of land where agriculture can flourish, which extends from the Nile Valley around to the Persian Gulf. The western part of this "fertile crescent," the Levant, has the same environment as much of the rest of the region adjacent to the Mediterranean, which today as for the last several thousand years is characterized by almost ideal growing conditions for grapes and olives and for raising sheep and goats; grains and legumes and other fruits can also be grown in much of the region. Its climate is moderate, without excessively high or low temperatures for the most part, and with abundant rainfall that occurs mainly during the winter months. Jerusalem, for example, receives on average about 22 in (550 mm) of rain annually, most of it falling between November and February, with January being the rainiest month. Higher elevations to the north receive still more rainfall, and the southern and easternmost regions considerably less.

Within the Levant itself, there is a wide variety of environments, the result of the geological substructure of the region, which presents dramatic changes in a relatively small area. Moving from west to east, the Mediter-

ranean coast is occupied by a coastal plain that is about 15 mi (25 km) wide in the south but narrows as one moves north. It is interrupted by Mount Carmel, which juts into it, and virtually disappears in northern Israel and Lebanon. The coast itself has several excellent harbors in the north, from which the Canaanites and their successors the Phoenicians conducted a flourishing maritime trade. Farther south the coast is relatively even, and there are few natural harbors. Phoenician influence eventually extended to such port cities as Acco, Dor, Joppa, and Ashkelon, and in the late first century BCE Herod the Great constructed an impressive artificial harbor at Caesarea. Along the coastal plain was a major route used by traders and by armies of conquest between Egypt and Damascus. This route ran to the point where the coast narrows below Mount Carmel, from which passes led from the coastal plain to the Jezreel (Esdraelon) Valley; from there, several routes could be taken to the northeast.

Adjacent to the coastal plain in the south is an uplift of smaller, gentler hills called "the Shephelah" ("lowland"). As the natural western boundary of the kingdom of Judah in the Iron Age, and of other entities in the same region before and after, it was protected by such important cities as Lachish and Gezer. The Shephelah forms the foothills of the mountainous region immediately to its east. This is the "hill country" of the biblical writers, with higher elevations to the north. For example, Jerusalem, about 35 mi (55 km) east of the Mediterranean, is 2,500 ft (760 m) above sea level, and many mountains in northern Galilee have elevations of over 3,300 ft (1,000 m). The highest peak in the region is Mount Hermon, which at 9,200 ft (2,800 m) is snow-covered year-round. The hill country is the setting for many of the key locales in biblical narrative, including the relatively inaccessible sites of Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom of Judah (later Judea), and Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and later of the province with the same name. This central mountainous ridge is bisected by the broad, fertile Jezreel Valley, the major route to the interior and hence the location of important ancient cities, including Jokneam, Megiddo, Taanach, Ibleam, and Jezreel. Mount Tabor rises from the floor of the Jezreel Valley in splendid isolation to an elevation of 1,929 ft (588 m) above sea level. The village of Nazareth, Jesus's hometown, is in the hills on the northern side of the valley.

To the north of the Jezreel Valley lies Galilee. Because of its abundant springs, Galilee was dotted by settlements from prehistoric times, but it plays little role in biblical narratives until the end of the first millennium BCE, when it is the setting both for some of the campaigns of the Maccabees and, in the early first century CE, of the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels.

Just east of this central mountainous region is the Rift Valley. This major depression in the earth's crust extends from southern Turkey into East Africa; in Israel and Jordan it is almost entirely below sea level. Included in it are the Huleh Basin in northern Galilee, 230 ft (70 m) above sea level, where the site of Hazor was a major fortified city from early in the second millennium BCE until its destruction by the Assyrians in 732 BCE. Some 12 mi (20 km) south of Lake Huleh is the Sea of Chinnereth, or the Sea of Galilee (also called the Sea of Tiberias and the Lake of Gennesaret), a large freshwater lake about 12 mi (20 km) long that fills the valley. It lies 210 m (700 ft) below sea level, and is fed by the Jordan River, which flows into it from the north. It is habitat to nearly two dozen species of fish, and the fishing industry has been an important part of the local economy since prehistoric times. Many of the events narrated in the Gospels are set in the many towns and cities near the lake; the region was a center of resistance against the Romans during the First Jewish Revolt of 66–73 CE.

The Jordan River continues its flow south from the Sea of Galilee 65 mi (105 km) to the Dead Sea. The valley itself is about 12 mi (20 km) wide and is entirely below sea level, with a semitropical climate that produces lush vegetation, even though because of its low elevation it receives relatively little rain. Important cities in the valley include Beth-shan (later Scythopolis) in the north and Jericho in the south. The valley was another important north-south route, especially during the Roman period, when Jews often avoided the district controlled by the Samaritans between Galilee and Judea.

The Dead Sea, lying 1,300 ft (400 m) below sea level, is the lowest point on the land mass of the earth. Because of evaporation due to high temperatures (a record 124°F [51°C] was measured here), the composition of the water is about 25 percent salt and other minerals, making organic life impossible and giving this lake its ancient name, "the salt sea" (Num 34.3,12; NRSV "Dead Sea"). The desolate region that surrounds it is the narrative setting for the legendary cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. On its western shore are Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, and Masada, a palace constructed by Herod that was the last Jewish outpost to be captured in the First Jewish Revolt.

East of the Rift Valley there is a rapid rise to the relatively level Transjordanian plateau to the east, with the elevation of modern Amman (ancient Rabbah, later Philadelphia) at ca. 2,700 ft (820 m) about average. This region also receives sufficient rainfall to sustain agriculture and, moreover, is watered by two tributaries of the Jordan, the Yarmuk and the Jabbok, and by the Arnon, which flows into the Dead Sea. The northern part of the plateau, biblical Bashan, was famous for its cattle and for

its oak forests, and in the Hellenistic and Roman periods was the location of several of the cities of the Decapolis. Traversing the Transjordanian plateau from south to north is another major route, called in the Bible the "King's Highway" (Num 20.17), used throughout antiquity as a conduit for the incense and spice trade from Arabia to Damascus. East of the plateau is a vast desert region, a continuation of the Arabian desert that extends northward to the Euphrates Valley, and thus limiting the Fertile Crescent on both east and west. Apart from a few oases, especially Tadmor (later Palmyra) northeast of Damascus, this desert was mostly uninhabited in historic times.

South of the hill country of Judah lies the Negeb, a region of limited rainfall and hence marginal agriculture. The city of Beer-sheba is located in the extreme northern Negeb, just south of the Judean hill country. The Negeb merges into the Sinai peninsula, which is formed by the two northern arms of the Red Sea, separating the Sinai from the North African desert to its west and the Arabian desert to its east.

The small size of this region is out of proportion to its importance in ancient times and to the importance of the biblical texts that are set in it. West of the Jordan, the traditional limits of ancient Israel were Dan in the north and Beer-sheba in the south, some 150 mi (240 km) apart. Between these two cities, and between the Mediterranean and the Rift Valley, is a region with an area approximately the same as that of Belgium or the state of Vermont. From another perspective, Jerusalem is about 35 mi (55 km) east of the Mediterranean and 16 mi (25 km) west of the Dead Sea. In the right conditions, both bodies of water are visible from Jerusalem's hills.

Michael D. Coogan

CULTURAL CONTEXTS
THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND ANCIENT ISRAEL TO THE MID-FIRST MILLENNIUM BCE

BEGINNINGS

By the time Israel appeared on the stage of the ancient Near East, civilization and the patterns of empires and of the larger shared culture of the Levant were already well established. Before the end of the fourth millennium BCE, full urbanization had developed in the great river valleys of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The development of technology to exploit the flooding of the Nile and to channel the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris enabled the production of regular food supplies and led to regional hegemonies. In Egypt, centered in the Nile Valley and oriented according to the south-to-north direction of the Nile's flow, this culminated in the unification of Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) Egypt at the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period toward the end of the fourth millennium. In southern Mesopotamia the kings of Sumer ruled that region from a succession of dominant city-states beginning at about the same time.

The stages that preceded urbanization are prehistoric in the sense that they antedate the development of writing. Archaeologists have been able to trace the slow, and often independent, progress from hunter-gatherer economies throughout the Near East to stable cultures that relied on domesticated crops and animals for their sustenance. Dependable supplies of food led to increases of population and eventually to competition for resources. These factors combined to necessitate specialization of tasks, centralized control, and record-keeping. For these purposes, writing was invented, again toward the end of the fourth millennium and, once introduced, was widely adopted (although using different systems) in Egypt and Mesopotamia. By 3000 BCE, then, written history may be said to have begun.

One result of more than two centuries of discovery, excavation, and decipherment of ancient texts is that a detailed chronology of the ancient Near East has been established. While there are occasional gaps in the sequence of rulers for Egypt and for the various Mesopotamian city-states, those sequences are relatively complete. For regions peripheral to the centers of power the historical record is more spotty, but still substantial. Allowing for minor scholarly disagreements, the chronology is secure and provides a framework for the history of the entire ancient Near East, including Israel. Although there remain some small groups of undeciphered texts, including a few in what is apparently the Philistine lan-

guage, and although much of cuneiform literature is still underground, it is unlikely that new discoveries will require substantial revision of our current understanding of the essential chronology of the ancient Near East.

Nor is the knowledge of the historical record restricted to kings and princes. Hundreds of thousands of nonelite texts have been found. These are not great myths and royal inscriptions but mundane business and commercial records, which shed valuable light on the lives of ordinary men and women, and which have made possible a reconstruction of the social world of the ancient Near East.

Ancient cultures were as intrigued as we are by beginnings, and they constructed elaborate myths to explain their own prehistory. The establishment of the natural and social orders is typically presented in these myths as the work of a deity, usually the principal god or goddess of the political entity in which they were written. Both Egyptian and Mesopotamian literatures have many such creation myths, features of which have parallels in biblical traditions. Like their more powerful neighbors to the southwest and northeast, the ancient Israelites had their own accounts of origins, some of which were ultimately collected and edited in the book of Genesis. The early chapters of Genesis deal with prehistory and are largely mythical. In these Israelite expressions of the origins of the world, of society, and of civilization, the principal agent is the god of Israel. And although intended as the prologue to a larger historical narrative, they are not historical in any modern sense; that is, they do not accurately represent what the archaeological record shows to have taken place, whether in terms of chronology, or the origin of species, or a universal flood.

Egypt and Mesopotamia have their own complex histories during the third millennium, now relatively well known thanks to textual and archaeological data. In the Levant this is the period known as the Early Bronze Age, when northern Syria was largely in the orbit of Mesopotamia, and Egypt exercised direct control over southern Canaan, the region directly northeast of Egypt. For complex reasons not fully understood, toward the end of the third millennium Egypt experienced some internal disruption, reflected in the decline of city-states in southern Canaan but not in Syria farther to the north. By 2000 BCE, however, centralized control had been reestablished, and the textual and artifactual evidence is abundant. Trade flourished, as is indicated by both the archaeological record and commercial and diplomatic correspondence among larger urban centers, and between them and Mesopotamia and Egypt. The Levant was spanned by a cultural continuum, with Syria and northern Canaan being more closely linked with Mesopotamia, and southern Canaan with Egypt. Canaan itself had a relatively homogeneous culture, and its inhabitants, especially in rural and village settings, went about their lives with relatively few changes despite the struggles of the urban centers with each other. From as far back as the end of the fourth millennium, and into the first, there appears to have been continuity of population, whose patterns of material culture develop rather than being replaced by successive waves of invaders, as earlier historical reconstructions suggested.

It is in this larger context that Israel placed its own beginnings, centered on the lives of four generations of ancestors, the families of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebekah, and of Jacob and Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah, and their offspring.

THE HISTORICITY OF THE ANCESTRAL NARRATIVES IN GENESIS

In the biblical account of the origins of Israel, narratives concerning Israel's ancestors in Gen 12–50 follow the mythic material in chs 1–11. According to the biblical writers, the time when the ancestors lived is the early second millennium BCE, but there are no direct connections between the biblical traditions and nonbiblical sources. No person or event known from Egyptian, Mesopotamian, or other sources is even mentioned in the book of Genesis. At the relatively few points where the Bible does name rulers (as in Gen 14; 20.2; 26.8), none of them are found in any nonbiblical sources. Moreover, at many points in the narrative the Bible is tantalizingly vague. For example, if the biblical writers had just given the name of the pharaoh who took Sarah into his house (Gen 12.15), or of the pharaoh in whose court Joseph rose to power (Gen 41), we would know when the biblical writers thought those events took place, and could correlate them with Egyptian chronology.

The biblical narratives themselves are the result of a lengthy and complicated process of formation, transmission, and editing (see "Introduction to the Pentateuch," p. 3). Although the reconstruction of that process is hypothetical, there is no doubt that the process itself has caused the inclusion of many anachronisms. These reflect the times when the transmission and editing took place rather than the times in which the narratives are presumably set.

Because of these factors, not surprisingly, scholars are divided on the question of historicity, with proposed dates for the ancestors of Israel, if in fact they even existed, spanning the entire second millennium BCE. A cautious positive assessment would be at best a convergence of possibilities. Allowing for anachronisms, the data are not inconsistent with the Middle to Late Bronze Ages (ca. 2000–1200), with some clues pointing to earlier rather

than later in that time span. These clues are admittedly indirect, and include the forms of personal names used and the identification of the god of the ancestors as El (see Ex 6.3), also known in texts from Ugarit in northwest Syria as the head of the Canaanite pantheon from Ugarit. The account of Joseph's elevation to a position of prominence in the Egyptian court is not incompatible with the rise to power of the Hyksos, the Fifteenth Dynasty rulers of Semitic origin who controlled much of Lower Egypt at the end of the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1650–1550).

Yet most of the details of the lives of the ancestors of Israel, both as pastoral seminomads and as periodically migrating to Egypt, fit not only the mid-second millennium but other times as well. Biblical writings probably do preserve some authentic historical memories, but these have been so refracted by the processes of transmission and the idealization of the ancestors that it is impossible to designate any of the individuals mentioned in Genesis as historical or to establish anything resembling a precise chronology.

THE HISTORICITY OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

As with the ancestral narratives in Genesis, there is no direct connection between biblical traditions about the Exodus from Egypt and other ancient sources. Egyptian records make no mention of the major individuals and events of the narrative in Ex 1–15: Moses, Aaron, the plagues, and the defeat of the Egyptian army at the sea are completely absent from the extensive documentation we have for ancient Egypt. Again, the biblical sources are frustratingly unspecific. Neither the pharaoh "who did not know Joseph" (Ex 1.8) nor the pharaoh of the Exodus itself (Ex 5–15) is named. The only precise detail in the narrative is the store cities named in Ex 1.11, but their precise location and the dates when they were founded and occupied are uncertain, and their inclusion could also be anachronistic. In addition, biblical chronology is both vague and inconsistent. Moreover, as with the ancestral narratives in Gen 12–50, the narrative has been shaped by centuries of transmission and redaction. Finally, although the importance of the Exodus is evident from the amount of space devoted to the generation of the Exodus (the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy), the narrative framework was supplemented by the attachment of large chunks of legal and ritual material from subsequent periods. Once again, then, it is hardly surprising that scholars have divergent views about the date and even the historicity of the Exodus and of its principal characters. And, again, we do best to speak of a convergence of probabilities based on indirect evidence.

The first fixed datum, one of great importance, is a victory stele of Pharaoh Merneptah (1213–1203). In it he claims to have defeated various enemies in Canaan, including the identifiable cities of Gezer, Yanoam, and Ashkelon, and in the same geographical region, a group identified as Israel. Whether or not the victory celebrated on the stele is as complete as claimed, clearly by the end of the thirteenth century BCE the Egyptians knew of the existence of a geopolitical entity called Israel in the land of Canaan. Thus, the Exodus, or some movement of Hebrews out of Egypt, and their entry into Canaan, where they formed at least part of the group that called itself Israel, must have occurred before that date.

The biblical narrative is composite, and when critically analyzed suggests that what the Bible presents as a single episode may in fact have been several, and that more than one group of "Hebrews" eventually moved from Egypt to Canaan, probably entering it at several different places. Most of the details of the account of the forced labor of the Hebrews and of the glimpses of the Egyptian court that we get in the narratives would fit almost any period in ancient Egyptian history.

A majority of modern scholars, but by no means all, date the central episode, associated with Moses, to the thirteenth century, during the reign of Rameses II (1279–1213). An earlier date, toward the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, would link the Exodus with the expulsion of the Hyksos Dynasties from Egypt in the mid-sixteenth century and better fits the chronology in the biblical text, which dates the Exodus to 480 years prior to the construction of the Solomonic Temple in the mid-tenth century (1 Kings 6.1). This correlation was first proposed by the first-century CE Jewish historian Josephus, and continues to have modern adherents. Among the arguments against it is the absence of any mention of Israel in the land of Canaan before the Merneptah inscription. This is especially true in the case of the Amarna Letters, which are diplomatic correspondence from the fourteenth century between the Egyptian court and the rulers of city-states in Canaan. Furthermore, the biblical accounts of the period after the entry into the land found in the books of Joshua and Judges (see text that follows.) contain no hint of Egyptian presence in the land, although both archaeological and written sources indicate that it was significant throughout the Late Bronze Age. It is thus more likely that the (or an) Exodus took place during the thirteenth century.

That some Exodus took place is a responsible inference, given the persistence of the Exodus tradition in the Bible and its presence in the earliest biblical poetry (notably Ex 15), and some smaller details, such as the Egyptian names of Moses, Aaron, and Phinehas. The event must have involved fewer people than the exaggerated biblical numbers (see Ex 12.37) indicate, and

may have constituted little more than the escape of a relatively small group of Hebrews from forced labor in the eastern Nile delta in the thirteenth century BCE. Given the lack of historical data it is impossible to say more.

That group, whatever its size, interpreted its escape as the direct intervention of the deity Yahweh on its behalf, to be celebrated in hymns and magnified in importance as it was told and retold. When the group eventually entered Canaan, at a time when there was no centralized power to oppose it, it joined with others and eventually became the twelve-tribe confederation of Israel.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF IRAEL IN THE LAND OF CANAAN

Perhaps no period in the history of Israel is more controversial than the first two centuries of the Iron Age. The beginning and end of this era are framed by two synchronisms: the mention of Israel in the Merneptah Stele in the late thirteenth century, and the campaign of Pharaoh Shishak in the southern Levant in 925, an event documented both in Egyptian sources and in the Bible. During the intervening three centuries, according to a majority of scholars, Israel developed from a loose confederation of tribes into a relatively stable dynastic monarchy. But of the principal events and individuals that figure in biblical narratives, none occur in other sources. Once more, historical reconstruction must be inferential.

One reconstruction of the beginning of this period that was dominant from the early to the mid-twentieth century is that of conquest. The book of Joshua describes how the large group of Israelites crossed the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua and, in a series of swift and relentless campaigns, defeated the kings of the major Canaanite cities and annihilated most of the indigenous population. This view seemed to be confirmed by the presence of destruction layers at key sites, all dated to the very end of the Late Bronze Age.

Reexcavation of many of those sites and more refined ceramic chronology, however, made it clear that some of the sites had not in fact been occupied at that time, and that the destructions were not all contemporaneous. Moreover, the opening chapters of the book of Judges present a very different picture. While some Israelite groups may have succeeded in defeating their Canaanite neighbors, many others coexisted alongside them. This is apparently confirmed even in the book of Joshua, where such Canaanite groups as the family of Rahab (Josh 6.25) and the Gibeonites (Josh 9) were incorporated into Israel. Thus the conquest model has largely been abandoned by scholars, but no other reconstruction has gained general acceptance.

One plausible scenario is to combine elements of various models to suggest that Israel as a sociopolitical entity emerged in the land of Canaan and was made up of diverse groups. One of these was the Exodus group, whose allegiance to the god who had brought them out of Egypt, Yahweh, would become the central religious tenet of the Israelite confederation. They were joined by others, some who were apparently their kin who had never gone down to Egypt, and some who may have been Canaanites disaffected from the centers of power. These disparate elements united in a confederation or league, whose primary principles of sole worship of Yahweh and mutual support were expressed in a social compact or covenant. The elements are called tribes, and they are associated with specific subregions in the land. While the number of twelve tribes is constant, both the names of the tribes and the territories with which they were associated were less so. The religious symbol of the confederation was a movable shrine, the ark of the covenant, which seems to have been based at different tribal centers at different times. The confederation was decentralized, with no overarching authority, and the tribes were relatively independent. In time of crisis, however, tribes were expected to come to the assistance of a beleaguered member, as in the very ancient poem in Judg 5, or to punish one of their own for breach of the compact, as in the account of the Benjaminite war in Judg 19–21. In situations like these a volunteer militia was mustered.

This reconstruction takes into account a variety of biblical data that are embedded in a later historical work, the Deuteronomistic History (see "Introduction to the Historical Books," p. 315). It also incorporates recent archaeological evidence, including both significant elements of cultural continuity between the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age, and the proliferation of small rural settlements in the hill country both west and east of the Jordan. Not all of these settlements would have been Israelite, nor would tribal territory necessarily entail complete control. Several important urban centers remained outside the confederation, and Israel did not achieve total control of the Promised Land until the end of the eleventh century at the earliest.

At the beginning of the Iron Age (ca. 1200 BCE), shortly after the likely date for the Exodus, another group had arrived in Canaan. These were the Philistines, one component of the "Sea Peoples" well documented in Egyptian sources and in the archaeological record. Of Aegean origin, they had repeatedly failed in their attempts to invade Egypt, and one or more of these Sea Peoples, including the Philistines, settled in Canaan. According to the biblical account, they formed a pentapolis in the five cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron, and

the four of these cities that have been excavated (Gaza is the exception) show a remarkably homogenous material culture at this time.

The broad outline of the biblical account, in Judg 13–16 (the Samson stories) and in 1 and 2 Samuel (the stories of Samuel, Saul, and David), and the archaeological record are in considerable agreement. The Philistines had a superior technology, especially in metallurgy (see 1 Sam 13.20) and military hardware, and a professional standing army. By the mid-eleventh century they were poised to expand their territory to the north and east, and their presence is mentioned at important centers beyond Philistia proper, including Beth-shan in the Jordan Valley, and at military outposts in the heart of Judah, the dominant southern tribe, and in the north as well. The Philistines and the Israelites were thus on a collision course, both vying for control of the same region, and Israel's survival was at stake.

THE UNITED MONARCHY (CA. 1020—928 BCE)

The emergence of Israel as a nation-state is part of a larger pattern of the development of regional geopolitical and ethnic entities throughout the region, such as those of the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites in Transjordan, the Arameans in Damascus and other centers in central and northern Syria, and the Phoenicians in Tyre. For this development there is both archaeological and scattered written evidence. In the case of Israel, the major source is the Bible itself, especially the narrative of the Deuteronomistic Historians in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1–11. Judging from these sources, at least in part because of the Philistine threat, toward the end of the eleventh century Israel profoundly changed its form of government from a loose confederation of tribes to a monarchy, according to the terminology of the biblical writers. The first ruler, Saul, seems to have been more a military chief than a full-fledged king. And despite initial successes, he was unable to check the Philistine advance and died in a battle with them deep in Israel's territory in the Jezreel Valley. He was succeeded by a former commander in his army, David, who moved swiftly to contain the Philistines within their original territory and to unite Israel around himself and a newly chosen capital, Jerusalem.

Biblical historians describe additional military successes, which enabled David, and his son and successor Solomon, to subject kingdoms adjacent to Israel to vassal status, including the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites in Transjordan, and the Arameans in Damascus. Whether the extent of the territory controlled by David and Solomon is as large as biblical sources suggest is questionable. Clearly the biblical historians have magnified the period of the United Monarchy, the reigns of David and Solomon, viewing them in many respects as an ideal age, made possible by divine grant. Underlying the sometimes hyperbolic biblical accounts, however, is authentic historical memory of increasing centralized control and concomitant administrative complexity, a picture indirectly confirmed by the archaeological record. When textual and archaeological data are added to the synchronisms between the Israelite monarchy and those of its neighbors, beginning in the tenth century, there is little doubt that the outlines of the biblical narrative are essentially correct.

The most important of these synchronisms comes just after the death of Solomon. The Egyptian pharaoh Shishak (Sheshonq I) undertook a campaign in Western Asia in 925, a date based on established Egyptian chronology. Mentioned in 1 Kings 14.25–26 (cf. 2 Chr 12.2–9), this campaign is further documented in Egyptian sources and is confirmed by destruction layers at key cities in Israel. This synchronism is the basis for the chronology of the first three kings of Israel, Saul (ca. 1025–1005), David (1005–965), and Solomon (968–928, allowing for a coregency with David at the beginning of his reign).

To be sure, the biblical account of the reigns of these three kings, found in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1–11, is shaped by theological concerns and also displays a pervading interest in the characters of the narrative—the tragically inadequate Saul, the heroic David, the ambitious but flawed Solomon—and in the intrigues of the royal court. But it is also significantly different from narratives about earlier periods in Israel's history. Divine intervention is minimal, with most events taking place largely on the human plane. Moreover, a careful reading of the biblical text discloses archival and other details that can be correlated with the archaeological record and are consistent with the framework of events presupposed by the narrative. Thus, the skepticism of some modern historians, who argue that the biblical accounts of the United Monarchy are fictional retroversions from a later time, seems unwarranted.

David also seems to have begun the process of transforming his chiefdom into a dynastic monarchy, which, consistent with other Near Eastern models, described itself as divinely chosen. With the establishment of the monarchy came social and religious innovation. The older structures of the decentralized premonarchic confederation were now co-opted by royal institutions. The ark of the covenant was enshrined in the Temple in Jerusalem built by Solomon, providing in effect divine sanction for the monarchy. Priests became royal appointees, and there was a growing movement toward centralization of worship in the capital. Yet this centralized administration formed a kind of overlay, a veneer, on the social sys-

tems of the nation as a whole. Individuals still identified themselves as members of a family, clan, and tribe, and disputes between them were usually settled at the local level. Apart from the requirement of paying taxes and providing personnel for royal projects and for the army, life in the villages probably proceeded much as it had for centuries.

The establishment of the monarchy, however, had entailed the formation of an elite, wealthy class. Life in the capital of Jerusalem and, after the split of the kingdom into two, in the northern capital of Samaria as well, was characterized by conspicuous consumption. This is evident in the accounts of Solomon's court (1 Kings 4.22–28; 10.14–22), and in the description of the Temple and royal palace complex he constructed (1 Kings 6–7). That the extravagances documented in these accounts are not entirely an exaggeration is evident from archaeological data at Samaria and at royal cities such as Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, and Dan. With the concentration of political power in the hands of a ruling aristocracy came abuse. One of the constants of the biblical traditions is opposition to the exploitation of the poorer classes. This opposition was frequently expressed in prophetic rebukes of the aristocracy, as in the legendary traditions concerning Elijah (2 Kings 20), and in the books of the prophets themselves. While their own relationship to the centers of power was not always antagonistic, prophets such as Amos, Isaiah, and Micah in the eighth century and Jeremiah in the late seventh to early sixth centuries were harsh in their denunciation of social injustice. In a sense they were conservatives, even reactionaries, insisting that the older premonarchic tradition of covenant was still binding, a tradition that commanded not only exclusive worship of Yahweh but also fair treatment of every Israelite.

THE DIVIDED MONARCHY (CA. 928 TO THE LATE SEVENTH CENTURY BCE)

The union of the northern and southern tribes had been fragile, even during the United Monarchy, and it disintegrated at Solomon's death. The reason implied in 1 Kings 12 is the northerners' anger at the cost of the extravagances of the capital, and this must have been part of the motivation. Solomon's son and successor Rehoboam was unable to gain the allegiance of the ten northern tribes, who seceded and formed a separate kingdom. This inaugurates the period of the Divided Monarchy, the two kingdoms of Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The dynasty that David had established remained in power in Judah for nearly four centuries, while Israel was ruled by a succession of royal families, many of whose rulers came to power in military coups. The parts were less than their sum had been, and the two kingdoms had mixed relations, sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile. Neither was able to control effectively the regions that bordered them, and the Davidic empire, such as it was, ceased to exist.

Changes on the larger international scene would increasingly affect these two kingdoms. Pressure from a revived Egypt is already evident in the afore-mentioned campaign of Shishak to the north in 925. Meanwhile, in northern Mesopotamia, the kingdom of Assyria had consolidated its control over Babylon in the south and adjacent regions to the north and east, and by the ninth century was poised to expand into the Levant. At this point the fairly complete Assyrian annals enable the construction of a reliable chronology and provide numerous synchronisms with biblical texts. Beginning with Ahab, king of Israel in the mid-ninth century, many of the rulers of both Israel and Judah are mentioned in Assyrian sources, an indication of the growing Assyrian interest in the region and a coincidence of ominous significance.

The Assyrians were establishing an empire, a process that reached its zenith with the Assyrian king Esarhaddon's subjugation of Egypt in 671. They accomplished this by virtue of a technologically sophisticated army, which in relatively rapid advance overwhelmed the smaller kingdoms to their west, usually incorporating their territories into the empire as provinces and deporting the elite of their populations to other regions. By the late eighth century this subjugation was virtually complete. The Syrian kingdoms had been taken, including that of the Arameans in Damascus in 732. In 722 Samaria fell, its ruling class was exiled to Assyria, and the Northern Kingdom of Israel became an Assyrian province. Judah's territory was curtailed and, in part because of the remote location of Jerusalem, was allowed to exist in vassal status. Toward the end of the eighth century King Hezekiah attempted to reassert Judean independence, but this was ruthlessly quashed by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in a campaign (701) which is well documented in both biblical and Assyrian sources and archaeologically. Jerusalem avoided destruction only by payment of a heavy tribute, and the Davidic dynasty survived.

Beginning with Amos and Hosea in the mid-eighth century, the prophets, and the later authors of the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua–2 Kings) interpreted these events as a deserved punishment inflicted by God on his rebellious people. For them, the repeated experiences of attack, siege, and exile were ultimately caused not by the inexorable progress of the Assyrian armies but by divine agency, imposing the fulfillment of the curses attached to the covenant made by God with Israel on Mount Sinai.

THE END OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH (LATE SEVENTH TO EARLY SIXTH CENTURIES BCE)

By the late seventh century the Assyrian Empire was overextended and thus unable to prevent first independence and eventually overthrow by a resurgent Babylonia to its south. The Babylonians captured the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612, and in effect took over the Assyrian Empire. At first, Egypt and Judah attempted to take advantage of the transfer of power by reasserting their independence. This was the time of the reign of the Judean king Josiah (640–609), whom biblical sources compare to David and whose accomplishments are magnified like those of his illustrious predecessor. While it seems likely that Judah reestablished control over some of the territory to the north and west that had been under direct Assyrian rule, its autonomy, such as it was, was short-lived. After Josiah's death in battle at Megiddo in 609, in a failed attempt to prevent the Egyptians from moving north to reinforce the tottering Assyrians, Judah was again reduced to the status of a vassal, first to Egypt, and then, by the end of the seventh century, to Babylon. Caught between two greater powers, the Judean kings Jehoiakim and Zedekiah successively allied themselves with Egypt, which proved to be the weaker partner. Under Nebuchadrezzar (also called Nebuchadnezzar) II, the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem in 597 and 586, in the second instance destroying the city, burning down the Temple, and ending the Davidic dynasty.

Despite the extravagant propaganda of the royal establishment, neither the Davidic dynasty nor its capital city were impregnable. Jerusalem was destroyed, its dynastic Temple burned, and its population decimated by death and exile. Autonomous control of the Promised Land became only a memory. And despite partial restoration later in the sixth century, exile in Babylon forever transformed the religion of Judah: Judaism. From this point on, a significant proportion of Jews would be living outside the Promised Land, without king, Temple, or priesthood.

Michael D. Coogan

CULTURAL CONTEXTS
THE PERSIAN AND HELLENISTIC PERIODS

THE PERSIAN PERIOD (539—333 BCE)

The Babylonian exile and the period of Persian domination that followed was a time of great transformation for Judean institutions, religious practices, and culture, but it was equally a time in which the fundamental continuity with preexilic traditions was reaffirmed and secured. When Nebuchadrezzar put down the rebellion of Judah in 586 BCE, he exiled to Babylonia a portion of the population, including many of the ruling class and the skilled artisans. Some, however, remained in Judah, where a subsistence economy was soon reestablished. Although the system of regular sacrifices at the Temple was disrupted, the ruined Temple remained a focus for religious observances. The book of Lamentations may preserve liturgical poems used on days commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. Little is known about the circumstances of those who went into exile, although it appears that the exiles were settled in many local communities in Babylonia, where they were able to oversee their own internal and cultural affairs under the leadership of Jewish elders and prophets (see Ezek; Isa 40–55). Recently published documents from southern Babylonia preserve business and legal documents from a number of Jewish families during the period (572–477 BCE) and include references to a village called Al-Yahudu ("Judah-ville"), evidently a site where most of the residents were Jewish. Though most of the families attested in these archival documents were of modest means, some, like the families of Ahiqam son of Rapa-Yama and Ahiqar son of Rimut had significant property and business interests. These documents complement the previously known Murashu archive (ca. 450–400) which include some documentation on economically modest Jewish families from the area around Nippur. Most likely the most affluent Jews would have been descendants of the Judean royal court, which was settled in Babylon, as documents from the Weidner archives attest.

The conquest of Babylon by the Persian king Cyrus the Great in 539 BCE brought significant changes. In keeping with his policy of respecting the various deities worshiped throughout the empire, a decree by Cyrus in 538 (see Ezra 1.1–4; 6.1–5) authorized the rebuilding of the

Temple in Jerusalem and the return of the Temple vessels captured by Nebuchadrezzar. In addition, Cyrus allowed any of the exiles who wished to return to Judah to do so. Within the exilic community in Babylon the anonymous prophet known as "Second Isaiah" (Isa 40–55) strongly supported Cyrus and urged the exiles to return to Judah. Although the historical sources are few and not always easy to interpret, it appears that only a small minority of the exiles and their descendants returned to Judah, most choosing to remain in Babylonia. This latter group became the nucleus of a large and highly significant Jewish Diaspora community (Jews of "the dispersion," that is, living outside the Promised Land), which strongly influenced the development of Judaism and Jewish culture during the following centuries.

Despite the decree of Cyrus, the Temple in Jerusalem was not rebuilt until 520–515 BCE. The reasons for the delay were various. Persian control over the western territories may actually have been tentative until after the Persians conquered Egypt in 525. The economy of Yehud (the name by which the Persian province of Judah was known) was weak, and there appears to have been friction between the population that had remained in the land and the small but powerful group who returned from exile with the authorization and financial backing of the Persian king. Conflicts with the neighboring territories of Samaria to the north and Geshur and Ammon in Transjordan also complicated the situation. Within the Bible the prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah and portions of Ezra 1–6 refer to this period, but these sources have to be read and interpreted critically, for they are neither consistent with one another nor easy to understand on their own terms. At least during the early part of Persian rule the governors of Judah appear to have been prominent Jews from the Diaspora community, one of whom, Zerubbabel, was a member of the Davidic royal family. The province of Yehud itself was very small, consisting of Jerusalem and the territory surrounding it within a radius of about 15–20 mi (24–32 km).

Once the Temple was rebuilt, it became the nucleus of the restored community, and consequently a focus of conflict (Isa 56–66; Mal). The high priestly family, which had also returned from the Diaspora, became very powerful, and at least on occasion was in conflict with the governor appointed by the Persian king. Although the details are often not clear, there appears to have been continuing conflict during the fifth century between those Jews whose ancestors had been in exile and those whose ancestors had remained in the land. Those who returned from the Diaspora styled themselves the "children of the exile" and referred rather contemptuously to the rest as "people of the land," as though their very status as Jews was in question. In fact, the question of the limits of the community was one of the most contentious issues of the period, reflected both in the controversy over marriages between Jewish men and ethnically foreign women (Ezra 10; Neh 13) and also in conflicts within the Jewish community over who had the right to claim the traditional identity as descendants of "Abraham" and "Israel" (see Isa 63.16 and more generally "Third Isaiah," Isa 56–66). Although the conflicts between various contending groups in early Persian period Yehud are largely cast in religious terms, there is no question that they were also in part socioeconomic (see Neh 5). All of these conflicts and efforts toward redefinition of the community, however, took place within the reality of Persian imperial control. Thus it is not by accident that the two most prominent figures involved in various reforms of mid-fifth-century Yehud, Ezra and Nehemiah, were Diaspora Jews of high standing, carrying out tasks that had been specifically authorized by the Persian kings.

Because this was a period of self-conscious reconstruction, it was also a time of immense literary activity, as traditional materials were collected, revised, and edited, and new works composed. Although portions of the Pentateuch may have existed in various forms during the time of the monarchy, it was probably reworked during the Persian period into something close to its final form. Although a history of Israel and Judah known as the Deuteronomistic History (Deut through 2 Kings) had been composed during the latter years of the monarchy and updated during the exile, a new version of that history, 1–2 Chronicles, was prepared during the Persian period (ca. 350 BCE). It clearly reflects the concerns of the postexilic community, focusing almost exclusively on the history of Judah and giving particular emphasis to the institution of the Temple. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah interpret events from the decree of Cyrus in 538 until the late fifth century.

In addition to the prophetic books composed at this time (Isa 56–66, Hag, Zech, Mal, and perhaps Joel), the texts of older prophets were also edited and reinterpreted. Psalmody had been an important element of worship at the First Temple but appears to have taken on an even more significant role in the Second Temple. Although the expansion and revision of the book of Psalms may have continued until well into the Hellenistic or even Roman period, an important shaping of the psalter, perhaps including its division into five "books," was part of Persian- period activity. Wisdom writing, too, flourished during this time. The book of Job, parts of the book of Proverbs, and perhaps Ecclesiastes were likely composed then.

THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD (333–363 BCE)

The westward expansion of the Persian Empire into the area of Asia Minor had brought it into conflict with Greece, since many of the cities of Asia Minor that came under Persian control had been founded and populated by Greeks. Twice the Persians had even invaded the Greek mainland but were defeated on both occasions. Eventually, Philip of Macedon developed a plan to free the Greek cities of Asia Minor from Persian domination. Although he died before he could undertake the campaign, it was taken up by his son Alexander the Great in 334 BCE. Alexander, however, did not stop with the accomplishment of that initial goal. In 333 he continued down the Phoenician coast, subduing any city that resisted, conquered Egypt, then turned to the Persian heartland, defeating Darius III, the last Persian emperor, in 331. Alexander continued his conquest into the eastern reaches of the Persian Empire before returning in 324 to Babylon, which he apparently intended to establish as the capital of the empire he now controlled. He died in 323 before he could successfully organize his enormous territory. After Alexander's death, his generals fought for control of portions of the empire. By 301 an agreement gave Egypt to Ptolemy and Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine to Seleucus. Ptolemy, however, occupied Palestine and southern Syria. Through a series of five wars extending over more than a hundred years, the Ptolemaic kings managed to hold onto their Palestinian territory, finally losing it to the Seleucids in 198 BCE.

Jerusalem had surrendered to Alexander in 333 and was relatively undisturbed by the events of his conquest. Samaria, too, surrendered but rebelled in 332 and was severely punished, its inhabitants killed or sold into slavery, and the city refounded as a Macedonian military colony. Documents belonging to a group of Samaritans who fled and were later tracked down and killed by Alexander's troops have been excavated from the Wadi Daliyeh in the Jordan Valley. In contrast to the relatively settled conditions following Alexander's conquest, however, the dispute between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids over control of Palestine had serious consequences for Jerusalem and Judea. Not only did the wars sometimes affect Judean territory, but the nation's leaders had to make difficult choices concerning which power to support, a factor that influenced internal Judean politics during the third century BCE.

Although the high priest was the primary representative of the Judeans, the Ptolemaic system of government and taxation had significant effects on the power structure of the country. The Ptolemies considered their territories primarily as a source of revenue. Rather than collecting funds directly, they employed "tax farmers," often local persons who bought the right to collect taxes for a specified area. Their profit was the difference between the amount they raised and the amount they had pledged to the government. Some of these positions were quite lucrative. Moreover, the Ptolemies also engaged prominent landowners to keep the peace as the heads of locally organized military villages. The Jewish historian Josephus preserves a long account of the Tobiad family, which served the Ptolemaic government in both capacities. From his lively narrative one has a sense not only of the power and wealth such positions could afford but also of the dangers and conflict they often entailed.

Culturally, the most significant effect of Ptolemaic rule was the establishment of a large Jewish Diaspora community in Egypt, centered in the new city of Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great. Jews had often migrated to Egypt during times of economic or political trouble (see, e.g., Jer 42–44). In the fifth century a Jewish military colony in the service of the Persian army was established at Elephantine (near modern Aswan). They had their own temple, though they remained in correspondence with Jerusalem concerning various religious matters, including the proper celebration of Passover and assistance in securing Persian permission for the rebuilding of the Elephantine temple after it was destroyed by local Egyptians. The various Aramaic documents found there (letters, contracts, marriage documents, records of legal disputes, etc.) provide an important glimpse into the daily life of this Jewish community in Egypt. Among the papyri was a copy of the book of Ahikar, a legendary story about an official in the Assyrian court at the time of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (late eighth to early seventh century). Although the story was not Jewish in origin, it became popular among the Jews. The book of Tobit in the Apocrypha makes reference to Ahikar, even calling him Tobit's nephew (Tob 1.21–22).

The Hellenistic-era Egyptian Diaspora, however, was much larger and more influential than the previous small communities of Jews living in Egypt. Its origins are not clear, but during the initial Ptolemaic conquest of Palestine, Ptolemy I apparently captured Jerusalem and took many prisoners back to Egypt, where they settled. Later many other Jews migrated there, presumably for economic reasons. The community continued to grow, both in numbers and in prosperity, until in the Roman period the Jewish population numbered in the hundreds of thousands, including many wealthy and prominent families.

By the middle of the third century BCE the largely Greek-speaking Jewish community in Egypt had translated the books of the Torah (Genesis–Deuteronomy) into Greek, and over the next century or so, the other books of the Hebrew Bible were also translated. A leg-

endary account of this project is contained in the Letter of Aristeas. According to that narrative, the impetus for the project came from the king himself, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BCE), who wished to have a copy for the library of Alexandria. Seventy-two Jewish translators were brought to Egypt from Jerusalem for the task; hence the translation came to be known as the Septuagint, from the Greek word for "seventy." Scholars largely reject this account as unhistorical and maintain that the translation was undertaken for the religious needs of a Jewish community that no longer understood Hebrew. (See the essays "The Canons of the Bible" and "Textual Criticism," the section on Hebrew Bible: Texts and Versions, p. 1845, for more information about the Septuagint.)

In addition to the translation of the scriptures, the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt produced a rich and varied literature in Greek. One should not assume, however, that every Jewish writing in Greek originated in Alexandria, for during the Hellenistic period Greek became the most important language in the Near East. Educated Jews in Palestine and in the eastern Diaspora were nearly as likely to speak Greek as their counterparts in Egypt. Nevertheless, Alexandria remained unparalleled in the richness of its intellectual culture.

Throughout the Hellenistic world the increasing contact between different ethnic groups led to a new self-consciousness within communities about their own historical traditions and how these traditions related to those of other peoples. Thus historiographical writing, from the scholarly to the popular, became an important type of literary activity. In the late third century BCE an Alexandrian Jew named Demetrius investigated the chronologies of the biblical tradition, attempting to explain apparent contradictions and logical inconsistencies. A more entertaining work is Eupolemus's *Concerning the Kings in Judea*. A friend of Judas Maccabeus, Eupolemus retold the biblical narrative with many embellishments and legendary details in an attempt to glorify Israel's traditions and accomplishments. In Eupolemus's history Moses appears as a culture-bringer, the inventor of the alphabet, which the Phoenicians and the Greeks later borrowed. Eupolemus particularly emphasizes the power and influence of the Israelite kingdom under David and Solomon, as well as the splendor of the Solomonic Temple. Not only was the Temple decorated with gifts from the kings of Tyre and Egypt, but Solomon reciprocated, sending a golden pillar to the temple of Zeus in Tyre.

The tendency to make connections between one's own traditions and those of other ethnic groups and to claim priority in the arts of civilization is reflected in *Asatir*, a highly legendary history written in the second century BCE by an anonymous Samaritan. He identifies Enoch with the Greek Titan hero Atlas and claims that Abraham was the inventor of astrology, which he taught to the Egyptians when he sojourned there. A similar tendency is evident in the work of Artapanus. In his history Moses becomes the inventor of the technologies basic to civilization. Moreover, this Moses serves as a general in the Egyptian army, organizes Egyptian religion, and comes to be treated virtually as a god by the Egyptians, who identify him with Hermes (the Greek equivalent of the Egyptian god Thoth). The interest of Egyptian Jews in the biblical figure of Joseph is reflected in the romance *Joseph and Asenath*, which tells the story of Joseph's marriage to the Egyptian noblewoman Asenath (see Gen 41.45). She is depicted as a model convert to Judaism, and the story depicts some of the complications of Jewish-Gentile relations in Hellenistic Egypt.

Jewish poetic works composed in Greek also reflect a blending of cultural traditions. The Hellenistic genre of poetry praising cities and countries is represented in the work of Theodotus and Philo the Epic Poet, who wrote poems about Shechem and Jerusalem, respectively. Even more ambitious was the work of Ezekiel the Tragedian, whose play *The Exodus* retold the account of Ex 1–15 in a style influenced by the Greek dramatists Aeschylus and Euripides.

Greek philosophy, too, left its imprint on Hellenistic Jewish culture. Already in the second century BCE an Alexandrian Jew named Aristobulus produced a philosophical commentary on the Torah in which he claimed that the law of Moses anticipated many of the fundamental tenets of Greek philosophy and that the Greek philosophers Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato derived their ideas from the Jewish law. Written toward the end of the Hellenistic period, the Wisdom of Solomon continues the biblical tradition of wisdom books like Proverbs but incorporates many elements of Greek rhetoric, philosophy, and literary style.

Less is known about the Jews of the eastern Diaspora who remained under Seleucid control than about the Jews of Egypt and Palestine, but it appears that peoples of various ethnic groups had access to economic and political advancement within the Seleucid Empire. Several writings from this time—Tobit, Dan 1–6, and Esther—suggest something of the outlook of Jews in the eastern Diaspora. Written originally in Hebrew or Aramaic and later enlarged when they were translated into Greek, these books are works of fiction, edifying entertainments that tell the stories of Jews who achieved high status in foreign courts, were threatened by jealous rivals, and yet succeeded in securing personal power and the good will of the king. Though the stories are all set

in the pre-Hellenistic period (Tobit in the Assyrian Empire, Daniel in the Babylonian exile, and Esther in the Persian court), they were probably written (or in the case of Daniel revised and updated) during the Seleucid period. These stories are ideologically complex, exhibiting forms of resistance against the claims of imperial culture and the danger it might represent for Jews, but also envisioning ways that Jewish life could flourish in the Diaspora.

The eastern Diaspora was also the conduit for important religious developments that arose from the contact between Judaism and the religions of Babylon and Persia. This influence is most clearly seen in the development of apocalyptic literature. Parts of the book of *1 Enoch* composed in the third century BCE reflect astronomical lore and traditions about antediluvian sages that derive from Babylonian sources. Although it is more difficult to trace the path of influence in its earliest stages, the dualistic religious beliefs of Persian Zoroastrianism almost certainly contributed to the development of Jewish apocalyptic thought and to some of the ideas of the sectarians at Qumran.

The eventual triumph of the Seleucid kingdom over the Ptolemies in the fifth Syrian war (198 BCE) obviously had a greater significance for the Jews of Judea than for those of Egypt. The Seleucid ruler Antiochus III treated the Judeans generously in appreciation for the support he received from the pro-Seleucid faction, granting an allowance for the Temple and various tax concessions, as well as confirming the Judeans' right to live "according to the laws of their country." Although relations began well, the way the Seleucid Empire governed its territories set the stage for a terrible conflict. Unlike the Ptolemaic system of centralized government administered with the cooperation of local leaders, the Seleucid regime was more decentralized. It derived some unity, however, from a network of Greek cities established throughout the empire. These were not necessarily ethnically Greek but were cities that had received a charter to organize as a "polis," the Greek form of city government. Cultural prestige and economic advantages often led the leadership of Near Eastern cities to request such a charter.

The events leading up to the conflict between Judea and the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BCE) are complex and not fully understood. In part they involved a struggle for succession to the high priesthood and the attempts of various contenders to secure the support of the king by paying him large sums of money. The first of the contenders, Jason, also paid to have Jerusalem established as a Greek "polis," Antioch at Jerusalem. Neither of these acts in itself seems to have aroused much opposition in Jerusalem. The conflict was not a cultural conflict between Judaism and Hellenism, for Palestinian Jews had already incorporated significant elements of Hellenistic culture, which they considered quite compatible with their religious identity.

The crisis was sparked by the attempt by another contender, Menelaus, to buy the office of high priest. When he promised the king more than he could pay, he attempted to raise the money by taking golden vessels from the Temple. At this, a riot broke out in Jerusalem. Subsequent fighting between the forces of Jason and Menelaus convinced Antiochus that Judea was in revolt, and he retook the city and plundered the Temple, in either 169 or 168. Sometime later there were further disturbances, and Antiochus sent Syrian troops, which remained garrisoned in Jerusalem. Whether the status of Jerusalem at this point was a "polis" or a military colony is uncertain, but in either case in 167 the Temple was reorganized to accommodate the religious needs of the Syrian troops. The Temple was dedicated to Zeus Olympios, the Greek name for the Syrian god Baal Shamem, and an altar established for sacrifice to him. Though Menelaus continued to preside as high priest, most Jews considered these actions to have profaned the Temple. In addition, the traditional practice of Judaism was suppressed by Antiochus, perhaps with the cooperation of Menelaus. Since religious persecution was virtually unknown in antiquity, it is difficult to know how Antiochus understood this repression and what he hoped to accomplish by it. Its actual result was to ignite the resistance known as the Maccabean revolt.

The Hasmoneans, Mattathias and his sons Judas Maccabeus, Jonathan, Simon, John, and Eleazar, were the leaders of the revolt. Although Judas managed to retake control of the Temple in 164 (its rededication being the occasion for the institution of the festival of Hanukkah), it was not until 142 that the last of the Seleucid army was expelled and actual independence was secured by Simon. From then until the Roman conquest of Judea in 63 BCE the small kingdom was ruled by the Hasmonean family, which in addition to being kings also assumed the office of high priest.

Religious and cultural life in Judea during the Seleucid and Hasmonean periods was rich and varied, with a remarkable quantity of literature produced in Hebrew, Aramaic, and to some extent in Greek. Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Jesus Ben Sira's book of wisdom teachings, was probably composed in Hebrew about 180 BCE. Though largely traditional, it embodies several innovations: Ben Sira's identification of wisdom with the law (Torah) of Moses, his praise of the contemporary high priest Simon II, and his own explicit claim to authorship. Ben Sira may have disapproved of apocalyptic speculation, but the crisis under Antiochus IV produced an upsurge in apocalyptic writings, not only Dan 7–12, but also *1 Enoch* 83–90 and *The Testament of Moses*. After the establishment of the Hasmonean monarchy, a supporter of the dynasty composed an account of the

war in Hebrew (1 Maccabees), modeling it after the earlier books of Kings and Chronicles. An Egyptian Jewish writer, Jason of Cyrene, also wrote a history of the war in Greek (2 Maccabees), which was strongly influenced by forms of Hellenistic history writing.

Our knowledge of the literature of this time has been greatly increased by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran. Although this library was the property of a sectarian religious group related to the Essenes, it contained many Hebrew and Aramaic texts that were not sectarian compositions. Several of these scrolls contain noncanonical psalms, blessings, and other liturgical material. There are also many examples of what is called "the rewritten Bible," fairly free retellings of parts of the biblical story, embellished with new narrative episodes, prayers, and other elements (e.g., *Jubilees*, *The Genesis Apocryphon*, *The Apocryphon of Joshua*). Some texts elaborate on the apocalyptic elements of the books of Ezekiel and Daniel or place apocalyptic pronouncements in the mouths of other biblical figures, such as Levi, Qahat (Kohath), and Amram. Several texts, often having to do with matters of religious law, purport to be discourses of Moses, most remarkably, the Temple Scroll, which apparently takes the form of an address by God to Moses. Although it incorporates material from the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy, it also contains much new material, including detailed instructions for building the Temple.

These documents and others pertaining to the Qumran sect itself help to clarify issues of religious controversy that shaped the period of Hasmonean rule. The Temple and the Torah were central institutions for Judaism, which made them focal points for conflict. The Qumran scrolls show that conflict over the correct calendar (i.e., solar or solar-lunar) for the conduct of Temple sacrifices was one of several issues dividing the Qumran Essenes from their rivals, the Pharisees. Though the Hasmoneans were not always on good terms with the Pharisees, they adopted the lunar calendar favored by them. Many other writings from Qumran also elaborate their understanding of disputed issues such as purity, marriage, and sabbath observance, concerning which they were at odds with the Pharisees. Although the Qumran community did not compose apocalypses (i.e., reports of revelatory visions), they were strongly influenced by apocalyptic ideas and considered themselves to be living in the last times, just before God would intervene to restore proper order to the world. They supported their ideas in part by writing "pesharim," types of commentaries on biblical texts, which they read as referring to themselves and their opponents. Their understanding of the ancient texts as only actualized in their own time anticipates NT exegesis of the Jewish scriptures in many ways.

In general, the Hellenistic period presents a picture of Judaism that is extraordinarily diverse. Not only did Jews live in a vast range of lands from Egypt to Parthia, they also creatively adapted many elements from the varied Hellenistic cultures of these lands. Nevertheless, important symbols and institutions, including the Temple in Jerusalem, the scriptures, and common religious practices based in the Torah, provided a sense of unity and common identity.

Carol A. Newsom

CULTURAL CONTEXTS
THE ROMAN PERIOD

The Roman conquest of Judea in 63 BCE was part of a centuries-long expansion of the power of Rome. The destruction of Carthage in North Africa in 146 BCE concluded the Punic Wars and secured the western Mediterranean, and the destruction of Corinth in the same year demonstrated Rome's control of Greece. In the next century, a series of conflicts with the successors of Alexander the Great in Asia and Egypt brought Roman rule to the entire eastern Mediterranean. The events that led to the replacement of the Roman republic by autocratic rule culminated with the installation of Julius Caesar's nephew Octavian (later Augustus) as the first emperor in 27 BCE, and included the conquest of Egypt. The Mediterranean was now, as it has aptly been called, "a Roman lake."

Within the Roman Empire, especially in the east, client states were allowed considerable autonomy as long as their rulers maintained order and paid tribute to Rome. In Judea, Herod the Great, king of Judea from 37 to 4 BCE, succeeded on both counts, and with Roman sanction his control eventually extended to all of the region west of the Jordan and over much of Transjordan. His successors were not so adept, and direct Roman rule of Judea itself began in 6 CE. Thus began an uneasy détente between a series of Roman governors and the leaders of the Jewish

community, based in the Temple in Jerusalem. This broke down during the First Jewish Revolt (66–73 CE), prompting the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. A brief resurgence of Jewish nationalism in the Second Jewish Revolt (132–135 CE) was easily crushed, and Jerusalem became Aelia Capitolina, a fully Hellenized city from which Jews were banned.

This is the historical setting for the life of Jesus and the development of earliest Christianity, one of several "Judaisms" that coexisted in Palestine before 70 CE. For most of them the Temple was the primary place of worship and the locus of authority in religious and intracommunity issues. The priesthood in the Temple was hereditary, but from the time of Herod on the high priest was appointed by a ruler or governor. The high priest was head of a council, called the Sanhedrin, which had jurisdiction in religious and, to a limited extent, in civic matters. Other groups that comprised Judaism, with boundaries not always sharply drawn, included the Sadducees, members of the priesthood whose social status was aristocratic and whose views were conservative. The Pharisees were a movement concerned with observance of the Torah and hence with its interpretation, often through local houses of assembly; these "synagogues," however, did not replace the Temple as the place of sacrifice and pilgrimage. The Pharisees were forerunners of the rabbinic Judaism that developed after the Temple's destruction in 70. Outside of these groups, but still part of the broad spectrum of Judaism, were the Essenes and allied members of the "community" which professed to follow the new or true covenant. The rules governing these communities were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Its founding leadership had seceded from the Temple-based priesthood during the early Hasmonean period (mid-first century BCE). Often involved in tense interaction with first-century Judeans, the Samaritans possessed their own version of the Torah and opposed sacrificial worship at the Jerusalem Temple. They remain a tiny minority within Israel today.

WITHIN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Readers encounter two different cultural spaces within the New Testament: the village economy of agriculture and fishing in the Galilee, and the mobile economy of merchants and tradesmen in the urban centers of the empire. The first, the village economy, forms the context of Jesus's ministry and of the itinerant disciples who formulated the collections of sayings, stories, and miracles that underlie the Gospels. The second, the merchant economy, constitutes the world of Paul's missions as well as that of countless unknown disciples like those responsible for bringing the gospel message to Rome around 41 CE. This larger, urban world is that of the epistles and the book of Acts. It is also evident in the expansions and reformulations of Mark and "Q" that are found in Matthew and Luke. Both the village agriculturists and the traveling merchants view from below a third cultural space: that of the wealthy, educated elite who are responsible for most of the architectural, artistic, literary, legal, philosophical, and religious remains that represent the Roman world and its influence within Western history and culture.

The predominance of this third, elite world in its cultural influence creates a problem for historians. We must be cautious in using the productions of an elite minority to describe the religious or social world of ordinary people in ancient societies. Anthropologists, for instance, make a distinction between the high tradition of sacred texts, temple rites, and the learned commentary upon them that centers upon the great urban cultural milieu, and the humbler, smaller traditions of religious belief, story, and practice that villagers hand on to one another. The story of the young Jesus remaining in the Temple to debate the teachers (Lk 2.41–52) exemplifies this distinction. For the Galilean peasants, religious devotion is focused on, and expressed in, the act of pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover. For the religious elite, it consists rather of learned interpretation of the sacred texts.

Thousands of papyri found in the dry climate of Egypt have yielded new insights into the lives of ordinary people in ancient times. Scholars also study nonelite forms of storytelling, popular belief, and everyday life; these aspects of experience are reflected in novels, in expansions of the biblical text in the Targums (Aramaic translations and paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible), in Jewish and Christian apocryphal writings, and within the New Testament itself, as well as in the remains of material culture recovered by archaeologists.

Roman rule constituted the overarching political reality for both the village agricultural society in the Gospels and the urban context of Acts and the epistles. Its most immediate impact within Palestine was the accession of the Idumean Herod as king. Rome, not the Jewish populace, established the terms of Herodian rule. Herod's massive building projects—including the city of Caesarea, his own mausoleum at Herodion, and the Temple complex in Jerusalem—followed Greek and Roman models. Further consequences of Herod's rule included the severing of ties between tenant farmers and landholders who were no longer local patrons (see Mk 12.1–9). Pressures on the tax system to meet Roman demands and to finance Herod's building projects must have been considerable; this, and the possibilities for corruption and extortion inherent in the system, re-

sulted in the cultural disdain reflected in the phrase "tax collector and sinner" (Lk 15.1–2; Mt 18.17 uses the alternative, equally dismissive, "tax collector and Gentile"). The auxiliary forces who represented the immediate face of Roman power were composed of troops from surrounding areas with inherited ethnic hatreds for the population they policed. Soldiers might extort goods and services at random from the local populace (Mt 5.41). However, legionary centurions who retired in a region where they had served might also be valuable local patrons (Lk 7.1–10). Physicians attached to army units could also serve the populace on the side (Mk 5.26).

Most of Galilee seems to have been a prosperous region of small landholders, who produced wine or olive oil, and grazed herds of sheep and goats. Families in the villages where Jesus preached were largely self-sufficient. Craftsmen, such as Jesus himself, may have worked in the cities that were being built in the region, like Tiberias and Sepphoris. After harsh reprisals against some towns for the surprise massacre of Roman troops commanded by the experienced legate Cestius in 66 CE, Galilee was quickly pacified. The rebellion against Rome, which Judean zealots ignited in 66 CE, had no traction in Galilee. Further evidence for the general prosperity of the region emerges when one turns to the occupation of Jesus's core disciples, Peter, James, and John (Mk 1.16–20). The fishing industry around the Sea of Galilee was a flourishing one, as the archaeological remains of extensive harbor installations indicate. Fishing involved families or partners who owned the boats working with hired hands. Fish was salted, dried, smoked, or pickled, and packed in jars for export. Thus Jesus and his disciples were neither naïve isolated pastoralists nor poor peasants, but were engaged in economic enterprises crucial to Galilee's place in the larger world.

For Jerusalem, a city whose chief economic asset was its Temple, the crowds of pilgrims at major feasts and the massive new complex of buildings were both an economic boon and a source of civic pride. The major cities in the eastern Mediterranean, such as Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, and Thessalonica, also enjoyed increased prosperity as a consequence of Roman rule and the large number of travelers on land and sea. Without such routine travel, the Christian mission could not have taken place. The expansion of Christianity was also furthered by the existence of Jewish communities in those cities, which provided an initial network (e.g., see Acts 13.5; 14.1). Many of the peoples incorporated into the Roman Empire, Jews and non-Jews alike, would have shared positive sentiments toward its authority (see Rom 13.1–7; 1 Pet 2.13–17).

On the other hand, civic discord, rioting, and localized rebellion against Roman rule remained real possibilities wherever a native population was not fully assimilated. Alexandria in Egypt had a large Jewish population that included highly educated, cultured, and wealthy individuals like the philosopher and exegete Philo of Alexandria (d. ca. 50 CE). Yet non-Jewish residents rioted in 41 CE when the Jewish elite sought the same citizenship rights as the citizen descendants of the Greek founders. Despite the appeals of a delegation of prominent Jewish Alexandrians, the emperor Claudius refused to grant their request, and threatened severe punishment if further civil discord occurred. Claudius also expelled members of Rome's Jewish community for "rioting at the name of Chrestus," presumably local discord occasioned by Christian missionaries (see Acts 18.1–2). Nero, in 65, executed some members of the new sect of undesirables, the Christians—including, according to tradition, Peter and Paul—as scapegoats for a fire that burned for nine days engulfing two thirds of the city and killing hundreds. He became the focus of anti-Roman sentiment, the demonic persecutor of faithful Christians in later generations (see Rev 13.1–18).

Despite the counsel of moderate voices and the pro-Roman policies of Herod Agrippa, the ruler of Galilee and northern Transjordan, zealot hostilities initiated by a faction from Jerusalem in 66 CE brought the region into full-scale revolt against Rome; by August of 70, Titus led Roman troops in burning and destroying the Temple. Christians living in Jerusalem appear to have fled the city prior to its fall. Jews living in the Diaspora did not support the Judean rebellion; this did not keep the Romans from penalizing all Jews after the defeat. The Romans forced Jews who once paid a tax to support the Temple (see Mt 17.24–27) to pay instead an increased tax to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome.

THE TYPICAL ROMAN CITY

A brief tour of Caesarea Maritima, the residence of the Roman governor of Judea (Acts 8.40; 9.30; 10.1,24; 11.11; 12.19–23; 18.22; 21.8; 23.23; 25.1–13), reveals the outline of an ancient city from the perspective of the rich. It was originally a small military settlement dating from the mid-third century BCE; Augustus gave it to Herod, who built a magnificent city of some 8,000 acres and a harbor to rival that of Alexandria. Two breakwaters created a sheltered harbor of 40 acres. An area with a temple, on a raised mound, dedicated to Rome and Augustus, faced the harbor at the south end of the forum that runs along the harborside. To the south of the city, a theater faced the sea, although the structure that has been unearthed is a later, rebuilt one. Among the discoveries there is a

stone with an inscription referring to Pontius Pilate as prefect. There was also a large amphitheater similar to the Colosseum and a large racecourse (hippodrome).

An aqueduct supplied the city with water from springs on Mount Carmel, and an elaborate sewer system under the city drained away waste. Walkways were decorated with mosaics, and promenades were lined with columns. Herod spared no expense on his showcase; builders used imported marbles from Italy and Egypt, and pink granite from Aswan. There were warehouses facing the harbor to store the goods that passed through the city from extensive maritime trade, which reached as far as south Asia. The residents of Palestine did not have to journey to Alexandria, Corinth, or Rome to see the world's riches on display for a wealthy elite.

Capernaum on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee was the base for Jesus's preaching activities around Galilee. It lay on the road that connected Caesarea and Ptolemais (Acco) on the coast with Damascus in Syria. Even if they never visited the new city of Caesarea, the traffic along the highway between the coast and Damascus would have alerted Jesus and his contemporaries to the cultural realities of Greco-Roman cities. Two other city foundations within Galilee itself, Sepphoris and Tiberias, contributed to the growth of urbanization. Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 BCE to 39 CE, resided at Sepphoris, a mere 4 mi (7 km) from Nazareth, until he moved to the newly built Tiberias on the lake in 19–20 CE. The Gk term *tekton* used for Joseph and his sons (Mk 6.3; Mt 13.55) is usually translated "carpenter," but there is no reason to assume that Jesus and his family were restricted to the carpenter's shop of a village. They are just as likely to have been employed in the building that occurred in Sepphoris and Tiberias. Jesus's view of the rich could have been shaped by such experiences, and his followers may have included individuals connected to the Herodian court (see Lk 8.3).

STATUS AND SOCIAL CLASS IN THE CITY

The artisans, manual laborers, and merchants who lived in a typical Roman city had little time for the pleasures of the city's main streets. Long days in cramped and often dark shops would have been more typical of Paul's life as a tentmaker, for instance (Acts 18.3; 2 Cor 6.5; 11.27). This trade involved creating the awnings, made of a rough, thick fabric like sailcloth, which provided cover from the sun in theaters and the forum, and in front of the booths from which goods were sold. When crowds thronged the city for a festival, such as the biennial Isthmian games outside Corinth in honor of Poseidon (see Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 8.9), there would have been no shortage of work for tentmakers.

The members of the wealthy elite and the educated scribes, Pharisees, and philosophers who were attached to them despised such lowly occupations, as well as those who collected the taxes. The tensions between rich and poor that were evident in Corinth (1 Cor 11.17–34) show how difficult it could be to cross social divisions of class and status. Those in whose homes the community assembled would have thought it their right to provide a feast for the others who were from their own group; the rest—artisans who had to work from dawn to dusk, as well as slave members of the community—should be glad for the meager rations provided for them. Similarly, the letter of James (2.1–13) excoriates Christians for showing deference to a rich man, giving him a comfortable seat and asking the poor to squat on the floor in the assembly. Although Paul's letters lack the sharp attacks on wealth found in the teaching of Jesus and in the letter of James, Paul does challenge the privileges of social superiority to one's fellows when they surface in the Christian community.

Although most Christians did not belong to the local civic elite (1 Cor 1.26–30), a few individuals associated with the Corinthian church could claim such status. Acts 18.8 refers to Crispus (1 Cor 1.14) as *archisynagogos,* "head of the synagogue," a title that he may have been accorded as a benefactor, perhaps by contributing funds for a synagogue building. Women can appear as patronesses and *archisynagogai* as well. Paul recommends Phoebe, a deaconess from the Corinthian port city Cenchrea (Rom 16.1–2). Such recommendations were a common lettertype in the ancient world, in which patronage relationships were essential to success. Gaius (1 Cor 1.14) was wealthy enough to host all the Christians in Corinth at once (Rom 16.23).

Paul also conveys greetings from a certain Erastus, who is *oikonomos* ("city treasurer") of Corinth (Rom 16.23), the only convert who is known to have held a civic office. A pavement in Corinth from the area between the north market and the theater bears an inscription stating that Erastus paved the area at his own expense in return for the office of called in Latin *aedile* (one of the four magistrates who governed the city, and particularly the public officers in charge of the streets). Since the name is an unusual one (no other instances are known), scholars think it possible that it was the same person mentioned by Paul. The term that Paul uses is not the Greek equivalent for *aedile,* so it may represent a lesser position in the municipal government that was an intermediate step on the way to becoming a magistrate. In any case Erastus appears to be a wealthy freedman engaged in the extensive rebuilding of Corinth during this period.

Since Corinth had been refounded as a Roman colony under Julius Caesar less than a century before, and there-

fore had no long-entrenched ruling class, the opportunities offered for civic advancement may have encouraged competition. In other cities, the ranks of citizens—those enrolled who could hold various public offices—were strictly limited to a particular group of aristocratic families. Other residents, no matter how wealthy or influential, were excluded. Jews who sought to be included on the citizen rolls of Alexandria were rebuffed. Since Roman citizens and the Greek citizens of Alexandria were exempt from poll taxes levied by the Roman state, this status carried some economic advantage. Most Jews, who were laborers and artisans, would not have been eligible for enrollment in any case. Whether Jewish families succeeded in joining the citizen elite elsewhere in the Diaspora is less clear. Luke has Paul claim to be a citizen of Tarsus (Acts 21.39), but this may be mistaken or imprecise.

LITERACY AND EDUCATION

Scholars remain divided over how to assess the extent of literacy in the Greco-Roman period. Portraits showing girls holding the stylus and wax tablet of the student suggest that among the elite some level of education extended to women, but on the evidence of documentary papyri, far fewer women than men were able to sign their names, and women who were able to write often pointed out that fact explicitly. The cities and larger villages of Egypt had teachers who drilled children in the rudiments of reading and writing Greek as well as the study of classic texts. Further education would require sending each young person, accompanied by a family slave, off to Alexandria in search of a suitable tutor.

Even among people who could read, the difficulty of deciphering texts in which all the letters were run together (the standard way in which ancient texts are written) often made it preferable to listen to a slave who was trained to read such texts aloud. We can deduce which texts were most in demand by studying the literary papyri. Texts of Homer are by far the most frequently found, with considerable numbers of texts by Demosthenes, Euripides, and Hesiod as well. Technical manuals on such subjects as medicine and astrology also show up in papyri fragments. Among the papyri that have been discovered are some that were orders to and from a book dealer in Oxyrhynchus, about 100 mi (160 km) south-southwest of modern Cairo. Outgoing orders seek dialogues of Plato and works of Homer, Menander, Euripides, and Aristophanes. The dealer acknowledges receipt of treatises on such edifying subjects as "On Training," "On Marriage," "On Freedom from Pain," "On the Uses of Parents," "On the Uses of Domestic Slaves," and Book 3 of a work by Poseidonius, "On Persuasion" (see *P. Oxy.* 1153; 2192). Apparently this dealer's clientele read for self-improvement and practical purposes as much as for entertainment and philosophical enlightenment.

The requirements of reading Torah may have made basic schooling even more necessary for Jewish boys, for whom it would replace Homer as the primary text. Assimilated Jews in cities like Tarsus and Alexandria, however, saw to it that their sons received instruction in the classics as well. Philo defends the practice of sending Jewish students on to the more advanced instruction in arithmetic, geometry, music, and philosophy at the equivalent of a secondary school, the gymnasium (*De spec. leg.* 2.229–30). Educational centers like Alexandria and Tarsus had numerous schools of rhetoric to further a young man's ability to take his place in public affairs by training him to speak fluently and write persuasively. Although Paul insists that eloquence ("wisdom") is not needed to communicate the truth of the gospel (1 Cor 1.17) and disclaims any use of such methods (1 Cor 2.4; 2 Cor 11.6), both his opponents (2 Cor 10.10) and contemporary scholars notice a high degree of rhetorical art in his letters. Even his refusal to engage in the sort of rhetorical discourse that would please his audience exhibits familiarity with such arts (see the "fool's speech," 2 Cor 11.1–12.13).

It is more difficult to assess the kind of education received by boys growing up in the Galilean towns and villages. In an oral society, persons can be highly skilled and even have extensive cultural knowledge, such as Jesus's knowledge of scripture, without being able to read or write. Luke 4.16 presumes that Jesus was literate, though Luke may be speaking from the perspective of an urban class that assumes literate habits as a normal part of education. The Jewish historian Josephus writing in the 90s CE makes no such assumption. Weekly Torah study could be accomplished orally: "He [Moses] appointed the Law to be most excellent and a necessary form of instruction, ordaining that it be heard not once or twice or several times, but that every week men should quit their other occupations and assemble to listen to the Law and obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it" (*Ag. Ap.* 2.175).

The first-century CE synagogue building at Gamala in the Golan lacks the elaborate religious features of later synagogues like that at Capernaum. It consists of a central nave created by two rows of columns and four levels of stone benches set in steps along the walls. Without the ritual bath attached to the complex, there would be nothing to distinguish it from an ordinary assembly hall. There is no evidence of a Torah shrine built into the walls, of a fixed elevated podium from which Torah was read, or of a seat of honor near the center; presumably Torah

reading and instruction took place in the central area. The architectural space of the synagogue could serve a variety of community functions, from teaching and worship to legal proceedings and social gathering.

Another form of education required by Jesus and his disciples involved skills specific to their individual trades. Measuring, counting, and recording skills necessary to building or running a fishing business could have been taught on an apprentice basis. Tax collectors had to keep records of persons and amounts. Officials in the local Jewish community also had to collect the annual half-shekel paid to the Temple by all Jewish males (Ex 30.11–16; Mt 17.24–27). Such practical skills must have been taught, but little evidence of the process survives. Though not considered "education" by the rhetorically trained elite of the Greco-Roman cities or by the scribes learned in Jewish Torah, such skills would have distinguished Jesus and his disciples from others in their villages.

RELIGION, ASTROLOGY, AND MAGIC

When Herod the Great built Caesarea Maritima, he placed the temple to Rome and Augustus in a prominent place. The city was dedicated to the emperor; its civic life would have included festive sacrifices in the ruler's honor. Herod's renovations to the Jerusalem Temple and his expansions of its surroundings were planned to enhance the prestige of the city. Other cities also had famous shrines and festivals that drew visitors from abroad. Acts 19.21–40 tells a story of a riot at Ephesus that occurred when those who sold silver models of its famous temple to the goddess Artemis (Diana) claimed that the effectiveness of Paul's preaching had cut into their business.

Christianity did not deliver the death blow to the established civic worship that Acts seems to suggest. Most of its readers lived in cities, where they could easily witness the ongoing enthusiasm for sacrifices and festivals. What individual residents actually believed about the gods was not an issue; their participation, not their internal assent, was the key, and that participation (or lack of it) was observed by the authorities. To join in sacrifices honoring the Roman emperor, for example, demonstrated that the city and its populace were loyal subjects. Jews refused to participate, and this refusal often brought on them accusations of "hatred of humanity." At Alexandria some argued that Jews could never be admitted to the citizen rolls because they did not worship the city's gods. Nevertheless, through long-tolerated practice, Jews were not often persecuted for refusing to participate in civic rituals. When Christians who were not of Jewish origin began to withdraw from such public activities, however, it caused comment, suspicion, and even persecution. A story like that of Paul's deeds in Ephesus, leading some to abandon the worship of Artemis, would have highlighted the superiority of Christ to one of Asia Minor's most famous religious shrines and might increase Christian resolve to remain separate. Not all Christians would choose persecution, however. Some clearly followed the lead of educated pagans, who often did not believe in the real existence of the gods, or in their myths. They would join public religious activities as required by their social status or civic office, as a social bond rather than as a religious profession. When faced with Christians who obstinately refused to participate, magistrates had no qualms about sentencing them to exile or death.

Astrologers, diviners, and magicians could be visited in the marketplace. Though such activities were frowned upon by those higher in the social scale, the large number of horoscopes, amulets, and magic spells recovered shows that these methods of making decisions, predicting the future, and bringing good luck (or guarding against bad) continued to be popular. Astrologers to the upper classes justified their practices with a philosophical veneer based on Stoic physical doctrines explaining the relations between earthly and heavenly bodies by means of an all-pervading "rational spirit." Christian insistence that the glorified and exalted Christ is above all the demonic powers and planetary forces (see Col 2.8–23; Eph 1.15–2.2; 6.12) did little to curb popular enthusiasm for these beliefs and practices. Biblical texts show up in Christian magical amulets. Jesus's exorcisms led to accusations that his powers were a consequence of an alliance with the leader of the demonic world (Mk 3.22–30), and Acts describes conflicts between Christian missionaries and local magicians (8.4–25; 13.4–12).

PHILOSOPHY AS HEALING THE SOUL

Unlike the monotheistic faith of Jews and Christians, which placed a high premium on hearing, interpreting, and acting on divine revelation preserved in sacred texts, Greco-Roman religions did not produce texts, legal and ethical codes, or theological doctrines. Those who sought teaching about the divine and its relationship to the observable cosmos, or moral guidance and advice about how to live a good life, turned to philosophy. Formal study of the philosophical systems that emerged from the schools of classical and Hellenistic Athens—especially Platonism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism—could be pursued only by the elite, who had the leisure time to devote to them. Luke's tale of Paul's visit to Athens (Acts 17.16–31) shows its first-century reputation as a destination for intellectuals, not the powerful center of commerce and art that it had been.

More ordinary citizens learned what they knew of philosophy from anthologies of moralistic tales, trea-

tises on how to cope with various problems in life, public discourses offered by itinerant philosophical preachers, and the like. The philosopher-teacher saw himself as a physician for the soul. Under his guidance, people might be converted from the mindless, destructive pursuit of the passions, from fears about a future they could not control, even from superstitious belief in the gods. Some treatises, like Plutarch's "Advice on Marriage" (*Mor.* 12.138–46) even recommend that the young husband share his knowledge with his wife. Such knowledge will protect her against the passion for luxuries, foolish behavior, and talk common among women. If she knows something of Plato, Xenophon, and astronomy, she will not be taken in by the common practices of magic or witchcraft. Such treatises also presume that in the properly ordered household the husband governs the life of his wife, his children, and his slaves in accordance with a reason that has been schooled by philosophical instruction. Similar kinds of assumptions appear in sections of the New Testament often referred to as "household codes" (Col 3.18–4.1; Eph 5.21–6.9; 1 Pet 2.18–3.7). They also inform the descriptions of requirements for leadership (1 Tim 3.1–11), including those that exclude women from teaching or supervising men (1 Tim 2.9–15; 1 Cor 14.34–36).

As a possible analogue for itinerant Christian preachers, scholars point to a movement of rough-spoken, antiestablishment street preachers called Cynics, from the Greek word for dog, originally a derogatory name that referred to their unrefined public behavior. Claiming as their inspiration Socrates, the impoverished stone mason who went about Athens challenging all its citizens, representatives of this movement could be found in the public marketplaces. They rejected the comforts that might be offered by wealthy patrons and lived on as little as possible. They were known for sharp sayings intended to wound an opponent, not persuasive speeches to soothe one into agreement. If the harsh medicine worked, the hearer might convert to a philosophical way of life. If not, he might become angry, even murderously so, as had Socrates's opponents. Some scholars point to this movement as comparable to the mission of Jesus and his disciples, as depicted in the Gospels. Others have proposed that Paul's description of himself as the solicitous nurse or the father to his fledgling converts (1 Thess 2.1–12) is analogous to the Cynics' relationship to their followers. Although these cultural models may not have dictated the content of early Christian preaching, they provide a context for understanding what missionaries like Paul were doing in the cities that they visited, and how they would have appeared to their first hearers.

Pheme Perkins

TIMELINE

DATE	PERIOD	EGYPT
Ca. 3300–2000 BCE	EARLY BRONZE AGE	
3300–3100	Early Bronze I	Earliest forms of writing
3100–2700	Early Bronze II	Political unification; Early Dynastic period
2700–2300	Early Bronze III	Old Kingdom; Dynasties 3–5
2300–2000	Early Bronze IV	First Intermediate Period
Ca. 2000–1550 BCE	MIDDLE BRONZE AGE	
2000–1650	Middle Bronze I–II	Middle Kingdom; Dynasties 11–12
1650–1550	Middle Bronze III	Second Intermediate/ Hyksos Period
Ca. 1550–1200 BCE	LATE BRONZE AGE	New Kingdom; Dynasties 18–19: Thutmose III (1479–1425), Akenhaten (1352–1336), Seti I (1294–1279), Rameses II (1279–1213), Merneptah (1213–1203); Sea Peoples (groups including Philistines) invasions begin
Ca. 1200–586 BCE	IRON AGE	
Ca. 1200–1025	Iron I	Rameses III (1184–1153)[1]
Ca. 1025–586	Iron II	
Ca. 1025–928	Iron IIA	
Ca. 928–722	Iron IIB	Shishak I invades Palestine (925)

1. For a more complete list of rulers, see "Chronological Table of Rulers," pp. 1914–16.

SYRIA-PALESTINE		MESOPOTAMIA, ASIA MINOR
		Earliest forms of writing; Full urbanization; Sumerian culture develops
In Egyptian sphere Flourishing city-states		High point of Sumerian culture Sargon of Akkad; Naram-Sin of Akkad; Gudea of Lagash
Decline/abandonment of city-states		Third Dynasty of Ur
Revival of urbanism; Invention of alphabet		Amorite kingdoms: Shamshi-Adad of Assyria (ca. 1813–1781); Hammurapi of Babylon (ca. 1792–1750); Rise of Hittites
In Egyptian sphere; Rise of Mitanni in north; Ugarit flourishes;		
Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt;		Hittites challenge Egypt for control of Syria;
Collapse of city-states		Hittite empire collapses; Trojan War
Israel emerges in Canaan; Philistines settle on SW coast; Small city-states develop in Phoenicia, Syria, Transjordan		Resurgence of Assyria: Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076)
United Monarchy in Israel: Saul (1025–1005); David (1005–965); Solomon (968–928)		
Divided Monarchy:		
JUDAH:	ISRAEL:	
Rehoboam (928–911)	Jeroboam I (928–907)	Rise of Neo-Assyrian Empire
	Omri (882–871); Capital at Samaria	Shalmaneser III (858–824); Battle of Qarqar (853)
	Ahab (873–852)	
Jehoshaphat (867–846)	Prophet Elijah (mid-ninth century)	
	Prophet Elisha (mid- to late ninth century)	
Athaliah (842–836)	Jehu (842–814)	
Jehoash (836–798)	Jehoash (800–788)	Adad-nirari III (811–783)
	Jeroboam II (788–747)	
	Prophet Amos (mid-eighth century)	
	Prophet Hosea (mid-eighth century)	Tiglath-pileser III (745–727); Assyrian conquest of the Levant
Ahaz (743/735–727/715)	Hoshea (732–722)	Shalmaneser V (727–722) Samaria captured (722)

DATE	PERIOD	EGYPT
Ca. 722–586	Iron IIC	
		Egypt conquered by Assyria (671) Psammetichus I (664–610)
		Neco II (610–595)
Ca. 586–539	NEO-BABYLONIAN	
		GREECE AND ROME
539–333	PERSIAN	
		Greeks repel Persian invasions
		Peloponnesian War (431–404)
333–63	HELLENISTIC	Alexander the Great (336–323); Defeats Persians at Issus (332); Occupies the Levant and Egypt
		Rome gains control over Greece (ca. 188–146);
		Sack of Carthage and Corinth (146)
63 BCE–330 CE	ROMAN	
		Julius Caesar named dictator (49); assassinated (44) Octavian (Augustus) defeats Antony at Actium (31); (Emperor 27 BCE–14 CE) Tiberius (14–37 CE) Gaius (Caligula) (37–41) Claudius (41–54) Nero (54–68) Vespasian (69–79) Titus (79–81) Domitian (81–96) Nerva (96–98) Trajan (98–117) Hadrian (117–138)

SYRIA-PALESTINE	MESOPOTAMIA
JUDAH:	
Prophet Isaiah (late eighth to early seventh centuries)	Sargon II (722–705)
Prophet Micah (late eighth century)	Sennacherib (705–681); Attack on Judah and seige of Jerusalem (701)
Hezekiah (727/715–698/687)	
Manasseh (698/687–642)	Esar-haddon (681–669)
Josiah (639–609)	Ashurbanipal (669–627)
Prophet Zephaniah (late seventh century)	
Prophet Jeremiah (late seventh to early sixth centuries)	Rise of Babylon
Jehoahaz (609)	Assyrian capital of Nineveh captured (612)
Jehoiakim (608–598)	
Jehoiachin (597)	Nebuchadrezzar II (604–562) of Babylon
Prophet Ezekiel (early sixth century)	
Zedekiah (597–586); Capture of Jerusalem (586)	
	Nabonidus (556–539)
EASTERN AND MEDITERRANEAN	
	Cyrus II (the Great) (559–530); Capture of Babylon
Some exiles return from Babylon (538)	Cambyses (530–522); Capture of Egypt (525)
Second Temple built (520–515)	Darius I (522–486)
Prophet Haggai (520); Prophet Zechariah (520–518)	Xerxes I (486–465)
Nehemiah governor of Judah (ca. 445–430)	Artaxerxes I (465–424)
Mission of Ezra the scribe (mid-fifth [or early fourth] century)	Artaxerxes II (405–359)
Seleucus I (312/311–281) controls Syria and Mesopotamia	
Ptolemy I (323–282) controls Egypt, Palestine, Phoenicia	
Antiochus III (223–187) gains control of southern Syria, Phoenicia, and Judea from Ptolemy IV (202–198)	
Ben Sira (Sirach) (early second century)	
Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164)	
Revolt of the Maccabees (167–164)	
HASMONEAN RULE OF JUDEA (165–37):	
John Hyrcanus (135–104); Alexander Janneus (103–76); Salome Alexandra (76–67)	
Pompey conquers the Levant (66–62); Enters Jerusalem (63)	
Herod the Great king of Judea (37–4); Rebuilds Second Temple	
(Herod) Antipas (4 BCE–39 CE)	
Life of Jesus of Nazareth (ca. 4 BCE–30 CE)	
Pontius Pilate governor of Judea (26–36)	
(Herod) Agrippa I (39–44)	
Missionary activity of Paul (mid-first century)	
(Herod) Agrippa II (53–93)	
First Jewish Revolt in Judea against Rome (66–73); Jerusalem is captured (70)	
Jewish revolts in Egypt, Libya, Cyprus (115–118)	
Second Jewish Revolt in Judea against Rome (132–135)	

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF RULERS

DATE	EGYPT	ASSYRIA	BABYLONIA
1300 BCE	DYNASTY 19 (1295–1186):		
	Seti I (1294–1279)		
	Rameses II (1279–1213)		
	Merneptah (1213–1203)		
1200			
	DYNASTY 20 (1186–1069)		
		Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076)	
	DYNASTY 21 (1069–945)		
1000			
	DYNASTIES 22–24 (945–715):		
	Shoshenq I (**Shishak**) (945–924)		
		Shalmaneser III (858–824)	
		Shamshi-Adad V (824–811)	
	DYNASTY 25 (780–656):		
800		Adad-nirari III (811–783)	
		Shalmaneser IV (783–773)	
		Ashur-dan III (773–755)	
		Ashur-nirari V (755–745)	
		Tiglath-pileser III (**Pul**) (745– 727)	Marduk-apal-iddina II
		Shalmaneser V (727–722)	(**Merodach-baladan**)
		Sargon II (722–705)	(721–710, 703)
700		**Sennacherib** (705–681)	
	Taharqa (**Tirhakah**) (690–664)	**Esar-haddon** (681–669)	
		Ashurbanipal (669–627)	
		Ashur-etil-ilani Sin-shum-lishir } (627–612) Sin-shar-ishkun	
	DYNASTY 26 (664–525):		Nabo-polassar (625–605)
	Psammetichus I (664–610)	Ashur-uballit II (612–609)	**Nebuchadrezzar** II (**Nebuchadnezzar**) (605–562)
	Neco II (610–595)		Amel-Marduk (**Evil-merodach**) (562–560)
	Psammetichus II (595–589)		Neriglissar (560–556)
	Apries (**Hophra**) (589–570)		Labashi-Marduk (556)
	Amasis II (570–526)		**Nabonidus** (556–539)
	Psammetichus III (526–525)		**Belshazzar** (coregent 553–543)
400			
325 BCE			

Note: Names in boldface occur in the Bible. Overlapping dates indicate coregencies. Date ranges are reigns, not life spans.
1. The data are inconsistent for the dates of the reigns of Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh.

PERSIA	ISRAEL	
	UNITED MONARCHY:	
	Saul (1025–1005); **David** (1005–965);	
	Solomon (Yedidiah) (968–928)	
	DIVIDED MONARCHY:	
	JUDAH:	ISRAEL:
	Rehoboam (928–911)	**Jeroboam** I (928–907)
	Abijam (Abijah) (911–908)	**Nadab** (907–906)
	Asa (908–867)	**Baasha** (906–883)
	Jehoshaphat (870–846)	**Elah** (883–882); **Zimri** (882)
		Omri (882–871)
		Ahab (873–852)
	Jehoram (Joram) (851–843)	**Ahaziah** (852–851)
	Ahaziah (Jehoahaz) (843–842)	**Jehoram (Joram)** (851–842)
	Athaliah (842–836)	**Jehu** (842–814)
	Jehoash (Joash) (836–798)	**Jehoahaz** (817–800)
	Amaziah (798–769)	**Jehoash (Joash)** (800–784)
	Azariah (Uzziah) (785–733)	**Jeroboam** II (788–747)
		Zechariah (747); **Shallum** (747)
		Menahem (747–737)
	Jotham (759–743)	**Pekahiah** (737–735)
	Ahaz (743/735–727/715)[1]	**Pekah** (735–732)
		Hoshea (732–722)
	Hezekiah (727/715–698/687)[1]	
	Manasseh (698/687–642)1	
	Amon (641–640)	
	Josiah (640–609)	
	Jehoahaz (Shallum) (609)	
	Jehoiakim (Eliakim) (608–598)	
	Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, etc.) (597)	
	Zedekiah (Mattaniah) (597–586)	
Cyrus II (559–530)		
Cambyses (530–522)		
Darius I (522–486)		
Xerxes I **(Ahasuerus)** (486–465)		
Artaxerxes I (465–424)		
Darius II (423–405)		
Artaxerxes II (405–359)		
Artaxerxes III (359–338)		
Artaxerxes IV (338–336)		
Darius III (336–330)		

DATE	EGYPT	SYRIA
	HELLENISTIC PERIOD	**Alexander** (the Great) (336–323)
300 BCE	Ptolemy I Soter (305–282)	**Seleucus** I **Nicator** (305–281)
	Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246)	Antiochus I Soter (281–261)
		Antiochus II Theos (261–246)
	Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221)	Seleucus II Callinicus (246–225)
	Ptolemy IV **Philopator** (221–204)	Seleucus III Soter Ceraunos (225–223)
	Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204–180);	**Antiochus III** (the Great) (223–187)
	Cleopatra I (180–176)	**Seleucus** IV Philopator (187–175)
		Antiochus IV **Epiphanes** (175–164)
	Ptolemy VI **Philometor** (180–145);	**Antiochus** V **Eupator** (164–162)
	Cleopatra II (175–116)	**Demetrius** I Soter (162–150)
	Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator (145)	**Alexander Epiphanes** (Balas) (150–145)
	Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II Physcon (170–116)	**Demetrius** II Nicator (145–141 and 129–125)
		Antiochus VI Epiphanes (145–142)
		Trypho (142–138)
		Antiochus VII Sidetes (138–129)
		Cleopatra Thea (126–121)
		Antiochus VIII Grypus (125–121 and 121–96)
	Cleopatra III (116–101)	Seleucus V (125)
	Ptolemy IX Soter II (116–107 and 88–80)	Antiochus IX Cyzicenus (115–95)
100 BCE	Ptolemy X Alexander I (107–88)	Seleucus VI (95)
		Antiochus X Eusebes (95–83)
		Antiochus XI Philadelphus (95)
	Cleopatra Berenice (101–88)	Demetrius III Eukairos (95–88)
		Philip I Epiphanes Philadelphus (95–84)
	Ptolemy XI Alexander II (80)	Antiochus XII Dionysus Epiphanes (87–84)
		Philip II (67–66)
	Ptolemy XII Auletes (80–59 and 55–51)	Antiochus XIII Asiaticus (69–68 and 65–64)
50 BCE	Cleopatra VII (51–30)	
	Ptolemy XIII (51–47)	
	Ptolemy XIV (47–44)	
		ROMAN EMPIRE
		ROMAN EMPERORS:
		Octavian (**Augustus**) (27 BCE–14 CE)
25 CE		**Tiberius** (14–37)
		Gaius Caligula (37–41)
50 CE		**Claudius** (41–54)
		Nero (54–68)
		Galba (68–69); Otho (69); Vitellius (69)
		Vespasian (69–79)
		Titus (79–81)
100 CE		Domitian (81–96)
		Nerva (96–98)
		Trajan (98–117)
		Hadrian (117–138)

PALESTINE

HASMONEAN RULERS

[Mattathias d. 166]
Judas Maccabeus, son of Mattathias (165–160)
Jonathan, son of Mattathias (160–142)
Simon, son of Mattathias (142–135)
John Hyrcanus I, son of Simon (135–104)

Judah Aristobulus I , son of John Hyrcanus (104–103)

Alexander Janneus, son of John Hyrcanus (103–76)

Salome Alexandra, wife of Alexander Jannaeus (76–67)
Aristobulus II, son of Alexander Jannaeus and Salome Alexandra (67–63)

Hyrcanus II, son of Alexander Jannaeus and Salome Alexandra (63–40)
Mattathias Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II (40–37)

HERODIAN DYNASTY

Herod the Great, king of the Jews (37–4)
Herod Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, Idumea (4 BCE–6 CE)
Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 BCE–39 CE)
Herod **Philip**, son of Herod the Great, tetrarch of Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis (4 BCE–34 CE)

Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, king of Batanea, Trachonitis, Aurantis (37–44) and of Judea, Galilee, and Perea (41–44)

Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I, king of Chalcis (50–53), king of Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, Galilee, Perea (53–ca. 93)

ROMAN GOVERNORS OF JUDEA

Coponius (6–8 CE)
M. Ambivius (9–12)
Annius Rufus (12–15)
Valerius Gratus (15–26)
Pontius Pilate (26–36)
Marcellus (36–37)
Marullus (37–41)[2]
Cuspius Fadus (44–46)
Tiberius Julius Alexander (46–48)
Ventidius Cumanus (48–52)
M. Antonius **Felix** (52–60?)
Porcius Festus (60?–62)
Clodius Albinus (62–64)
Gessius Florus (64–66)

2. In 41 Judea was made part of the kingdom of Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great (see Herodian Dynasty, above). At his death in 44 it became a province again.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The modern equivalents for biblical measures and weights are presented in the following tables.

HEBREW WEIGHTS

HEBREW	NRSV	EQUIVALENCE	U.S. AVOIRDUPOIS	METRIC UNITS
kikkar	talent	60 minas	75.558 pounds	34.3 kilograms
maneh	mina	50 shekels	20.148 ounces	571.2 grams
sheqel	shekel	2 bekas	176.29 grains	11.42 grams
pim (or payim)	pim	.667 shekel	117.52 grains	7.61 grams
beqa‘	beka, half a shekel	10 gerahs	88.14 grains	5.71 grams
gerah	gerah		8.81 grains	.57 gram

The practice of weighing unmarked ingots of metal used in commercial transactions prior to the invention of money explains that the names of the units of weight were used later as indications of value, and as names for monetary standards. There is, however, no direct relation between the shekel-weight and the weight of a shekel piece.

WEIGHTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

GREEK	NRSV	EQUIVALENCE	U.S. AVOIRDUPOIS	METRIC UNITS
talenton	talent	(Hebrew) talent	75.558 pounds	34.3 kilograms
mna	pound	(Hebrew) mina	20.148 ounces	571.2 grams
litra	pound	(Latin) libra	0.719 pound	326.4 grams

HEBREW MEASURES OF LENGTH

HEBREW	NRSV	EQUIVALENCE	U.S. MEASURES	METRIC UNITS
’amma≥h	cubit	2 spans	17.49 inches	.443 meter
zeret	span	3 handbreadths	8.745 inches	.221 meter
topaḥ, tepaḥ	handbreadth	4 fingers	2.915 inches	.074 meter
’etsba‘	finger		0.728 inch	.019 meter

The cubit described in Ezekiel 40.5; 43.13 is equal to seven (not six) handbreadths, namely 20.405 inches.

MEASURES OF LENGTH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

GREEK	NRSV	U.S. MEASURES	METRIC UNITS
pechus	cubit	about 1.5 feet	.456 meter
orguia	fathom	about 72.44 inches	1.839 meters
stadion	stadia, or the equivalent in miles	about 606 feet	184.7 meters
milion	mile	about 4,854 feet	1.482 kilometers

HEBREW MEASURES OF CAPACITY: LIQUID MEASURES

HEBREW	NRSV	EQUIVALENCE	U.S. MEASURES	METRIC UNITS
kor	measure, cor	10 baths	60.738 gallons	230 liters
bat	bath	6 hins	6.073 gallons	23 liters
hin	hin	3 kabs	1.012 gallons	3.829 liters
qab	kab	4 logs	1.4349 quarts	1.276 liters
log	log		0.674 pint	.32 liter

HEBREW MEASURES OF CAPACITY: DRY MEASURES

HEBREW	NRSV	EQUIVALENCE	U.S. MEASURES	METRIC UNITS
ḥomer	homer	2 lethechs	6.524 bushels	229.7 liters
kor	measure, cor	2 lethechs	6.524 bushels	229.7 liters
letek	lethech, measure	5 ephahs	3.262 bushels	114.8 liters
'epah	ephah, measure	3 seahs	20.878 quarts	22.9 liters
se'ah	measure	3.33 omers	6.959 quarts	7.7 liters
'omer	omer	1.8 kabs	2.087 quarts	2.3 liters
'issaron	tenth part (of ephah)			
qab	kab		1.159 quarts	1.3 liters

MEASURES OF CAPACITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

GREEK	NRSV	EQUIVALENCE	U.S. MEASURES	METRIC UNITS
batos	measure	(Hebrew) bat	6.073 gallons	23 liters
koros	measure	(Hebrew) kor	60.738 gallons or 6.524 bushels	230 liters
saton	measure	(Hebrew) se'ah	6.959 dry quarts	7.71 liters
metretes	measure		10.3 gallons	39 liters
choinix	quart		0.98 dry quart	1.079 liters
modios	bushel	(Latin) modius	7.68 dry quarts	8.458 liters
xestes	pot	(Latin) sextarius	0.96 dry pint, or 1.12 fluid pints	.53 liter

TIME

The Bible has no systematic presentation of the measurements of time that its writers used. The evidence that it presents is thus incomplete, and, not surprisingly, inconsistent, in part because it was written over many centuries and represents several different cultures.

THE DAY

The Hebrew word for day ("yom") can mean either a full day (in our system, twenty-four hours), or the daytime as opposed to the night ("laylah"). Parts of the day are also named, including dawn, morning, noon or midday, and afternoon; and likewise for night—evening and midnight; but we find no early evidence that the day was divided into regular parts (but see Judg 7:19; Jn 11:9). In the New Testament, day and night each had twelve hours (see Jn 11.9), which were numbered: see, e.g., Mt 20.3-6, where NRSV converts a series intended to mark out an entire day to our system ("nine o'clock," etc.). . Given seasonal variations in daylight, hours did not have a standard length in this system. For most purposes the generic categories of dawn (Mk 6.48), morning (Mk 11.20), midday (or "sixth hour," Mk 15.33; Jn 4.6), afternoon ("ninth," Mk 15.34), or evening (Mk 4.35) suffice as temporal designations.

In most texts, a day begins at sunrise and ends the following sunrise; hence the phrase "day and night." Only late in the biblical period was a day calculated from evening to evening, as is the sabbath in Jewish tradition (see Neh 13.19); hence the phrase "night and day" (e.g., 1 Kings 8.29; Lk 2.37).

THE WEEK

The origins of the seven-day week are unknown, but it is firmly entrenched in biblical tradition, as the sabbath observance on the seventh day of the week shows. In the Bible the first six days of the week are called by their ordinal number but have no name; the seventh day is also called the sabbath.

THE MONTHS

As in English and many other languages, the two biblical Hebrew words for "month" are related to words having to do with the moon. The most frequently occurring word, "ḥodesh," comes from the root meaning "new"; a

month thus began when the new moon appeared, and a religious festival celebrated its appearance (see Num 28.11–15). Less frequent is "yerah" from the word for "moon" ("yareaḥ"). The Greek word for "month," "meis," also means "crescent moon." In both Babylonian and Greek sources, a month begins with the first evening sighting of a lunar crescent in the west. A month therefore was a lunar month of twenty-nine or thirty days.

In different periods, different names were used for individual months; moreover, the texts themselves do not give the names of all months. In earlier periods, Canaanite names were used; four of these occur in the biblical text. Beginning in the sixth century BCE, Babylonian names were used, and continue to be used in Judaism today. In many periods the months were numbered as well as named, but here too there is some variation, depending on when the new year was celebrated. In the Hellenistic period, Greek names began to be used; two Egyptian names are also attested, both found only in the books of Maccabees and in nonbiblical sources. The table below gives the various names of the months used in the Bible and their corresponding English equivalents; names in parentheses are not found in the Bible but are those used in Judaism.

NUMERICAL	CANAANITE	ISRAELITE/JEWISH[1]	GREEK	EGYPTIAN	JULIAN/ROMAN[2]	MAJOR FESTIVALS
First month	Abib	Nisan	Xanthicus		March/April	Passover/Unleavened Bread (Pesah)
Second month	Ziv	(Iyyar)			April/May	
Third month		Sivan		Pachon (?)	May/June	Weeks (Pentecost) (Shavuot)
Fourth month		(Tammuz)			June/July	
Fifth month		(Av)			July[3]/August[4]	
Sixth month		Elul			August/September	
Seventh month	Ethanim	(Tishri)		Epeiph	September/October	Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
						Booths (Tabernacles) (Sukkot)
Eighth month	Bul	(Marheshvan)			October/November	
Ninth month		Chislev	Dioscorinthius (?)		November/December	Dedication (Hanukkah)
Tenth month[5]		Tebeth			December/January	
Eleventh month		Shebat			January/February	
Twelfth month		Adar	Dystrus		February/Match	Purim

THE YEAR

A year usually consisted of twelve months. The twelve lunar months comprise fewer days than a solar year, so if a particular month is to occur at about the same time every solar year, then some adjustment needs to be made, either by lengthening some months, as in most modern calendars, or by adding an extra, intercalary month every few years, although this practice is not attested in the Bible. The year is roughly divided into the two seasons of summer and winter reflecting the agricultural cycle.

For most of the biblical period a new year began in the spring. The spring passover festival was celebrated in the first month (Ex 12.2), the day of atonement in the fall was celebrated in the seventh month (Lev 23:32), and the ninth month was in winter (Jer 36.22). A fall new year is implied in some sources, both biblical and nonbiblical. The later Jewish fall new year festival, Rosh Hashanah, is not mentioned in the Bible (but see its basis in Lev 23:24). A similar variation is found in English and other languages, in which the name of the twelfth month, December, literally means "the tenth month," recalling an older system in which the new year was in the spring rather than January 1.

1 Derived from Babylonian names. Names in parentheses do not occur in the Bible.

2 While the Canaanite, Babylonian, and Israelite/Jewish calendars are based on the cycle of lunar months, the reform of the Roman calendar under Julius Caesar, which took effect on 1 January 45 BCE, introduced a solar calendar of 365¼ days (divided into 30 or 31 days, with a short month of February with 28 or 29 days), guaranteeing that the months would remain correlated with the seasons. As a result its months do not correlate with months in the Babylonian/Judean calendar.

3 Originally Quintilis ("fifth"), this month was renamed Julius for Julius Caesar.

4 Originally Sextilis ("sixth"), this month was renamed "Augustus" by the emperor Augustus in 8 BCE.

5 January is the first month of the Roman year. Previously the first month had been March, which explains the names September (seventh), October (eighth), November (ninth), and December (tenth).

While astronomical and agricultural cycles provided divisions within a year and its seasons (Gen 1.14–19), locating events within a succession of years was more problematic. Systems of dating which attach events to "regnal years," the year in the reign of a king (Isa 6.1; 7.1), or to individuals who held important offices (Lk 2.1–2; 3.1–2), or to major events often require additional information to suggest a date in a modern calendar. Without the global calendar and time-grid to which we were accustomed, both time and calendar were local. Correlating one civic calendar with another could be difficult if not impossible. Within the Greek world, Timaeus of Tauromenium (fourth to third century BCE) produced a chronology that lined up Olympic victors, priestesses of Hera from Argos, kings of Sparta, and Athenian archons. Olympiads provided a grid for some Hellenistic historians. Varro (ca. 43 BCE) provided Romans with what would be considered the "date" for the city's founding in the Olympiad system, "the third year of the sixth Olympiad" (i.e. ca. 754/3 BCE). We do not find efforts to make such chronological correlations between their past and that of others in the Bible. But in the fourth century CE, Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome undertook the grand project of synchronizing Greek and Roman history with that of the Egyptians, the Medes, and the biblical kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Using an Olympiad numbering system, Jerome's tables give the date of Abraham's birth as ca. 2016 BCE.

LONGER TIME-SPANS

In biblical Hebrew, spatial metaphors are used for the past and the future. The past is "qedem," literally that which is in front of one and therefore known, and the future is "'aḥarit" (or "'aḥaron"), literally that which is behind one and therefore unknown.

As in English, "a generation" is the period from a person's birth to the birth of their first child; in biblical times this was roughly twenty years. However, the Roman equivalent, "saeculum," could range from "generation" as the longest individual life-span within a community to a period that approximates our "century." A heavenly sign such as the comet which appeared following the death of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE might be read as signaling the transition between one "saeculum" and the next. Similarly the heavenly portent of angels announces that a new age is inaugurated with the birth of Jesus in Luke 2.13–15. Much longer periods of time are expressed by phrases such as "a thousand years, "a thousand generations," and "forever."

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PARALLEL TEXTS

Alongside the widespread evidence of alternative traditions in the Bible, in which two or more authors or traditions deal with the same general subjects (e.g., the two accounts of creation in Gen 1–3; the Gospel of John as compared with the first three Gospels), throughout the Bible there are also literary relationships between one book or part of a book and another. Sometimes the authors or editors of one book simply reproduced their sources verbatim; sometimes they were retouched. Often called "synoptic passages," because when viewed together their common elements can be seen, these texts are important in understanding the specific purposes and themes of a writer by analyzing what was included, added, omitted, revised, and rearranged. There follows a listing of the larger synoptic passages throughout the Bible. These texts have a demonstrable literary relationship with each other, either direct, where a source can be identified, or indirect, where a source that no longer survives but must be presumed is quoted at length and verbatim, or with only minor modifications in one or more places.

HEBREW BIBLE

	SYNOPTIC PASSAGES		SUBJECT MATTER
EXODUS	Ex 20.2–17	Deut 5.6–21	Ten Commandments
JOSHUA	Josh 21.1–39	1 Chr 6.54–81	Levitical cities
2 SAMUEL	2 Sam 22	Ps 18	Thanksgiving hymn
1 CHRONICLES	1 Chr 1.1–4	Gen 5	Descendants of Adam
	1 Chr 1.5–23	Gen 10.1–32	Descendants of Noah
	1 Chr 1.24–27	Gen 11.10–32	Descendants of Shem
	1 Chr 1.28–33	Gen 25.1–6,12–18	Descendants of Ishmael and Keturah
	1 Chr 1.34–54	Gen 36.1–43	Descendants of Esau
	1 Chr 3.1–9	2 Sam 3.2–5; 5.5,13–16	Sons of David
	1 Chr 6.54–81	Josh 21.1–39	Levitical cities
	1 Chr 10	1 Sam 31	Death of Saul
	1 Chr 11.1–9	2 Sam 5.1–10	David's early reign
	1 Chr 11.10–47	2 Sam 23.8–39	David's heroes
	1 Chr 13.5–14	2 Sam 6.1–11	David retrieves the ark
	1 Chr 14.1–17	2 Sam 5.11–25	David's reign in Jerusalem
	1 Chr 15.25–16.3	2 Sam 6.12–19	David brings the ark to Jerusalem
	1 Chr 16.8–36	Ps 105.1–15; 96.1–13;	Thanksgiving hymn
	1 Chr 17–21	2 Sam 7; 8; 10; 11.1; 12.26,30–31; 21.18–22; 24	David's reign in Jerusalem
2 CHRONICLES	2 Chr 1.3–13	1 Kings 3.4–15	Solomon's prayer for wisdom
	2 Chr 1.14–17	1 Kings 10.26–29	Solomon's wealth
	2 Chr 2.1–18	1 Kings 5.1–18	Preparations for building Temple
	2 Chr 3.1–4	1 Kings 6.1–3	Temple dimensions
	2 Chr 4.1–5.1	1 Kings 7.23–26,39–51	Temple metalwork
	2 Chr 5.2–7.10	1 Kings 8	Dedication of the Temple
	2 Chr 7.11–9.29	1 Kings 9–10	Solomon's reign
	2 Chr 9.29–31	1 Kings 11.41–42	Solomon's death
	2 Chr 10.1–11.4	1 Kings 12.1–24	Rehoboam's accession
	2 Chr 12.2–16	1 Kings 14.25–31	Shishak's invasion
	2 Chr 15.16–17.1	1 Kings 15.17–24	Asa's reign
	2 Chr 18.2–34; 20.31–21.1	1 Kings 22	Jehoshaphat's reign
2 CHRONICLES	2 Chr 21.2–10	2 Kings 8.16–22	Jehoram's reign
	2 Chr 22.2–6	2 Kings 8.25–29	Ahaziah's reign
	2 Chr 22.10–23.21	2 Kings 11	Athaliah's reign

	SYNOPTIC PASSAGES		SUBJECT MATTER
	2 Chr 24.1–14	2 Kings 12.1–14	Jehoash's reign
	2 Chr 25.1–4,17–28; 26.1–2	2 Kings 14.1–22	Amaziah's reign
	2 Chr 26.3–4,21–23	2 Kings 15.1–7	Uzziah's reign
	2 Chr 27.1–9	2 Kings 15.32–38	Jotham's reign
	2 Chr 28.1–4,26–27	2 Kings 16.1–4,19–20	Ahaz's reign
	2 Chr 29.1–2; 32.1, 9–12,15	2 Kings 18.1–3,13,17–22, 29–30	Hezekiah's reign
	2 Chr 33.1–9,18–20	2 Kings 21.1–9,17–18	Manasseh's reign
	2 Chr 33.21–25	2 Kings 21.19–26	Amon's reign
	2 Chr 34.1–2,8–31; 35.20	2Kings 22.1–23.3,29	Josiah's reign
	2 Chr 36.1–4	2 Kings 23.30–34	Jehoahaz's reign
	2 Chr 36.5,6,8	2 Kings 23.36–37; 24.1,5	Jehoiakim's reign
	2 Chr 36.9	2 Kings 24.8	Jehoiakin's reign
	2 Chr 36.11–12	2 Kings 24.18–19	Zedekiah's reign
	2 Chr 36.22–23	Ezra 1.1–2	Decree of Cyrus
EZRA	Ezra 1.1–2	2 Chr 36.22–23	Decree of Cyrus
	Ezra 2.1–70	Neh 7.7–69	List of returning exiles
PSALMS	Ps 14	Ps 53	Lament
	Ps 18	2 Sam 22	Thanksgiving hymn
ISAIAH	Isa 2.2–4	Mic 4.1–3	Oracle of future age
	Isa 15–16	Jer 48.29–38	Oracle against Moab
	Isa 36–39	2 Kings 18.13–20.19	Events in Hezekiah's reign
JEREMIAH	Jer 39.1–10	2 Kings 25.1–12	The fall of Jerusalem
	Jer 48.29–38	Isa 16.6–10; 15.2–7; 16.11–12	Oracle against Moab
	Jer 49.9–10,14–16	Ob 5–6,1–4	Oracle against Edom
	Jer 52	2 Kings 24.18–25.30	The fall of Jerusalem
OBADIAH	Ob 1–6	Jer 49.14–16,9–10	Oracle against Edom
MICAH	Mic 4.1–3	Isa 2.2–4	Oracle of future age

APOCRYPHA

	SYNOPTIC PASSAGES		SUBJECT MATTER
1 ESDRAS	1 Esd 1.1–55	2 Chr 35.1–36.21	Last days of Judah
	1 Esd 2.1–15	Ezra 1.1–11	Cyrus's decree
	1 Esd 2.16–30	Ezra 4.7–24	Opposition to rebuilding Temple
	1 Esd 5.7–46	Ezra 2.1–70; Neh 7.7–69	List of returning exiles
	1 Esd 5.47–73	Ezra 3.1–4.5	Rebuilding Temple
	1 Esd 6.1–7.15	Ezra 4.24–6.22	Completion of Temple
	1 Esd 8.1–9.55	Ezra 7.1–10.44; Neh 7.73–8.12	Ezra's mission

NEW TESTAMENT

A majority of scholars think that the Gospel of Mark was independently used as a source by Matthew and Luke.

	SYNOPTIC PASSAGES		SUBJECT MATTER
Mk 1.2–8	Mt 3.1–6,11–12	Lk 3.1–6,16	John the Baptist
Mk 1.9–11	Mt 3.13–17	Lk 3.21–22	Baptism of Jesus
Mk 1.12–13	Mt 4.1–2,11	Lk 4.1–2,13	Temptation of Jesus
Mk 1.16–20	Mt 4.18–22	(Lk 5.1–11)	Call of disciples
Mk 1.21–38	(Mt 7.28–29; 8.14–17)	Lk 4.31–43	Teaching and healing by Jesus
Mk 1.40–45	Mt 8.1–4	Lk 5.12–16	Healing of a leper
Mk 2.1–22	Mt 9.1–17	Lk 5.17–39	Events in Jesus' ministry
Mk 2.23–3.30	Mt 12.1–37; 10.1–4	Lk 6.1–19; 11.14–23; 12.10; 6.43–45	Events in Jesus' ministry
Mk 3.31–4.25	Mt 12.46–50; 13.1–13, 18–23	Lk 8.4–21	Sayings of Jesus
Mk 4.30–34	Mt 13.31–32,34–35	Lk 13.18–19	Sayings of Jesus
Mk 4.35–41	Mt 8.23–27	Lk 8.22–35	Stilling the storm
Mk 5.1–43	Mt 8.28–34; 9.18–26	Lk 8.26–56	Healings by Jesus
Mk 6.1–6	Mt 13.51–52		Rejection in Nazareth
Mk 6.7–14	Mt 10.1,9–11; 14.1–2	Lk 9.1–9	Events in Jesus' ministry
Mk 6.17–29	Mt 14.3–12		Death of John the Baptist
Mk 6.30–44	Mt 14.13–21	Lk 9.10–17	Feeding of five thousand
Mk 6.45–8.10	Mt 14.22–15.39		Events in Jesus' ministry
Mk 8.11–21	Mt 16.1–12	(Lk 11.29; 12.1)	Sayings of Jesus
Mk 8.27–9.48	Mt 16.13–17.23; 18.1–9	Lk 9.18–50; 17.1–2	Events in Jesus' ministry
Mk 12.28–31	Mt 22.34–40	Lk 10.25–38	Sayings of Jesus
Mk 10.1–12	Mt 19.1–12		On marriage
Mk 10.13–52	Mt 19.13–30; 20.17–34	Lk 18.15–43; 22.24–27	Sayings of Jesus
Mk 11.1–12.37	Mt 21.1–27,33–46; 22.15-46	Lk 19.28–38,45–48; 20.1–44; (10.25–28)	Jesus in Jerusalem
Mk 12.41–44		Lk 21.1–4	The poor widow
Mk 13.1–32	Mt 24.1–36	Lk 21.5–33	Sayings of Jesus about the end
Mk 14.1–15.47	Mt 26.1–27.2; 27.11–61	Lk 22.1–34,39–71; 23.1–5,18–55	Passion of Jesus
Mk 16.1–8	Mt 28.1–10	Lk 24.1–11	The empty tomb

A majority of scholars think that Matthew and Luke used a source that has not survived (known as "Q").

	SYNOPTIC PASSAGES	SUBJECT MATTER
Mt 3.7–10,12	Lk 3.7–9,17	John the Baptist's preaching
Mt 4.3–10	Lk 3.3–12	Temptation of Jesus
Mt 5.3–12	Lk 6.20–23	Beatitudes
Mt 5.13–16	Lk 14.34–35; 11.33	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 5.21–26	Lk 12.57–59	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 5.38–48	Lk 6.27–36	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 6.9–15	Lk 11.2–4	Lord's Prayer
Mt 6.19–7.27	Lk 12.33–36; 16.13; 12.22–31; 6.37–38, 41–42; 11.9–13; 6.31; 13.23–24; 6.43–49	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 8.5–15	Lk 7.1–10	Healing of a centurion's servant
Mt 8.18–22	Lk 9.57–60	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 10.26–39	Lk 12.2–9,51–53; 14.26–27	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 11.2–19	Lk 7.18–35	On John the Baptist

	SYNOPTIC PASSAGES	SUBJECT MATTER
Mt 11.20–27	Lk 10.13–15,21–22	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 12.38–45	Lk 11.29–32; 11.24–26	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 13.16–17	Lk 10.23–24	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 13.33	Lk 13.20–21	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 18.10–14	Lk 15.3–7	Sayings of Jesus
Mt 22.1–4	Lk 14.16–22	Parable of the marriage feast
Mt 23.37–39	Lk 13.34–35	Lament over Jerusalem
Mt 24.37–51	Lk 17.26–35; 12.39–46	Sayings of Jesus about the end
Mt 25.14–30	Lk 19.12–27	Parable of the talents

PARALLEL TEXTS FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Although the Gospel of John has the same general outline of Jesus' life as the Synoptic Gospels, only a few of the same sayings of Jesus found in the Synoptics occur in John, and the chronology and details of events in his life often differ. Important parallels are:

	SYNOPTIC PASSAGES			SUBJECT MATTER
Jn 1.19–34	Mt 3.1-17	Mk 1.1–11	Lk 3.1–22	John the Baptist
Jn 1.26-27	Mt 3.11	Mk 1.7-8	Lk 3.16	Saying, Baptist's relation to Jesus
Jn 1.30-33	Mt 3.16	Mk 1.10	Lk 3.22	Spirit descends on Jesus
Jn 1.35-42	Mt 4.18-20	Mk 1.16-18	Lk 5.1-11	Andrew & Simon Peter become disciples
Jn 1.42	Mt 16.18			Jesus nicknames Simon
Jn 2.12	Mt 4.13	Mk 1:21	Lk 4.31	Ministry begins in Capernaum
Jn 2.13–25	Mt 21.12–17	Mk 11.15–19	Lk 19.45–46	Jesus cleansing the Temple
Jn 4.4-6			Lk 9.52-53	Jesus moves into Samaria
Jn 4.35-36	Mt 9.36-38		Lk 10.2	Saying, harvest workers needed
Jn 4.43-45	Mt 13.57	Mk 6.4	Lk 4.24	Saying, prophet rejected in his hometown
Jn 4.46–53	Mt 8.5–13		Lk 7.1–19	Healing at Capernaum
Jn 5.1-18	Mt 9.1-8	Mk 2.1-12	Lk 5.17-26	Healing paralytic, forgiving sins
Jn 6.1–13	Mt 14.13–21	Mk 6.30–34	Lk 9.10–17	Multiplication of bread
Jn 6.15–21	Mt 14.22–33	Mk 6.45–52		Walking on water
Jn 6.30-31	Mt 16.1-4	Mk 8.11-13		Demand for a sign
Jn 6.52-58	Mt 26.26-29	Mk 14.22-26	Lk 22.15-20	Eating Jesus' body/blood
Jn 6.60-71	Mt 16.13-21	Mk 8.27-32	Lk 9.18-22	Peter's confession, passion prediction
Jn 9.1-7	Mt 20.29-34	Mk 10.46-52	Lk 18.35-42	Sight for the blind
Jn 10.1-5, 11-13	Mt 18.12-14		Lk 15.4-6	A good shepherd
Jn 11.17-44			Lk 7.11-17	Restores life to the dead
Jn 11.4–53	Mt 26.1–5	Mk 14.1–2	Lk 22.1–2	Conspiracy against Jesus
Jn 11.55-57			Lk 22.3-6	Authorities seek an informer
Jn 12.1–8	Mt 26.6–13	Mk 14.3–9	Lk 7.36–50	A woman anoints Jesus
Jn 12.12–19	Mt 21.1–9	Mk 11.1–10	Lk 19.28–38	Entry into Jerusalem
Jn 12.25-26	Mt 10.38-39	Mk 8.35	Lk 9.24	Saying, losing one's life to save it
Jn 12.27-32	Mt 26.36-41	Mk 14.32-36	Lk 22.41-46	Jesus prays accepting death
Jn 12.37-40	Mt 13.10-17	Mk 4.10-12	Lk 8.9-10	Unbelief predicted in Isa
Jn 12.44	Mt 10.40	Mk 9.41		Saying, to receive a disciple is receiving Jesus
Jn 13.12-17	Lk 22.24-27			Lesson on humility

	SYNOPTIC PASSAGES			SUBJECT MATTER
Jn 13.16	Mt 10.24-25		Lk 6.40	Saying, no disciple greater than the master
Jn 13.17	Mt 24.46		Lk 11.28	Beatitude
Jn 13.20	Mt 10.40			Saying, to receive a disciple is to receive Jesus
Jn 13.21–30	Mt 26.20–25	Mk 14.17–21	Lk 22.14,21–23	Judas identified as traitor
Jn 13.38	Mt 26.3	Mk 14.29-31	Lk 22.31-34	Peter's denial predicted
Jn 14.2-3	Lk 22.30			Disciples to be in the Father's house
Jn 14.12-14	Mt 7.7-8; 18.19; 21.22	Mk 11.24	Lk 11.9-10	Confidence in prayer
Jn 14.31	Mt 26.39	Mk 14.25	Lk 22.42	Jesus' will is the Father's
Jn 15.1-6	Mt 26.29	Mk 14.25		Vine image
Jn 15.13	Mt 20.28	Mk 10.45		Jesus gives his life for others
Jn 15.18-16.4a	Mt 10.17-25	Mk 13.9-13	Lk 21.12-17	Discipleship in a hostile world
Jn 15.26	Mt 10.20	Mk 13.11	Lk 21.12-13	Spirit speaks in disciple witnesses
Jn 16.2	Mt 10.17	Mk 13.9	Lk 21.12; 6.22	Disciples punished in synagogues
Jn 16.2	Mt 24.9	Mk 13.12	Lk 21.16	Disciples put to death
Jn 16.24	Mt 7.7		Lk 11.9	Saying, prayer in Jesus' name
Jn 17.1	Mt 26.39	Mk 14.36	Lk 22.42	Jesus prays to the Father
Jn 17.15	Mt 6.13			Prayer, kept safe from the evil one
Jn 18.2–12	Mt 26.47–56	Mk 14.43–52	Lk 22.47–53	Jesus arrested
Jn 18.13–27	Mt. 26.57–59, 69–75	Mk 14.53–55, 66–72	Lk 22.54–62	Jesus before the high priest
Jn 18.28–19.16	Mt 27.1–2, 11–32	Mk 15.2–21	Lk 23.2–5, 18–25	Jesus before Pilate
Jn 19.17–30	Mt 27.33–50	Mk 15.22–37	Lk 23.3–49	The crucifixion
Jn 19.38–42	Mt 27.57–60	Mk 15.42–46	Lk 23.50–56	The burial of Jesus
Jn 20.1–	Mt 28.1–8	Mk 16.1–8	Lk 24.1–11	Women find the tomb empty
Jn 20.2-10			Lk 24.24	Male disciples confirm the women's report
Jn 20.11-18	Mt 28.9-10			Women encounter the risen Jesus
Jn 20.19-23			Lk 24.36-49	Risen Jesus appears to the disciples at the evening meal
Jn 20.22			Lk 24.49; Acts 2.2-4	Disciples receive the Spirit
Jn 20.23	Mt 18.18			Disciples to forgive sin
Jn 20.30-31			Lk 1.1-4	Purpose for writing
Jn 21.1-14	Mt 28.16-20	[Mk 16.7]		Risen Jesus in Galilee
Jn 21.1-14, 15-19	[Mt 16.17-19]		Lk 5.1-11	Miraculous catch, Peter's calling

CHAPTER/VERSE DIFFERENCES

Chapter/verse differences between standard English numbering and Hebrew text numbering used in NJPS. Books are listed in the order they appear.

ENGLISH	HEBREW	ENGLISH	HEBREW	ENGLISH	HEBREW
Gen 31.55	Gen 32.1	Neh 10.1–39	Neh 10.2–40	Ps 30.1–12	Ps 30.2–13
Gen 32.1–32	Gen 32.2–33	Job 41.1–8	Job 40.25–32	Ps 31. title	Ps 31.1
Ex 8.1–4	Ex 7.26–29	Job 41.9–24	Job 41.1–26	Ps 31.1–24	Ps 31.2–25
Ex 8.5–32	Ex 8.1–28	Ps 3 . title	Ps 3.1	Ps 32. title	Ps 32.1a
Ex 22.1	Ex 21.37	Ps 3.1–8	Ps 3.2–9	Ps 34. title	Ps 34.1
Ex 22.2–31	Ex 22.1–30	Ps 4. title	Ps 4.1	Ps 34.1–22	Ps 34.2–23
Lev 6.1–7	Lev 5.20–26	Ps 4.1–8	Ps 4.2–9	Ps 35. title	Ps 35.1 (1st word)
Lev 6.8–30	Lev 6.1–23	Ps 5. title	Ps 5.1	Ps 36. title	Ps 36.1
Num 16.36–50	Num 17.1–15	Ps 5.1–12	Ps 5.2–13	Ps 36.1–12	Ps 36.2–13
Num 17.1–13	Num 17.16–28	Ps 6. title	Ps 6.1	Ps 37. title	Ps 37.1 (1st word)
Num 26.1a	Num 25.19	Ps 6.1–10	Ps 6.2–11	Ps 38. title	Ps 38.1
Num 29.40	Num 30.1	Ps 7. title	Ps 7.1	Ps 38.1–22	Ps 38.2–23
Num 30.1–16	Num 30.2–17	Ps 7.1–17	Ps 7.2–18	Ps 39. title	Ps 39.1
Deut 12.32	Deut 13.1	Ps 8. title	Ps 8.1	Ps 39.1–13	Ps 39.2–14
Deut 13.1–18	Deut 13.2–19	Ps 8.1–9	Ps 8.2–10	Ps 40. title	Ps 40.1
Deut 22.30	Deut 23.1	Ps 9. title	Ps 9.1	Ps 40.1–17	Ps 40.2–18
Deut 23.1–25	Deut 23.2–26	Ps 9.1–20	Ps 9.2–21	Ps 41. title	Ps 41.1
Deut 29.1	Deut 28.69	Ps 11. title	Ps 11.1a	Ps 41.1–13	Ps 41.2–14
Deut 29.2–29	Deut 29.1–28	Ps 12. title	Ps 12.1	Ps 42. title	Ps 42.1
1 Sam 20.42b	1 Sam 21.1	Ps 12.1–8	Ps 12.2–9	Ps 42.1–11	Ps 42.2–12
1 Sam 21.1–15	1 Sam 21.2–16	Ps 13. title	Ps 13.1	Ps 44. title	Ps 44.1
1 Sam 23.29	1 Sam 24.1	Ps 13.1–5	Ps 13.2–6a	Ps 44.1–26	Ps 44.2–27
1 Sam 24.1–22	1 Sam 24.2–23	Ps 13.6	Ps 13.6b	Ps 45. title	Ps 45.1
2 Sam 18.33	2 Sam 19.1	Ps 14. title	Ps 14.1a	Ps 45.1–17	Ps 45.2–18
2 Sam 19.1–43	2 Sam 19.2–44	Ps 15. title	Ps 15.1a	Ps 46. title	Ps 46.1
1 Kings 4.21–34	1 Kings 5.1–14	Ps 16. title	Ps 16.1a	Ps 46.1–11	Ps 46.2–12
1 Kings 5.1–18	1 Kings 5.15–32	Ps 17. title	Ps 17.1a	Ps 47. title	Ps 47.1
1 Kings 18.33b	1 Kings 18.34a	Ps 18. title	Ps 18.1–2a	Ps 47.1–9	Ps 47.2–10
1 Kings 20.2b	1 Kings 20.3a	Ps 18.1–50	Ps 18.2b–51	Ps 48. title	Ps 48.1
1 Kings 22.22a	1 Kings 22.21b	Ps 19. title	Ps 19.1	Ps 48.1–14	Ps 48.2–15
1 Kings 22.43b	1 Kings 22.44	Ps 19.1–14	Ps 19.2–15	Ps 49. title	Ps 49.1
1 Kings 22.44–53	1 Kings 22.45–54	Ps 20. title	Ps 20.1	Ps 49.1–20	Ps 49.2–21
2 Kings 11.21	2 Kings 12.1	Ps 20.1–9	Ps 20.2–10	Ps 50. title	Ps 50.1a
2 Kings 12.1–21	2 Kings 12.2–22	Ps 21. Title	Ps 21.1	Ps 51. title	Ps 51.1–2
1 Chr 6.1–15	1 Chr 5.27–41	Ps 21.1–13	Ps 21.2–14	Ps 51.1–19	Ps 51.3–21
1 Chr 6.16–81	1 Chr 6.1–66	Ps 22. title	Ps 22.1	Ps 52. title	Ps 52.1–2
1 Chr 12.4	1 Chr 12.4–5	Ps 22.1–31	Ps 22.2–32	Ps 52.1–9	Ps 52.3–11
1 Chr 12.5–40	1 Chr 12.6–41	Ps 23. title	Ps 23.1a	Ps 53. title	Ps 53.1

ENGLISH	HEBREW	ENGLISH	HEBREW	ENGLISH	HEBREW
2 Chr 2.1	2 Chr 1.18	Ps 24. title	Ps 24.1a	Ps 53.1–6	Ps 53.2–7
2 Chr 2.2–18	2 Chr 2.1–17	Ps 25. title	Ps 25.1a	Ps 54. title	Ps 54.1–2
2 Chr 14.1	2 Chr 13.23	Ps 26. title	Ps 26.1a	Ps 54.1–7	Ps 54.3–9
2 Chr 14.2–15	2 Chr 14.1–14	Ps 27. title	Ps 27.1a	Ps 55. title	Ps 55.1
Neh. 4.1–6	Neh 3.33–38	Ps 28. title	Ps 28.1a	Ps 55.1–23	Ps 55.2–24
Neh 4.7–23	Neh 4.1–17	Ps 29. title	Ps 29.1a	Ps 56. title	Ps 56.1
Neh 9.38	Neh 10.1	Ps 30. title	Ps 30.1	Ps 56.1–13	Ps 56.2–14
Ps. 57. title	Ps. 57.1	Ps. 85.1–13	Ps. 85.2–14	Ps. 133. title	Ps. 133.1a
Ps. 57.1–11	Ps. 57.2–12	Ps. 86. title	Ps. 86.1a	Ps. 133.1	Ps. 133.1b
Ps. 58. title	Ps. 58.1	Ps. 86.1	Ps. 86.1b	Ps. 134. title	Ps. 134.1a
Ps. 58.1–11	Ps. 58.2–12	Ps. 87. title	Ps. 87.1a	Ps. 134.1	Ps. 134.1b
Ps. 59. title	Ps. 59.1	Ps. 87.1	Ps. 87.1b	Ps. 138. title	Ps. 138.1a
Ps. 59.1–17	Ps. 59.2–18	Ps. 88. title	Ps. 88.1	Ps. 138.1	Ps. 138.1b
Ps. 60. title	Ps. 60.1–2	Ps. 88.1–18	Ps. 88.2–19	Ps. 139. title	Ps. 139.1a
Ps. 60.1–12	Ps. 60.3–14	Ps. 89. title	Ps. 89.1	Ps. 139.1	Ps. 139.1b
Ps. 61. title	Ps. 61.1	Ps. 89.1–52	Ps. 89.2–53	Ps. 140. title	Ps. 140.1
Ps. 61.1–8	Ps. 61.2–9	Ps. 90. title	Ps. 90.1a	Ps. 140.1–13	Ps. 140.2–14
Ps. 62. title	Ps. 62.1	Ps. 90.1	Ps. 90.1b	Ps. 141. title	Ps. 141.1a
Ps. 62.1–12	Ps. 62.2–13	Ps. 92. title	Ps. 92.1	Ps. 141.1	Ps. 141.1b
Ps. 63. title	Ps. 63.1	Ps. 92.1–15	Ps. 92.2–16	Ps. 142. title	Ps. 142.1
Ps. 63.1–11	Ps. 63.2–12	Ps. 98. title	Ps. 98.1 (1st word)	Ps. 142.1–7	Ps. 142.2–8
Ps. 64. title	Ps. 64.1	Ps. 100. title	Ps. 100.1a	Ps. 143. title	Ps. 143.1a
Ps. 64.1–10	Ps. 64.2–11	Ps. 100.1	Ps. 100.1b	Ps. 143.1	Ps. 143.1b
Ps. 65. title	Ps. 65.1	Ps. 101. title	Ps. 101.1a	Ps. 144. title	Ps. 144.1 (1st word)
Ps. 65.1–13	Ps. 65.2–14	Ps. 101.1	Ps. 101.1b	Ps. 145. title	Ps. 145.1a
Ps. 66. title	Ps. 66.1a	Ps. 102. title	Ps. 102.1	Ps. 145.1	Ps. 145.1b
Ps. 66.1	Ps. 66.1b	Ps. 102.1–28	Ps. 102.2–29	Eccl. 5.1	Eccl. 4.17
Ps. 67. title	Ps. 67.1	Ps. 103. title	Ps. 103.1 (1st word)	Eccl. 5.2–20	Eccl. 5.1–19
Ps. 67.1–7	Ps. 67.2–8	Ps. 108. title	Ps. 108.1	Song 6.13	Song 7.1
Ps. 68. title	Ps. 68.1	Ps. 108.1–13	Ps. 108.2–14	Song 7.1–13	Song 7.2–14
Ps. 68.1–35	Ps. 68.2–36	Ps. 109. title	Ps. 109.1a	Isa. 9.1	Isa. 8.23
Ps. 69. title	Ps. 69.1	Ps. 109.1	Ps. 109.1b	Isa. 9.2–21	Isa. 9.1–20
Ps. 69.1–36	Ps. 69.2–37	Ps. 110. title	Ps. 110.1a	Isa. 63.19	Isa. 63.19a
Ps. 70. title	Ps. 70.1	Ps. 110.1	Ps. 110.1b	Isa. 64.1	Isa. 63.19b
Ps. 70.1–5	Ps. 70.2–6	Ps. 120. title	Ps. 120.1a	Isa. 64.2–12	Isa. 64.1–11
Ps. 72. title	Ps. 72.1 (1st word)	Ps. 120.1	Ps. 120.1b	Jer. 9.1	Jer. 8.23
Ps. 73. title	Ps. 73.1a	Ps. 121. title	Ps. 121.1a	Jer. 9.2–26	Jer. 9.1–25
Ps. 73.1	Ps. 73.1b	Ps. 121.1	Ps. 121.1b	Ezek. 20.45–49	Ezek. 21.1–5
Ps. 74. title	Ps. 74.1a	Ps. 122. title	Ps. 122.1a	Ezek. 21.1–32	Ezek. 21.6–37
Ps. 74.1	Ps. 74.1b	Ps. 122.1	Ps. 122.1b	Dan. 4.1–3	Dan. 3.31–33
Ps. 75. Title	Ps. 75.1	Ps. 123. title	Ps. 123.1a	Dan. 4.4–37	Dan. 4.1–34
Ps. 75.1–10	Ps. 75.2–11	Ps. 123.1	Ps. 123.1b	Dan. 5.31	Dan. 6.1
Ps. 76. Title	Ps. 76.1	Ps. 124. title	Ps. 124.1a	Dan. 6.1–28	Dan. 6.2–29

ENGLISH	HEBREW	ENGLISH	HEBREW	ENGLISH	HEBREW
Ps. 77. Title	Ps. 77.1	Ps. 124.1	Ps. 124.1b	Hos. 1.10–11	Hos. 2.1–2
Ps. 77.1–20	Ps. 77.2–21	Ps. 125. title	Ps. 125.1a	Hos. 2.1–23	Hos. 2.3–25
Ps. 78. Title	Ps. 78.1a	Ps. 125.1	Ps. 125.1b	Hos. 11.12	Hos. 12.1
Ps. 78.1	Ps. 78.1b	Ps. 126. title	Ps. 126.1a	Hos. 12.1–14	Hos. 12.2–15
Ps. 79. Title	Ps. 79.1a	Ps. 126.1	Ps. 126.1b	Hos. 13.16	Hos. 14.1
Ps. 79.1	Ps. 79.1b	Ps. 127. title	Ps. 127.1a	Hos. 14.1–9	Hos. 14.2–10
Ps. 80. title	Ps. 80.1	Ps. 127.1	Ps. 127.1b	Joel 2.28–32	Joel 3.1–5
Ps. 80.1–19	Ps. 80.2–20	Ps. 128. title	Ps. 128.1a	Joel 3.1–21	Joel 4.1–21
Ps. 81. title	Ps. 81.1	Ps. 128.1	Ps. 128.1b	Jon. 1.17	Jon. 2.1
Ps. 81.1–16	Ps. 81.2–17	Ps. 129. title	Ps. 129.1a	Jon. 2.1–10	Jon. 2.2–11
Ps. 82. title	Ps. 82.1a	Ps. 129.1	Ps. 129.1b	Mic. 5.1	Mic. 4.14
Ps. 82.1	Ps. 82.1b	Ps. 130. title	Ps. 130.1a	Mic. 5.2–15	Mic. 5.1–14
Ps. 83. title	Ps. 83.1	Ps. 130.1	Ps. 130.1b	Nah. 1.15	Nah. 2.1
Ps. 83.1–18	Ps. 83.2–19	Ps. 131. title	Ps. 131.1a	Nah. 2.1–13	Nah. 2.2–14
Ps. 84. title	Ps. 84.1	Ps. 131.1	Ps. 131.1b	Zech. 1.18–21	Zech. 2.1–4
Ps. 84.1–12	Ps. 84.2–13	Ps. 132. title	Ps. 132.1a	Zech. 2.1–13	Zech. 2.5–17
Ps. 85. title	Ps. 85.1	Ps. 132.1	Ps. 132.1b	Mal. 4.1–6	Mal. 3.19–24

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INTRODUCTORY

Evans, Craig A. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature.* Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson, 2005.

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GLOSSARY

A

Aaron the first high priest, brother of Moses and Levite (Ex 4.14); he is inaugurated in Ex chs 28–29. Although it is unclear how, or whether, Aaron was supposed to be the progenitor of later priests, he is regarded as the prototype. See **Levite**, **Zadokite**

Abaddon (Heb "place of destruction"), the realm of the dead (Job 26.6; Prov 15.11; Ps 88.10–12; Rev 9.11)

Abba (Aram. "father"), the word Jesus (Mk 14.36) and the early church (Rom 8.15) used to address God

accession the act of taking one's place as a ruler

acropolis (Gk "height of the city") the fortified upper area of a Greek city; "the Acropolis" refers to this area in Athens

acrostic a literary device in which the first letter of each line of poetry occurs according to a predetermined pattern. In the poetry of the Hebrew Bible all acrostics are alphabetical: the individual lines of a poem (or occasionally small groups of lines) begin with the twenty–two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order. (This would be equivalent to the first line of an English poem beginning with *A*, the second with *B*, etc.) The acrostic form, besides giving the esthetic pleasure of a pattern, may have been intended to make memorization easier. It may also have been intended as a way of expressing completeness: in Lamentations, for instance, the acrostic format of the individual chs might have been used to express the completeness of the outpouring of grief. The following poems in the Bible are acrostics: Pss. 9–10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145; Prov. 31.10–31; Lam 1, 2, 3, 4 (ch 5 is not an acrostic, but preserves part of the form by having 22 lines, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet); Nah 1.2–8 (or 9) (incomplete). In the Hebrew text of Sirach, 51.13–30 is acrostic.

Adar the twelfth month (February-March) in the Jewish year. In order to bring the lunar calendar into alignment with the solar year, a leap year, in which there are two months of Adar, occurs seven times during each nineteen-year cycle of years (see Calendar)

Adonai (Heb "my Lord") a divine title and the word generally substituted for **YHWH** when the Bible is read aloud

Ahikar an ancient Near Eastern story of a prime minister to the king of Assyria, who is betrayed by an ungrateful nephew but ultimately vindicated. It is alluded to in Tob 1.21–22.

Akedah (Heb "binding") the story of the binding of Isaac (Gen 22)

Akkadian the language of Assyria and Babylonia. Akkadian is a Semitic language related to Hebrew, and is written in cuneiform, wedge-shaped writing.

alien see **resident alien**

allegory an extended comparison, which directly describes one reality while indirectly describing something entirely different. An allegory as a narrative uses action, setting, and characters to point symbolically to something else.

alleluia a Greek and Latin form of a Hebrew phrase that means "Praise the LORD." See **hallelujah**.

Amarna Letters diplomatic correspondence from the reigns of the Egyptian pharaohs Amenophis III and Akhenaten, written in **Akkadian** cuneiform, that provide information about **Canaan** in the fourteenth century BCE

Ammon, Ammonites, the territory and its inhabitants east of the Jordan River

Amorites according to the Bible, one of the native nations of Canaan. Amorites are attested in other ancient Near Eastern documents from the third millennium BCE and onward as residents of Syria who migrated to Mesopotamia and other areas. Their language was related to Hebrew.

amphictyony a social organization in ancient Greece in which groups were united around a central sanctuary and serviced this sanctuary on a rotating basis. Some scholars think that a similar system existed in Israel in premonarchic times.

anachronism an element in a story that is out of place because it did not exist at the time in which the story is set. Anachronisms can be valuable clues to when a narrative was written.

Anat a Canaanite goddess often depicted as a warrior

anathema (Gk "devoted [to evil]," "accursed") a solemn pronouncement by a recognized religious authority banning or condemning a person, thing, or idea as false or evil

aniconic (Gk "not representational") worship without the use of statues or images; also a symbolic or suggestive presentation of a divine being, rather than a literal or realistic rendition

anoint touch or rub with oil. Anointing was a sign that a person or thing was dedicated to God. See also **messiah**.

anthropomorphic (Gk "in human form") the description or representation of a divine being in the form of a human person

antichrist the apocalyptic figure presented as opposing God, battling the heavenly angels serving God, or fighting against God's anointed ruler

antithesis the contrast of ideas through closely contrasted words

antithetic parallelism two parallel lines related to one another by opposition or contrast

aphorism a short, memorable saying

apocalypse (Gr. *apokalypsis*, "removal of the veil, revelation") a literary genre in which an angel or other heavenly being communicates to a human being the divine plan for history, especially the end of time

apocalyptic having the character of an apocalypse

Apocrypha (Gk "hidden things") a group of about twenty mostly Jewish works, many of which were included in the **Septuagint**, but which are not included in the Jewish or Protestant canons of the Bible. Most of these works are canonical for Roman Catholics; a few more are canonical for Orthodox Christians. See **deuterocanon**.

apodictic law law stated absolutely, as in the Decalogue's "you shall not," rather than casuistically, "if a person . . . ." See **casuistic law**.

apologia (Gk "explanation") a defense of one's actions or beliefs, usually in a formal speech or written document

apostasy abandoning a set of beliefs, or the position of having abandoned them

apostle (Gk "one who is sent"), a delegate or representative. In the New Testament, an apostle was one who had known Jesus and could witness to the resurrection (Acts 1.21–2), or a preacher of the gospel who had been called by God (1 Cor 12.28; Rom 16.7).

apostrophe (Gk "turn from") a direct address to someone or something not present

apotropaic (Gk "turn away from") an action intended to ward off evil

Aramaic a Semitic language used widely in the Near East during the Persian period, though it developed earlier. It became the ordinary language of Jews, and was used by Jesus. An Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible is called a **Targum**.

Aramaism the use in another language of a word or grammatical form derived from Aramaic.

Arameans a Semitic people living in Syria from the second millennium BCE onward. Damascus was a principal city of the Arameans.

aretalogy (Gk "words about virtue") praise of virtues, either of a hero or of oneself

ark of the covenant the chest in the tabernacle or Temple that contained the text or tablets of the covenant, and that served as part of the throne of the LORD

Armageddon the traditional site of the final battle between good and evil (Rev 16.6), possibly derived from Megiddo, a strategically located site where many battles occurred

ascension going up, particularly to a divine realm but also literally climbing a hill (as to Jerusalem)

asceticism (Gk "training") deliberate self-denial or self-punishment for religious purpose

Asherah (pl. Asherim) Canaanite goddess, wife or consort of **El**; her sacred symbol, a pole or tree, was the object of prophetic condemnation.

Assyria a Mesopotamian world power in the second and first millennia BCE. Its capital cities included Ashur and Nineveh. The Assyrian empire conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE and exiled its people. The Assyrians were well-known for their massive building projects, and for their cruelty in war.

Astarte the Canaanite goddess of love and fertility

atbash a form of code in Hebrew in which the last letter of the alphabet is substituted for the first, the next-to-last for the second, and so on: *alep* becomes *taw*, *bet* becomes *shin*, *gimel* becomes *resh*, etc. (In English, *A* would become *Z*, *B* would become *Y*, etc.) In Jer 25.26; 51.41, Babylon (b-b-l) is written Sheshach (sh-sh-k).

atonement expiation for sin, or reparation for an injury committed against another

Atrahasis hero of the Mesopotamian epic named for him, who survives the god Enlil's efforts to destroy humankind by a flood. See also **Gilgamesh.**

B

Baal ("master," "lord," "husband") the chief god of Canaanite religion, a storm god

Babylonia a Mesopotamian world power. It often competed against Assyria, which it conquered in 612 BCE. Its major city was Babylon (Akkadian "gate of the gods"). Its main god became Marduk. Babylonia destroyed Jerusalem in 586, and was conquered by the Persian king **Cyrus** the Great in 539.

Babylonian exile the forced relocation of some of the population of Judah, especially the elite, after the conquest by Babylonia in the early sixth century BCE. The exile ended with the permitted return to the land under **Cyrus** in 538 BCE.

Babylonian Talmud see **Talmud**

ban (Heb h*erem*) the dedication or sacrifice of war booty (including people) to the deity

baptism ritual purification by immersion in water, used by Christians as an initiation into the community

BCE Before the Common Era, equivalent to BC

Beelzebul (also Baalzebul, Baalzebub, Beelzebub) the ruler of the demons (Mt 12.24–27). It is based on the Hebrew *Baalzebul*, "Baal the exalted," a title of the Phoenician god at Ekron (2 Kings 1.2–18), changed probably as a derogatory name into Baalzebub, "lord of flies."

Behemoth a mythical beast in Job 40.15–24 who represents violent forces in the world

Bel (Akkadian "master," cognate to **Baal**) title of **Marduk**

belomancy a method of divination by choosing or tossing down arrows on which names of potential victims are inscribed

berît (Heb "treaty, contract, covenant") a term that may be used of a legal agreement between two individuals, groups, or nations, or between God and Israel (see **covenant**)

bicolon unit of Hebrew poetry composed of two *cola*, or lines (sometimes called a *dístich)*

Binding (of Isaac) see **Akedah**

Book of the Covenant see **Covenant Collection**

booths, festival of (Heb *Sukkot*) the autumn harvest festival, also called the festival of ingathering), so named because the harvesters lived in the fields in makeshift tents or booths, also called tabernacles

bulla a clay seal with the impression of a signet ring or other symbol of authority

C

Cairo Geniza the storeroom (see **geniza**) of a synagogue in Old Cairo in which were discovered many thousands of fragments of texts, including a portion of the book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) in Hebrew

Cambyses son of **Cyrus** and king of Persia 529–522 BCE. He conquered Egypt in 525

Canaan in Mesopotamian and Egyptian documents and in some biblical texts, a name for the region in the southern Levant part of which became biblical Israel, whose inhabitants are called Canaanites. Also a grandson of Noah.

canon (Gk "measuring rod") the rule by which something is determined to belong or not to a category. Christian tradition uses the word for the official list of the books that make up the Bible.

canonical criticism the interpretation of a biblical text based upon its final form, rather than viewing it as an assemblage of preexisting units

casuistic law (also called "case law") the form of law dealing with the treatment of specific cases. It is frequently in the form of "if/when . . . then" formulae. Most ancient Near Eastern law collections are formulated this way.

catchword, catchphrase a representative or repeated word or group of words that stands for an argument or point of view; that word or phrase picked up and used in a subsequent or related text

Catholic Epistles (also "Epistles General") the New Testament letters, from James to 3 John, identified not by their recipients but by their authors and therefore presumed to be addressed to the universal ("catholic" means "entire") church

CE Common Era, equivalent to AD

centurion in the Roman army, an officer commanding a century, a maximum of a hundred soldiers; there were sixty centuries in a legion

ceramic typology dating different levels of an archaeological site by classifying the pieces of pottery found in them according to the approximate eras in which they were made

Chaldean(s) a collective name for the tribes that were dominant in Babylon from the late sixth century BCE; Chaldea is frequently associated with the area of southern Mesopotamia

chaos complete lack of order. In ancient Near Eastern mythology, chaos was sometimes personified as divine beings who had to be conquered by other gods in order to establish an orderly, habitable universe.

charismatic (Gr. "gifted, graced") characterized by the ability to influence or lead others; personally magnetic; talented

chattel possessions or persons owned by someone else and therefore at that person's complete disposal

Chemosh the chief god of Moab

cherubim (sing. "cherub") mythical, composite creatures with body parts from various animals; they often had wings and human heads. They were commonly guardians of temples and palaces in the ancient Near East.

chiasm, chiasmus (from Gr. *chi*, the letter that resembles an *X*) inverting the second pair of terms in a parallel structure, so that the corresponding terms, if laid out in a square, would form an *X*. The resultant pattern is *abba, abcba, abccba*, etc.

Christ (Gk "anointed"), the translation of Heb *mashiah*, "messiah." In the New Testament and in general usage, Christ always refers to Jesus of Nazareth.

christology the theological doctrines concerning the nature of Christ

chronicle an account of events in the order in which they occurred

Chronicler the name for the unknown author of the books of Chronicles; sometimes also applied to the author of Ezra and Nehemiah

church (see also house church) the community of believers in a particular area; the later use of "church" to mean a building where people worship does not occur in the New Testament

church fathers see **patristic writers**

circumcision the removal of the foreskin of the penis

Cisjordan Latin for "this side of Jordan," that is, the region west of the Jordan river

citadel a stronghold or fortress, whether standing alone or serving as the inner fortification of a city

clan a social unit, composed of several families considered to be descended from a common ancestor; several clans constituted a tribe

climax (Gk "ladder"), a series of clauses in which each succeeding clause repeats the important term from the previous clause, each clause in turn making a more important point

codex a manuscript of separate pages, bound along one edge. Modern books are a development of the codex.

colon (pl. *cola*) a single line of poetry (also known as a *stich*)

colophon (Gk "summit," by extension "finishing touch") a notice, usually found at the end of an ancient text, giving information about details such as authorship

concordance a word index to a given text, listing each occurrence of a given word along with its context

concubine a woman who is the sexual partner of a man, and is legally recognized as such, but who does not have the full status of a wife

corvée forced labor for the state

cosmology an account of the origins of the cosmos

cosmopolis (Gk "world city") a major metropolis, usually the main city of an empire, to which peoples from different countries or ethnic groups came or in which they resided

cosmos (Gk "order, regularity") the created world of order, stability, relative permanence; the opposite of chaos

Council of Trent the twenty-ninth ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church (1545–1563), held after the Protestant Reformation had begun. Among other decisions, it defined the books that are included in the Catholic canon of Scripture.

covenant (Heb *berit*) a contract or treaty. Some covenants have specific conditions or treaty stipulations, while others are covenants of grant; often used of the relationship between God and Israel

Covenant Code another term for **Covenant Collection**

Covenant Collection an ancient set of laws (Ex 20.19–23.33), which details the terms of the covenant between God and Israel

cult prostitute one available for sexual intercourse with worshipers at the temple of a god

cult rituals and religious practices at a place of worship. The cult of the Jerusalem Temple means the religious practices carried out there, with no judgment about their value.

Cynics (Gk "dogs, doglike ones") a nickname for a Greek philosophical movement of the fourth century BCE aimed at achieving happiness by lessening desires, and therefore needing less; it also taught contempt (or at least disregard) for social conventions and consequent lack of shame about meeting one's physical needs (hence the nickname, since dogs were popularly supposed to have no shame)

Cyrus Cylinder an Akkadian inscription describing the conquest of Babylon by **Cyrus**

Cyrus king of Persia (559–530 BCE). He defeated Media in 550 and conquered most of the ancient Near East, including **Babylonia**, allowing the Jewish exiles in Babylonia to return to Judah in 538

D

D according to the **Documentary Hypothesis**, the Deuteronomic source, which covers almost the entire book of Deuteronomy

Davidic dynasty the direct descendents of King David, who ruled in Jerusalem from the tenth to the early sixth centuries BCE

Davidic having to do with the monarchic dynasty founded by David that ruled over Israel and, after the division of the kingdom, the southern part (Judah) until the Babylonian conquest and exile of the sixth century BCE; also the movement to restore that monarchy or to reproduce the self-rule that it represented

Day of Atonement, Heb **Yom Kippur**, the tenth day of the seventh month in the fall, a day of fasting and repentance

Day of the Lord the time mentioned in many prophetic books when God will appear as a warrior, sometimes fighting against Israel, sometimes against Israel's enemies

Dead Sea Scrolls a group of manuscripts found beginning in 1947 in caves near the Dead Sea, at Wadi Qumran. The scrolls were probably the library of an Essene settlement that flourished at the site from the second century BCE until it was destroyed by the Romans in 68 CE. The library included Hebrew manuscripts of biblical books older than those previously known, and other scrolls regulating the life of the community that shed light on the variety of Jewish belief and practice in the Roman period.

Decalogue (Gk "ten words") a traditional name for the list of ten commandments in Ex 20.1–17, Deut 5.6–21

defective spelling the form of a word in the Hebrew text that is missing one or more optional vowel letters

defilement a state of ritual impurity caused by contact with a corpse or other impure object. Priestly literature in the Torah is especially concerned with defilement and removing defilement.

demon, demonic (Gk "spirit") a being of the spiritual realm, or a quality of that realm, particularly one opposed or hostile to human beings

deuterocanon, deuterocanonical (Gk "second canon"), those books or portions of books not included in the Jewish or Protestant canons but accepted as canonical by some Christian churches (Roman Catholic and Orthodox) because they were included in the **Septuagint**. The NRSV places notices within the Apocryphal/ Deuterocanonical Books explaining which ones are accepted by which groups.

Deutero-Isaiah see **Second Isaiah**

Deuteronomistic History the account in the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings that presents the history of Israel in the promised land, interpreting it a partial failure to keep the covenant faithfully, and the consequences of that failure. These books show significant theological and linguistic similarities, suggesting that they have a common editor or editors.

Deuteronomistic pertaining to the editor(s) of the history comprised in the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, as prefaced by the book of Deuteronomy. The term is also applied to the style of these books, reflecting concern for such matters as obedience to the laws given in Deuteronomy, centralized worship in Jerusalem, and support for the **Davidic dynasty**.

Deutero-Pauline (Gk "secondary [letters] of Paul") the writings (Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and sometimes Hebrews) traditionally attributed to Paul but which many modern scholars now classify as written by others, perhaps some of them disciples of Paul

devil a spiritual being opposed to God or to the angels of God

diaspora (Gk "dispersal") the scattering of Jews from the promised land Israel, and hence any Jews living outside Israel. Also dispersion.

diatribe an argument against a position, or one critical of a person or group. Diatribe often includes an imagined dialogue between opposing viewpoints.

Didache (Gk "teaching") an early Christian writing, dating from around 150 CE but including earlier materials. It consists of moral exhortation, a manual of church order, and guidance for community life. It is valuable for providing insight into the concerns of early Christian communities, and contains material similar to that in the **Pastoral Epistles**.

dietary laws see **kosher**

diptych two leaves joined with a hinge; a form of ancient notebook in which leaves, wax-covered on the inner surface, could be inscribed with notes.

disciple a follower, an adherent of a particular teaching

dispersion see **diaspora**

divination the effort to learn about the present or the future, by consulting mediums, interpreting omens, and the like

divine warrior God in the role of leader of the heavenly armies, usually seen as fighting for Israel. See also **holy war**.

Documentary Hypothesis a theory about the formation of the first five books of the Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy. The hypothesis holds that there are four traditions underlying these books, naming them after a chief characteristic of each: "*J* or the "Yahwist" ("*J* from the German spelling "Jahveh") uses the divine name "YHWH" (the LORD) consistently and contains much of the oldest material; "*E* or the "Elohist" uses the divine name "Elohim" (God) fairly consistently and contains traditions from the Northern Kingdom of Israel; "*P* or the "Priestly" writer is concerned largely with legal codes and matters of religious practice; and "*D* or the "Deuteronomist" represents the traditions gathered mostly in Deuteronomy.

doxology (Gk "word of glory") a prayer of praise to God, or one glorifying God

dualism the religious or philosophical view that reality consists of two basic elements, often seen as "good" and "evil"

dynasty a ruling family; when a leader dies, the next leader is always chosen from among the family members

E

E according to the **Documentary Hypothesis**, the Elohist source, which in Genesis refers to God as *elohim*. It is general though to have originated in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Edom, Edomites the territory and people to the southeast and south of Judah, first attested in late second-millennium BCE texts. Edom is identified in Genesis 36 with Esau, Jacob's brother. The enmity between these brothers and between Judah and Edom mirror each other. Edom was later called **Idumea**.

El a Canaanite deity popular in the second millennium BCE. In the texts from Ugarit, he is a significant deity, but is often depicted as old and is largely supplanted by **Baal**.

elect, election those whom God has chosen (Matt 24.22,24; Rom 8.33) or the process of God's having

chosen a group (Rom 9.11); these terms do not imply the later (Calvinist) teaching of predestination

Elephantine Papyri Aramaic documents, mostly from the fifth century BCE, found on the island of Elephantine, near Syene (modern Aswan) in Egypt. The papyri show that among those who inhabited the colony on Elephantine were Jews who kept up religious observances, such as Passover, and had their own temple.

elohim the Hebrew word usually translated "God," though its plural form is sometimes also translated "gods." It is originally a common noun (a god), though it is often used as a proper noun for the God of Israel, even though it is a plural form.

Elohist the presumed author of the **E** source according to the **Documentary Hypothesis**

encomium a formal speech praising someone, as in a funeral oration

Enuma Elish a Babylonian text in which the god Marduk becomes king of the gods after creating the cosmos from the body of the goddess of the deep, Tiamat, whom Marduk defeated

ephod (1) the linen apron worn by priests in the Temple; (2) a device used to divine the will of God. The second kind of ephod was carried in priestly garments, which may explain why the same word can be used for both.

Ephraim son of Joseph, for whom the most important tribe of the **Northern Kingdom** is named

Epicureans a Greek philosophical school, founded by Epicurus (341–270 BCE), who taught that human beings naturally seek pleasure, and that the best way to achieve this pursuit was in moderation, since moderation permits the longest possible life of pleasure-seeking

Epiphanes a title, "[God] made manifest," adopted by Antiochus IV, the ruler of the part of the Greek empire that included Judea during the second century BCE. He was the king who forced pagan worship to occur in the Jerusalem Temple, thus provoking the revolt of the Maccabees.

epiphany (Gk "appearing") the manifestation or visual presence of a divine being

epiphany (Gk "manifestation, appearance") usually the appearance of a god or divine being in a form that can be seen by human beings

episcopacy, episcopate (Gk "overseer") a form of church governance in which one authority is responsible for the Christians in a particular geographical area

epistle a letter, sometimes intended for public reading and therefore written according to a particular literary form

Epistles General see **Catholic Epistles**

epistolary prescript a standard salutation or opening phrase at the beginning of a letter

epithet a word or phrase that characterizes a person or thing, and that can often be used by itself to refer to the person

eponymous (Gk "regarding the name") person for whom something is named; Judas Maccabeus is the eponymous main character of the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees

eschatological, eschatology (Gr. *eschata*, "last things") a concern with the end time, or the end of the world as we know it, whether that involves a new historical era radically discontinuous from this one, or an entirely new cosmos after the destruction of the current one

eschaton (Gk "final thing") the end of a period or era; the final stage of history

Essenes a communal society in Judaism from the second century BCE to the first century CE whose members lived apart in communities that were similar in some respects to later monastic groups. It is generally agreed that the **Dead Sea Scrolls** were collected and preserved by an Essene community.

ethics, ethical (Gk "custom") rules of behavior or moral standards expected in a particular place or among a particular group; behavior conforming to those rules or standards

etiology (Gr. *aition*, "cause") an explanation for a name, an event, a custom or ritual, or a natural phenomenon. An etiological story is one that posits a particular cause (not necessarily correctly) for something.

etymology (Gk "study of origins") the study of the derivation of words from their root meanings

Eucharist a ritual or service of thanksgiving, centering on the sharing of bread and wine, based on the final meal Jesus shared with his followers before his trial and crucifixion; also called Communion, the Lord's Supper, and the Mass.

eunuch a castrated male, sometimes a guard for a ruler's concubines and sometimes an official in a court or government

euphemism the substitution of an inoffensive word for one that is too explicit or impolite

evangelist (from Gk *euangelion*, "good news") the author of a gospel

exegesis (Gk "lead into") the explanation or interpretation of the meaning of a written text

exhortation urging a particular course of action or behavior by argument or advice

exile the forced removal of a people from its land, and the community in which they lived in the foreign land. The Israelites of the Northern Kingdom were exiled by the Assyrians in the late eighth century BCE, and the Judeans were exiled by the Babylonians in

the early sixth century. Specifically, "the Exile" is the period from 586 to 538 BCE, when much of the population of Judah was deported from Judah to Babylon. See **Babylonian Exile**.

F

fable an illustrative story in which animals or plants have speaking parts.

Fertile Crescent the agriculturally fertile areas of the Near East and Mesopotamia, forming an arc through the modern countries of Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq

festival scrolls the five short books that are read on five holy days in the Jewish calendar: Song of Songs on Passover, Ruth on the festival of weeks, Lamentations on 9 Ab (the date of the Temple's destruction), Ecclesiastes on the festival of booths, and Esther on Purim

First Temple the Temple in Jerusalem built by King Solomon in the tenth century BCE and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE

form criticism the interpretation of a text with particular attention to its genre and structure and to the original setting (**Sitz im Leben**) out of which it arose

Former Prophets the name in the Hebrew Bible for the first part of the longer section called "the Prophets." The Former Prophets are the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

forty in biblical usage, a conventional number for a lengthy or completed time period: forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Num 14.33–34), forty years of kingship for David (1Kings 2.11), and Solomon (1 Kings 11.42), forty days of fasting for Moses (Ex 34.28) or Jesus (Mt 4.2 and parallels)

G

Galilee the northernmost geographical area of Israel

Gehenna originally the valley of (the son of) Hinnom, a place outside of Jerusalem where children were burnt as sacrificial offerings. Its associations with burning and evil developed into the image of a place of fiery punishment.

gematria (Heb *gimatriya*, likely from Gk *geometria*) a procedure for interpreting a word or phrase by its numerical value. Hebrew letters may represent numbers (*alef* = 1; *bet* = 2, etc.), and the letters of a word or phrase are added up and equated with other words having the same total.

genealogy a list or history of the ancestors of an individual or group

geniza a storeroom in a synagogue used for keeping old books and objects, especially those too sacred to be discarded. See also **Cairo Geniza**.

genre a form of literature with particular characteristics

gentile a non-Jew

Gilgamesh the Mesopotamian epic, whose hero, Gilgamesh, travels the world in search of immortality. Among the characters he encounters is Utnapishtim, whose tale of the flood has parallels with the biblical account of Noah.

glean to gather or collect, usually by hand, grain that is left behind by reapers

glossolalia the phenomenon of ecstatic speech, or "speaking in tongues" that characterized some early Christian worship (1 Cor 12.10,28,30); it occurs in some Pentecostal Christian worship in the present day. The report of the speeches on the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) in Acts 2.4–11 maintains that the languages spoken were human languages that could be understood by those in attendance; the reports in the letters reflect not a known, spoken language but a transitory occurrence during worship when one or more worshipers would break into speech (perhaps regarded as the speech of heavenly beings) that neither they nor their hearers could understand.

Gnosticism (from Gk *gnosis*, "knowledge") a philosophy that regards spirit and matter as opposites. According to Gnostic teaching, human beings are spirits trapped or imprisoned in matter; the material world is an illusion or the work of an inferior, even demonic, divine being; and the purpose of life is to learn how to free oneself from material things (including the body) and attain eternal life in the spiritual realm. This is accomplished by learning specialized or secret knowledge about the nature of reality; it is from this emphasis on knowledge that gnosticism gets its name.

Greek Bible a general term for the variety of ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek in antiquity, including the **Septuagint** and the translations of Aquila, **Symmachus**, and **Theodotion**

H

H see **Holiness Collection**

Hades the Greek name for the underworld, to which the disembodied souls of the dead went; it was similar to **Sheol** (see)

hallelujah a Hebrew acclamation, "Praise Yah!" It is frequent in the Psalms.

Hammurabi (or **Hammurapi**) king of Babylon in the eighteenth century BCE, responsible for the formulation of a legal collection (the Code [or Laws] of Hammurabi) that is one of the earliest collections of case law

Hanukkah see **Hasmonean revolt**

haruspex a practicer of divination who examines inner organs of chickens for guidance

Hasmonean Revolt the uprising led by the family of Mattathias Heshmon against the **Seleucid** ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes beginning in 166 BCE, particularly by Mattathias's son Judah (or Judas) Maccabeus ("the hammer"), which succeeded in liberating Jerusalem and the surrounding territory from Seleucid rule in 164. When the Temple, which had been desecrated by Antiochus, was retaken by the Jews it was rededicated, an event commemorated in the festival of Hanukkah ("dedication").

Hasmonean the dynasty descended from the Maccabee brothers. It ruled Judea from 135 to 36 BCE; the last Hasmonean was overthrown by Herod the Great

Hebrew Bible a term used to refer to what Christians call the (Protestant) Old Testament. Though the two terms refer to the same body of writings, the order of books in the Hebrew Bible (that is, the Jewish Bible) differs from that found in the Old Testament.

Hellenism the spread of Greek culture, politics, and language around the Mediterranean in the period after the conquests of Alexander the Great (d. 323 BCE)

Hellenistic Greek-speaking or influenced by Greek culture after the time of Alexander

Hellenize bring under the influence of Greek language and culture

hepatoscopy the practice of divination by examining animal livers for guidance

herem see **ban**

hermeneutics (Gk "interpretation") the theory and practice of interpretation

Herodian followers and members of the court of Herod the Great and his sons (late first century BCE to late first century CE)

Hexapla the compendium of six Bible versions (in columns: 1. Hebrew, 2. Hebrew transliterated into Greek, 3. Greek [Aquila], 4. Greek [**Symmachus**], 5. **Septuagint**, 6. Greek [**Theodotion**]) compiled by the early Christian scholar Origen (d. 254). The original was lost, but quotations from and translations of it have survived.

Hexateuch (Gr. "six scrolls") a scholarly grouping of the first six books in the Bible, Genesis through Joshua. See **Pentateuch**, **Tetrateuch**

high places shrines, usually on a hill or a raised platform, where worship, especially sacrifices, took place

higher criticism the effort to distinguish among the sources of biblical documents, and to trace them back to their origins; distinguished from "lower criticism" or textual criticism, which is concerned with establishing the most accurate text in its final form. See **Documentary Hypothesis; synoptic problem**.

historical-critical method interpreting a text by trying to understand its original setting and audience, and what it would have meant when it was originally written or spoken. This method uses the tools of historical research to understand the conditions of the past, and critical tools to understand the traditions and developments that lie behind the surface of the text. It is also a general term that includes such methods as form criticism and redaction criticism.

Holiness Code, Collection, School, Source the ritual and ethical laws in Lev 17–26, named from the repeated exhortation to the Israelites to be holy, or the purported authors or collectors of the material in those chapters. "Collection" is preferred in the annotations herein. "Code" implies a definitive, legal corpus, whereas "Collection" acknowledges the coherence of the chapters without implying a particular purpose in bringing the materials together. "Source" posits a particular document that is reproduced in the chapters, a document produced by a "School" that aimed at inculcating holiness among the people. The authors of this group of laws (sometimes called the Holiness School) were affiliated with the Priestly school and also wrote small sections dispersed throughout the first four books of the Bible; the entire work is often abbreviated *H*.

holocaust a sacrifice entirely consumed by fire, a whole burnt offering

holy war battles conducted under divine guidance in which the LORD fought for Israel in the role of **divine warrior**

homily a sermon

Horeb possibly another name for **Sinai** (see), primarily though not exclusively in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 1.2; Ex 3.1)

hortatory characteristic of writing or speech that aims at changing the behavior of the hearers or inspiring them to a particular course of action

hosanna a Hebrew word, meaning "Save!" that was used as a cry of acclamation

house church a descriptive term (not used in the NT itself) for a worship gathering of early Christians in a home rather than a separate building such as a synagogue

household rules the codes of behavior and hierarchy that governed domestic relations in the Roman world, particularly a patriarchal authority system, the subordination of women, children, and slaves, and the rights and responsibilities of various parties in a familial relationship; see Eph 6.1–9; Titus 2.1–10

Hyksos rulers in Egypt of Semitic origin in the mid-second millennium BCE

hyperbole exaggeration for effect

hypostatization speaking of an abstract quality as if it were an object or a living being. See also **personification**.

hyssop a shrub related to mint. It was used as a medicine and, because of its leafy branches, for ritual sprinkling of water or blood.

I

idolatry the worship of anything other than what the worshiper defines as the true God

Idumea later name for **Edom,** a kingdom located south of Judah, between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean

Ignatius, Letters of early Christian writings of instruction. The author, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in the late first century CE, wrote them (seven are known to have survived) on his way to martyrdom in Rome. They are largely concerned with overcoming divisions in local churches, combating false teaching, and conducting one's life properly.

imprecation a curse or other prayer for harm to another; the opposite of blessing

impurity a ritual state which prevented an individual from participating in religious rituals (see **defilement**)

incarnation (Latin, "enfleshment") the belief that a divine being has become human in some form

inclusio the use of the same word or phrase at the end of a passage as appeared at the beginning, thus rounding off or completing it. Also called inclusion, frame, and envelope structure.

incubation the practice of sleeping in a particular place, or in contact with particular things (animal skins, the ground) in order to induce dreams that might provide divine guidance

inspiration the belief that the words uttered by a human being are really the words of a divine being. In the ancient world, prophets and oracles were thought to be inspired. In Christian tradition, the notion of inspiration was eventually applied to the whole Bible.

intercalation adding a day or month to a calendar to compensate for the inexact fit between the solar year and the daily or lunar cycle. In the Jewish calendar, an extra month (a repetition of **Adar**) is intercalated in seven years of the nineteen-year cycle.

interpolation an insertion of material into a previously existent text

irony (adj., ironic) a characteristic of literature in which the reader or listener knows more than the characters about the situation in the story. By extension, an ironic aspect of a story, situation, or fact is one that from the outside looks very different than it does from the inside. Irony thus becomes a rhetorical technique in which the author's literal meaning differs from the author's intended meaning.

Ishtar Mesopotamian goddess of fertility and war

Isis Egyptian goddess, wife of Osiris, the god of vegetation and hence of regeneration

Israel the name for both the union of twelve tribal groups, of which David and Solomon were kings, and for the northern section of this kingdom, which split off after the death of Solomon and began a separate political existence under Jeroboam (1 Kings 12). See **Northern Kingdom, Southern Kingdom.**

J

J (from Jahvist, German for Yahwist) according to the **Documentary Hypothesis,** the document or source that uses the divine name (see **YHWH).** J is usually understood to be the earliest source, and to have been written in Judah. It frequently depicts God in very anthropomorphic terms.

Jerome (ca. 345–420) Christian theologian and translator. He translated the Bible into Latin, in the case of the Old Testament directly from the Hebrew. His version became known as the Vulgate ("common") because it was commonly used in Western Christianity. With the Protestant Reformation, its authority was questioned, but was reaffirmed by the Roman Catholic Church at the **Council of Trent**.

Johannine characteristic of, or having to do with, the NT literature associated with the Gospel of John and 1, 2, 3 John; sometimes (though not in more recent scholarship) also applied to the book of Revelation

Joseph and Aseneth (also spelled Asenath) a Jewish novel written in Greek in the first century BCE or the first century CE about Joseph's life in Egypt; his marriage to Asenath, the daughter of an Egyptian priest (see Gen 41.45); her conversion to faith in Joseph's God; and their triumph over a plot to kill them.

Josephus a Jewish historian who lived from ca. 37 CE to ca. 100 CE. Four of his works, all written in Greek, have survived: *The Jewish War*, an account of the rebellion against Rome in 66–70 CE, with background information starting at ca. 200 BCE; *The Antiquities of the Jews*, a complete history from the creation up to the point where *The Jewish War* begins; *Against Apion*, a defense of Judaism; and an autobiography, the *Life*.

jubilee (Heb *yovel*, perhaps "ram" from the sounding of the ram's horn to mark the beginning of the obser-

vance) the year of release for slaves and return of ancestral lands to their original owners (or descendants of the owners), to occur every fifty years (after seven sabbaths of years). It is a cornerstone of Priestly ideology, but it is uncertain if it was ever practiced.

Jubilees, book of a retelling, attributed to Moses, of much of Genesis and Exodus and representing itself as a hidden revelation from the Angel of the Presence. It was most likely written in the second century BCE in Judea. The book gets its name from its concern with cycles of time. Jubilees was apparently considered authoritative by the Qumran community.

Judah, Yehud, Judea, Judean when the kingdom of Israel was divided, after the death of Solomon (1 Kings 12.1–20), the southern portion (Southern Kingdom) took the name of its major tribe, Judah (Heb *Yehudah*). That proper noun became "Yehud" during the Persian period (536–333 BCE), "Ioudaia" during Greek rule (333–67), and "Judaea" or Judea under the Romans. The geographical territory had also been diminished, until by the time of the Romans it consisted of the area around Jerusalem, south of Samaria, west of Perea and the Dead Sea, and north of Idumea (though administratively "Judea and Samaria" could also be referred to as "Judea" simply). The inhabitants of the territory were Judeans (just as the inhabitants of the northern area west of the Sea of Galilee were Galileans). The terms "Judaism" and "Jew" are derived from this name.

jussive a verb form in the third person expressing a command

justification translation of the underlying Gk term "making righteous," expressing the restoration of one's proper relationship to the moral realm or to God (see Rom 5.1–21)

K

kere see **qere**.

ketib ("what is written"; also *ketiv*) the biblical text in its written form, in contrast, in certain cases, to the way it is to be read aloud (**qere)**

Ketubim (also Kethubim, Ketuvim) The Writings, the third division of the Hebrew Bible

kosher (Heb "fit" or "proper") a general term used in postbiblical texts for dietary laws; usually applied to food, but also to other ritual objects and practices.

L

lament a poem of grief or mourning (see also **qinah**)

Last Supper the name for the meal that Jesus shared with his closest followers on the night before his crucifixion (Mt 26.20–29 and parallels)

Latter Prophets the canonical division of **Nevi'im** that includes the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve **Minor Prophets**

law the usual English translation of Hebrew *torah*, which more generally means "teaching, instruction." *Torah* is also the name for the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

laying on hands a gesture of healing, blessing, or setting something or someone apart for religious purposes

lectionary a list of readings of scripture passages for sabbaths and holy days (in Judaism) or Sundays and holy days (in Christianity). Christian lectionaries also sometimes include readings for weekdays. Lectionaries are partly designed to read certain portions of the Bible—for instance, the Torah, in Jewish lectionaries, or the first three Gospels, in many Christian lectionaries—completely through, in order, over a lectionary cycle of a year or several years. In addition, in Christian lectionaries important seasons (for instance, Christmas or Easter) have their own specific readings outside the continuous readings. In the synagogue, the Torah reading is followed by what is called a Haftarah reading (*haphtarah* is Hebrew for "conclusion, completion") from one of the prophets; in addition, the **festival scrolls** are read on five holy days.

legate an official representative

legend a popular story, sometimes exaggerated or romanticized, about a holy or important person or place.

Levant (Lat "rising") the east as the direction of the rising sun; more usually, the lands at the eastern end of the Mediterranean

Leviathan a monster of the sea in Canaanite mythology, who is defeated by Baal. It is sometimes identified with the crocodile (Job 41.1) and represents the forces of watery chaos which must be overcome at creation (Ps 74.1–17) and that will be finally defeated at the end of time (Isa 27.1). In the book of Revelation, the dragon, the enemy of God, is identified with the sea (17.1,3), and in the new creation there is no more sea (21.1).

levirate marriage (from Latin *levir*, "husband's brother") the provision that if a man died without an heir to carry on his name, his brother would marry the widow and the first son she bore would be regarded as the dead brother's heir

Levites the priests of Israel were deemed to be descendants of Levi, therefore members of the tribe of Levi, or Levites (sometimes levites). There is little evidence for this tribe, but the religious authorities in early Israel claimed descent from **Aaron** (see),

the first high priest. Perhaps during the reform of Josiah, however, the levites were demoted to Temple assistants, probably when their local shrines were suppressed, and the Jerusalem priesthood, claiming descent from Zadok (see **Zadokites**) gained greater power and wealth.

lex talionis (Latin "law [of retribution] in kind") punishment fitting the crime; see **talion**

lingua franca a common tongue or shared language that enables people with different native languages to converse, carry on commercial relationships, etc. In the Persian period **Aramaic** replaced Akkadian as a lingua franca around the Near East; during the Hellenistic period Greek did the same for the lands surrounding the eastern Mediterranean.

litany (Gk "entreaty") a prayer form consisting of a series of petitions or supplications, often following each with a repeated congregational response

littoral a region along the shore of a large body of water

liturgical characteristic of an order for worship, either directions for action (rituals) or texts for speaking (rites)

liturgy the form or ritual for communal, public worship

Lord's Supper a term (used in the NT only at 1 Cor 11.20) for the commemoration or re-enactment of Jesus' last meal with his followers (see **Last Supper**)

lot(s) any method of choosing something by random chance, as by tossing a marked stone (similar to flipping a coin) or choosing an arrow or a stick from a group of similar objects. "Casting lots" was used to select candidates for a position (Acts 1.15–26), to determine who had transgressed a vow or law (1 Sam 14.41–42), or in other ways to determine the divine will, since it was assumed that an event that was random from the human perspective could be determined by divine direction.

lower criticism or **textual criticism**, as distinguished from **higher criticism**

LXX the roman numeral 70, the standard abbreviation for the **Septuagint**

M

Maat Egyptian goddess of reason and order; her name literally means "truth"

Major Prophets a convenient title for the three longest prophetic books, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (in Christian Bibles, also Daniel); in contrast to **Minor Prophets** (see)

makarism (Gk "happy, blessed") a statement of blessing or an attribution of happiness to one who follows the exhortation of the speaker; the Beatitudes (Mt 5.3–11) are makarisms, perhaps following the form of many Psalms such as Ps 1.1, "Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked. . . ."

malediction curse; opposite of benediction, "blessing"

manumission release from servitude

Marduk chief god of Babylon; according to **Enuma Elish**, he formed the cosmos from the corpse of **Tiamat**, goddess of the deep

martyr (Gk "witness") a person who demonstrates loyalty by remaining faithful to his or her religion even when being threatened with death or being killed

martyrology (Gk "list of witnesses [to their faith]") an account of the martyrdoms of various individuals, or an official list of those accounted as martyrs, that is, who were killed because of their religious beliefs

Masorah (Heb "tradition") the system of markings (vowel signs, marginal notes, cantillation and accent marks, etc.) that were added to the consonantal Hebrew text by scribal scholars (**Masoretes**) in the early Middle Ages

Masorete a scholar of the scribal schools that in the early Middle Ages established the basic Hebrew text for the Bible, fixed its accepted pronunciation, and ensured its accurate copying and transmission by a system of markings (**Masorah**)

Masoretic Text the text of the Hebrew Bible, established by Jewish scholars (**Masoretes**). The text consists of the Hebrew consonants, vowel signs, accent markings, and other notes. Texts derived from this effort date from circa 900 to 1000 CE. The Masoretic Text is the only complete form of the Hebrew Bible that has survived, though individual manuscripts of books are among the **Dead Sea Scrolls**.

matrilineal tracing descent through female ancestors; see **patrilineal**

matzah unleavened bread, associated with **Passover**, but also used with certain sacrifices.

Megillot Heb "scrolls," in Jewish tradition the five festival scrolls, the books of Song of Solomon (read at Passover), Ruth (on Shavuot [Weeks/Pentecost]), Lamentations (on Tisha B'Ab, commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and 70 CE), Ecclesiastes (on Sukkot [Tabernacles]), and Esther (on Purim)

merism a figure of speech in which opposing terms, e.g., "good and bad," are combined to convey the idea of including both terms and everything in between

Merneptah Stele an Egyptian inscribed stone that includes the first mention of Israel outside the Bible. It celebrates victories of Pharaoh Merneptah (ca. 1200 BCE) in Canaan.

Merodach a Hebrew version of **Marduk**, chief god of Babylon

Mesha Stele (also called the Moabite Stone) a monument dating from about 830 BCE with engraved text celebrating the reign of King Mesha of **Moab** (2 Kings 3.4–5). Besides an account of the dealings of Mesha with the descendants of Omri, king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the text mentions the god of Moab, Chemosh, and the favor that Chemosh has shown to Mesha in contrast to his predecessors in allowing Mesha to reclaim territory from Israel. It also contains a reference to the **herem** or ban.

Mesopotamia (Gk "between the rivers") the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers

messiah (Heb *mashiah*, "anointed [one]") a title for a king or other servant or agent of God (priest, prophet, or even the non-Israelite Cyrus in Isa. 45.1). In the Hebrew Bible, *mashiah* never refers to the future ideal king. Later the term came to be used of the expected savior of the Jewish people, and was taken over by Christians to refer to Jesus, whom they believed to be the messiah (Gk *christos*, "anointed"). See also **Christ.**

messianic having to do with the **messiah** or with the era that the messiah was inaugurating

Messianic Secret conventional term for Jesus' commands, primarily in Mark (1.44; 3.12; 8.30 and elsewhere), not to proclaim his status or deeds publicly

metaphor a direct comparison between two things

metonymy a figure of speech in which a word is used in place of another word to which it is closely related: "The coastlands have seen and are afraid" (Isa 41.5) means "the inhabitants of the coasts, foreigners."

mezuzah (Heb "doorpost") a parchment on which are written the paragraphs of the **Shema**

midrash, midrashic (Heb *derash* "inquire") interpretation that finds meanings in a text that are other than, or go beyond, the "plain sense" (see **peshat**)

Milcom the principal god of the **Ammonites;** also called **Molech**

Minor Prophets the twelve shorter prophetic books from Hosea to Malachi, seen as a collection; also known as the Book of the Twelve

Mishnah (Heb "oral instruction," from *shanah* "repeat") the compilation of oral law and rabbinic commentary, edited ca. 200 CE, that is the basis of the **Talmud**

Moab, Moabites the territory and its inhabitants east of the Dead Sea

Moabite Stone see **Mesha Stele**

Molech a Canaanite god whose worship according to the biblical writers included child sacrifice

Mosaic having to do with Moses or with the teaching that Moses is purported to have proclaimed in the Torah (Pentateuch)

Mot the **Canaan**ite god of death

motif an image or character type that recurs throughout a literary work

mystery in the New Testament, a divine truth that is kept hidden or secret by God until the right moment for it to be revealed

mystery religion any one of various religious groups in the Greek and Roman empires which practiced secret rites of initiation. Mystery religions taught that the real meaning of life could not be learned without divine guidance and that such guidance was available in their secret teachings and practices. These secret rites were themselves known as "mysteries," and had the sense of a revelation from the divine realm that is similar to some of the New Testament uses of "mystery."

mysticism the effort to be in direct contact with a divine realm, as opposed to the view that the divine must always be mediated—by subordinate beings such as angels or by a human being, a sacred text, or some other bridge

N

narrative a connected, orderly account of an incident, or a longer account including many incidents. Narratives can be historical, fictional, legendary, mythical, or a combination of types.

Nebi'im see **Nevi'im**

necromancy (Gk "divination [by means of] the dead") the effort to determine the unknown or the future by consulting those who are dead, as in Saul's questioning of the dead Samuel through the medium of Endor (1 Sam 28.3–25). If **teraphim** (see) are images of ancestors, then divination by their means would be a form of necromancy.

Negeb, Negev the region south of the central hill country of Israel

Nevi'im (also Nebi'im) the Prophets, the second division of the Hebrew Bible, subdivided into the **Former Prophets** and the **Latter Prophets**

new moon the beginning of any month in the Jewish calendar

Northern Kingdom the political assembly of tribal groups that split off from the kingdom of Israel after Solomon's death. This newly formed kingdom was itself called Israel, and in some texts also **Ephraim**, after its largest tribe.

novel a fictional work in prose. Ancient novels were often **romances**.

O

obelisk a four-sided stone shaft, usually tapered and topped with a pyramid, characteristic of ancient Egypt

Old Latin the Latin translation of the Bible based on the Greek text, the Septuagint. The Old Latin version was replaced by the Vulgate, the Latin translation by **Jerome**.

oracle (usually translates Heb *masa'*, literally "burden") a statement uttered by a prophet or other sacred person, purporting to be the words of a deity

oracular having the qualities of an oracle or sacred speech

Oral Torah a synonym for the **Mishnah** and **Talmud**. According to traditional rabbinic belief, the Oral Law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai along with the written law, the Torah. It was committed to writing by the rabbis in the first millennium CE.

ordination a formal ceremony and process by which certain members of the community are set apart for religious service, for instance as priests

oxymoron (Gk "clever-foolish") combining two terms that appear contradictory.

P

P according to the **Documentary Hypothesis,** the Priestly source in the Pentateuch, comprised of both narratives and laws. It is concerned, among other things, with laws and regulations, ritual practices, the proper conduct of the Temple worship, holiness and purity, and genealogies.

Palestine a name first used by the fifth-century BCE historian Herodotus and adopted by the Romans in the designation *Provincia Syria Palaestina* ("Syro-Palestinian Province"), which replaced *Provincia Judaea* ("Judean Province") after 135 CE. The word is derived from the term translated "**Philistine,**" and the Latin spelling of "Philistine," and the Roman designation was probably intended as a derogation of Jewish claims to the territory.

pantheon (Gk "all gods") the complete community of divine beings worshiped or honored in a particular culture

papyrus (pl. **papyri**) the paper made from reeds that grow along the Nile and other rivers in the Near East; the reeds were split, soaked, laid side-by-side in one layer with another layer, also side-by-side, at right angles, and then pounded together until the matted fibers had meshed into a flat, somewhat flexible sheet. Papyri were one of the writing surfaces (others being clay and animal skins) in use in antiquity. Early Gk manuscripts of the NT are on papyri, and many significant texts—such as P46, an important textual source of Paul's letters that also includes the Letter to the Hebrews—are in this form.

parable a statement or story that uses figurative or imaginative language to evoke a reality that lies beyond the literal level of the story of statement. A parable makes its point by analogy, or the comparison of a known fact, situation, or experience with one that is less familiar.

parallelism a characteristic feature of biblical Hebrew poetry in which the second line of a unit in some way echoes the meaning or grammatical structure of the first line. This can take the form of a repetition of the meaning, or of a statement of opposites, or of a further statement that serves to extend or modify the first line in some way.

parenesis moral exhortation

parousia (Gk "coming") the second coming of Christ; the expected return of the **messiah** at the end of the age or the end of the world

Paschal pertaining to the **Passover** (ultimately from Gk *pascha*, derived from Heb *pesah*)

Passover (Heb *pesah*) the festival that commemorates the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt

Pastoral Epistles or **Pastoral Letters** a term used for three letters attributed to Paul, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus

patriarchs the ancestors of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

patriarchy the social and cultural arrangements and conventions in which the father of a family, older males, or males generally, exercise authority over females, children, slaves, and those younger; characteristic of Israelite and Roman social practice

patrilineal tracing one's descent through male ancestors; see also **matrilineal**

patristic writers theologians of the early Christian centuries, including Clement, Irenaeus, Origen, and Jerome

patronym, patronymic (Gk "father's name") the designation of a person or group by the name of their father or ancestor

Pauline characteristic of the thought or writings of Paul; those letters generally accepted to be by Paul: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon

penitential psalms Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143, used in Christian services of repentance from the earliest times

Pentapolis the five cities of the **Philistines:** Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, Gaza

Pentateuch (Gk "five scrolls") the first five books of the Bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy; the Torah

Pentecost see **weeks, festival of**

periphrasis, periphrastic the use of more words than necessary to express a thought

Persian period the era from 539 to 333 BCE, from Cyrus until Alexander

personification representing an idea, a value, or other abstract thought as a person.

Pesah see **passover**

peshat (Heb "simple") the "plain sense" or "contextual sense" of a text, often contrasted with *derash*, the homiletical meaning

pesher (pl. *pesharim*; "interpretation") a type of commentary on the Bible in the **Dead Sea Scrolls** in which the biblical text is understood to be fulfilled in the interpreter's time

Peshitta (Syriac, "simple") the name of the **Syriac** translation of the Bible (called "simple" because it was a plain translation from Hebrew, not a translation with textual apparatus like the **Syrohexapla**). The Peshitta contains books of the Bible translated by Jews for Jewish worshipers who spoke Syriac, but it was taken over and completed (including a New Testament) by Syriac-speaking Christians.

Pharisees a Jewish sect in the first century CE, according to Josephus and the New Testament. The Pharisees were concerned to extend Jewish practice into all areas of life, and followed the tradition of interpretation (**Oral Torah**) associated with the schools of Hillel and Shammai. They were opponents of the more conservative **Sadducees**, who did not accept their traditions of oral law.

Philistines a group of the **Sea Peoples,** who invaded and settled in on the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean in the late second millennium BCE, having been repulsed in an invasion of Egypt (ca. 1190 BCE). The five major Philistine cities (the **Pentapolis**) were Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza.

Philo a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher and interpreter of scripture, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, from about 20 BCE to 50 CE. He wrote works in philosophy, scriptural interpretation, and history. In Philo's view, the best insights of Greek philosophy could be found in the Bible by means of allegorical interpretation. He influenced Jewish writers like the author of the Wisdom of Solomon and Christian theologians such as Clement, Origen, and Ambrose.

Phoenicia(n) (Gk "red-purple") the territory occupied by a Semitic group along the eastern Mediterranean coast, in an area roughly where modern Lebanon now is. The Phoenicians were seagoing and engaged in trade across a wide area; their main cities in biblical times, Tyre and Sidon, are prominent on the coast. They manufactured cloth dyed purple using a mollusk that grew along the shore (these "Tyrian purple" robes were worn by kings). The Phoenicians were also responsible for the spread westward across the Mediterranean of a form of alphabetical writing, from which all later alphabets, including Hebrew and Greek, were derived.

phylacteries (Gk *phulakterion*, "amulet," from *phulax*, "guard") small black leather boxes containing biblical passages (Ex 13.1–10, 13.11–16; Deut 6.4–9, 11.13–21), worn during prayer on the head and on the left arm. Also called "tefillin."

Platonism a philosophy derived from the teaching of Plato, saying that there is a profound difference, even an opposition, between the realm of matter and the realm of spirit, and that the world of sense experience is essentially an illusion, deriving what reality it has from a correspondence with a true, ultimately real world of Forms

pogrom an officially encouraged, organized massacre of a minority group

polemic, polemical (Gk *polemos*, "war") an argument or debate in the form of an attack on one's opponent or on the opposing position. Polemical speech is characterized by verbal attacks, exaggerated language, and sometimes violent imagery

Polycarp, Letter of an early second-century CE Christian letter of instruction, written by Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and addressed to the church of Philippi

potsherd a broken piece of pottery. Examination of such pieces allows archaeologists to date the different levels of a site according to the type of pottery represented at a given level.

prescript (epistolary) see **epistolary prescript**

priest, high priest in the Hebrew Bible, the priest (Heb *kohen*) was the official set apart to preside at the worship in the Temple, particularly to offer sacrifices of various kinds. In the NT the term "priest" (primarily *hiereus*) is applied only to the Jewish priesthood of the Temple (*archiereus*, "high priest," "chief priest," e.g. Mt 2.4); a pagan priest (Acts 14.13); Melchizedek (e.g., Heb 7.1); Jesus Christ (Heb 10.21); or the whole of the Christian people ("priesthood," 1 Pet 2.5; "priests," Rev 1.6). The *Gk* term *presbyteros*, from which the English word "priest" is derived, means "elder" and is so translated in the NRSV (e.g., Jas 5.14; 2 John 1.1).

primogeniture the social tradition by which the eldest son inherits a father's title or the bulk of the father's property

proem a short introduction or preface to a literary text

Promised Land a conventional term for the Land of Israel, as it was promised to Abraham and to the descendants of Abraham ("this land that I have promised," Ex 32.13)

prophecy, prophesy the name for a prophetic utterance is "prophecy" (pronounced prah-feh-see, rhyming with "fee"); the activity of a prophet is to "prophesy" (pronounced prah-feh-sye, rhyming with "high")

prophet (Gk *prophetes*, "speak out" or "speak forth") the **Septuagint** translation of *nabi'* ("one who is called"), the standard Heb term for prophet. Synonyms include "seer," "man of God," and "visionary."

prophetic lawsuit (Heb *rib*) a literary form in the prophets and elsewhere in which the people are accused of breaking their covenant with God

Prophets, The, Heb **Nevi'im,** the second division of the **Hebrew Bible**

proselyte (Gk "come toward") one who has adopted a religion or belief system, often after leaving a previous religion; a convert

protreptic (Gk "turn toward, turn forward to") speech promoting a particular view; exhortation, persuasion

pseudepigrapha (Gk "writings with false attributions of authorship") a diverse group of Jewish or Christian religious writings attributed to notable biblical persons that are not included in the books of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, or the Apocrypha. These writings date from about 250 BCE to 200 CE, and some of them are quoted from or alluded to in the Bible.

pseudonymous written or published under a false name. Pseudonymous writing in antiquity is often attributed to someone much better known than the actual writer, in order to give the text the benefit of the presumed authority of the famous person.

Ptolemies the rulers of Egypt and its surrounding areas after the breakup of the Greek empire of Alexander the Great, following his death in 323

Purim the festival that commemorates the delivery of the Jews in Persia from destruction, as recounted in the book of Esther

Q

Q see **synoptic problem**

qeri ("what is read") in the **Masoretic text**, a word as it should be pronounced, in contrast to what is written (ketib) in the main text

qinah meter a metrical pattern consisting of a line with three stresses followed by a line with two stresses; it is primarily used in psalms of lament or complaint, and in the book of Lamentations.

Qumran community the settlement near Wadi Qumran at the Dead Sea, most likely composed of Essenes. The Qumran group was a sectarian Jewish community that kept its own practices in opposition to the established community in Jerusalem and Judea; the library of this group was discovered beginning in 1947 and is known as the **Dead Sea Scrolls**.

R

rabbi (Aram. "teacher") a Jewish religious leader who studies the **Torah** and its associated commentaries, particularly the **Talmud**, and offers his own teaching based on that study

rapture the doctrine, based on an interpretation of 1 Thess 4.13–18, that when Jesus Christ returns in the **parousia** (see) those Christians who have not yet died will be "caught up" along with Christ and those who, having died, are raised from the dead. In its context, the passage is intended not as a literal description of events at the return of Christ, but as a reassurance that both those still living and those already dead would be reunited with Christ.

reader-response criticism analyzing a text by looking at the relationship between the text and its reader, including the clues within the text that guide the reader in drawing meaning from it

redaction criticism the study of how already existing textual units—narratives of incidents, laws, proverbs, or other isolatable pieces that can be disentangled by **source criticism**—were combined into larger texts by the activities of editors, called "redactors"

redactor an editor who works with already existing units to combine them into larger wholes

resident alien a foreigner with legal rights living in Israel or an Israelite residing in the territory of another tribe

revelation (Latin "remove the veil," translating Greek *apokalypsis*) belief or insight granted to a human being by a deity or heavenly being

rhetoric (Gk *rhetor*, "speaker, orator") the art or study of persuasive speech or writing

Rift Valley a major cleft or depression that extends from southeastern Turkey to East Africa, and at the point of the Dead Sea is the lowest place on the land mass of Earth

Ritual Decalogue a term for the commandments in Ex 34.10–28, in some cases paralleling those of the Decalogue (Ex 20.1–17) but mostly dealing with matters of worship or other religious observance, such as the offering of firstborn livestock or the observance of festivals

Roman Period the period of Roman ruke in Judea, beginning in 63 BCE

romance a popular storytelling technique in the ancient Mediterranean world that recounted the situation of young lovers and how they overcome obstacles to their marriage. In early Christianity the form was

modified to tell the stories of early converts and martyrs and the obstacles to their faith.

Rule of the Community one of the Dead Sea scrolls (1QS) that sets out the arrangements under which the community functioned and those that they held up as an ideal: holding property in common; eating, blessing, and advising one another in unity; preparing for the end time; and training new members of the community in their responsibilities.

S

sackcloth rough cloth, often made from animal hair. A garment made of sackcloth is uncomfortable and is worn to indicate penitence or grief.

Sadducees a Jewish sect in the first century CE, according to Josephus and the New Testament. They held to a strict application of Torah and to maintaining Temple worship according to its mandate. They were opposed to the **Pharisees** in not accepting the traditions of oral law, and they were also opposed to the political activists who wished to rebel against Roman rule, fearing that any rebellion would bring an end to the limited autonomy under which they could maintain Temple worship.

saga popular narrative account of prehistory or events of the distant past. Sagas often involve stories of the ancestors of a group or the founders of a country.

saint(s) (Lat "holy one[s]") in the NT, the term for all Christians (2 Cor 1.1), or for what all Christians are "called" to be (Rom 1.7, 1 Cor 1.2)

Samaritan Pentateuch a Hebrew text of the first five books of the Bible used by the **Samaritans.** This text differs from the **Masoretic Text** at many points. Some of these disagreements reflect Samaritan beliefs, but others are supported by the **Dead Sea Scrolls** and reflect an alternate textual tradition.

Samaritans the descendants of the population of Samaria (the capital of the **Northern Kingdom** of Israel) after the Assyrían invasion of that kingdom and the deportation of its inhabitants in 722 BCE. The Samaritans regard themselves as descended from the Jewish remnant after the deportation, but the returning exiles from the Southern Kingdom of Judah (after the **Babylonian exile** in the early sixth century) did not regard them as Jews, seeing them rather as descendants of foreigners who had been settled there after the Jewish population had been removed. Therefore, beginning with Ezra and Nehemiah, the leadership forbade intermarriage between Samaritans and Jews. The Samaritans maintained worship (with a temple on Mount Gerizim) and the Pentateuch (but not the rest of the Bible), although their calendar is not the same as the Jewish calendar.

Sanhedrin (ultimately from Gk *synedria* from *syn-* and *hedra*, "with seat," i.e., "council") the religious court, whose membership was drawn from the Jewish ruling classes, that held ruling authority over the territory of Palestine under the Roman empire. The Sanhedrin was responsible for census-taking and taxation as well as for acting as a court that would decide cases on its own and also, after preliminary determination, send cases on to the Roman governors. "Sanhedrin" is also the title of a tractate of the **Mishnah** dealing with law courts in general.

Satan (Heb "adversary, accuser") the Satan (a title, not a name) in Job 1.6–12, 2.1–7 is a member of the divine council who serves as a prosecutor or tester of God's faithful (see also Zech 3.1). In the Gospels Satan serves as the chief tempter and head of the demonic realm (Mt 4.1–11; 12.26); in the book of Revelation Satan is identified with the serpent, the dragon, and the devil (12.9; 20.2).

school of prophets term for the followers of a prophet, who preserved the prophet's words and, it is presumed, applied them to new situations as they arose

scribe in general, one who could write, especially official documents, and take down dictation for letters, legal proceedings, etc. In the New Testament, a scribe was a lawyer, one who was expert in the requirements and meaning of Jewish law, especially the **Torah**.

scroll a long strip of parchment (treated leather) or papyrus (reeds split, moistened, and pressed together), on which a text was written in columns. The scroll was read by unrolling one side while rolling up the other, to expose successive columns of text. Besides the literal meaning, scrolls stand for the message or teaching of God that a prophet has internalized and will then deliver to the intended hearers. Jeremiah (15.16) eats the words of God, and following him Ezekiel (3.3) eats a scroll. The message of God in the book of Revelation (5.1ff.) is expressed in stages as the seals on a scroll are broken open.

Sea Peoples remnants of the Mycenean or Aegean civilizations, which collapsed toward the end of the second millennium BCE. Some of these people sailed eastward on the Mediterranean and attacked those living along the coast; they were repulsed from Egypt and settled in southwest Canaan. The biblical **Philistines** are among the Sea Peoples.

Second Coming the return of a glorified Christ to Earth in judgment and redemption. See **parousia**.

Second Isaiah, also **Deutero-Isaiah,** the general term for chs 40–55 of the book of Isaiah. These chs are primarily concerned with the events leading up to the decree of the Persian king Cyrus in 538 BCE

permitting the exiles to return to Judah from Babylon and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. See also **Third Isaiah**.

Second Temple the Temple constructed beginning ca. 515 BCE by the returning exiles, and continued and expanded over the course of time, until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE

sect a religious grouping that emphasizes strict adherence to particular teachings and excludes those who do not conform

seder (Heb "order") the ritual meal and recitation of Passover. Also, the major divisions of the **Mishnah** (pl. *sedarim*).

Seleucids the rulers of Syria and its surrounding areas after the breakup of the Greek empire of Alexander the Great, following his death, The Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV "Epiphanes" desecrated the Temple in 167 BCE, leading to the Maccabean revolt and the rededication of the Temple in 164 BCE, an event commemorated in the festival of Hanukkah.

Septuagint the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Septuagint was translated over a lengthy period beginning probably in the third century BCE. Traditionally there were 72 translators, a number that was rounded off to 70 and, in Roman numerals, used as the abbreviation for this translation (LXX). The Septuagint was prepared for the use of Jews who lived in the **Diaspora** whose main language was Greek. It is important for several reasons: it translated a version of the Hebrew text that is older than the **Masoretic text**; it contains additional works, grouped in NRSV as the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, most of which were originally written in Greek; and it was the Old Testament of early Christians.

Shavuot see **festival of weeks**

Shema the first word, used as a title, of the exhortation "Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD alone" (Deut. 6.4), also the name of perhaps the most important and best-known prayer in Judaism, comprised of Deut. 6.4–9; 11.13–21; and Num. 15.37–41.

Sheol the underworld or abode of the dead

Shephelah the foothills leading to the central hill country of the land of Israel

shofar, also **shophar** the ram's horn for ceremonial use. In ancient Israel it was sounded to announce the anointing of a king or as a summons to war or to sound an alarm; today, in the synagogue, it is sounded on the High Holy Days.

signet ring a ring bearing a personal seal, used to make an indentation in clay as a sign of authenticity of authorship

simile a comparison, using "like" or "as" rather than, as in metaphor, linking two things directly

Sinai properly, the name of a peninsula bounded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, on the east by the Gulf of Aqaba, and on the west by the Gulf of Suez. Traditionally the mountain of Sinai, purportedly the location where Moses received the Decalogue, is on this peninsula, but no mountain has been definitively identified as the biblical Sinai. See also **Horeb**.

Sitz im Leben (German, "setting in life") in **form criticism,** the original context in which a specific genre or form was used

sorites a philosophical argument in the form of linked propositions. The second part of each proposition forms the first part of the next, and the series therefore becomes an extended chain of reasoning

source criticism the effort to discover the sources or documents behind a text and to explore how the sources were combined into larger units. See **Documentary Hypothesis**.

Southern Kingdom see **Judah, Yehud,** etc.

step parallelism a form of poetic **parallelism** (see) in which successive lines do not repeat or reverse the structure of the preceding line, but build on it like a set of steps: "O send out your light and your truth; / let them lead me; / let them bring me to your holy hill/and to your dwelling. / Then I will go to the altar of God, / to God my exceeding joy; / and I will praise you with the harp, / O God, my God." (Ps 43.3–4)

Stoics Greek philosophers in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, who taught that emotions should be strictly controlled by reason

Sukkot see **booths, festival of**

Sumer a civilization that ruled southern Mesopotamia from the late fourth millennium to the early second millennium BCE. The Sumerians developed cuneiform writing, which involved using a wedge-shaped reed to press marks into wet clay; the clay was then baked.

superscription a heading or descriptive title before the actual beginning of a text; many of the Psalms have a superscription giving a purported setting for the Psalm (e.g. Ps 3) or instructions on how it is to be performed (Ps 4).

suzerain the lord or ruler to whom loyalty is due in a covenant relationship

Symmachus a second-century CE translator of the Bible into Greek, whose translation was included in Origen's **Hexapla** (a compendium of six Bible versions)

synagogue (Gk "coming together with") an assembly; a congregation. For Jews who were too distant from the Temple to worship at it, and for all Jews after the

final destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, the synagogue became the only form of worship. Services consisted of prayer, song, and study of the sacred text.

syncretism the incorporation into one religion of practices and teachings derived from another, or the effort to combine two different religious traditions into a third, composite religion

synecdoche (Gk "understand with") a figure of speech using a part of something to stand for the whole: in "Do not keep needy eyes waiting" (Sir 4.1) "needy eyes" stands for the whole needy person

synonymous parallelism a type of **parallelism** where the second line or **colon** of a **bicolon** echoes the meaning of the first in different terms.

Synoptic Gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke. "Synoptic" means "view together," and is applied to these writings because they, unlike John, can be readily compared.

synoptic problem the observation that in many passages Matthew and Luke repeat with only minor changes what Mark says, yet in other passages they do not follow Mark, or include stories or sayings that Mark does not have, yet match each other very closely. According to the most widely held theory, Matthew and Luke relied on Mark and on another document (now lost) that contained mostly sayings of Jesus; this second document is referred to as "Q" (from the German word "Quelle," meaning "source"). In addition, Matthew and Luke each had their own sources.

Syriac an eastern form of **Aramaic** that was the language of some Jews and of some eastern Christian communities in the early centuries of the Common Era. It is the language of the **Peshitta**.

Syrohexapla (or Syriac hexapla) a Syriac translation of the Septuagint text that provides textual evidence about the nature of the Septuagint. Although the Hexapla was translated in the seventh century CE, it is based upon a **Septuagint** text dating from as early as the third century CE.

T

tabernacle the portable sanctuary used by the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness

tabernacles, feast of see **booths, festival of**

tablet a slab, typically of clay, with a smoothed surface that can be inscribed with a text

talion (Latin *talio*, "in kind" from *talis*, "like," "such like") a punishment that is of the same kind as the crime: exacting an equivalent penalty, such as an equal economic loss for theft, or death for murder, or "an eye for an eye." Talion is well attested in Mesopotamian law, and in some biblical legal collections.

Talmud (Heb "teaching") the title of the two great collections of rabbinic teaching, the Jerusalem Talmud (also called the Palestinian Talmud or the Talmud of the Land of Israel) and the Babylonian Talmud. The Talmuds were compiled beginning after 200 CE. They consist of comments on, and extensions of, the Mishnah in order to apply Jewish teaching to everyday life, but they also include information on a wide range of topics. The two centers of rabbinic study (the land of Israel and Babylonia) were in contact with each other and the commentary therefore reflected a common effort; later, especially with the completion of the Talmud in Israel (ca. 400 CE), the Babylonian effort continued to refine and extend the applications, and it was the Talmud developed in Babylonia (completion after 500 CE) that was distributed worldwide, under the auspices of the academies that continued to work in Babylon until the beginning of the second millennium CE.

Tanakh an acronym formed from the beginning letters of the three divisions of the **Hebrew Bible**: Torah, Nevi'im, Ketubim

Targum translation of the Hebrew Bible into **Aramaic**. The Targums are important for textual criticism of the Hebrew text, since they provide evidence about it at a stage earlier than that of the **Masoretic text**.

tel (Heb), **tell** (Arabic) a mound formed by repeated construction, occupation, and destruction of buildings on a particular site

Temple the central place of worship for Israelite religion in Jerusalem, referring either to the **First Temple** or the **Second Temple**

teraphim a term (generally translated "household gods") for certain cultic objects in early Israel; their nature and function is unclear, and their size seems to be varied (in Gen 31.34 Rachel can conceal Laban's household gods by sitting on them; in 1 Sam 19.13, the "idol" is large enough to look like someone is in a bed). They may have been images of one's ancestors. One use to which they were put may have been divination (Ezek 21.21), but how this was done is not explained.

testament (Lat "*testamentum*," for Gk *diatheke*) a final disposition of one's personal property, but used in LXX to translate Heb *berith*, "covenant," and therefore applied to the "new covenant" or "new testament" as inaugurated by Jesus (recalling Jeremiah's promise of a "new covenant" in 31.31–34); testament therefore came to mean the collection of writings (the Hebrew Scriptures or the Christian Scriptures)

that presented the covenant of God with the people of God

Tetragrammaton (Gk "four letters") the divine name, **YHWH**

Tetrateuch the first four books of the Bible, Genesis through Numbers, regarded by some scholars as an edited collection to which Deuteronomy was then attached. See **Pentateuch**

textual criticism the effort to establish, by scholarly assessment of manuscript copies and other sources, an accurate version of a text; also called "lower criticism"

theodicy the theological effort to justify the goodness of God in the face of suffering

Theodotion (ca. second century CE) a translator of the Hebrew Bible into Greek and reviser of the Septuagint

theophany (Gk "appearance of god") the temporary appearance or manifestation of a divine being in a form that can be apprehended by the human senses

Third Isaiah, also **Trito-Isaiah,** the scholarly term for chs 56–66 of the book of Isaiah, which are primarily concerned with the life of the returned exiles in the province of Yehud (the Persian name for Judah) after 538 BCE. Some scholars doubt the separate existence of Third Isaiah; others maintain that it is not the product of one author, but a collection of diverse oracles by different members of a "school of Isaiah" collected during the **Persian period**. See also **Second Isaiah**.

Thomas, Gospel of an early collection of sayings attributed to Jesus. It contains no miracle stories and no account of Jesus' deeds, his birth, his death, or the resurrection. Some of the sayings resemble those in the canonical Gospels, but others reflect **Gnosticism.**

thresh to beat gathered stalks of grain in order to separate the grain from the stems and husks. A threshing floor, a flat area used for threshing grain, was often built on a hilltop to catch the breeze necessary for **winnow**ing.

threshing floor see **thresh**

Tiamat goddess of the deep and mother of the Babylonian pantheon; she is sometimes portrayed as a dragon.

tithe the conventional religious due (traditionally 10 percent) of certain material goods, such as herbs (Deut 14.22; Mt 23.23); other produce, like fruit or livestock, required the donation of "first fruits" or the young that opened the womb (the firstborn kid or calf) to God (Ex 13.12)

Torah (Heb "teaching, instruction") the first division of the Hebrew Bible, consisting of Genesis through Deuteronomy. The word (and hence the title) is sometimes translated "law," but this translation is misleading since the five books contain much more than law codes and regulations.

tradition criticism the investigation of the development of a text from its earliest stages (oral or original source documents) to the latest (canonical) stage

Transfiguration, the conventional title for narrative (Mk 9.2–8; Mt 17.1–8; Lk 9.28–36) in which Jesus, accompanied by Peter, James, and John, ascends a mountain and appears to the disciples in dazzling white, like a vindicated martyr, in the company of Moses and Elijah (founder and renewer of Israel)

Transjordan ("across Jordan") the region east of the Jordan River

transmission history an account, usually inferred, of how a text came down to the present from its originator. Steps in transmission history can include oral transmission, redaction, manuscript copying, and scribal emendation.

Trito-Isaiah see **Third Isaiah**

trope (Gk "turn [away]") use of a word or phrase in a sense differing from its usual or literal meaning, as in a figure of speech; "a stitch in time" is not about sewing, but about the advantages of timely or early action

Twelve, Book of the the **Minor Prophets**

Twelve, the conventional designation for Jesus' closest followers (Mk 3.14–16 and parallels; Mk 10.32)

typology (Gk *tupos*, the raised design on a seal for imprinting in wax, then by extension a pattern or model) understanding persons or events, especially in the New Testament, by referring them to earlier biblical precursors

U

Ugarit city on the Mediterranean coast (Ras-Shamra in present-day Syria), source of an important collection of Canaanite myths and other texts from the second half of the second millennium BCE in a language called Ugaritic, which was related to Hebrew

Ugaritic an ancient Semitic language closely related to Hebrew, which was used at the city of Ugarit on the coast of the Mediterranean in Syria in the second millennium BCE. Many Ugaritic texts have connections in style and content with the Bible.

unleavened bread (Heb *matzah*, pl. *matzot*) bread made without yeast; also the festival of unleavened bread associated with **passover**.

Urim and Thummim a method of **divination** used to discover God's response to "yes" or "no" questions

V

vassal the underlord in a covenant relationship, who is granted power and control over people in a particular area in return for loyalty to the **suzerain**

Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon an Assyrian treaty document from the reign of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (681–669 BCE), with parallels to parts of Deuteronomy

Vulgate see **Jerome**

W

wadi (Arabic) a stream bed or valley that is dry for part of the year; an arroyo or gulch

weeks, festival of (Heb *Shavuot*; "Pentecost," Gk for "fiftieth" [day]) the spring harvest, occurring according to Priestly texts fifty days (seven full weeks) after Passover

winnow to separate grain from its husks (called chaff) after it has been threshed. The threshed grain is placed in a wide, flat basket and tossed repeatedly into the air, allowing a breeze to blow away the lighter chaff while the grain drops back down into the basket.

wisdom literature Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew Bible, Sirach and Wisdom in the Apocrypha, and some Psalms. Wisdom literature is concerned with insight, instruction, meditation of the meaning of life, and moral exhortation. It does not generally concern itself with key events in Israel's history, such as the Exodus; central teachings, such as the covenant; or focal institutions, such as the Davidic monarchy, prophecy, or the Temple.

Writings the third division of the **Hebrew Bible**

Y

Yahweh see **YHWH**

Yahwistic characteristic of the religion of the worship of YHWH or of the teachings, Temple practices, etc., in the Pentateuch

Yehud designation of the province of Judah during Persian times; see **Judah**

YHWH (sometimes also YHVH) the name of God, which in Jewish tradition is conventionally unpronounced; moden scholars use the conventional pronunciation "Yahweh." The name is represented in the **Masoretic text** by the Hebrew letters *yod-he-vav-he* and the vowels for the title *Adonai*, "my Lord." In most English translations, following an ancient substitution, YHWH is represented by the word LORD written in capital and small capital letters. The original vocalization and meaning of the name YHWH is uncertain, though it is connected to the verb *h-y-h*, "be" or "become," most likely in a causative sense, "he who causes to be."

Yom Kippur see **Day of Atonement**

Z

Zadokites priests purportedly descended from Zadok, one of David's chief priests and the only chief priest under Solomon, who anointed Solomon king (1 Kings 1). Zadok was descended from Aaron (1 Chr 6). Ezekiel's vision of the restored Temple explicitly maintains that Zadokites will be the priests, differentiated from **Levites** (Ezek 48.11). The Qumran community wanted to restore the Zadokite priesthood; Zadok may also be the source of the name Sadducees, those who supported the religio-political elite centered on the Jerusalem Temple under the Roman occupation. See also **Aaron**.

Zealot a member of a Jewish revolutionary movement during the Roman occupation of Palestine in the first century CE

ziggurat a temple-tower in ancient Mesopotamia. Ziggurats are presumed to represent a mount, on the top of which the earthly and divine realms merged.

Zion the name of the fortified hill within Jerusalem and thus, by extension, an alternative name for Jerusalem itself, especially in biblical poetry

Zion theology a name for the view that God's ultimate plan for Israel is restoration of the monarchy under a Davidic king who rules from Jerusalem

INDEX TO THE STUDY MATERIALS

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THE GREAT SEA
Plain of Phoenicia
Plain of Sharon
Plain of Philistia
The Shephelah
Hill Country of Ephraim
Hill Country of Judah
The Negeb
Wilderness of Judah
Dead Sea (Salt Sea)
(Sea of the Arabah)
Arabah
Edom
Moab
The Desert
Gilead
Bashan
Leja
Hauran
Damascus Plain
Anti-Lebanon
Plains of Moab
Ammon
Sidon
Tyre
Dan
Paneas
Damascus
Kedesh
Hazor
Merom
Achzib
Acco (Ptolemais)
Capernaum
Arbela
Kamaim
Ashtaroth
Sephoris
Madon
Nazareth
Megiddo
Dor
Caesarea
Jezreel
Taanach
Beth-shan (Scythopolis)
Ibleam
Dothan
Yehem
Samaria
Tirzah
Shechem
Mt. Gilboa
Mt. Tabor
Hill of Moreh
Arbela
Ramoth-gilead
Gerasa
Jogbehah
Rabbah
Joppa
Beth-dagon
Aphek
Lebonah
Shiloh
Lod (Lydda)
Bethel
Beth-horon
Mizpah
Michmash
Jericho
Jabneel
Aijalon
Ramah
Geba
Mt. Scopus
Jerusalem
Ashdod
Ekron
Azekah
Bethlehem
Ashkelon
Libnah
Lachish
Gaza
Hebron
En-gedi
Heshbon
Mt. Nebo
Dibon
Aroer
Carmel
Maon
Debir
Beer-sheba
Kir-hareseth
Ascent of Akrabbim
Brook Besor
Brook Zered
R. Arnon
R. Jabbok
R. Jordan
Brook Cherith
Wadi Yarmuk
Wadi Hesban
Mt. Pisgah
Mts. of Abarim
R. Nahaliel
The Way of the Sea
The King's Highway
Waters of Nimrim
Mt. Hermon
Mt. Carmel
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Gerizim
Mt. Lebanon (Nahr el Litani)
R. Leontes
R. Pharpar
R. Abana
Ladder of Tyre
Plain of Acco
Wadi esh-Shaghur
Plain of Megiddo (Great Plain)
Shihor-libnat Wadi Zerqa
Wadi el-Muqhaiyir
Valley of Jezreel
Valley of Lebanon
The Plain
Plain of Hazor
Waters of Merom
River Jordan
Sea of Galilee (Chinnereh)
L. Huleh (Semechonitis)
Upper Galilee
Lower Galilee
Jebel Jermaq
Wadi Qubeiba
Valley of Zephathah
Valley of Elah
Valley of Sorek
Valley of Aijalon
Valley of Achor
Valley of Beracah
Ascent of Ziz
Wadi Murabba'at
Valley of Jeruel
Wadi Arabah
Valley of Beer-sheba
Valley of Salt
Brook of Kanah
Plain of Dor
Wadi el-Mughaiyir
R. Kishon
R. Besor
R. Brook (Kedron)
Wadi Zarqa
Wadi Fa'ar
Wadi Farah
Wadi Tirzah
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Gerizim
Mt. Scopus
Mt. Tabor
Mt. Gilboa
Hill of Moreh
Mts. of Abarim
Mt. Nebo
Mt. Pisgah
Mt. Hermon
Mt. Lebanon (Nahr el Litani)
Jebel Jermaq
Plain of Hazor
Plain of Megiddo (Great Plain)
Valley of Jezreel
Valley of Lebanon
The Plain
Waters of Merom
Sea of Galilee (Chinnereh)
L. Huleh (Semechonitis)
Upper Galilee
Lower Galilee
Wadi esh-Shaghur
Plain of Acco
Ladder of Tyre
Wadi el-Muqhaiyir
Plain of Dor
R. Kishon
Wadi Fa'ar
Wadi Farah
Wadi Tirzah
Wadi Yarmuk
Wadi Hesban
Wadi Arabah
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Valley of Aijalon
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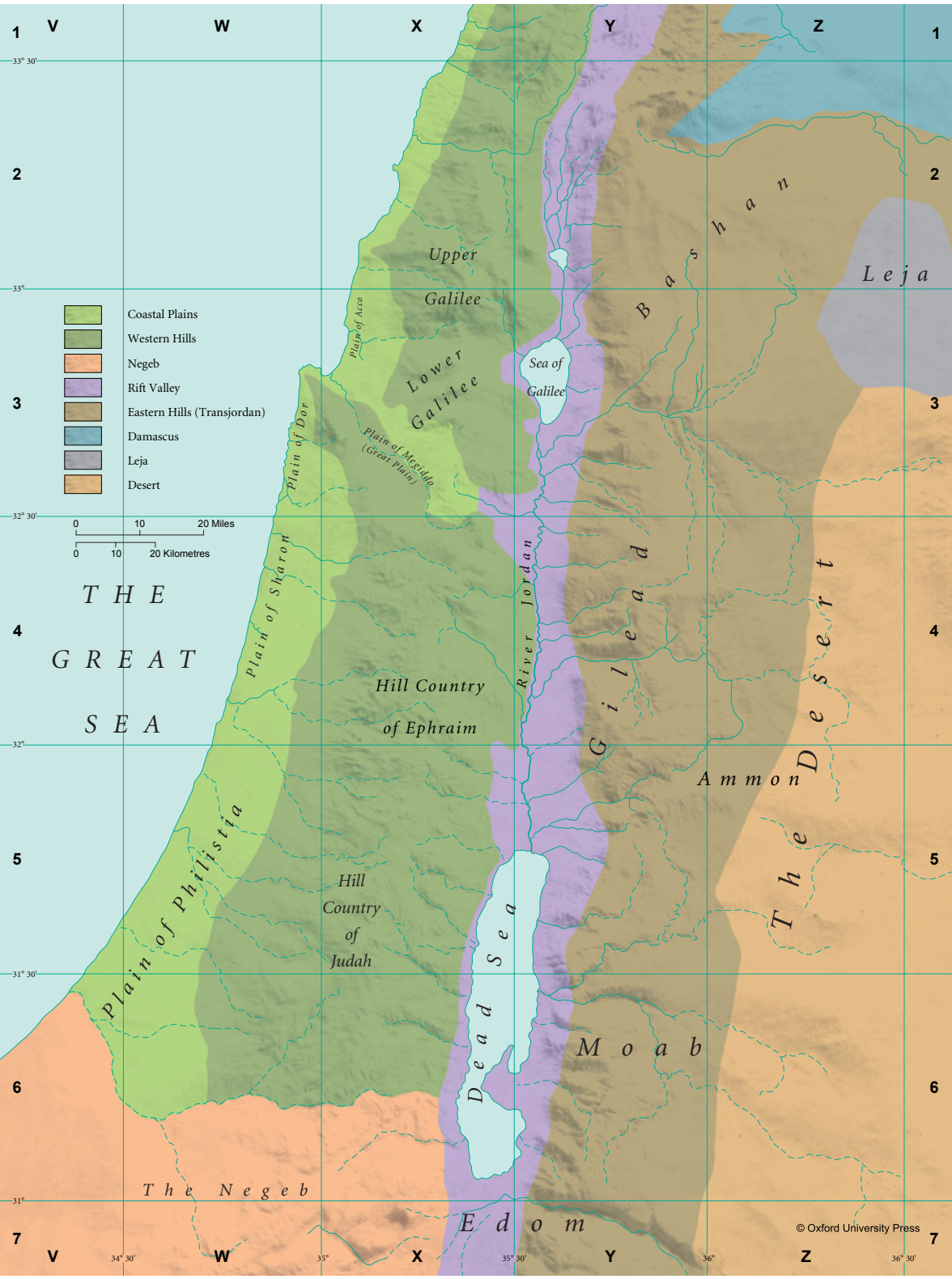
Valley of Beracah
Ascent of Ziz
Wadi Murabba'at
Valley of Jeruel
Valley of Beer-sheba
Valley of Salt
Brook of Kanah
Brook Besor
Brook Zered
R. Arnon
R. Jabbok
R. Jordan
Brook Cherith
R. Leontes
R. Pharpar
R. Abana
R. Brook (Kedron)
Wadi Zarqa
Shihor-libnat
Plain of Megiddo (Great Plain)
Plain of Hazor
Plain of Acco
Ladder of Tyre
Waters of Merom
River Jordan
Sea of Galilee (Chinnereh)
L. Huleh (Semechonitis)
Upper Galilee
Lower Galilee
Jebel Jermaq
Valley of Lebanon
The Plain
Mt. Lebanon (Nahr el Litani)
Mt. Hermon
Mt. Carmel
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Gerizim
Mt. Scopus
Mt. Tabor
Mt. Gilboa
Hill of Moreh
Mts. of Abarim
Mt. Nebo
Mt. Pisgah


V
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36°
36° 30'
Coastal Plains
Western Hills
Negeb
Rift Valley
Eastern Hills (Transjordan)
Damascus
Leja
Desert
0 10 20 Miles
0 10 20 Kilometres
THE GREAT SEA
Plain of Philistia
Plain of Sharon
Plain of Dor
Plain of Acco
Upper Galilee
Lower Galilee
Plain of Megiddo (Great Plain)
Sea of Galilee
River Jordan
Dead Sea
Hill Country of Ephraim
Hill Country of Judah
The Negeb
Bashan
Leja
Gilead
Ammon
The Desert
Moab
Edom
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Forest
Dry Forest
Scrub and grassland
Desert
Sand Dunes
Oases
0 10 20 Miles
0 10 20 Kilometres
Sidon
Damascus
Tyre
Dan
Plain of Phoenicia
Upper Galilee
Acco (Acre)
R. Jordan
Sea of Galilee
Lower Galilee
Mt. Carmel
Megiddo
Caesarea
Plain of Sharon
River Jordan
The Arabah
The Gilead
The Desert
Shechem
Hill Country of Ephraim
Joppa
Bethel
Jerusalem
Plain of Philistia
The Shephelah
Hill Country of Judah
Wilderness of Judah
Dead Sea
Ashkelon
Dibon
Beer-sheba
The Negeb
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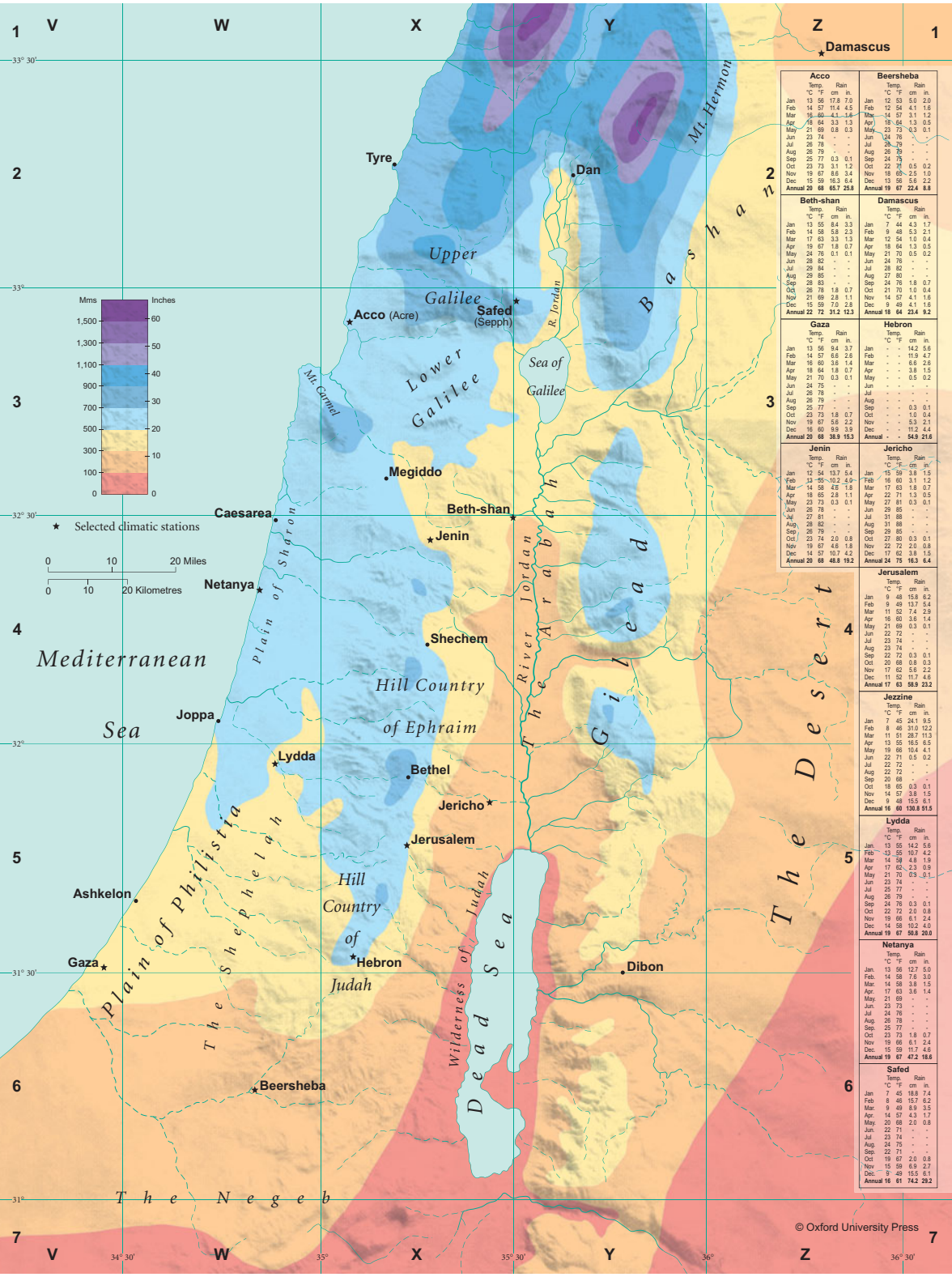

Acco

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	13	56	17.8	7.0
Feb	14	57	11.4	4.5
Mar	16	60	4.1	1.6
Apr	18	64	3.3	1.3
May	21	69	0.8	0.3
Jun	23	74	-	-
Jul	26	78	-	-
Aug	26	79	-	-
Sep	25	77	0.3	0.1
Oct	23	73	3.1	1.2
Nov	19	67	8.6	3.4
Dec	15	59	16.3	6.4
Annual	**20**	**68**	**65.7**	**25.8**

Beersheba

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	12	53	5.0	2.0
Feb	12	54	4.1	1.6
Mar	14	57	3.1	1.2
Apr	18	64	1.3	0.5
May	23	73	0.3	0.1
Jun	24	76	-	-
Jul	26	79	-	-
Aug	26	79	-	-
Sep	24	75	-	-
Oct	22	71	0.5	0.2
Nov	18	65	2.5	1.0
Dec	13	56	5.6	2.2
Annual	**19**	**67**	**22.4**	**8.8**

Beth-shan

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	13	55	8.4	3.3
Feb	14	58	5.8	2.3
Mar	17	63	3.3	1.3
Apr	19	67	1.8	0.7
May	24	76	0.1	0.1
Jun	28	82	-	-
Jul	29	84	-	-
Aug	29	85	-	-
Sep	28	83	-	-
Oct	26	78	1.8	0.7
Nov	21	69	2.8	1.1
Dec	15	59	7.0	2.8
Annual	**22**	**72**	**31.2**	**12.3**

Damascus

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	7	44	4.3	1.7
Feb	9	48	5.3	2.1
Mar	12	54	1.0	0.4
Apr	18	64	1.3	0.5
May	21	70	0.5	0.2
Jun	24	76	-	-
Jul	28	82	-	-
Aug	27	80	-	-
Sep	24	76	1.8	0.7
Oct	17	63	1.7	0.4
Nov	14	57	4.1	1.6
Dec	9	48	5.3	2.1
Annual	**18**	**64**	**23.4**	**9.2**

Gaza

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	13	56	9.4	3.7
Feb	14	57	6.6	2.6
Mar	16	60	3.6	1.4
Apr	18	64	1.8	0.7
May	21	70	0.3	0.1
Jun	24	75	-	-
Jul	26	78	-	-
Aug	26	79	-	-
Sep	25	77	-	-
Oct	23	73	1.8	0.7
Nov	19	67	5.6	2.2
Dec	16	60	9.9	3.9
Annual	**20**	**68**	**38.9**	**15.3**

Hebron

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	-	-	14.2	5.6
Feb	-	-	11.9	4.7
Mar	-	-	6.6	2.6
Apr	-	-	3.8	1.5
May	-	-	0.5	0.2
Jun	-	-	-	-
Jul	-	-	-	-
Aug	-	-	-	-
Sep	-	-	0.3	0.1
Oct	-	-	1.0	0.4
Nov	-	-	5.3	2.1
Dec	-	-	11.2	4.4
Annual	**-**	**-**	**54.9**	**21.6**

Jenin

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	12	54	13.7	5.4
Feb	13	55	10.2	4.0
Mar	14	58	4.8	1.8
Apr	18	65	2.9	1.1
May	23	73	0.3	0.1
Jun	26	78	-	-
Jul	27	81	-	-
Aug	28	82	-	-
Sep	26	79	-	-
Oct	23	74	2.0	0.8
Nov	19	67	4.6	1.8
Dec	14	57	10.7	4.2
Annual	**20**	**68**	**48.8**	**19.2**

Jericho

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	15	59	3.8	1.5
Feb	16	60	3.1	1.2
Mar	17	63	1.8	0.7
Apr	21	71	1.3	0.5
May	27	81	0.3	0.1
Jun	29	85	-	-
Jul	31	88	-	-
Aug	31	88	-	-
Sep	29	85	-	-
Oct	27	80	0.3	0.1
Nov	22	72	2.0	0.8
Dec	17	62	3.8	1.5
Annual	**24**	**75**	**16.3**	**6.4**

Jerusalem

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	9	48	15.8	6.2
Feb	9	49	13.7	5.4
Mar	11	52	7.4	2.9
Apr	16	60	3.6	1.4
May	21	69	0.3	0.1
Jun	22	72	-	-
Jul	23	74	-	-
Aug	23	74	-	-
Sep	22	72	0.3	0.1
Oct	20	68	0.8	0.3
Nov	17	62	5.6	2.2
Dec	11	52	11.4	4.6
Annual	**17**	**63**	**58.9**	**23.2**

Jezzine

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	7	45	24.1	9.5
Feb	8	46	31.0	12.2
Mar	11	51	28.7	11.3
Apr	13	55	16.5	6.5
May	19	66	10.4	4.1
Jun	22	71	0.5	0.2
Jul	22	72	-	-
Aug	22	72	-	-
Sep	20	68	-	-
Oct	18	65	0.3	0.1
Nov	14	57	3.8	1.5
Dec	9	48	15.5	6.1
Annual	**16**	**60**	**130.8**	**51.5**

Lydda

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan.	13	55	14.2	5.6
Feb.	13	55	10.7	4.2
Mar.	14	58	4.8	1.9
Apr.	17	62	2.3	0.9
May.	21	70	0.3	0.1
Jun.	23	74	-	-
Jul.	25	77	-	-
Aug.	26	79	-	-
Sep.	24	76	0.3	0.1
Oct.	22	72	2.0	0.8
Nov.	19	66	6.1	2.4
Dec.	14	58	10.2	4.0
Annual	**19**	**67**	**50.8**	**20.0**

Netanya

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan.	13	56	12.7	5.0
Feb.	14	58	7.6	3.0
Mar.	14	58	3.8	1.5
Apr.	17	63	3.6	1.4
May.	21	69	-	-
Jun.	23	73	-	-
Jul.	24	76	-	-
Aug.	26	78	-	-
Sep.	25	77	-	-
Oct.	23	73	1.8	0.7
Nov.	19	66	6.1	2.4
Dec.	15	59	11.7	4.6
Annual	**19**	**67**	**47.2**	**18.6**

Safed

	Temp. °C	Temp. °F	Rain cm	Rain in.
Jan	7	45	18.8	7.4
Feb	8	46	15.7	6.2
Mar	9	49	8.9	3.5
Apr.	14	57	4.3	1.7
May.	20	68	2.0	0.8
Jun.	22	71	-	-
Jul.	23	74	-	-
Aug.	24	75	-	-
Sep.	22	71	-	-
Oct.	19	67	2.0	0.8
Nov.	15	59	6.9	2.7
Dec.	9	49	15.5	6.1
Annual	**16**	**61**	**74.2**	**29.2**

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Black Sea
Caspian Sea
Mediterranean Sea
Red Sea
Persian Gulf
Gulf of 'Oman
Aral Sea
Sea of Azov
Crimea
Caucasus Mountains
ARMENIA
ASIA MINOR
ANATOLIA
Taurus Mts.
Kara Kum
Kopper Desert
Dasht-e Kavir
Dasht-e Lut
Alborz (Elburz) Mts.
Zagros Mountains
Lorestan (Luristan)
Khuzestan
PERSIA (IRAN)
Khorasan
Sistan
Baluchistan
Makran
Mesopotamia
CRESCENT
FERTILE
Syrian Desert
Arabian Desert
Nafud
Dahna
Rub' al Khali
Jebel Tuwaiq
Jebel Akhdar
Libyan Desert
Western Desert
Eastern Desert
Nubian Desert
Libyan Plateau
Qattara Depression
Siwa Oasis
Jalo Oasis
Farafra Oasis
Dakhla Oasis
Kharga Oasis
1st Cataract
Gulf of Suez
Sinai Penin.
Suez Canal
Aswan High Dam
Lake Nasser
Nile Delta
LOWER EGYPT
UPPER EGYPT
LIBYA
CYRENAICA
EGYPT
ETHIOPIA
GREECE
MACEDONIA
ITALY
CRETE
CYPRUS
SICILY
Rhodes
Carpathos
Cythera
Khania (Canea)
Cephalonia
Zacynthos
Corfu (Corcyra)
Peloponnese
Euboea
Cyclades
Chios
Samos
Ephesus
Rhodope Mts.
Balkan Mts.
Transylvanian Alps
Dinaric Alps
Adriatic Sea
Aegean Sea
Ionian Sea
Istria
Rome
Vesuvius
Sparta
Athens
Thebes
Memphis
Alexandria
Joppa
Jerusalem
Dead Sea
Damascus
Tyre
Sidon
Byblos
Ugarit
Antioch
Nineveh
Babylon
Ur
Ecbatana
Persepolis
Dumah
Tema
Qeshm
Strait of Hormuz
Abu Simbel
River Nile
River Euphrates
River Tigris
River Danube
River Volga
Amu Darya (Oxus)
Syr Darya (Iaxartes)
Kara-Bogaz-Gol
L. Sevan
L. Van
L. Urmia (Reza'iyeh)
L. Tuz
Bosphorus
Dardanelles
Strait of Gibraltar
Mt. Olympus
Mt. Ida
Pindus Mts.
Apennine Mts.
Etna
Vesuvius
Malta
G. of Taranto
Sea of Marmara
Mt. Ararat
Mt. Sinai
Mt. Hermon
Mt. Lebanon
Mt. Carmel
Mt. Tabor
Mt. Gerizim
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Nebo
Mt. Gilboa
Mt. Gilead
Mt. Moriah
Mt. Zion
Mt. Ephraim
Mt. Judah
Mt. Tabor
Mt. Hermon
Mt. Sinai
Mt. Horeb

Black Sea
Caspian Sea
Mediterranean Sea (Upper Sea)
Persian Gulf (Lower Sea)
Red Sea
HITTITE EMPIRE (HATTI)
ARARAT (URARTU)
SUBARTU
MITANNI
ASSYRIA
BABYLONIA
(Akkad)
(Sumer)
ELAM
MEDIA (MADAI)
Zagros Mts.
GUTIUM
(KEDAR)
ARABIA
EGYPT
Lower Egypt
Upper Egypt
Egypt
Libya (Lubim)
Put
Sinai
Midian
Negeb
Canaan
Syria
OPHIR
Cush (Ethiopia)
Minoans
Arzawa
Assuwa
Rhodes
Alashiya, Kittim (Cyprus)
Troy (Ilium)
Mycenae
Athens
Argos
Tiryns
Pylos
Knossos
Phaistos
Caphtor (Crete)
R. Sangarius
R. Halys
R. Maeander
Hattusa
Ankuwa
Kanish
Taurus Mts.
Kizzuwatna (Cilicia)
Lake Van
Lake Urmia
Nineveh
Calah
Arbela
Asshur
Nuzi
Ecbatana
R. Zab
Little Zab
R. Tigris
R. Adhem
R. Diyala
Euphrates
R. Habor
River
Carchemish
(Zinjirli)
Haran
(Tell Halaf)
Halab (Aleppo)
Ebla
Alalakh
Ugarit
R. Orontes
Hamath
Arvad
Kadesh
Tadmor
Lebanon Mts.
Gebal
Berytus
Sidon
Damascus
Tyre
Acco
Hazor
Dor
Megiddo
Shechem
Joppa
Bethel
Jericho
Jerusalem
Ashkelon
Gaza
Raphia
Hebron
Beer-sheba
Karkor
Kadesh-barnea
Mari
Eshnunna
Sippar
Cuthah
Babylon
Kish
Borsippa
Nippur
Isin
Lagash
Larsa
Erech (Uruk)
Ur
Eridu
Susa
(Malamir)
ancient coastline
(Dumah)
(Tema)
(Dedan)
(Yathrib)
(Mahd edh-Dhahab)
Dilmun
Tanis (Zoan)
Avaris (Rameses)
On (Heliopolis)
Memphis (Noph)
Gizeh
Saqqarah
Heracleopolis
(Serabit el-Khadim)
R. Nile
Beni-hasan
Hermopolis
Akhetaton (Tell el-'Amarna)
Abydos
Thebes (No)
(el-Kab)
Syene
1st Cataract
Route reflected in the story of Abraham
0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometres
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GAD, etc.
Tribes of Israel said to have settled in Transjordan
EDOM, etc.
Kingdoms said to have been encountered by the Israelites at the time of the settlement
Cities mentioned in Numbers and Deuteronomy, but not in Genesis
0 10 20 Miles
0 10 20 Kilometres
THE GREAT SEA
(The Western Sea)
Sidon
Damascus
ARAM (SYRIA)
Mt. Lebanon
Mt. Hermon (Sirion, Senir)
Ijon
Tyre
Uzu
Abel
Laish (Dan)
Kanah
Beth-anath?
MAACAH
Kedesh
Achzib
Hazor
Janoah
Merom
Aduru
R. Jordan
GESHUR
BASHAN
ARGOB
Acco
Chinnereth
Sea of Chinnereth
Karnaim
Golan
Ashtaroth
Madon
Hannathon
Mt. Carmel
Achshaph?
Beth-yerah (Philoteria)
Yanoam
HAVVOTH-JAIR
Shimron
Japhia
Jokneam
Edrei
Dor
Megiddo
Shunem
Anaharath?
Aruna
Taanach
Ham
Ramoth-gilead
Beth-haggan (En-gannim)
Beth-shean
Rehob
Pehel (Pella)
Migdal
Ibleam
Gath of Sharon
Arubboth
Dothan
Yehem
Socoh
Plain of Sharon
Tirzah
Mt. Ebal
Shechem
Mt. Gerizim
Succoth
Penuel
R. Jabbok
Mahanaim
Aphek
Joppa
Ono
Jazer
Jogbehah
Beth-dagon
Lod
Rabbah
AMMON
Bethel (Luz)
Beth-nimrah
Ai
Plains of Moab
Beth-horon
Gilgal
Abel-shittim (Shittim)
Gezer
Aijalon
Gibeon
Jericho
Elealeh
Ekron
Jerusalem (Salem)
Beth-jeshimoth
Heshbon
Bezer?
Ashdod
Beth-shemesh
Mt. Pisgah
Mt. Nebo
Timnah
Bethlehem (Ephrath)
Medeba
Gath?
Kiriathaim
Ashkelon
Socoh
Mts. of Abarim
Baal-meon (Beon)
Chezib
Adullam
Keilah
Mattanah
Lachish
R. Nahaliel
Ataroth
Eglon?
Mamre
Dibon
Kedemoth?
Gaza
Beth-tappuah
Hebron (Kiriath-arba)
Aroer
Beth-eglaim (Eglaim)
R. Arnon
Gerar
Ziklag?
Debir
Yurza
Sharuhen
Moladah
ARAD?
Bab ed-Dra'
Ar
Beer-sheba
MOAB
Hormah
Arad?
Aroer
Numeira
Possible location of the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar in the Valley of Siddim
Rehoboth
es-Safi
Zoar
The Negeb
Ziph
Hazazan-tamar (30° 48' N)
EDOM
Brook Zered
Ascent of Akrabbim
(Khanazir)
Feifa
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ASIA MINOR
THE GREAT SEA
Cyprus
River Euphrates
Sea of Chinnereth
CANAAN
Philistia
Plain of Sharon
Bethel
Ai
Ashdod
Gezer
Jerusalem
Azekah
Libnah?
Lachish
Jericho
Shittim
Rabbah
Heshbon
Mt. Nebo
Medeba
Dibon
Ar Aroer
Gaza
Raphia
Gerar
Hebron
Juttah
ARAD?
Debir
Beer-sheba
Arad?
Horman
Kir-hareseth
Salt Sea
The Negeb
Wilderness of Zin
Hazazon-tamar
Sela
Bozrah
Punon
Oboth
Azmon
Hazar-addar
Kadesh-barnea (Meribah)
Bene-jaakan (Beeroth)
Mt. Sinai? (Horeb) (Jebel Helal)
The Way to Shur
Wilderness of Shur
Brook of Egypt
The Way to the Land of the Philistines
Zilu (Tjaru)
Pelusium (Sin)
Mons Casius
Lake Sirbonis
Lake Menzaleh
Busiris
Zoan (Tanis)
Rameses (Qantir)
GOSHEN
Lake Timsah
Pi-beseth (Bubastis)
Pithom
Succoth
Athribis
Great Bitter Lake
Little Bitter Lake
Baal-zephon
Possible Northern Exodus route
Wilderness of Paran
The Arabah
The King's Highway
Alternative Exodus route
Traditional Exodus route
Ezion-geber
EDOM
MIDIAN
Arabian Desert
Western Desert
EGYPT
River Nile
(Rosetta)
Buto
Heliopolis (On)
(Tell el-Yahudiyeh)
Saqqarah
Memphis (Noph)
Heracleopolis
Lake Moeris
Beni-hasan
SINAI
Wilderness of Sin?
Mt Sinai (Horeb)? (Jebel Musa)
(Gulf of 'Aqaba)
Gulf of Suez
Red Sea
Possible route reflected in the Exodus story
Possible alternative routes
Line of border fortresses
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ASHER, etc. Tribes of Israel
Cities of refuge
Philistine Cities
0 5 10 15 Miles
0 5 10 15 Kilometres
Sidon
Damascus
Mt. Lebanon
Valley of Lebanon
Mt. Hermon
Baal-gad?
Ahlab
Tyre
Dan (Laish)
Beth-rehob
Beth-anath?
Kedesh
Misrephoth-maim
Yiron
Achzib
Abdon
Hazor
Merom
Waters of Merom
R. Jordan
ASHER
NAPHTALI
DAN
Acco
Rehob
Cabul
Chinnereth
Sea of Chinnereth
Aphik
Nahalol
Madon
Rimmon
Hannathon
Achshaph?
Hammath
Golan
Ashtaroth
BASHAN
Mt. Carmel
Bethlehem
Haroseth-ha-goiim
Shimron
Mt. Tabor
Hill of Moreh
En-dor
Lakkum
HAVVOTH-JAIR
ZEBULUN
ISSACHAR
Jokneam
R. Kishon
Dor
Naphath-Dor
Megiddo
Shunem
Beer
Kamon?
Edrei
Jezreel
Valley of Jezreel
Tob
Ramoth-gilead
Taanach
Mt. Gilboa
Beth-shean
Ibleam
En-ganniim (Beth-haggan)
Jabesh-gilead
Hepher?
Socoh
Bezek
Abel-meholah
Country of Israel
Thebez
Tabbath?
Tirzah
Zaphon?
Succoth
Penuel
R. Jabbok
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Gerizim
Shechem
Pirathon
Arumah
Ataroth
Zarethan?
Adam
Baal-shalishah
Aphek
Gath-rimmon?
Tappuah
Lebonah
Shiloh
Joppa
Asor
Ramathaim-zophim
Beth-dagon
Timnath-serah
Jogbehah
Betonim
Rabbah
Ephron (Ophrah)
Bethel
Ai
Rimmon
Beth-nimrah
Lower Beth-horon
Upper Beth-horon
Naarah
Gilgal
Jericho
Jabneel
Gibbethon
Shaalbim
Mizpah
Michmash
Aijalon
Gibeon
Ramah
Gezer
Beeroth?
Shittim
Mount Baalah
Shikkeron
Chephirah
Heshbon
Baalath?
Baalah (Kiriath-jearim)
Gibeah?
Anathoth
Beth-peor
Bezer?
Ekron
Sorek
Zela
Jerusalem (Jebus)
Middin?
Mt. Pisgah
Ashdod
Timnah
Zorah
Beth-shemesh
Lehi?
Beth-jeshimoth
Mt. Nebo
Kiriathaim
Medeba
Makkedah?
Jarmuth
Bethlehem
Secacah?
Gath?
Azekah
Timnah
Etam
Nibshan?
Beth-baal-meon
Ashkelon
Socoh
Adullam
Keilah
Giloh
Zereth-shahar
Libnah
Beth-zur
Mareshah
Eglon?
Lachish
Hebron
Kedemoth?
Gaza
Dibon
Jezreel?
Ziph
En-gedi
Aroer
R. Arnon
Debir
Anab
Goshen?
Maon
Gerar
Ziklag?
Eshtemoa
Karkor (37°36'E)
Madmannah
Jattir
Bethul (Bethel)
Ashan
Kabzeel?
ARAD?
Beer-sheba
Hazar-shual
Arad?
Hormah
Adadah (Aroer)
Brook Besor
MOAB
The Negeb
Ziph
Brook Zered
Ascent of Akrabbim
EDOM
PHILISTINES
DAN
EPHRAIM
MANASSEH
GILEAD
AMMON
REUBEN
BENJAMIN
JUDAH
SIMEON
Hill Country of Judah
The Shephelah
Valley of Elah
Valley of Achor
Sea of the Arabah (The Salt Sea)
River Jordan
The Arabah
THE GREAT SEA
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SYRIA, etc.
Non-Israelite peoples
Places fortified by Solomon
I-XII
Solomon's administrative districts (1 Kgs. 4. 7-19)
0 10 20 Miles
0 10 20 Kilometres
ZOBAH
Damascus
SYRIA (ARAM)
Sidon
SIDONIANS
Mt. Lebanon
BETH-REHOB
Mt. Hermon
Tyre
Abel-beth-maacah
Dan
Beth-rehob
MAACAH
BASHAN
ARGOB
GESHUR
Hazor
Merom
Acco
Cabul
R. Jordan
Sea of Chinnereth
Helam
Mt. Carmel
R. Kishon
Jokneam (Jokmeam)
HAVVOTH-JAIR
GILEAD
THE GREAT SEA
Dor
Megiddo
Jezreel
Taanach
Mt. Gilboa
Beth-shean
Tob
Rogelim
Ramoth-gilead
Plain of Sharon
Arubboth
Hepher?
Socoh
Thebez
Jabesh-gilead
Abel-meholah
The River Jordan
Arabah
Mt. Ebal
Shechem
Mt. Gerizim
Pirathon
Lo-debar?
R. Jabbok
Succoth
Mahanaim
Zarethan?
AMMON
Joppa
Gath-rimmon
Zeredah
Shiloh
Jazer
Baal-hazor
Ephraim
Rabbah (Rabbath-ammon)
Beth-hanan
Bethel
Lower Beth-horon
Upper Beth-horon
Gilgal
Shaalbim
Gibeon
Geba
Jericho
Gezer
Baalath?
Makaz
Elon
Beeroth?
Heshbon
Kiriath-jearim
Gibeah?
Anathoth
Ekron
Sorek
Jerusalem
Ashdod
Beth-shemesh
Bethlehem
Medeba
Ashkelon
Gath?
Timnah
Netophah
Adullam
Libnah?
Tekoa
Giloh
R. Nahaliel
Salt Sea
(Sea of the Arabah)
Wilderness of Judah
Hebron
Dibon
Aroer
Gaza
PHILISTINES
The Shephelah (Lowland)
Carmel
Gerar
Ziklag?
Debir
R. Arnon
MOAB
Kabzeel?
Arad
Beer-sheba
Brook Besor
Valley of Salt
Kir-hareseth
The Negeb
AMALEKITES
Brook Zered
EDOM
Tamar
(30° 48'N)
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Pergamum
Sardis
Smyrna
LYDIA (LUD)
HITTITES
Kanish
ARARAT (URARTU)
L. Van
Van
Tabriz
Caspian Sea
Iconium
Melid
Amida
Meshech
Tubal
Markasi
Gurgum
Kummukhu
HURRIANS
L. Urmia
Kue
Tarsus
Sam'al
Adana
Yaudi
Carchemish
Haran
Gozan
Nineveh
MEDIA
Rhodes
Alalakh
Halab
R. Khabur (Izalla)
Singara
Calah
Arbela
Crete
Posidium
Ugarit
Orontes
Hittites
Tiphsah
ASSYRIA
Asshur
Nuzi
Arrapkha
Enkomi
Hamath
Qatna
Arvad
Homs
Tirqa
Mari
R. Tigris
Ecbatana
Kittim (Alashiya)
Gebal
Lebo-Hamath
Tadmor
KASSITES
ELAM
The Great Sea
Berytus
Sidon
Lebanon
Damascus
R. Euphrates
Eshnunna
Tyre
Acco
Hazor
BABYLONIA
Dor
Megiddo
Bashan
Bozrah
Babylon
Susa
Samaria
Shechem
Israel
Gilead
Nippur
Joppa
Rabbah
Ashkelon
Ammon
Pharos
Naucratis
Gaza
Judah
Jerusalem
Kenites
Moab
Nebaioth
Ur
Shur
Seir
Sela
Heliopolis (On)
Memphis (Noph)
Edom
ARABIA
Dumah
ancient coastline
Sealand
Persian Gulf
Sinai
Ezion-geber
KEDAR
Buz
Midian
Ephah
Akhetaton (T.el-'Amarna)
Tema
R. Nile
Dedan
Dilmun
Myos Hormos
Oasis
Thebes (No)
Khaibar
Leuke Kome
Yathrib
Syene
Berenike
OPHIR
(Mahd edh-Dhahab)
Abu Simbel
Buhen
Red Sea
JOKTAN
Approximate line of principal trade routes
0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometres
ETHIOPIA (CUSH)
Napata
Meroe
Adulis
Uzal
Marib
Shabwa
SHEBA
HAZARMAVETH
Timna
PUNT
Canneh
Muza
Eden
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Black Sea
Caspian Sea
The Great Sea (The Upper Sea, the Western Sea)
The Lower (Eastern) Sea
Red Sea
PHRYGIA
LYDIA
JAVAN
CILICIA (KHILAKKU)
Gomer (Gimarrai)
Meshech (Mushki)
Tubal (Tabal)
COMMAGENE (KUMUKHU)
Musri
ARARAT (URARTU)
Nairi
ASSYRIA
Minni (Mannai)
MADAI (MEDES)
HATTINA
ARAMEA
Kue
Cyprus (Iadanna)
Crete (Caphtor)
Rhodes
Sardis (Sepharad)
Usiana
Togarmah (Til-garimmu)
Milid (Melitene)
Turushpa (Tuspar)
Lake Van
Lake Urmia
Sam'al
Carchemish
Haran
Gozan
Calno
Arpad
Aleppo
Beth-eden (Bit-adini)
Tiphsah
Rezeph
Dur-sharrukin
Nineveh
Calah
Arbela
Asshur
Arrapkha
Ecbatana
Hamath
Qarqar
Arvad
Riblah
Kadesh
Tadmor (Tadmar)
Gebal (Byblos)
Berytus
Lebo-Hamath
Helbon
Sidon
Tyre
Damascus
Ushu
Acco
Hauran
Salecah
ISRAEL
Samaria
Jerusalem
JUDAH
Gaza
Raphia
AMMON
MOAB
EDOM
Sela
Kedar (Qidri)
ARABIA
Dumah
Tema
Dedan
Sippar
Cuthah
Babylon
Borsippa
Nippur
Pekod (Puqudu)
ELAM
Susa (Shushan)
BABYLONIA
Erech (Uruk)
Larsa
Ur
ancient coastline
Sais
Zoan (Tanis)
Tahpanhes
Migdol
Pelusium
Athribis
Heliopolis (On)
Memphis (Noph)
Sinai
EGYPT
Hermopolis
Lycopolis (Siut)
River Nile
Thebes
Syene
ETHIOPIA
SHEBA (SABA)
OPHIR
Libya
R. Sangarius
R. Halys
R. Hermus
R. Maeander
R. Orontes
Amanus Mts.
R. Balikh
R. Habor
River Tigris
Euphrates
R. Adhaim
R. Diyala
Lower Zab
Upper Zab
Approximate extent of Assyrian domination in the latter part of the 8th. century.
(Later, under Esarhaddon (680-669), Assyria conquered Egypt.)
0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometres
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ISRAEL
Former kingdom of Israel conquered by Assyria
Approximate boundaries
0 10 20 Miles
0 10 20 Kilometres
Sidon
Damascus
Zarephath
Ahlab
Tyre
Uzu
Dan
Kedesh
Achzib
Hazor
Acco
Jotbah
Rumah
Karnaim
Ashtaroth
HAURAN
Dor
Megiddo
Taanach
Ramoth-gilead
Beth-shan
Ibleam
Dothan
Ham
Jabesh-gilead
Abel-meholah
Samaria
Tirzah
Shechem
Succoth
Penuel
Adam
Joppa
Bene-berak
Asor
Ono
Shiloh
Jazer
AMMON
Beth-dagon
Lod
Rabbah
Mesad Hashavyahu
Gimzo
Bethel
Rimmon
Aiath
Mizpah
Michmash
Gilgal
Jericho
Eltekeh?
Jabneel (Jabneh)
Gezer
Gibbethon
Mount Baalah
Baalath?
Shikkeron
Ramah
Migron
Gibeah?
Gallim
Geba
Kiriath-jearim
Laishah
Anathoth
Shittim
Elealeh
Sibmah
Heshbon
Bezer? (Bozrah?)
Ashdod
Ekron
Timnah
Jerusalem
Nob
Nebo
Beth-shemesh
Beth-haccherem
Azekah
Bethlehem
Kiriathaim
Medeba
Ashkelon
Gath?
Socoh
Netophah
Beth-meon (Baal-meon)
Beth-diblathaim
Moresheth-gath
Adullam
Achzib?
Tekoa
Libnah?
Keilah
Jahaz?
Lachish
Mareshah
Ataroth
Gaza
Bozkath
Hebron
Kerioth
Dibon
Ziph
Aroer
Beth-gamul
Beth-ezel
Gerar
Debir
Yurza
Madmannah
Madmen?
Raphia
Sharuhen
Great Arad
Ar
Beer-sheba
Kir-hareseth (Kir, Kir-heres)
Zoar
Brook Zered
Sea of Chinnereth
Salt Sea (Sea of the Arabah)
Mt. Hermon
R. Pharpar
R. Jordan
Mt. Carmel
R. Kishon
R. Jabbok
R. Arnon
Waters of Nimrim
Brook Besor
Plain of Megiddo
Plain of Sharon
The Shephelah
The Jordan River Arabah
PHOENICIA
GALILEE
SAMARIA
JUDAH
PHILISTIA
GILEAD
MOAB
EDOM
THE GREAT SEA
The Negeb
SYRIA (ARAM)
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Black Sea
Caspian Sea
The Great Sea
Persian Gulf
Red Sea
R. Sangarius
R. Halys
R. Hermus
R. Maeander
LYDIA
(LUD, LUDU)
Ionia
Caria
Lycia
Rhodes
Corinth
Athens
Sardis
Magnesia
Crete
(Caphtor)
Cyprus
(Iadanna)
URARTU
(ARARAT)
Mannai
(Minni)
Izalla
Nisibis
ASSYRIA
Nineveh
Calah
(Kalkhu)
Asshur
Arrapkha
Ecbatana
MEDIA
Upper Zab
Lower Zab
R. Adhaim
R. Diyala
R. Tigris
River Euphrates
R. Balikh
R. Habor
Haran
Balikhu
Quramati
Rusapu
Khin-Anat
danu
Sukhu
Khume
(Kue)
Carchemish
Khazazu
Arpad
Kirshu
Ura
Pirindu
Pitusu
Sallune
SYRIA
R. Orontes
Hamath
Kadesh
Arvad
Riblah
Gebal
Lebo-Hamath
Sidon
Tyre
Damascus
Arabs
KEDAR
Megiddo
SAMARIA
AMMON
Ashkelon
Gaza
Jerusalem
JUDAH
MOAB
EDOM
Zoan (Tanis)
Migdol
Pelusium
Pi-beseth
Tahpanhes
Heliopolis (On)
Memphis
(Noph)
Sinai
PATHROS
EGYPT
R. Nile
River Nile
Thebes
Syene
ETHIOPIA
Tema
Dedan
Dumah
Sallat
AKKAD
Der
Sippar
Cuthah
Babylon
Kish
Nippur
BABYLONIA
(CHALDEA)
Erech (Uruk)
Ur
Susa
ELAM
Anshan (Tall-i Malyan)
PERSIA
ancient coastline
Approximate greatest extent of Babylonian domination.
(The Halys river marked the border of the Median and lydian Empires after the Battle of the Eclipse in 585 B.C.)
0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometres
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Black Sea
Caucasus Mountains
Hyrcanian Sea
(Caspian Sea)
Aegean Sea
Upper Sea (Mediterranean Sea)
Red Sea
Lower Sea (Persian Gulf)
Erythraean Sea
THRACE (SKUDRA)
MACEDONIA
THESSALY
PELOPONNESUS
Sparta
Athens
Corinth
Thebes
Marathon
Delphi
Thermopylae
Salamis
Lesbos
Myllene
Magnesia
Sardis
LYDIA
PHRYGIA
Ephesus
Samos
Magnesia on Maeander
Miletus
CARIA
Mt. Mycale
Mt. Ida
Hellespont
Granicus R.
R. Sangarius
R. Halys
Sinope
Donuscus
Byzantium
PAPHLAGONIANS
DASCYLLIUM
CAPPADOCIA
Gordion
CIMERIANS
Pteria?
Trapezus
MOSCHI (MESHECH)
COLCHI
R. Araxes
R. Cyrus
CHORASMIA
SOGDIANA
R. Oxus
(Bokhara)
Cyropolis
SAKA (SCYTHIANS)
Margiana (Margus)
R. Margus
Bactra
BACTRIA
GANDHARA
Astrabad (Gorgan)
Zadrakarta (Turang Tepe)
(Damghan)
Tesmes (Mashhad)
HYRCANIA
MEDIA
PARTHIA
Artacoana
R. Arachosia
ARIA
(Ghazni)
SATTAGYDIA
Rages (Rhagae)
Ecbatana (Achmetha)
Behistun (Bisutun)
SAGARTIA
DRANGIANA
(Kandahar)
ARACHOSIA
Gabae (Isfahan)
(Kerman)
Parsagarda (Pasargadae)
Anshan (Tall-i Malyan)
Persepolis
PERSIS (PERSIA)
ELAM (SUSIANA)
Susa (Shushan)
Eshnunna
Der
Sippar
Babylon
Borsippa
Nippur
Erech (Uruk)
Larsa
Ur
BABYLONIA
Persian Gulf coastline
GEDROSIA (MAKA)
CARMANIA
(Gulashkird)
Pura
HINDUSH (INDIA)
R. Indus
Pattala
Arabian Sea coastline
ARMENIA (URARTU)
L. Van
L. Urmia
COMMAGENE
Melitene
Royal Road
Carchemish
Arpad
Aleppo
Thapsacus
Haran
Tarsus
Issus
Cilicium Pylae Gates
CILICIA
PAMPHYLIA
LYCIA
Xanthus
Rhodes
Crete
Gortyna
Cyprus
Soli
Kyrenia
Salamis
Cilium
Amathus
Hamath
Arvad
Gebal
Sidon
Tyre
Damascus
Tadmor
R. Euphrates
ASSYRIA
Nineveh
Arbela
Asshur
Arrapkha
R. Tigris
BEYOND THE RIVER
PHOENICIA
KEDAR
Samaria
Ashdod
Gaza
Jerusalem
JUDAH
AMMON
MOAB
EDOM
Sela
Dumah
Tema
Dedan
Cyrene
(Alexandria)
Sais
Busiris
Zoan
Tahpanhes
Pelusium
Heliopolis
Memphis
Sinai
LIBYA
EGYPT
Hermopolis
Abydos
Coptos
Thebes
Edfu
Yeb (Elephantine)
Syene
ETHIOPIA (CUSH)
ARABIA
R. Nile
Approximate boundary of the Persian Empire
0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometres
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Black Sea
Mediterranean Sea
Red Sea
Persian Gulf
Erythraean Sea
Caspian Sea
Aegean Sea
Hyrcanian Sea
THRACE
MACEDONIA
Pella
Philippi
Thessalonica
Thasos
Dorıscus
Byzantium
Lysimachia
Calchedon
Heraclea
Sinope
Trapezus
PAPHLAGONIA
PONTUS
Nicaea
Scyllium
Ilium (Troy)
Ancyra
Pteria?
Gordium (Gordion)
GALATIA
THESSALY
AETOLIA
Delphi
Thebes
Athens
Corinth
Olympia
Sparta
Mytilene
Pergamum
Magnesia
IONIA
Sardis
Ephesus
Samos
Miletus
Didyma
Halicarnassus
CARIA
PHRYGIA
Issus
Apamea (Calaenae)
Delos
PISIDIA
PAMPHYLIA
CILICIA
Perga
Phaselis
LYCIA
Rhodes
Xanthus
Cydonia
Knossos
Gortyna
Crete
Cyprus
Salamis
Citium
Paphos
Laodicea
Marathus
Tripolis
Byblos
Berytus
Sidon
Tyre
Ptolemais
Dora
Samaria
Azotus
Gaza
Paraetonium
Alexandria
Sais
Bubastis
Pelusium
Heliopolis
Memphis
Arsinoe
Petra
Raphia
Antioch (Gerasa)
Philadelphia
Jerusalem
Damascus
Paneas
Cyrene
CYRENAICA
PTOLEMAIC EMPIRE
EGYPT
Oasis of Ammon (Siwa)
Crocodilopolis
Hermopolis
Lycopolis
Ptolemais
Nag Hammadi
Thebes
Syene
NABATAEANS
ARABIA
Approximate boundary of Alexander's Empire
SELEUCID EMPIRE
COMMAGENE
CAPPADOCIA
Melitene
Tyana
Tarsus
Soli
Alexandria
Carchemish
Aleppo
Antioch
Thapsacus
SYRIA
Palmyra
Dura-Europus
ARMENIA
L. Van
L. Urmia
Nisibis
Gaugamela
Arbela
Ctesiphon
Seleucia
Babylon
Nippur
Uruk
BABYLONIA
MESOPOTAMIA
Ecbatana
Rages (Rhagae)
Astrabad (Gorgan)
Zadrakarta (Turang Tepe)
Hecatompylus (?)
HYRCANIA
CHORASMIA
SOGDIANA
SAKA (SCYTHIANS)
Cyropolis
Alexandria (Antiochia-Margiana)
BACTRIA
Alexandria Kapisa
Ortospana (Kabul)
GANDHARA
HINDUSH
Alexandria Arion
Alexandria Arachosion
PARTHIA
ARIA
DRANGIANA
ARACHOSIA
Alexandropolis (Kandahar)
Gabae
Susa
SUSIANA
Persepolis
Parsagarda
PERSIS
CARMANIA
GEDROSIA
Alexandria (Gulashkird)
Pura
Harmozeia
Pattala
Scale 0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometres
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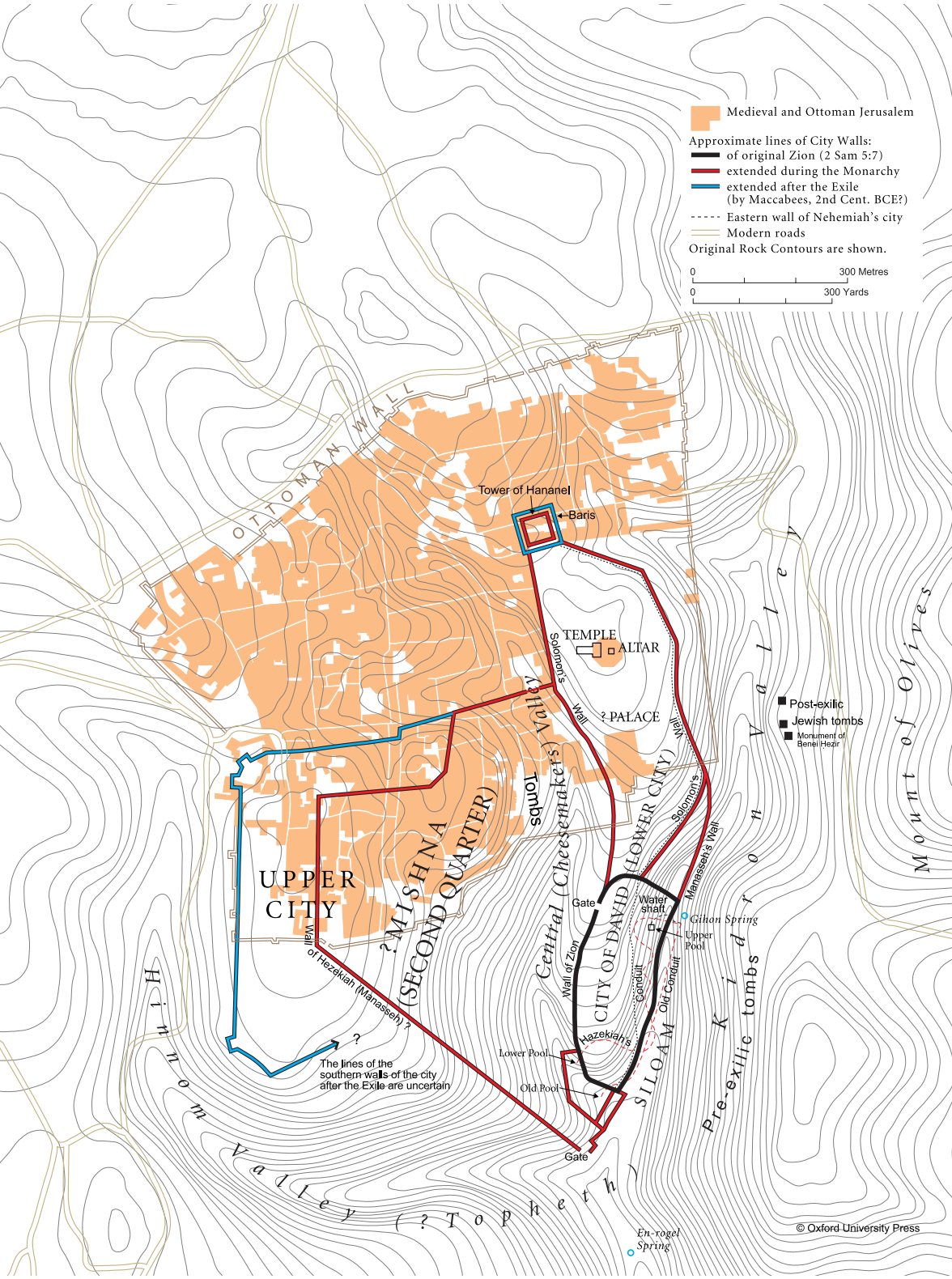
Medieval and Ottoman Jerusalem
Approximate lines of City Walls:
of original Zion (2 Sam 5:7)
extended during the Monarchy
extended after the Exile
(by Maccabees, 2nd Cent. BCE?)
Eastern wall of Nehemiah's city
Modern roads
Original Rock Contours are shown.
0 300 Metres
0 300 Yards
OTTOMAN WALL
Tower of Hananel
Baris
TEMPLE
ALTAR
? PALACE
Solomon's Wall
Tombs
? Valley
? MISHNA (SECOND QUARTER)
UPPER CITY
Wall of Hezekiah (Manasseh) ?
?
The lines of the southern walls of the city after the Exile are uncertain
Central (Cheesemakers') Valley
CITY OF DAVID (LOWER CITY)
Solomon's Wall
Manasseh's Wall
Gate
Water shaft
Gihon Spring
Upper Pool
Wall of Zion
Conduit
Old Conduit
Hezekiah's
Lower Pool
Old Pool
SILOAM
Gate
Hinnom Valley (? Topheth)
En-rogel Spring
Kidron Valley
Pre-exilic tombs
Mount of Olives
Post-exilic Jewish tombs
Monument of Benei Hezir
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V
W
X
Y
Z
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
33° 30'
32° 30'
31° 30'
34° 30'
35°
35° 30'
36°
36° 30'
Sidon
Sarepta
Tyre
Damascus
(a city of the Decapolis)
ABILENE
SYRIA
ITURAEA
Paneas
Danos (Caesarea Philippi)
R. Leontes
Bathyra?
TRACHONITIS
BATANAEA
Raphana
(a city of the Decapolis)
AURANITIS
GAULANITIS
Ptolemais
Chorazin
Capernaum
Bethsaida-Julias
Gennesaret
Sea of Galilee
Magdala
(Taricheae)
Gamala
Hippos
Djon?
Sepphoris
Gabae (Hippeum)
Nazareth
Wadi Yarmuk
Abila
Gadara
Dora
Caesarea
(Strato's Tower)
Scythopolis
Pella
Sebaste (Samaria)
Neapolis
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Gerizim
Gerasa
Amathus
Apollonia
Sozusa
Antipatris
Joppa
Alexandrium
Phasaelis
Gadara
Thamna
Lydda
Gophna
Archelais
Philadelphia (Rabbah)
Jamnia
Gazara
Emmaus (Nicopolis)
Jericho
Cyprus
Betharamphtha
Jerusalem
Bethany
Hyrcania
(Kh. Qumran
settlement of
Dead Sea sect)
Medeba
Azotus
Bethlehem
Herodium
Ascalon
(Free City)
Betogabri
Marisa
Agrippias
(Anthedon)
Gaza
Hebron
Adora
Lake
Asphaltitis
(Dead
Sea)
Callirhoe
Machaerus
Engaddi (En-gedi)
R. Arnon
Masada
Raphia
Bersabe
(Beersheba)
Malatha
Mampsis
MARE INTERNUM
(Mediterranean Sea)
PROVINCE OF
KINGDOM OF
HEROD
HEROD
CAPOLIS
PEREA
SAMARIA
JUDEA
IDUMEA
NABATAEAN KINGDOM
Mt. Carmel
The Great
Plain
Plain of Sharon
River Jordan
R. Jordan
R. Yabbok
Wilderness of Judah
Boundary of Herod's kingdom
at its greatest extent
Divisions, CE 6-37
Fortresses
0
10
20 Miles
0
10
20 Kilometres
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Political boundaries CE 6-34
JUDEA, etc.
Politcal units
Places mentioned in the New Testament
Cities of the Decapolis
Cities of the Decapolis mentioned in the New Testament
Fortresses
0 5 10 Miles
0 5 10 Kilometres
PROVINCE OF SYRIA
PHOENICIA
GALILEE
TETRARCHY OF PHILIP
GAULANITIS
DECAPOLIS
PEREA
IDUMEA
JUDEA (under Roman administration)
SAMARIA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Lake Asphaltitis (Dead Sea)
Sea of Galilee
Lake Semechonitis (Lake Huleh)
Wilderness of Judea
The Great Plain (Esdraelon)
Plain of Sharon
Brook Cherith
Brook of Kanah
Brook Besor
Wadi Yarmuk
R. Jordan
R. Arnon
R. Nahaliel
R. Zered
R. Kishon
R. Belus (Kedron)
Kidron
W. Murabbaat
(Wadi Jezreel)
(Wadi Qubeibah)
River Jordan
Ladder of Tyre
Valley of Jezreel
Mt. Carmel
Mt. Gerizim
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Scopus
Tyre
Abelane
Caesarea Philippi (Paneas)
Daphne
Cadasa
Caparcotna
Thella
Ecdippa (Achzib)
Gischala
Jamneith
Seleucia
Meroth
Baca
Sepph
Acchabare
Bersabe
Chorazin
Sogane
Ptolemais
Saab
Selame
Capernaum
Bethsaida-Julias
Chabulon
Sogane
Ginnesar (Gennesaret)
Jotapata
Magdala (Taricheae)
Arbela
Gergesa?
Gamala
Sycaminum
Cana
Asochis
Rumah
Bethmaus
Tiberias
Ammathus
Hippos (Susithah)
Dion?
Sepphoris
Garis
Besara
Sennabris
Bucolon Polis
Gabae (Hippeum)
Nazareth
Sigoph
Dabaritta (Dabira)
Beth-yerah (Philoteria)
Emmatha
Abila
Simonias
Japha
Exaloth
Itabyrium (Tabor)
Gadara
Gabata
Nain
Capitolias
Dora (Dor)
Agrippina
Arbela
Crocodilon Polis
Caesarea
Scythopolis
Narbata
Ginae
Pella
Salim?
Aenon?
Gitta
Bemesilis
Yishuh
Sebaste (Samaria)
Gerasa
Amathus
Neapolis
Sychar
Tirathana
Pharaton
Mahnayim
Coreae
Apollonia Sozusa
Capnarsaba
Cappareteaea
Arus
Acrabbein
Alexandrium
Antipatris (Pegai)
Tephon
Anathu Borcaeus
Tower of Aphek
Selo (Shiloh)
Zia
Joppa
Phasaelis
Gadara
Rathamin (Arimathea?)
Thamna (Timnath)
Ilon
Lydda
Adida
Berzetho
Gophna
Archelais
Philadelphia (Rabbath)
Modein
Ephraim (Aphairema)
Iamnitarum Portus (Jamnia Harbour)
Bethel
Sappho
Aialon?
Lower Beth-horon
Upper Beth-horon
Michmash
Jamnia
Gazara
Adasa
Capharsalama?
Taurus
Jericho
Cyprus
Emmaus (Nicopolis)
Berea?
Gabaon
Gabath Saul
Betharamphtha (Livias Julias)
Kedron
Cariathiareim
Anathoth
Esbus
Colonia Amasa (Emmaus?)
Azotus Paralius (Azotus-on-Sea)
Accaron (Ekron)
Azotus
Jerusalem
Bethphage
Bethany
(Kh. Qumran: settlement of Dead Sea sect)
Hyrcania
Medeba (Madaba)
Bethletepha
Bethlehem
Beth-basi
Herodium
Ascalon (Free city)
Beth-zechariah
Etam
Maiumas Ascalon (Baths of Ascalon)
Beth-zaith
Thecoa (Thekoa)
Betogabri
Capharabis
Callirrhoe
Gemmaruris
Bethsura (Beth-zur)
Machaerus
Agrippias (Anthedon)
Aluos
Caphartobas
Terebinthus (Mamre)
Hebron
Gaza
Adora
?Caparorsa
Aristobulias
Engaddi (En-gedi)
To Province of Syria
Masada
Areopolis (Rabbathmoab)
Bersabe (Beersheba)
Malatha
Mampsis (31°01′)
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Boundary of Roman Empire (c.CE 65)
Provincial boundaries (c.CE 65)
ASIA, etc Roman Provinces
Selected Roman roads (route between Rome and the East)
0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometres
ROMAN EMPIRE
ROME
ITALY
Tyrrhenian Sea
Adriatic Sea
Ionian Sea
Aegean Sea
Mediterranean Sea (Mare Internum, Mare Nostrum)
Lesser Syrtis
Greater Syrtis
Sea of Azov
Euxine Sea (Pontus Euxinus)
Scythians
PANNONIA
DACIA
ILLYRICUM (DALMATIA)
MOESIA
THRACE
MACEDONIA
ACHAEA
CRETE
CYPRUS
BOSPORAN KINGDOM
BITHYNIA and PONTUS
GALATIA
PHRYGIA
CAPPADOCIA
CILICIA and SYRIA
KINGDOM OF ARMENIA
PARTHIAN EMPIRE
Nabataean Kingdom
Arabian Desert
Sahara Desert
AFRICA
LIBYA
EGYPT
CYRENAICA
TRIPOLITANIA
Genua
Portus Veneris
Luca
Florentia
Arretium
Perusia
Bononia
Ravenna
Ariminum
Ancona
Pola
Siscia
Sirmium
Singidunum
Viminacium
Salonae
CORSICA
SARDINIA
Ostia
Three Taverns
Forum of Appius (Appii Forum)
Antium
Tarracina
Capua
Beneventum
Puteoli
Neapolis
Pompeii
Canusium
Capreae (Capri)
Paestum
Tarentum
Brundisium
Sybaris
Croton
Panormus
Messana
Rhegium
SICILY
Catana
Agrigentum
Utica
Carthage
Syracuse
Thapsus
St. Paul's Bay
Malta (Melita)
Sabratha
Oea
Lepcis Magna
Cyrene
Phoenix
Fair Havens
Salmone
Lasea
Cauda
Scodra
Scupi
Dyrrhachium
Apollonia
Beroea
Philippi
Neapolis
Thessalonica
Philippopolis
Sardica
Niassus
Oescus
Novae
R. Danube
Istros
Tomi
Odessus
Mesembria
Byzantium
Heraclea
Nicomedia
Nicaea
Cyzicus
Prusa
Troas (Alexandria)
Assos
Adramyttium
Dorylaeum
Pergamum
Thyatira
Sardis
Philadelphia
Smyrna
Ephesus
Miletus
Laodicea
Colossae
Antioch
Iconium
Lystra
Derbe
Tarsus
Seleucia
Attalia
Perga
Pamphylia
Lycia
Myra
Patara
Rhodes
Cnidus
Chios
Lesbos
Corcyra
Nicopolis
Actium
Larissa
Thessaly
Corinth
Cenchreae
Athens
Olympia
Sparta (Lacedaemon)
Amastris
Sinope
Amisus
Side
Trapezus
Chersonesus
Gangra
Amasea
Comana
Ancyra
Tavium
Gordium
Pessinus
Caesarea (Mazaca)
Archelais
Melitene
Tigranocerta
Artaxata
Lesser Armenia
Colchis
Commagene
Samosata
Zeugma
Europus (Carchemish)
Edessa
Carrhae (Haran)
Nisibis
Osroene
Ninus
Arbela
Adiabene
Nicephorium
Apamea
Salamis
Paphos
Epiphania
Emesa
Palmyra
Dura-Europus
Tripolis
Berytus
Sidon
Tyre
Ptolemais
Damascus
Caesarea Philippi
Tiberias
Caesarea
Samaria
Joppa
Jerusalem
Gaza
Judea
Canopus
Alexandria
Naucratis
Sais
Pelusium
Heliopolis
Memphis
Babylon
Petra
Aila (Aelana)
Dumah
Mt. Sinai
Oxyrhynchus
Red Sea
Tema
Seleucia
Ctesiphon
Babylon
Elam
Mesopotamia
R. Euphrates
R. Tigris
R. Orontes
R. Halys
R. Araxes
L. Van
L. Urmia
Media
Atropatene
Gordyene
R. Nile
Via Egnatia
Via Appia
Via Aurelia
Via Flaminia
Via Aemilia
Via Cassia
Via Clodia
Via Latina
Via Valeria
Via Tiburtina
Via Salaria
Via Nomentana
Via Ostiensis
Via Portuensis
Via Labicana
Via Praenestina
Via Tiburtina
Via Salaria
Via Nomentana
Via Ostiensis
Via Portuensis
Via Labicana
Via Praenestina
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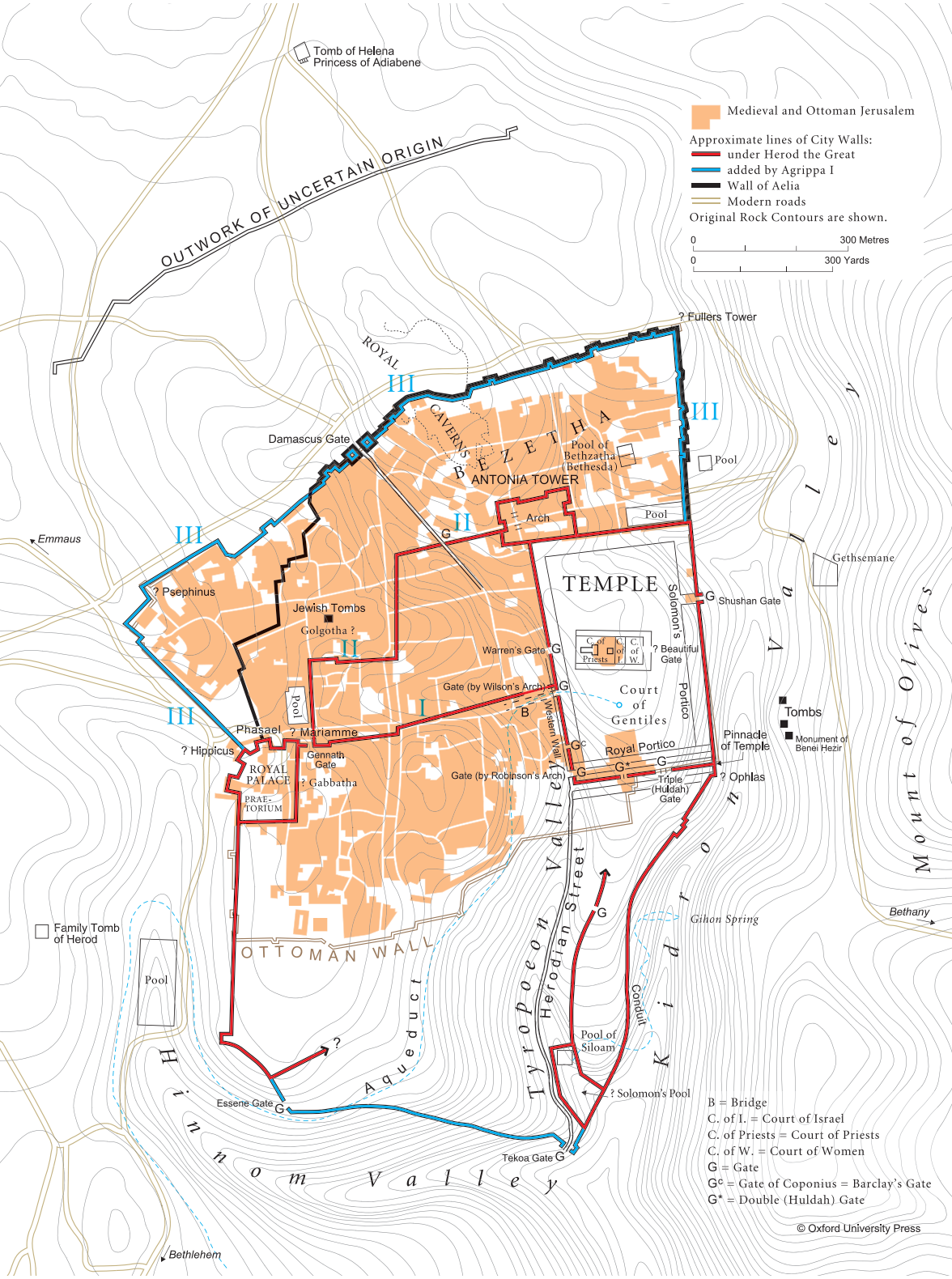

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Paul's 1st Journey
Paul's 2nd Journey
Paul's 3rd Journey
Black Sea
Mediterranean Sea
Adriatic Sea
Ionian Sea
Aegean Sea
ITALY
SICILY
Malta
Rome
MACEDONIA
THRACE
ACHAEA
Philippi
Neapolis
Amphipolis
Apollonia
Thessalonica
Berea
Samothrace
Istanbul
Troy
Troas
Assos
MYSIA
Pergamum
Thyatira
Mytilene
Chios
Samos
Patmos
Cos
Rhodes
Crete
Salmone
Phoenix
Cauda
Delphi
Athens
Corinth
Cenchrea
BITHYNIA
PONTUS
GALATIA
CAPPADOCIA
PHRYGIA
LYCONIA
PISIDIA
PAMPHYLIA
LYCIA
CILICIA
Ankara
Kaymakli
Philadelphia
Hierapolis
Colossae
Laodicea
Sardis
Smyrna
Ephesus
Miletus
Plisidian Antioch
Iconium
Lystra
Derbe
Tarsus
Antioch
Seleucia
Attalia
Perga
Myra
Patara
Cyprus
Salamis
Paphos
SYRIA
Sidon
Damascus
Tyre
Ptolemais
Sea of Galilee
Caesarea
Jerusalem
Dead Sea
Alexandria
EGYPT
Cairo
CYRENAICA
MESOPOTAMIA
River Euphrates
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A
B
C
D
E
1
2
3

Euxine Sea
(Pontus Euxinus)
Mediterranean Sea
(Mare Internum)
Aegean Sea
MACEDONIA
THRACE
EPIRUS
THESSALY
ACHAEA
MYSIA
BITHYNIA AND PONTUS
PAPHLAGONIA
GALATIA
CAPPADOCIA
LYDIA
ASIA
PHRYGIA
LYCAONIA
GALATIAN PHRYGIA
PISIDIA
PAMPHYLIA
LYCIA
CARIA
CRETE
CYPRUS
CILICIA AND SYRIA
CILICIA TRACHEA
KINGDOM OF ANTIOCHUS
PHOENICIA
Kingdom of Herod Agrippa II
JUDEA
NABATAEAN KINGDOM
EGYPT
Dyrrhachium
Egnatian Way
Scupi
Philippopolis
Doberus?
Beroea
Thessalonica
Philippi
Neapolis
Amphipolis
Apollonia
Dorisc
Mesembria
Byzantium
Calchedon
Heraclea
Amastris
Sinope
Amisus
Side
Nicomedia
Claudiopolis
Nicaea
Gangra
Amasea
Comana Pontica
Abydos
Cyzicus
Prusa
Propontis
Samothrace
Imbros
Hellespont
Lemnos
Lesbos
Chios
Samos
Delos
Patmos
Nicopolis
Actium
Larissa
Pharsalus
Delphi
Patrae
Thebes
Eleusis
Corinth
Cenchreae
Athens
Piraeus
Olympia
Sparta (Lacedaemon)
(Alexandria) Troas
Assos
Adramyttium
Mytilene
Pergamum
Thyatira
Smyrna
Sardis
Philadelphia
Ephesus
Magnesia
Tralleis
Miletus
Didyma
Halicarnassus
Cnidus
Rhodes
Xanthus
Patara
Myra
Dorylaeum
Cotiaeum
Ancyra
Tavium
Gordium
Pessinus
Appia
Amorium
Antioch
Hierapolis
Apamea
Laodicea
Colossae
Iconium
Lystra
Derbe
Archelais
Caesarea (Mazaca)
Comana Cappadociae
Germanicea
COMMAGENE
Cilician Gates
Tarsus
Issus
Soli
Seleucia (Free City)
Alexandria
Seleucia Pieria
Antioch
Laodicea
Apamea
Epiphania
Salamis
Paphos
Citium
Emesa
Tripolis
To Herod Agrippa II
Heliopolis
Abilene
Berytus
Chalcis
Sidon
Damascus
Tyre
Caesarea Philippi
Ptolemais
Tiberias
Gadara
Caesarea
Pella
Bostra
Scythopolis
Gerasa
Sebaste (Samaria)
Decapolis
Joppa
Jericho
Philadelphia
Jerusalem
To Herod Agrippa II
Gaza
Raphia
Pelusium
Canopus
Alexandria
Naucratis
Sais
Phoenix
Heracleon
Salmone (Sammanion)
Fair Havens
Lasea
Cauda (Gaudos)
Boundaries of Provinces of Roman Empire CE 65
ASIA, etc. Roman Provinces
'Seven Churches' of Asia (Rev. 1-3)
Selected Roman routes
0 50 100 Miles
0 50 100 Kilometres
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Black Sea
Sinope
Trebizond
Caspian Sea
MACEDONIA
THRACE
Philippi
Neapolis
Pella
Thessalonika
Thasos
Olynthus
Samothrace
Imbros
Cyzicus
Troy
Lemnos
Assos
GREECE
Lesbos
Thermae
Pergamum
Euboea
Scyros
Delphi
Midas City
Gordion
Polatli
Ankara
Pazarli
Alaça Hüyük
Boğazköy (Hattusa)
Alishar
R. Sakarya (Sangarius)
R. Kizilirmak (Halys)
ANATOLIA
ARMENIA
Chios
Smyrna
Sardis
Kusura
Beycesultan
Kültepe
Kayseri
Olympia
Mycenae
Athens
Salamis
Argos
Tiryns
Andros
Colophon
Ephesus
Magnesia
Antioch in Pisidia
Malatya (Melid)
Lake Van
Van
Pylos
Sparta
Tenos
Samos
Priene
R. Menderes
Miletus
Didyma
Labraunda
Paros
Delos
Halicarnassus
Melos
Naxos
Cos
Cythera
Marash
Nimrud Dagh
Karatepe
R. Ceyhan
Sakçe Gözü
Cilicia
Tarsus
Mersin
Zinçirli
Carchemish
Magarsus
T. Judeideh
Aleppo
Antioch
el-Mina
'Atshana (Alalakh)
Ebla
Emar
Harran
T. Ahmar
Chagar Bazar
T. Brak
T. Halaf (Gozan)
Arslan Tash
Antalya
Perga
Side
Ialysus
Rhodes
Lindus
Xanthus
Rhodes
Crete
Knossos
Carpathos
Ayia Triada
Phaistos
Palaikastro
Lapithos
Pighades
Vouni
Enkomi
Salamis
Idalion
Citium
Khirokitia
Kouklia
Curium
Amathus
Cyprus
Ugarit (Ras Shamra)
T. Sukas
Hama
Homs
Qatna
Tabbat el-Hammam
Kadesh
Qasr el-Hayr
Tadmor (Palmyra)
T. Ashara (Tirqa)
Dura-Europos
Mari
Byblos
Ba'albek
Damascus
Sidon
Tyre
Achzib
T. Abu Hawam
Hazor
Megiddo
Beth-shan
T. Far'a
Bostra
Samaria
Gerasa
Gezer
Jericho
Lachish
Amman
Kh. Qumran
T. 'Ajjul
Jerusalem
Palestine
Mediterranean Sea
Syrian Desert
River
MESOPOTAMIA
R. Tigris
Euphrates
Hassuna
Hatra
Little Zab
Asshur
Nuzi
Jarmu
Nineveh
Nimrud (Calah)
Tepe Gawra
Khorsabad
Geoy Tepe
Lake Urmia
Great Zab
MEDIA
Hamadan (Ecbatana)
Behistun
Tepe Giyan
Siyalk
Shah Tepe
TuranTepe
Tepe Hissar
Samarra
Aqar Quf
T. Asmar
Khafajeh
T. Harmal
Ctesiphon
Sippar
'Uqeir
Jemdet Nasr
Babylon
Kish
Borsippa
Nippur
Bismaya
Fara (Shuruppak)
Telloh (Lagash)
Larsa
Erech (Uruk)
T. el-'Ubeid
Ur
Eridu
Musyan
Susa
PERSIA
Bishapur
Persepolis
Sarvistan
ancient coastline
Persian Gulf
Alexandria
Tanis
LIBYA
T. Dafanneh
Nessana
T. Basta
T. er-Retabeh
T. Yahudiyeh
T. Maskhuta
Subeita
Kh. Tannur
es-Sela' (Sela)
Petra
Gizeh
Heliopolis
Saqqarah
Kuntillet 'Ajrud
Timna'
Madinat el-Fayum
Meidum
Lahun
Ahnus
Sinai
T. el-Kheleifeh (Elath)
(Serabit el-Khadim)
ARABIA
Oxyrhynchus
EGYPT
Beni-hasan
Hermopolis
T. el-'Amarna
Bawit
Deir Tasa
Badari
Qau
Red Sea
Abydos
Nag-Hammadi
Naqada
Qurna
Thebes
(Theban Cemetery)
Hierakonpolis
R. Nile
Abu Simbel
T. = Tell (mound, city site)
Kh. = Khirbet (ruin)
0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometres
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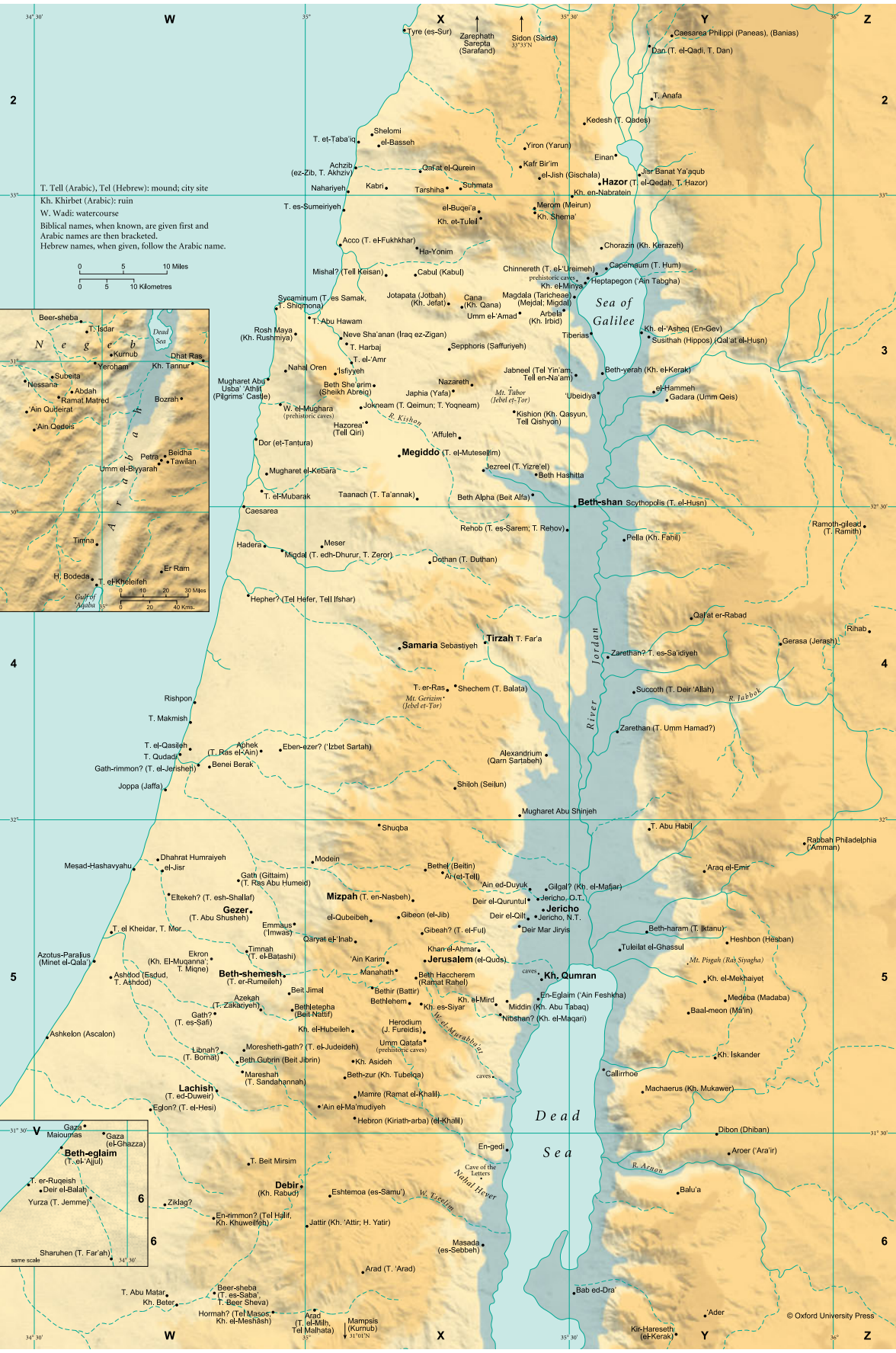
T. Tell (Arabic), Tel (Hebrew): mound; city site
Kh. Khirbet (Arabic): ruin
W. Wadi: watercourse
Biblical names, when known, are given first and Arabic names are then bracketed.
Hebrew names, when given, follow the Arabic name.
0 5 10 Miles
0 5 10 Kilometres
Tyre (es-Sur)
Zarephath Sarepta (Sarafand)
Sidon (Saida)
Caesarea Philippi (Paneas), (Banias)
Dan (T. el-Qadi, T. Dan)
T. Anafa
Kedesh (T. Qades)
Shelomi
T. et-Taba'iq
el-Basseh
Yiron (Yarun)
Einan
Achzib (ez-Zib, T. Akhziv)
Qal'at el-Qurein
Kafr Bir'im
el-Jish (Gischala)
Jisr Banat Ya'aqub
Hazor (T. el-Qedah, T. Hazor)
Naharlyeh
Kabri
Tarshiha
Suhmata
Kh. en-Nabratein
T. es-Sumeiriyeh
el-Buqei'a
Merom (Meiron)
Kh. et-Tuleil
Kh. Shema'
Acco (T. el-Fukhkhar)
Ha-Yonim
Chorazim (Kh. Kerazeh)
Mishal? (Tell Keisan)
Cabul (Kabul)
Chinnereth (T. el-'Ureimeh)
prehistoric caves
Capernaum (T. Hum)
Kh. el-Minya
Heptapegon ('Ain Tabgha)
Sycaminum (T. es Samak, T. Shiqmona)
Jotapata (Jotbah) (Kh. Jefat)
Cana (Kh. Qana)
Magdala (Taricheae) (Mejdal; Migdal)
Sea of Galilee
Umm el-'Amad
Arbela (Kh. Irbid)
T. Abu Hawam
Rosh Maya (Kh. Rushmiya)
Neve Sha'anan (Iraq ez-Zigan)
Tiberias
Kh. el-'Asheq (En-Gev)
Susithah (Hippos) (Qal'at el-Husn)
T. Harbaj
Sepphoris (Saffuriyeh)
T. el-'Amr
Nahal Oren
Ishiyyeh
Jabneel (Tel Yin'am, Tell en-Na'am)
Beth-yerah (Kh. el-Kerak)
Mugharet Abu Usba' 'Athlit (Pilgrims' Castle)
Beth She'arim (Sheikh Abreiq)
Nazareth
Japhia (Yafa)
Mt. Tabor (Jebel et-Tor)
'Ubeidiya
el-Hammeh
Gadara (Umm Qeis)
W. el-Mughara (prehistoric caves)
Jokneam (T. Qeimun; T. Yoqneam)
Kishion (Kh. Qasyun, Tell Qishyon)
R. Kishon
Hazorea' (Tell Qiri)
'Affuleh
Dor (et-Tantura)
Megiddo (T. el-Mutesellim)
Jezreel (T. Yizre'el)
Mugharet el-Kebara
Beth Hashitta
T. el-Mubarak
Taanach (T. Ta'annak)
Beth Alpha (Beit Alfa)
Beth-shan Scythopolis (T. el-Husn)
Caesarea
Rehob (T. es-Sarem; T. Rehov)
Pella (Kh. Fahil)
Ramoth-gilead (T. Ramith)
Hadera
Meser
Migdal (T. edh-Dhurur, T. Zeror)
Dothan (T. Duthan)
Hepher? (Tel Hefer, Tell Ifshar)
Qal'at er-Rabad
Rihab
Gerasa (Jerash)
Tirzah T. Far'a
Samaria Sebastiyeh
Zarethan? T. es-Sa'idiyeh
Jordan River
T. er-Ras
Shechem (T. Balata)
Mt. Gerizim (Jebel et-Tor)
Succoth (T. Deir 'Allah)
R. Jabbok
Rishpon
T. Makmish
Zarethan (T. Umm Hamad?)
T. el-Qasileh
Aphek (T. Ras el-Ain)
Eben-ezer? ('Izbet Sartah)
T. Qudadi
Alexandrium (Qarn Sartabeh)
Gath-rimmon? (T. el-Jerisheh)
Benei Berak
Joppa (Jaffa)
Shiloh (Seilun)
Mugharet Abu Shinjeh
Shuqba
T. Abu Habil
Rabbah Philadelphia (Amman)
Mesad-Hashavyahu
Dhahrat Humraiyeh
el-Jisr
Modein
Bethel (Beitin)
Ai (el-Tell)
'Araq el-Emir
Gath (Gittaim) (T. Ras Abu Humeid)
'Ain ed-Duyuk
Gilgal? (Kh. el-Mafjar)
Eltekeh? (T. esh-Shallaf)
Mizpah (T. en-Nasbeh)
Deir el-Quruntul
Jericho, O.T.
Gezer (T. Abu Shusheh)
el-Qubeibeh
Gibeon (el-Jib)
Deir el-Qilt
Jericho
Jericho, N.T.
T. el Kheidar, T. Mor
Emmaus ('Imwas)
Gibeah? (T. el-Ful)
Deir Mar Jiryis
Beth-haram (T. Iktanu)
Qaryat el-'Inab
Khan el-Ahmar
Tuleilat el-Ghassul
Heshbon (Hesban)
Timnah (T. el-Batashi)
'Ain Karim
Jerusalem (el-Quds)
Mt. Pisgah (Ras Siyagha)
Azotus-Paralius (Minet el-Qala')
Ekron (Kh. El-Muqanna', T. Miqne)
Manahath
caves
Kh. Qumran
Ashdod (Esdud, T. Ashdod)
Beth-shemesh (T. er-Rumeileh)
Beth Haccherem (Ramat Rahel)
Kh. el-Mekhaiyet
Beit Jimal
Bethlehem
En-Eglaim ('Ain Feshkha)
Azekah
Bethletepha (Beit Natlif)
Kh. el-Mird
Kh. es-Siyar
Middin (Kh. Abu Tabaq)
Medeba (Madaba)
(T. Zakariyeh)
Gath? (T. es-Safi)
Nitshan? (Kh. el-Maqari)
Baal-meon (Ma'in)
Herodium (J. Fureidis)
Wadi el-Murabba'at
Ashkelon (Ascalon)
Kh. el-Hubeileh
Umm Qatafa (prehistoric caves)
Libnah? (T. Bornat)
Moresheth-gath? (T. el-Judeideh)
Kh. Iskander
Beth Gubrin (Beit Jibrin)
Kh. Asideh
Mareshah (T. Sandahannah)
Beth-zur (Kh. Tubeiqa)
caves
Callirrhoe
Lachish (T. ed-Duweir)
Machaerus (Kh. Mukawer)
Mamre (Ramat el-Khalil)
Eglon? (T. el-Hesi)
'Ain el-Ma'mudiyeh
Dead Sea
Hebron (Kiriath-arba) (el-Khalil)
Dibon (Dhiban)
En-gedi
Aroer ('Ara'ir)
T. Beit Mirsim
Cave of the Letters
R. Arnon
Nahal Hever
Wadi Tseelim
Debir (Kh. Rabud)
Eshtemoa (es-Samu')
Balu'a
Ziklag?
En-rimmon? (Tel Halif, Kh. Khuweilfeh)
Jattir (Kh. 'Attir; H. Yatir)
Masada (es-Sebbeh)
Arad (T. 'Arad)
Bab ed-Dra'
'Ader
T. Abu Matar, Kh. Beter
Beer-sheba (T. es-Saba', T. Beer Sheva)
Hormah? (Tel Masos, Kh. el-Meshash)
Arad (T. el-Milh, Tel Malhata)
Mampsis (Kurnub)
Kir-Hareseth (el-Kerak)
Negeb
Beer-sheba
T. Isdar
Dead Sea
Kurnub
Dhat Ras
Yeroham
Kh. Tannur
Subeita
Nessana
Abdah
Ramat Matred
Bozrah
'Ain Qudeirat
'Ain Qedeis
Arabah
Petra
Beidha
Tawilan
Umm el-Biyyarah
Timna
H. Bodeda
T. el-Kheleifeh
Er Ram
Gulf of 'Aqaba
0 10 20 30 Miles
0 20 40 Kms.
Gaza
Maioumas
Gaza (el-Ghazza)
Beth-eglaim (T. el-'Ajjul)
T. er-Ruqeish
Deir el-Balah
Yurza (T. Jemme)
Sharuhen (T. Far'ah)
same scale
W
X
Y
Z
2
3
4
5
6
31° 30'
32°
32° 30'
34° 30'
35°
35° 30'
36°
33°
33°33'N
31°01'N
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